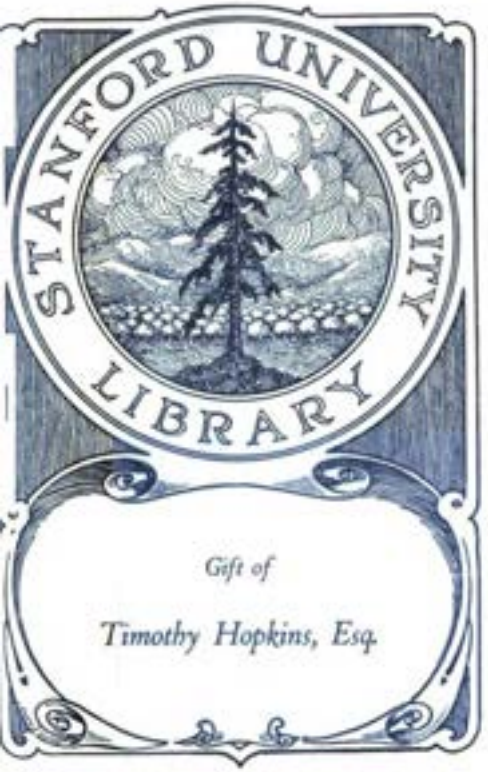

THE

DAMSEL OF DARIEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE YEMASSEE," "GUY RIVERS,"

"MELLICHAMPE," &c.

W. G. Simms

"Què te hice vil fortuna,
Porque te quieras mudar,
Y quitarme de mi silla,
En que el Rey me fue à sentar."

EL CONDE GRIMALTOS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE DAMSEL OF DARIEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEETING OF THE WARRIORS.

With the first beams of the morning sun, the Indian warriors of Zemaco, a wild and motly armament, prepared to descend from the mountains into the plain, or rather valley, in which lay the Spanish settlement of Darien. More than five thousand men, detachments from a hundred tribes, which acknowledged the sovereignty of Zemaco, were assembled under the lead of this vindictive chief. They gathered at his summons from the province of Zobayda, where the golden temple of their worship stood, and which they esteemed to be the visible dwelling of their God; Abibeyba, Zenu, and many other provinces, the several cassiques of which, though not present with the quotas which they provided, were yet required by Zemaco to hold themselves in readiness to defend their territories from the incursions of the Spaniards. The hills that rose on three sides of the Spanish settlement were darkened with savage warriors. Exulting in the certainty of victory, they brandished their macanas of palm wood, and shot their arrows upward in defiance, while they sounded their war conchs for the general gathering. Never, in his whole career of sway and conquest, had the proud mountain chief at one time, assembled so vast a host. Their numbers, their known valour, the great strength of their bodies, and the admirable skill with which they swung aloft the club or sent the arrow to its mark, filled his bosom with a vain confidence in his own superiority, which the better taught Caonabo ear-

nestly endeavoured to qualify and caution. But his counsels fell upon unwilling ears, and it was soon apparent to the latter that the prudence which he commended had the effect of diminishing his own courage in the estimation of his hearers. Once assured of this, the mortified Caonabo sank back to his little command, patiently resolved to await events, and remove any doubts on this head, of the Cassique of Darien, by the actual proofs of his prowess, which he was determined to display upon the field.

"When this noisy rabble, now so insolent, shall be flying before the dogs of the Spaniards it will be for Caonabo to strike."

The pride of the fugitive chief, stung as it was, by the little regard which had been given to his counsel, was yet content with this single expression of mortification. He called the warriors who were entrusted to his command apart from the rest, and endeavoured to school them in a portion of his policy. He taught them in few words a knowledge of the kind of armour which protected the Spaniard from his arrow—of the coverings for the breast and arms made of iron, such as were worn by the captains, and that inferior substitute, known as the escaupil, a coat padded with cotton, which constituted the chief defence of the common men. He counselled them to shoot at the horse rather than the man who bestrode him—disabused their minds of the belief that the steed and rider were one—and satisfied them of the ease with which they might despatch the fallen rider with their clubs, when once they had wounded or slain the steed. He showed them where the several pieces of armour were usually joined together, and the parts most easily penetrable by their arrows, at which he required them to aim. The thigh, he counselled them to select as a preferable mark to that of any other part of the body, as being seldom protected; for, though not a part where a fatal wound might be often inflicted, yet, to disable a Spaniard was, perhaps, sufficient, with their far superior numbers, to render his death subsequently certain from the use of the war-club.

Such were some of the counsels which the fugitive chief gave to the little band which Zemaco had assigned him; and had these counsels, in connection with his general plan of conduct, been followed by the chieftain, it is not probable that the Spaniards would have taken ready

foothold in the difficult passes of his country. The obstinacy and pride of Zemaco, which rejected this wholesome counsel, was shared among his followers; and it was not without great difficulty that Caonabo succeeded in making himself understood among his little band;—a difficulty which was greatly increased when he required their obedience. They beheld their brother warriors brandishing their weapons and shouting defiance, as they rushed down the heights in the open face of the enemy; and they felt as if some dishonour attached to their more covert movement along the edges of the hills, down by the gullies and gorges which mountain storms had fretted in their sides, and through bush and bog, on hands and knees, making their approach to the enemy in secret, which they had hitherto never made without songs of blood and clamorous threats, as if victory depended no less in alarming the foe by their cries and threatenings, than in beating them down with their blows. Nothing, indeed, but the express commands of their sovereign, in deputing the charge of them to Caonabo, could possibly have reconciled them to a course which was seemingly full of cowardice and degradation; and ill-concealed indeed were the looks of disquiet and hostility which they shot from beneath their dark and shaggy eyebrows at the strange warrior who compelled them to a departure from their customs, for which they saw no necessity, and which they obeyed without confidence or spirit. But the fugitive chief, though he beheld, was prudent enough to take no heed of their discontent. He cheered them with occasional assurances of victory, encouraged them with the hope of soon appearing before the enemy, and, with a pains-taking interest that never once grew impatient, he led them by circuitous paths, and without departing from the route which he had contemplated the night before, so that, upon the charge of the Spaniards, he must necessarily find himself upon their flank.

Meanwhile the thousand warriors of Zemaco, by tens, by twenties, and by fifties, after the manner of all savage people, were in motion, rising from behind the heights where they had so long been watching, and displaying themselves in all their strength and barbaric pomp, in the presence of the Spaniards. They rushed down the hillsides to the sound of drums and conchs, shouting as they ran, and brandishing their weapons with the exult-

ing consciousness of certain victory. They beheld their foe reduced to a point, a mere speck on the bosom of the valley, which their numbers could soon environ, and as they fondly imagined overrun. Some of them made their forward movement towards the enemy in a sort of festive dance, in which they kept admirable time, though compelled to descend the while an unequal and sometimes rapidly precipitous plane. Their confidence, their numbers, their long black hair, oily skins, and finely-formed persons, together with their shouts and howlings, were not without an effect upon the invaders; but repeated conflicts with the savages, and a confidence in their leader which was not unwisely bestowed, kept them from panic, and the Indians were not without their own share of surprise when they beheld the Spaniards awaiting their advance without a single change in their position.

With the first signs of the morning, Vasco Nunez had prepared for the attack which he had some reason to anticipate. When he beheld the hills half encircling his entrenchments covered with his foes, he drew forth his men with the view to use his dogs and horses. A portion of his cannon—a species of falconet, or grasshopper, then much employed in the wars of the new world—he had also drawn out of his fortress and concealed with select bodies of men, under chosen leaders, each having his especial instructions. The dogs were leashed and kept in cages at convenient points, but also covered from sight and harm until the proper moment of their use. His entire force, consisting of two hundred and fifty men, were drawn up in three columns, with just space enough between the array of each to permit of the play of the artillery. His little squadron of horse, but twelve in number, equally divided, lay with their backs close to the entrenchments of the settlement on the two flanks of his little army. Thus prepared, he saw the approach of the enemy without apprehension. He was himself mounted on an animal equally remarkable for his strength and fleetness. His favourite hound, Leonchico,—his only body-guard,—with the composure of a veteran, and a knowledge of his place, which veterans do not always know, kept close beside his stirrup, ready at the bidding of his master, and not before, to take part in the approaching conflict. Such had been his experience in the wars with the Indians, and such his docility, in consequence of the admirable training

to which he had been subjected, that the leash and cage which alone secured others from evil, were esteemed unnecessary for him. The arms of the Spaniards were of a motley description, and consisted of arquebusses, crossbows, swords and targets :—some few carried lances, or javelins, of palm wood, with which they had provided themselves from the hands of their Indian enemies. Thus prepared, Vasco Nunez received the shock of the assailant at the head of his little army. With a long wild shout, a concerted signal, which found its echo from every hill around them, the Caribbeans rushed on to the conflict. A thousand arrows at one instant darkened the air, and rattled among the little host of the Spaniards. Then, following up their missiles, without waiting to witness their effects, the savage tribes darted down upon their foes, with the avidity of the hawk stooping upon the sparrow. Wielding their clubs aloft with practised skill and muscular arms, they struck at the heads and knees, making one movement of the arm suffice for a single stroke at the two extremes of the person.

The Spaniards meanwhile, were not idle. Their crossbows returned the fire of the Indians, the archer firing at groups only ;—but when the keen eye of Vasco Nunez saw that the great body of savages had descended from the heights and were huddling together in confused bands, each striving to be foremost in its attack upon the small and condensed array which he led, he saw that the hour for serious strife was at hand. He commanded his ranks to open. This movement displayed the artillery, which another movement disposed in such order as to rake the entire valley. Yet still the signal was withheld. The Spanish leader lingered until the solid masses should reach that line along the plain which his artillery commanded. It was not long ere the impatient valour of the Caribbees brought them to the point, and then the cannon belched forth its unexpected and appalling thunders. The solid mass recoiled but did not fly. Its own density was against its safety, and prevented escape. Nor did flight, after the first moment of alarm, seem the desire of this fearless people. Checked by their own numbers from flight at the first essay, they did not think of renewing it. Encouraged by their chiefs, they answered the artillery with a second flight of arrows, and,

as before, followed up their missiles by a general rush. As Vasco Nunez had anticipated, directing their fury upon a point so narrow as that presented by his front, their immense numbers were unavailing, and worse than useless. The savages struggled with each other to reach the foe, and in this condition could oppose only man to man in the narrow valley into which they had unwittingly descended. It was now, as they began to exhibit a consciousness of their difficulties, and swayed to and fro beneath the raking fire of the artillery, that Vasco Nunez gave the signal for his little troop of cavalry to move from the wings towards the centre, and increase, with a new form of danger and terror, the confusion under which the assailants struggled. A sudden and full burst of martial music was the first ear-piercing intimation which the Caribbeans received of an onset, of the terror of which they could have formed no adequate idea. Then came the thundering tread of the horse, followed by his plunging form, his fire-breathing nostril, and the keen edge of that sword which it was the boast of the Spanish cavalier, could, with a single stroke of a good arm, sever the naked savage in twain. The roar of the cannon was succeeded by the ringing of the clattering sabre digging deep into the defenceless skulls of the scattered and flying crowd. Vainly the stubborn savages threw up, with arms practised at defence, the massive war club for their protection. The keen blade severed it like a thread, and the same blow most usually struck down the warrior to whom it yielded no protection. It was a work of carnage simply and not of fight. Vasco Nunez looked on with feelings of commiseration new to the Spanish warrior. Still, the fearless savages continued the struggle, however vain their opposition. Zemaco himself cheered them with shouts and stimulated them by the bitterest reproaches. Himself wounded, he yet strove where the fight was thickest, being resolute to die rather than retreat. He had seen how rapidly the work of death went on where the horsemen ploughed their way among the flying, the fighting and the dead; and with a desperate valour, he turned his arms in the quarter where he seemed most likely to encounter them. Already he had advanced among the conflicting fugitives, though with great difficulty, to a point which was threatened by the

cavalry. They were near at hand, and but one dense mass of his people stood between him and certain death. But this band was moved by no common sentiment of valour. They beheld the station which had been taken by their sovereign, and saw his danger. Though stricken down by their enemies, they clung to the necks and to the legs of the horses, and baffled, by their crowding bodies; the advance of the assailant. Shortening their arrows and spears, they stabbed the animals with their sharp flint heads, though without often inflicting mortal wounds; and these injuries, falling short of the designed effect, had rather the effect of goading forward the beast, whom the martial music, and the efforts of his rider, had already wrought up to a pitch of fury not congenial to the nature of so timid an animal. The fury of fear, the most intoxicating of any form of madness, caused the steed, when wounded, to overcome all obstacles; and the opposing warriors were flung from their hold, and beaten down beneath their flying hoofs. The devoted band who had thrown themselves between their monarch and the death which threatened him, were mangled and crushed. The power of resistance was gone, and the seemingly concerted scream, with which they warned the cassique to fly, was the last effort of their expiring loyalty. But the brave chieftain was not suffered to meet the foe and sink beneath the fate which threatened him. The chosen warriors of Zobayda—such as remained—and who claimed always the personal command of the cassique threw themselves between him and the horsemen. While one party devoted themselves to a like fate with the band which had perished, another seized with strong hands upon the person of the struggling Zemaco, and bore him upward along the heights. The flight of the chieftain was a sufficient sign to his people that the battle was at an end; and the fearless savages who would have continued the struggle, however hopeless, so long as their sovereign remained upon the field, now availed themselves of the tacit privilege thus given them to fly from the conflict with no less haste than they had employed in beginning it.

"Shall these rascals escape thus?" demanded the sanguinary Pizarro, riding up to Vasco Nunez—his eye glaring with the tiger's rage, while his hands were glued to his sabre hilt by the blood which had dripped down

from its crimson edge. "Shall we not set the dogs upon their heels?"

"Ay, let it be done Francisco," was the reply, "though, in truth, it is a cruel business. Let it be done."

At a word, the cage doors were thrown open, and the leash holders ran with the dogs to the nearest spot where a blood puddle lay—then cutting the cords which fastened them, they hallowed them after the fugitives, and the rank smell of blood, freshly left by the flying enemy, soon guided them up the hills in rapid pursuit. The horsemen followed at full speed, and ere the warriors who bore the still struggling Zemaco had reached the eminence for which they toiled, the furious Pizarro, followed by Rodrigo, Colmenares, and Bartolome Hurtado, was close upon their footsteps. The danger was imminent, and the fearless savage commanded that his people should desist from flight, which they now considered hopeless, and make a last, and no less hopeless, effort at resistance. They set the wounded chieftain on his feet, and once more he grasped his war-club in readiness, and prepared his javelin. His face was grave, but not gloomy; and he rebuked his followers for the downcast and dispirited expression of their looks.

"The Carib had a song of rejoicing in his death, and what says the priest who tends at the altar of the god, in the golden temple of Zobayda? Shall there be sorrow at the birth of the child, and sorrow too when he dies? Begin thy song of rejoicing and of triumph, Bahechio—and tell of the deeds of Zemaco. It will be good to say when thou hast done, that he lifted his spear to the face of the enemy, when death put an end to the battle."

But the answer of his followers was unanimous.

"The song of death shall be our song, but not the song of Zemaco. Zemaco shall live for his people. We will stand before the Spaniards while Zemaco goes over the hill."

The deep bay of the hound, breaking suddenly as it were from the ground beneath them, seemed to baffle this precious plan of flight. With a faint smile upon his lips, the cassique replied—

"Hark! the barking dog of the Spaniard says 'no.' We must fight—we must die."

The dogs came rushing up the hill at this moment and

the troopers fast following them. Leonchico led the way, but ere he approached the little group which environed the monarch, one of his followers sped a shaft which entered his side. But the wound failed to arrest the onward motion of the fierce and powerful dog, and the savage who had thus spent his last arrow in vain, with a noble daring, and with a loyalty not often surpassed, flung himself forward in the very face of the animal. Leonchico paused for an instant, thrust his nose to the earth, his eye all the while keenly fixed on that of the Indian. His ears were flattened, the skin upon his neck rose into a ridge of elaborated muscle, while the tawny red hair which covered it, assumed a comblike appearance, like a crest, that gradually continued to rise until it almost overhung his brow. His hind feet were gathered up close behind the fore, and in this attitude, he advanced two small paces before he sprung. An instant motion in the air—so instantaneous that the victim did not behold the moment of his rise—and he was upon the shoulders of the savage—his thick jaws clasped together upon his throat with a spasmodic energy which defied his struggles and made them short. The victim fell and writhed along the earth, but the limbs of the dog seemed to follow all his contortions, while his jaws relaxed their hold for no single instant after they had once been fixed upon him. A silent horror seized upon the limbs of the cassique as he looked on this dreadful spectacle. Arrow after arrow had been discharged at the inhuman assailant, but though all penetrated the skin, and some of them inflicted severe wounds, he seemed to give them no more regard than if they had been utterly unfelt. His victim appeared lifeless beneath him, and the jaws of the dog relaxed; but only to close again with double tenacity as he perceived another motion of his body, probably the last fleeting indication of life. In another moment he leapt from the carcass, and snuffed the air as if for new employment. Meanwhile a portion of the troops had gained the level on the verge of which stood the savage chieftain. But here their steps were arrested. A new enemy seemed to rise from the earth beneath them; and an ally sprang to the succour of Zemaco, at the moment when hope seemed to be gone for ever. This was the fugitive Caonabo. His men were scattered along the table ledge of the hill, and each had

his instructions. The policy of this seeming dispersion of his followers was instantly obvious; since the Spaniards, few in number, were required to face a hundred foes, all assailing in the same instant at every point of the compass. The commands of Caonabo, closely followed by the men he led, now docile as they saw the evident superiority of his discipline, and more fresh for the conflict, left the horsemen unharmed, but delivered their shafts with united purpose and good aim, solely at the dogs and horses. The first deed of Caonabo himself was to send an arrow into the nostril of the famous Leonchico, just at the moment when freeing his teeth from the hold taken upon the savage he had slain, he was preparing to advance upon the group of which Zemaco was the centre. Unable to rid himself from the shaft, which had penetrated a part without the free use of which his efforts were unavailing, the fierce animal retired from the field with the quiet instinct of the soldier, who employs his strength in seeking a cover in the bushes, when he can no longer engage in the conflict. A second shaft from the hands of Caonabo went quivering through the bosom of the horse bestrode by the unglutted Pizarro. The Spaniard fell heavily to the ground half buried beneath the wounded and struggling steed. The arrows of the scattered Indians rained upon his armour, and all the efforts of his companions were drawn to his extrication. The fight thickened around his body, and this event effected a successful diversion of the pursuit. When Vasco Nunez advanced to the assistance of his lieutenant, the cassique had disappeared, and no foe remained in sight but the fearless Caonabo, sustained by some fifty of the savages. These, as the re-enforcement came to the relief of Pizarro, began to retire slowly from the field; but the blood of Vasco Nunez was inflamed by this unlooked-for resistance and interruption to his conquest. He was not willing to suffer the escape of a warrior who had shown himself so capable. Giving the command to charge, he himself led the way against the retiring fugitive, and vainly did the latter seek to check his advance by a timely and skilful use of his shaft. Vasco Nunez wore a complete suit of mail, which defied the adroitness of the savage. His steed was also protected by a clothing of mail and padded cotton which protected him in all vital

parts. He had not escaped without wounds, however, and his vigour was diminished in consequence of fatigue and loss of blood. But the rising anger of his rider drove him forward in the pursuit, and the proud Caonabo beholding with what tenacious hostility the pursuing Spaniard kept only upon his track without seeming to heed the assaults made upon him by his followers, conceived the idea of giving him the battle which he desired. This was a resolution, presumptuous in the last degree, if considered by the ordinary standard of judgment in reference to the issue between the savage and the Spaniards. But Caonabo was no common man; and a reasonable conviction of his own powers, skill, and experience of the sort of foe with whom he had to deal, would scarce justify a charge of conceit or presumption against him. Giving instructions to a few of his warriors who happened to be most near him in his flight, to annoy the steed of his foe from behind while he encountered the rider in front, he boldly turned upon the pursuer, and awaited his approach at a little spot where some strewn and broken rocks promised to baffle the free movements of the horse.

Behind these he entrenched himself, with the hope that in any effort of the rider to leap his battlements, the steed might come to the earth, in which event he calculated that his foe must necessarily become the victim of his rashness. Knowing well the impatient insolence of the Spaniards in all their encounters with the Indians, in order to provoke his enemy to that degree of rashness which would make him attempt the rocks in front, he boldly assailed him with words of insult as he approached, delivered in imperfect Spanish. Surprised at such a salutation and in his own language, but still more enraged at its audacity, Vasco Nunez, pricking his reluctant steed with his dagger, drove him forward as Caonabo had expected. But the anticipations of the savage were not realized in another and more important respect. The steed of Vasco Nunez was one of a thousand, and carried him over the rocks without stumble or impediment.

"Dog of a savage, from whence come you? Who are you? Speak, slave, ere I hew thee to pieces."

Such was the answer of the cavalier to the address of the Indian. The answer of the latter as he slowly retired

backward among the rocks, was fearless and full of defiance.

"Dog thyself! I am a man—I hate thee, Spaniard,—I spit upon thee, and will slay thee."

"Ha! say'st thou—if thou art brave as insolent, it will be some pleasure to cleave thee asunder at a stroke. St. John of the Wilderness! let not this villain escape my hands."

The repeated goadings of the steel drove the beast forward with such speed, that Caonabo was only able to evade the onset of the cavalier by submitting his war-club to the severing stroke which was intended for his own head. Thrown upward in defence, the macana was cut in twain at the blow; and flinging from him the worthless fragment which filled his hands, Caonabo nimbly leaped aside from the path of the Spaniard, and throwing himself upon the ground at the edge of a steep declivity, he rolled headlong down the descent through a gorge which had been made by the continual passage of the mountain torrents. Before Vasco Nunez could extricate himself from among the rocks, the fugitive chief had disappeared from sight, probably not without severe hurt, but through passages where no horseman might pursue. His enemy, satisfied that farther pursuit was idle, yet vexed with the escape of one whose insolent language was no less strange than offensive, gave over the search, and returned slowly to his entrenchments, to count over the slain, attend the wounded, and gather the spoils of the field, which promised—because of the gold plates and pearls with which the savages with barbarous pomp had bedecked their persons,—to be no less profitable than it had been bloody.

CHAPTER II.

CARETA.

The Indians disappeared from the surrounding heights with the events of that bloody day, and the path of discovery, for a brief distance, lay open to Vasco Nunez. But as yet the brave cavalier could undertake no conquest or enterprise of moment, from the limited character of his resources, and the small number of soldiers which he commanded. Some of these were slain, and more wounded in the battle, and many more were sick in consequence of great fatigue, inadequate food, and diseases peculiar to the climate. The provisions which they had obtained from Hispaniola had long since given out, and their only food was found in such scanty supplies, as they gleaned from the savages by the terrors of their arms. Impatient to proceed on his path of conquest and renown, Vasco Nunez was yet too wise and thoughtful to push an enterprise which called for adequate preparation. A premature attempt he well knew would only result in disappointment, and would, most probably, impair his own reputation to so great a degree, as to lose him the confidence and command of his followers. Thus straightened, he reconciled himself, as well as he might, to the necessities of his situation. He strengthened his colony by additional entrenchments, built houses for his people, and laid out gardens for the cultivation of grain and vegetables. A portion of his men, the feeble and unenterprising, were employed in these necessary labours; while the rest were despatched on various missions, either of conquest or discovery, along the neighbouring coast and throughout the country. He himself seldom left the colony, reserving

himself for those larger perils only, which, as they involved the greater objects, necessarily implied the greatest dangers. Between the mountains before him and the seas behind him, the glance of his eyes and the expectations of his heart were equally divided. The one rose between him and those meditated conquests, which he might not hope to obtain without that succour which he knew could only reach him by the other; and anxiously, indeed, did he pray for the success of his messenger in Spain, who was to defend his conduct before his sovereign, and provide him with those supplies which he fondly hoped were to acknowledge his past, and facilitate his prosecution of new, achievements. His men saw nothing in the countenance and conduct of their leader, but the firm enthusiastic courage and confidence of a spirit born for success, and pursuing the only paths by which he might command it; but pacing the melancholy shore, looking wistfully over its chafing waters, a gloom, like that which broods over their solemn waste, gathered new strength in his bosom with every added moment of his watch. There, or along the mountain paths, over which he sometimes clambered to muse in secret upon his more than mountain projects, dark clouds gathered upon his brow, the certain token of those doubts which for ever haunt the path of human ambition, and gather above the summits of its loftiest hopes. It was in vain that the astrologer renewed his glowing promises, and dwelt upon the favouring aspects of his star. It was in vain that he reminded him of what had been already achieved, seemingly in his own despite, and certainly against his own hope, to give him the elevation he desired. He who has lofty purposes and hopes, has fears and doubts of corresponding depression, and it is no disparagement of genius to say, that a certain humility—the result of a due conviction of its own human incapacity—must sometimes make it tremble for the success of those designs, which a godlike imagination conceives, in aid of the more slow and creeping experience.

Meanwhile, the Cassique Zemaco was not idle, though dispirited by his late defeat. The result of the action with the Spaniards had tended in no small degree to elevate the judgment of Caonabo in his mind. He felt the force now of all those arguments which his vanity had before rejected; and the policy, while avoiding all gene-

ral engagements, of harrassing his enemy by hanging on his path, placing ambuscades for his march, laying waste the country, and cutting off his detachments, he determined to adopt after the counsel of the fugitive. Spies were placed upon all the movements of the Spaniards—emissaries sent to all the minor chiefs of the country; and their canoes, formed to ply the rivers and along the bays and indentations of the coast, stole along by night, even among the brigantines of the invaders, and ascertained their condition and reported their objects. This espionage, which the great numbers of his followers enabled Zemaco to make singularly effective, had the most important and paralyzing effect upon the fortunes of the Spaniards. Few of the enterprises which they undertook, though under such captains as Pizarro, Colmenares, and Valdivia, were entirely successful, and some of them were defeated with loss and discredit. Such results as these aroused Vasco Nunez to the necessity of undertaking the minor adventures himself; and some information which he obtained from two of the men whom Nicuesa had left at Nombre de Dios, determined him upon a journey of greater peril and extent than any that had been made before. These men, to escape some punishment, had fled from Nicuesa upon his first arrival in the country, had wandered off into the forests, and finally fallen into the hands of the Cassique of Coyba. Though prisoners, they had been treated kindly, and had remained with him in a sort of honourable captivity long enough to see into the condition of the land. Of its wealth in gold they gave a glowing account to Vasco Nunez, and spoke of immense and secret stores of provisions to which they could guide him without difficulty, pledging their lives for the success of any enterprise against his dominions. This offer, and the intelligence which they conveyed to him, determined Vasco Nunez upon his course. Choosing a hundred and thirty men, from the most resolute of his command, he at once set off for the province of Coyba. But the wary and wily enemy who had so long watched his movements, hung around them still, and though he suffered his march to remain unmolested, he noted every step in his progress, and the Cassique of Coyba was duly informed of the approaching foe. He was enabled to conceal his treasures of gold and grain, and to prepare

with all his force for battle. But the impetuous Spaniards entered the town where he had entrenched himself, by storm and in the night. A desperate fight ensued in the darkness. The Cassique fought bravely against a foe of whose savage cruelties he had heard an account no less appalling than had been told him, with more truth, of his overwhelming powers; and with the high-souled desperation of a prince, willing to sacrifice himself for his people, he sought out the leader of the Spaniards, by the blazing light of his habitation, which his own hands had set on fire. But all the accounts which had been brought him of the superior prowess of the invaders fell short of the truth as he realized it in the encounter which he sought himself. A single moment sufficed Vasco Nunez to destroy the hope of the cassique. His spear, severed at the first stroke of the Spanish sword, left his head unguarded for the second, while his prostrate form lay beneath the feet of the cavalier. Angry with the strife, and roused to all that minor sort of madness, without the blinding influence of which man would probably seldom strike his fellow-man, Vasco Nunez prepared to repeat the blow which must have severed the head from the shoulders of his opponent; when, as they beheld the danger of their chief, the Indians, to a man, threw down their weapons, and sunk with an appalling shriek of terror to the ground. At the same moment, while the yet uplifted sword of the cavalier hung threatening above the head of the prostrate warrior, a girl, scarcely more than fifteen, darted between the combatants, and throwing herself upon the body of the cassique, clung to his neck with the fondest devotion, seeking with her own slender and sylphlike form to cover and shield it from the impending weapon. Vasco Nunez was charmed by this unexpected apparition. Never had so bright and ethereal a creature descended before his eyes. Matchless in grace, as she lay before him, one arm around the cassique, one lifted imploringly to the conqueror, while her tearful eyes pleaded with the more eloquence that her lips were silent, he thought her one of those heavenly visions which sometimes hallow and delight even the dreams of the unrelenting soldier, and move him to momentary feelings of gentleness and love. Her face was girlish, almost childish, as, indeed, belonged to her years; but there was the

expanded soul of the woman in her eye, and in her conduct the affections which belong to all ages, and lift any into nobleness and beauty. Fairer than her people, her cheek bloomed with an olive lustre such as the Spaniards loved to applaud in the beauties of their own nation. Her forehead was high and narrow—her mouth small; and while it quivered with the nameless terrors which were struggling in her heart, the tips of the white teeth gleamed at intervals through the parted lips, from which the natural red had taken flight, though to return again, the moment after, with accumulated richness. Voluminous and of a glossy black like that of the wing of the raven, her hair covered not only her own shoulders but the bosom of her father—for such was the cassique whom she strove to shield from the rage of his conqueror. But the rage of the conqueror was already subdued. He looked on her pleading and tearful eyes, and his heart melted within him. He commanded his followers to stay the sword; and lifting the damsel herself from the form of him whom she had so opportunely rescued from the fatal stroke, he bade the cassique, in tones of mercy and forbearance, arise from the earth,

"What have I done to thee," said the cassique, as he stood in the presence of his conqueror—"For what crime is it that thou hast served me in this cruel wise. I have fed thy people when they were hungry, I have helped them when they were weary and athirst. I have ever treated the stranger with loving-kindness. Hadst thou sought me for food, I had given it—my people should have brought thee grain—my women should have strengthened thee with a pleasant beverage. I would rather meet the stranger with fruits than with a javelin; but thou hast yielded me no choice. Thy coming was in wrath and thunder. Thou hast stricken my people, and brought ruin to our dwellings. Wherefore hast thou come in war, when thou shouldst have come in friendship."

Vasco Nunez, if a common rude soldier, might have found some difficulty in replying to so pathetic and well-grounded a rebuke. But it is recorded as another remarkable accomplishment in the cavalier, that he had a wonderful skill in winning the affections of the savages. He was touched with the appeal of the cassique, and

replied to him, by expressing his good-will to the Indians. He ascribed his assault entirely to the necessities of the Spaniards—their absolute want of food which could not well be procured for present consumption in any other manner. With arguments like these, and by a grace of manner, which, in a being confessedly so superior, was beyond any argument beside, Vasco Nunez soon conciliated the favour and removed the anger of his savage host.

"There should not be strife between us," replied the cassique—"and it were madness in me to hope to contend with a warrior who wears such a weapon as this," touching the sword as he spoke—"and can cleave a man in twain at a single stroke. I would have thee as a friend—thee and thy people."

"I do not seek to harm thee," replied Vasco Nunez, "it gives me no pleasure to destroy and slay, nor, indeed, should I have descended upon thee in anger as I have done, but that I know thou hast taken counsel from the Cassique of Darien, to withstand me with thy warriors. What pledge wilt thou give me that thou wilt give no farther heed to the words of Zemaco?"

"My warriors shall follow thee," replied the cassique, "thou hast demanded of me the knowledge of the land—my people shall show thee their riches. I will provide thee with food, and that thou mayst the better believe the sincerity of my heart, lo! here is my daughter—my best beloved Careta; thou shalt take her to thy bosom as thy wife. She is good, and thou seest that she is both young and beautiful. She shall be a bond betwixt thee and me, a pledge of the fidelity of her father and her people."

The eye of Vasco Nunez turned anxiously and sadly upon the downcast features of the shrinking damsel, who clung to her father's arm as if dreading her instant removal. For a moment the lips of the cavalier were closed, compressed, as if to quell and silence certain unbidden feelings in his soul. Then, calmly approaching, he laid his hand gently upon the arm of the maiden, while he asked—

"Wilt thou go with the strange warrior, Careta—wilt thou leave thy father and live with me?"

She shrunk back, and trembled with an undefinable struggle. But though she shrunk, she looked up, as the

gentle words of the cavalier encouraged her, and her dewy eyes encountered the keen, earnest glance of his. In an instant they were cast down, while her face was suffused with blushes.

"Enough! thou shalt go with me, Careta—thou shalt be the wife of Vasco Nunez."

A piercing shriek escaped her at these words, and throwing herself upon her knees, she grasped those of the cassique, and wildly addressed herself to him.

"Wilt thou say it, my father,—wilt thou send thy child, thy Careta, from thee, to the far home of the pale warrior? Ah, my father—no!"

"The pale warrior will be the friend of thy father, when Careta sleeps upon his bosom. He will help thy father to strike his enemies—he will protect him with his mighty men from Ponca and Comagre. Will Careta make the pale warriors angry with her people?"

The girl rose meekly, and crossing over to where Vasco Nunez stood, put her hand in his with all the confiding trust of the innocent and hopeful child.

"Careta will go with the pale warrior. She will bring him drink when he is weary, and watch over him when he sleeps. Let the pale warrior be good to her people."

With emotions, strange and insuppressible, Vasco Nunez took the girl in his arms and folded her to his mail clad bosom. The hand of the astrologer was laid upon his shoulder.

"Nay, Micer Codro, I know what thou wouldst say, but it availeth nothing. I tell thee, my friend, that the pure heart of this heathen maiden is at this moment dearer in the eyes of Vasco Nunez than all the gifts of glory ever promised by the stars."

"Ah, Vasco, my son, couldst thou see with eyes like mine; already art thou far advanced on the path of thy greatness, and the danger that awaits thee is still the danger from a woman."

"It cannot be, Micer Codro, that this heathen damsel should be the woman of whom thou speakest. Is there not one—one that thou knowest?—are there not other women? The stars themselves could not make of this pure-hearted and trusting damsel an enemy of Vasco Nunez."

And he again clasped the maiden to his bosom at these

words, with a tenderness which surprised the savages, who had beheld in him only the stern warrior before.

"Shall I have no life but that of glory, Micer Codro?" continued the cavalier, "I tell thee, my father, even that life is not perfect if love hallow not its achievements."

"Love!" replied the other, "didst thou not love Teresa Davila?"

The cavalier turned as if a viper had suddenly stung his heel; he pushed the wondering girl from his arms, then as suddenly reclasped them around her, while he replied sternly to the aged man in accents of quick reproach.

"Speak not of her, Micer Codro! why shouldst thou seek to torture me with these cruel memories? Enough! when I knew Teresa, I ceased to love her. Shall the lip that has tasted a fruit which is bitter be denied to think that another may be sweet?"

"Alas! my son! Even the sweet may have its sorrow with the bitter. But I would not vex thee. Enough, that whether the damsel be thy enemy or not, thou hast none other than a friend in Micer Codro."

"I know it, father," cried Vasco Nunez promptly giving him his hand, "and thou shouldst know that I feel it even when in my impatience of rebuke I should seem to forget. But no more of this—there are other matters."

Then turning to the cassique he said—

"Coyba, our interests are one. Thy daughter shall be a tie between us, which shall bind us in strength and amity together. Bid thy warriors refresh themselves with sleep, for with the dawn of light to-morrow, it is my purpose to advance upon Ponca thy enemy. Micer Codro, it will not be many days ere we get tidings of that southern sea.

CHAPTER III.

TIDINGS OF THE SOUTHERN SEA—AN ENEMY IN DISGUISE.

With the morning, Vasco Nunez set forth with his warriors, and attended by the Cassique of Coyba with a large body of the natives, he advanced upon the neighbouring territories of Ponca, the enemy of his ally. But Ponca had been well apprised of the approach of his powerful foe, and had received the instructions of Zemaco to fly from before him. He took refuge in the passes of the mountains, where he busied himself in collecting his men, and uniting himself with other minor chiefs prepared to make a stand in situations where it would be impossible for the Spanish horse to operate. But having left behind him his chief treasures in his flight, Vasco Nunez did not care to pursue him. Another and more powerful cassique named Comagre, next attracted the attention of the invader. The Cassique of Coyba was not unwilling to display to his neighbours the great superiority of his ally, and persuaded Vasco Nunez accordingly to advance upon his territories also. The approach of the Spaniards was soon made known to Comagre, who disarmed their hostility by a timely conciliation. He sent forth a deputation of his chief men who conducted them to his palace,—a huge building of wood, described by the historians of that time as being no less than one hundred and fifty yards in length, and eighty in breadth, surrounded by a wall of stone, and, after the manner of that people, admirably furnished within. There they were welcomed with an hospitality which considered nothing but their wants and wishes. Their treatment was, indeed, worthy of a higher condition of civilization and refinement than was supposed

to belong to the Indians. Meats and dainties were spread before them, with various beverages of different flavour and various degrees of strength, which the Spaniards pronounced to be nothing inferior to wine. Dancing girls displayed their agility and charms while they feasted, and a plentiful supply of provisions for the colony was placed at their disposal. Nor did the courtesy and liberality of Comagre rest here. His eldest son, at a signal given by his father, disappeared from the hall of reception, but soon returned followed by a train of seventy slaves. Each of these slaves bore a vessel of gold, and while the Spaniards looked on, wondering at the profusion of wealth so suddenly spread before them, the slaves at another signal of Comagre, advanced each, and laid his burden at the feet of Vasco Nunez.

"These are for the chief warrior of the king of Spain," said Comagre—"Let him be a friend to Comagre henceforward. The slaves are for the Spaniard and the gold."

Then, after gratefully thanking the cassique for his gift, Vasco Nunez bade the treasurer advance and separate one-fifth of the gold to be set apart for the sovereign. The rest he gave to his soldiers to be divided among themselves. This donation, however, was productive of strife. The soldiers soon quarrelled about the division, most of them dissatisfied with the share allotted, and complaining that the best pieces had been partially bestowed by the treasurer. Vasco Nunez was compelled to interfere in the language of authority, but his commands, though productive of instant obedience, would scarcely have served to soothe and satisfy the discontented, but for the sudden and strange action of the son of Comagre. This youth, when he beheld the strife among the soldiers, with a blow of his fist, struck the scale, full of the precious metal, from the hands of the treasurer, exclaiming as he did so:

"Now wherefore should the Christians quarrel for this yellow stuff? If it is for this that they leave their own land which they tell us is beyond such a weary waste of water, let them follow me, and I will guide them to a country where it grows—where the meanest vessels of the people are made of it, and the water from the mountains carries it in masses to the sea."

"What sea? what sea?" exclaimed Vasco Nunez, with

impatience, proposing an inquiry which his followers conceived to be strangely at variance with the true question which he should have made.

The Indian pointed to the south.

"Ha! said I not!" exclaimed Vasco Nunez, grasping the arm of the astrologer, with an action that seemed strange to his followers no less than to the Indians.

"Years agone, when I came with Bastides to the shores of Darien, a withered Indian assured me of that sea; and vainly did I seek to persuade Rodrigo to enter upon the adventure. Years agone!—and in that time how many have heard my thoughts and counsels. Yet none have found—none have sought to find. The conquest is reserved for me!"

The young savage smiled when he saw the exultation which gleamed from the eyes of the cavalier—an exultation which well informed him of the growing purpose in his mind.

"Why dost thou smile?" demanded Vasco Nunez.

"Dost thou think to conquer the country of which I tell thee?" was the reply of the youth.

"By the smiles of the Blessed Virgin, under the favour of the Holy St. John of the wilderness, that will I, if life and strength be not withheld me."

"The cassique of that country would laugh at thy warriors. Thou wilt need a thousand such as thou hast. He is the ally of Zemaco, and hath a power greater than Zemaco. His people are like the leaves on the tree, and they are trained to battle from their boyhood. They wield the macana, which is hardened by fire, which our people have not strength to lift, and their young men use bows and slings, and they have strength enough to send their arrows through a man so that no part of it shall remain in. With their slings they can hurl a rock which shall cleave the head of the bravest warrior."

"Thou art yet to know the Spaniard," replied Vasco Nunez. "Look!" and as he spake these words, he gave orders for the discharge of one of his pieces, the effect of which he well knew would be more convincing than any boast which he could make of the powers of his men. When the terror and wonder of the Indians had subsided, Vasco Nunez, by a series of questions, drew from Comagre all that he desired to know of the people and the

mountains lying between him and the object of his desire. His heart was burning and leaping within him to overpass these narrow boundaries, and overcome the obstructions that gathered in his path of greatness. But when he looked round upon his little band, half of them already rendered incapable of fatigue or fight by reason of the toils and exposure they had already undergone, he was compelled with a sigh to defer the period of his full and final triumph. But in order the sooner to effect it, he found it necessary to return instantly to his little government of Darien. A rash man—one filled with his own unregulated enthusiasm,—would have marched onward, regarding nothing but his own desires; but with a daring that fell nothing short of the most adventurous, Vasco Nunez possessed an overruling sense, and a judgment of calm, deliberative, and comprehensive character, which was studious always to adapt his means to his ends, and to avoid the injudicious exposure of his little armament, however great might be the inducement, and however insignificant the danger. But the danger in the present instance, he well knew could not be insignificant. He had to overcome a range of high, untravelled mountains, cutting his way all the while through the hitherto unbroken forests, and fighting, as he went, with successive bands of savages, the subjects of cassiques, most of whom were either in alliance with, or subject to the control of his implacable enemy,—Zemaco. Under the most favouring aspects he was well assured that the little army with him was utterly inadequate, and the force at Darien was not sufficient to change materially the aspect of his difficulties. The world of beauty and delightful promise lay before his eyes; but a gulf was at his feet; and though passable by a single plank, the power was beyond him to procure that plank. His hope lay in supplies beyond the water, either from old Spain or Espanola, to both of which places his emissaries had already been despatched. Anxious, therefore, to hear from these regions, he hastened his return to the colony. His arrival at Darien was simultaneous with that of his messenger Valdivia from Hispaniola, who brought him some small supplies of provisions and ammunition, and a more important addition, a few soldiers. Among these soldiers was one, seemingly a mere boy, who had not yet numbered more than twenty years of hu-

man life. He was so small, and seemingly effeminate of person, that when Vasco Nunez came to examine the soldiers brought by Valdivia, he wondered much that he should have accepted so inadequate a person. But Valdivia excused himself by saying that he did reject the application of the youth, but that he persisted so strenuously in his desire to come, and expressed so great an admiration for his commander, that he found all his reluctance overcome, and he at length consented—the youth being resolute, he said, if Valdivia did not take him, to find other means for effecting his purpose. When Vasco Nunez heard this account of the young man, he called him out from the rest, and questioned him after the following manner.

"Your name is Pedro de Ulloa?"

"Of Valencia, señor," was the prompt reply of the youth.

"You are yet very young to be a soldier—and I think not strong. Are you used to the weapon?"

"To none other than the dagger, señor."

"It is not the weapon for the Indian, and an arm so slender as yours may scarcely carry one more effective. Your whole frame is feeble. I doubt whether you have chosen the right profession, Pedro."

"My heart is resolute in its purpose, señor; if my arm be weak, and though I may not carry weighty weapon, or do much harm to an enemy in arms, I am one to serve a captain. I am swift of foot—I can write a clear hand—I can bear despatches, and keep counsel."

"These are all excellent qualities, Pedro," returned the cavalier, "but in these heathen lands, it is needful always that the scribe and the messenger, nay, the priest of God himself, be ready to lift spear, and use it freely, against sudden necessity. Wert thou my messenger over these hills of Darien, and the warriors of Zemaco should environ thee, thy arm would do little for thy extrication."

"It would do all that it could, senor; but with keen eye, and quick foot, and quicker thought, it would not be so easy for the savages to environ me. If they did, senor, their tortures should only make me swallow my secret,—not yield it up."

"Thou hast the proper spirit; were the strength in thy arms—but, be it as thou wilt—I will keep thee near my

person,—thou couldst do but little service along with those iron men. They would destroy thee soon, if they could provoke thee to follow where they led. Thy face does not seem strange to mine eyes, Pedro,—have I not looked on thee before?"

"Never, senor—I am but a month from Spain. I had a brother senor—a brother that thou might'st have seen in Santo Domingo, in times past, and to whom it was said I bore some likeness. It may be thou hast looked on him."

The eyes of the youth were fixed on the ground as he uttered this reply, and a suspicious eye might have remarked a slight emotion in his frame, as if a tremor shook it. But Vasco Nunez beheld nothing, while he replied:

"And where is he, Pedro?—if he hath a spirit such as thine, I were glad to have him in my command. Is he yet in Hispaniola?—Valdivia will soon return, and shall seek him."

"He lives not, senor," was the quick reply, while a bitter smile passed over the lips of the speaker, "he lives not; though, did he, he were scarce the man to serve thee. He had not the right spirit, else, perchance, he had been here in place of me, and had been to this day a living man. If it please thee, senor, we will speak of him no more. He sleeps in a bloody grave."

"Was he slain in battle, Pedro? perchance—"

"No! senor!" almost fiercely interrupting his superior —"that had been a fit finish for a noble life. He fell by the hand of the midnight assassin; and, shame to me that I say it, his murderer yet lives, and—"

He paused, his lips quivered and became almost livid, while his eyes looked a venomous anger, even upon those of Vasco Nunez, and he clutched the dagger at his girdle with an almost spasmodic grasp.

"There is no shame to thee, Pedro, in this. Thou art but a boy; thou art too feeble for strife, and cannot hope to be the avenger of blood."

"Ha! think'st thou, senor? Thou art wrong. The injured hath a strength beyond the vain-glorious imaginings of the tyrant, though his arm be feeble, and his condition mean. The day may be far, but it will yet come; and I despair not of my hour. The God who suffers no

wrong to go unpunished, will help me to the redress of mine. Thou wilt see, senor—by the blessed shrine of Compostella, thou wilt see."

"Well, Heaven grant it for thy sake, Pedro," replied the cavalier—"the assassin who slew thy brother at midnight should fitly perish at thy hands. But thou look'st at me as if I had wronged thee—thine eyes flash with rage as they meet mine own, and why shouldst thy hand grapple with thy steel at a time when thy enemy stands not before thee?"

"Forgive me, senor," replied the boy—his voice filling as he spoke, and his eyes sinking to the earth, while his manner, on the instant, became that of a courteous humility—"forgive me, but, in the madness of my humour, methought he did. I pray thee, senor, that thou wilt no more move me to speak upon this matter. My heart kindles with a flame like that of a furnace, and the blood leaps into my brain, when I am minded that mine only brother—the stay and support of our aged mother in Spain—was cruelly murdered, and the murderer, not beyond my reach, I trust, lives yet to glory in his crimes."

"But thou canst tell me the name of his assassin. Is he of Spain?"

"Spare me, senor—I can only declare his name in the hour that lays him at my feet."

Vasco Nunez surveyed the face of the speaker with a look of inquiry, that truly indicated the feeling of doubt in his mind.

"It seems to me as though I must have known thee before, Pedro—yet it is now many years since I left Spain, and thou wert then too young to have been much regarded. But it matters little—I take thee into my service, since thou art resolute, and will find thee employment this very day. Thou shalt assist me to prepare my despatches for our sovereign, and for Don Diego Colon, who is restored, I see, to the command of Espanola—an act of justice which doth honour to the king and his royal council. It will be an hour before I need thee,—meanwhile take thy pleasure where thou mayst, but beware thou goest not beyond the barrier. The infidel is lurking about us, night and day, and whoso ventures single-handed beyond our defences, must needs have a keen eye to watch his coming, and a swift foot, such as thou boasteth, to es-

cape his snares. Thou art now at liberty—in one hour I will look to see thee again."

With these words, Vasco Nunez left him to proceed to other duties. The keen eye of the boy watched him closely as he departed, and words, brief and vindictive, fell from his muttering lips.

"Ay, indeed, my arm is feeble, sayst thou—would it were not! But though feeble, thanks to the avenger, there are other modes to strike the foe, to crush the tyrant, and redress the wrong, than by mere brute power. The wit that sharpened the dagger at the forge, hath a thousand modes of vengeance, and mighty though thou art, with gigantic limbs, and a skill that man can seldom match, there is yet—thou shalt find—an art beyond thine own, which shall bring thee, with all thy might and muscle, to the earth. Thou prayest heaven that I may win the vengeance I intend. Fool! Little dost thou imagine that thou thyself art the victim of thy prayer!"

Having thus spoken, the boy, concealing his bitter mood under a face of smiling and conciliation, passed from the apartment where his conference had taken place with Vasco Nunez, and, leaving the ordinary thoroughfare, took his way towards the sea-shore, where, in wandering and melancholy fancies, he consumed the brief period of time which had been allotted him. He then returned to the dwelling in which he had been instructed to await the commands of his superior.

CHAPTER IV.

HOPES AND ACTION IN ABEYANCE—HATE AND LOVE ALONE BUSY.

While Pedro waited without, a slave brought him word that Vasco Nunez desired his presence in an inner room, to which he conducted him. This was an apartment which was sacred to the commander and his most trusty friends. Here, he found Vasco Nunez, attended by Valdivia, to whom he was giving his parting instructions for his return to Hispaniola. The two warriors were employed at a table, which was covered with papers, rude charts, and Spanish books chiefly on subjects of war and adventure. At the feet of Vasco Nunez, lay the favourite Leonchico, who raised his head at the entrance of the boy, and surveyed him with a keen watchfulness that betokened some jealousy, if not distrust;—while, sitting upon a sort of ottoman, rudely constructed from the severed shaft of a pine, and covered with padded cotton, such as the natives were wont to use commonly in the decoration of their furniture and houses, sat the Indian damsel, Careta, busily intent in working, after the fashion of her people, a tippet of dyed cotton, over which she was distributing, with the natural and felicitous taste of the woman, a handful of seedy pearl, which, under the rapid movements of her fingers, soon began to assume, upon the garment, all the several shapes of leaf, bird, and flower. She gave but a single look to the stranger, and her eyes thenceforward were divided solely between her girlish labours, and the mighty chief upon whom her father had bestowed her. She had found it no difficult task to love one who so completely filled her own and the imaginations of her people—who was endued with such wondrous powers, alike, of conquest

and persuasion; and possessed a charm of winning affections with no less facility than of winning countries. His full, clear, open countenance, beaming with conscious nobility of soul—his high and towering forehead denoting manly intellect—his mild, but expressive eye of blue, and the small mouth, the sweetness of which was not lost even when it wore the stern aspect of battle—these realized that ideal of a god, which rendered it a thing no less strange than grateful to her mind, when she reflected that she was beloved by such a being—that she held the dearest secret of his soul, and even slept with an ear, listening through the long night to every beating of his heart.

But the boy was not suffered much time to survey the scene. His services were instantly commanded by his superior, who, bidding him to the table, proceeded to instruct him in the labours he was required to perform.

"You are a scribe, Pedro—you have had the blessings of the schools?"

"I was favoured by the wholesome instruction of the royal school at Merida, señor—the Holy Father, Gomez Gutierrez was my teacher in God and man, from my tenth year to my sixteenth."

"You should have grown as learned as the Holy Father himself, Pedro, in that long stretch of time. I trust thou hast enough of thy school knowledge to prove a worthy scribe for thy present duty. Thy writings shall have no less worthy eyes to read them, than those of the Bishop of Burgos; and it may be, by reason of their contents, our royal master himself will be pleased to behold them with his own. Do thy best therefore in transcribing on clear parchment, the rough advices which I have here drawn out before thee. Let thy copy be true, for I am jealous of the words which I here employ. As I use none that may be rejected, it follows that each hath its own force and meaning, and may not be so well expressed by any other. To thy task, therefore, with all speed, and the better to encourage thy labour, thou wilt learn from me, that the record which thou readest is a true history of this province of Darien, and of the means whereby I came into power, having no power in the colony at first. Thy knowledge of all these matters, will

the better prepare thy mind against what may chance in future."

With these words, Vasco Nunez left the boy to his task, and, turning to Valdivia, he resumed the tenor of those instructions, touching his business in Hispaniola, which rendered his instant departure necessary. These were long and various, nor were they uttered with any restraint or reservation. The boy heard equally with the warrior. Vasco Nunez was a man proverbially frank and fearless, and he recounted to Valdivia, not only the facts which had transpired in Darien while under his command, but even the hopes that grew out of his own calculations, and the plans which he had formed, the better to realize the resources which he knew to be in the country.

"I lack but a thousand men, Valdivia, and this sea of the south shall be reached. Beyond it there are lands, I well know, richer far than any yet known to the Spaniards; lands where the sun, with a more fervid power, turns whatever mineral he smites with his glance, into the pure and precious metal."

A shadow darkened the entrance at this moment.

"Ho! who is there? Francisco! enter, man—stand not there. We await you."

The individual who made his appearance at this moment, was the afterwards world-renowned Francisco Pizarro—a man utterly illiterate, but daring and adventurous; stout of limb and fearless, as became a soldier of fortune, but quick in hostility and implacable in his anger. When he entered and was seated, Vasco Nunez continued his enthusiastic and but half imagined pictures of the new world, yet in waiting for the tread of the conqueror; and from his glowing narratives and vigorous plans, the bold and savage soldier gathered that knowledge of the regions to which the eyes of the cavalier were turned, which enabled the former, in after days, to achieve the conquest of the empire of the Incas. Pizarro hearkened with greedy ears to the rich visions which Vasco Nunez described as truths, and which proved so to his hearer if not to himself. He summed up the various scraps of information afforded by individuals of different Indian tribes, all tending to confirm his grand theory of the southern sea, and the mighty continent which its

waters laved, and which yielded, from its sands and mountains, an unfailing tribute of the virgin gold.

"These waters and this world, it may be said, are now at our feet awaiting us. A few days' march, and we enter upon a new ocean and a new empire. I care not to live beyond that hour—the hope of my heart is answered. And you, Valdivia, will luxuriate in golden vessels, quaffing your wine from cups which our king may scarce equal, and must envy, while you, Francisco, will prefer, perchance, the spearing of a thousand tawny enemies, before you can sufficiently quiet your feverish blood, to sit down to supper with your companions."

"By the Holy Cross, it were a blessing to be prayed for, señor," answered Pizarro with a reckless laugh; "and Valdivia cannot tóo soon return with the forces which are to help us to this empire. My blood even now is in the mood for active service among the heathen; but it hath little encouragement from the numbers at this moment fit for service in our army."

"Hast thou finished thy count, Francisco?"

"I have, señor—of the arquebusses, there are seventy-one men; of the crossbows, one hundred and fifteen; of the swords and targets, one hundred and twenty-three; these, however, include not the men brought by Valdivia, of whom I took no count, seeing that he himself was at hand to speak more clearly to that matter."

"Seventy-one—one hundred and fifteen—one hundred and twenty-three! and thine, Valdivia?"

"Sixty-seven, señor—twenty-one arquebusses, thirty-three crossbows, and twenty-three swords and lancers."

"But three hundred and seventy in all," mused Vasco Nunez, "and of these not two hundred in condition for service. We can do nothing with these, Francisco—it were madness, madness! The savages in these mountains of Darien are no such timid creatures as the Haytian; and were they but wise enough to fight in the close wood or among the rugged passes of the hills only, we should find the warfare not so unequal between us. They will learn this secret from our successes, and then we shall lose the power. Haste with thy writing, boy—we have need of haste. The wind favours thee now, Valdivia, and all depends on thy skill and fleetness. Diego Colon thou think'st friendly; he is a noble gentle-

man—seek him first—thou shalt have a special letter for himself. The gold for the king's treasury, thou wilt deliver only to Miguel de Passemonte—fifteen thousand crowns—which must be kept apart from other sums which are sent upon private account to certain creditors in Hispaniola, who still cry, like the daughter of the horse-leech, 'give, give.' On his own account and mine, Micer Codro will provide thee with a treasure for the payment of a bond which is held against our mutual names by Davila. Thou wilt be heedful, ere thou deliverest the money to see him yield the parchment, and rend it with thine own hand. There are good reasons why it should be my prayer to have no claim against my person in the hands of such as he. Hast thou finished thy writing, Pedro, that thou givest freedom to thy pen?"

"The papers are finished, señor," replied the boy rising and placing them before his superior. While Vasco Nunez prepared to peruse one of the despatches, Pizarro took another into his hands, and looked with a degree of interest and curiosity over the document, which, though perceptible to Vasco Nunez, he yet regarded without seeming consciousness. Valdivia turned away from the table, concealing the smile which irresistibly rose to his lips; while the boy, ignorant of the illiterateness of the soldier, and seeing only that he surveyed the instrument reversed from top to bottom, in few, respectful words, endeavoured to set him right. The sallow cheeks of Pizarro grew to crimson on the instant, while he replied in tones the harshness of which he scarcely could subdue—

"Well—thinkest thou I know not, boy?"

A single glance of the eye of Vasco Nunez taught Pedro his error, but the evil was already done, and from that moment the boy knew Francisco Pizarro for his mortal enemy. A similar offence against the same individual in after days, cost the Inca of Peru his life. When the business of the morning was over, Valdivia despatched, and of the council the boy alone remained with Vasco Nunez, that cavalier spoke to him thus:

"Pedro, thou hast unwittingly made a foe of Francisco Pizarro. He is a man proud of the favouring opinion of mankind, and ambitious of that greatness which he may yet earn in these wild countries. But he hath the misfortune to be of lowly birth, and the blessings of that

learning of the schools which is thy becoming boast, hath been denied to him. Hadst thou been wiser, and less prompt, thou wouldst have suffered him to read thy writing after his own fashion, satisfied that, beginning at the end, he would soon have finished. As the matter stands, be wary not to vex or offend him—give him no power over thee by a perversity of speech, or chafing and offensive look. I have marked that thine eye hath a spirit and fire which speak thy feelings promptly, and with something too much of defiance in them. It will be well to throw none of these glances on Francisco. It will seem as if thou rememberest his error—which thou canst not too soon forget—and gavest him thy scorn in consequence. He would sooner forgive thee a stab at his throat than a flout upon his understanding, as indeed, would most men, those in especial who have the ambition of greatness without its soul, and better love the attributes which follow achievement, than the difficult paths and chastening circumstances which attend it. Enough: be wary, Pedro—I caution thee, not to rebuke thy youth, but that, through its rashness, thou mayst not come to harm. The rest of the day is thine."

The thought insensibly rose into the mind of the boy as he departed from the presence of Vasco Nunez:—

"Surely, this is one of the great men of Spain. He hath a wisdom that governs souls not less than soldiers; and, how strange to the time, the nobleness which strives not to secure for himself the treasures to which he guides the footsteps of all the rest. Yet, is he not the murderous wretch by whom my brother fell, and am I not sworn to avenge him? What is his greatness to me? wherefore, should I care whether he have noble or base purposes? If he be noble, the better, since the blood which I shed will not dishonour the steel of the avenger."

"Thou art happy, Careta?" said Vasco Nunez to the damsel when they were alone.

"Doth not my lord know," replied the girl, with eyes radiant with smiles and tears, as, throwing herself upon the rush-covered floor of the apartment, she placed her hands upon his knees, and looked up into his face. Her words, a sort of broken Spanish, in which language he himself strove to be her tutor, were sweeter to his ears from the lisp which accompanied and added to their im-

perfectness. He gazed upon her sweet and girlish features with a degree of tenderness that lost none of its character, because it was mingled with something of sorrow if not of regret. He spoke, but his words, only in part understood by the damsel, seemed the escaping expression of his own moved feelings, rather than as a speech intended for her ears.

"Thou should'st be happy, Careta, and I that have brought thee away from thy people, from thy wild forest-home, to share with me the cares of strife and the evil fortunes which may befal my ambitious strivings—I should make thee happy if I may—and if I may, by the smiles of the Benignant Mother, I will. But, an hour, my poor girl, may hurl me from the high place, the possession of which alone enables me to make thee happy and secure. The breeze that comes in fairly from the sea, though I look for it with prayers, I await its fruits with apprehensions. If it brings me the anger instead of the smiles of my sovereign—if it brings me manacles, rather than honours—what then will become of thee? At whose mercy shall I leave thee, far from thy father's home, and destitute among those who will scorn thee because of the very tie which thou hast had with me? Better, indeed, that I should slay thee with my own hand, than leave thee to the stripes and blows, such as the brutal Spaniard too freely bestows upon the weak or the unwilling victim of his prowess. He will punish thy weakness, as if it were unwillingness, and thy unwillingness, as if it were crime—until—"

The speaker paused, as if made conscious for the first time, that the damsel listened to his words. That she comprehended something of the feeling and the subject of which he spoke, if not the language, was evident from the increasing and tearful interest with which she watched every movement of his lips.

"Is my lord sorry that he took the poor damsel of Darien to sleep in his bosom?" she demanded with trembling tones and a broken dialect that seemed to go more deeply into the heart of Vasco Nunez, as it reminded him of her entire dependence upon him, than if it had been uttered by the polished lips of the noble Spanish maiden, and in the sweetly sonorous language of Castile.

"Let not my lord be sorry. Let him send Careta back

to her people. Wherefore should he have trouble because of the poor Indian girl? She can go to the woods, and hide herself in the mouth of the rock, and when my lord asks at Coyba, 'where is Careta?' they will tell him she died in the mouth of the rock, because she would not that my lord should be sorry. Careta will go back to Coyba, that my lord should not be sorry."

"Thou shall stay with me, Careta—why shouldst thou think that I am sorry to have thee in my arms. Alas! my poor girl, my sorrow is that I may not be able to keep thee in them."

"And who shall take Careta from my lord? Is not my lord strong? who can stand before a weapon like this, that can cleave down the warrior of Darien at a single blow? Is not my lord the lord at Darien? Doth not the cassique Zemaco fly from before him? Hath he not driven the cruel Ponca to the mountains? Did not Comagre do him honour?—and when he speaks, do not his own bearded warriors come and go, even as he bids them? Ah, my lord, they cannot take Careta from thee, if thou be not sorry to behold her."

"Thou forgettest, Careta. Have I not told thee that I too, though I seem greater to thee here than all—I, too, serve a cassique in Spain, to whom my own power is that of the infant when he would strive against the grown warrior? Should the cassique of Spain be angry with me—"

"No! no! my lord said that his cassique was wise—would Zemaco be angry with his best warrior, that slays his enemies, and brings him their treasure? No! no! my lord is beloved of the great cassique—my lord that loves Careta must not fear. Let him not look sorrowful any more."

"I will not, for thy sake, Careta,—and, indeed, it would be unbecoming for my own. The brave man should have no fear when he is without the feeling of wrong. Let me now teach Careta of my God—of the God of the Christians,—he who died upon the Cross, that thou shouldst be saved in life for ever."

"How!—died for Careta, didst thou say, my lord? Can it be? Where did he see—how did he know Careta?"

"He knows thee now, and has known thee from the

beginning—he sees thee ever, and even now his eyes are looking upon thee."

"Ah! dost thou say, my lord?" cried the startled damsel, springing to her feet, and looking around with the timid expression of the fawn, suddenly aroused in the covert by the footstep of the hunter. Then, suddenly turning to her companion—"I see him not—I see him not. Ah! my lord, can it be that thou art he?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the cavalier, with something of a holy horror in his countenance, "God forbid that such impious thought should have birth within thy mind, Careta. The God of whom I tell thee looks on thee, even though thou mayst not look on him. He sees thee in the darkness the same as in the daylight. Thou canst not hide from him—thou canst do nothing which he may not see—thou canst say nothing which he may not hear; and, therefore, it is wisdom for thee to do nothing and say nothing which may give him displeasure. But sit thee, Careta, while I teach thee of these things in order. First of God the Father, then of God the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the thrice-blessed Mother of God, who will, through great love, intercede for thee, so that thy sins may be forgiven thee. Look on this picture—this is an image of Mary, the Mother of God."

"Oh, sweet! oh, sweet! She is looking on me, my lord,—she is going to speak to me. Speak to me, sweet mother,—speak to the poor girl of Darien, and teach her the good things—teach her all the good things that she longs to hear!—Ah, my lord, she says nothing."

And an expression of disappointment passed over the face of the damsel, as she turned her eyes from the portrait to meet the watchful and fond glance of Vasco Nunez.

"She cannot speak from this. It is but an image, Careta, and has no life. I give it thee only that it may remind thee of one whom thou wilt soon learn to know, never to forget. But I will speak for her. I will teach thee her story, and the story of her Son, and the Son of God, who came down for thy safety and salvation, Careta, not less than mine. Hearken to me then, while I speak to thee of a people older far than thine own, and of lands, the names of which thy ears never heard before. The Blessed Mother of God help me to enlighten thy un-

derstanding as I proceed, and make thee quick to know the words that I utter."

Sitting upon the rushes of the floor, with her hand resting upon his knees, while her eyes were riveted, with equal admiration and curiosity, upon the face of the cavalier, the maiden disposed herself in silence. The speaker, meanwhile, as if duly elevated with the noble but unwonted task which he had undertaken, wore an expression upon his fine features which almost sublimed them; as if the Deity had lent something of his divine countenance to the spirit which impelled the performance of this new duty in the warrior. It is not our purpose to go through that process which the cavalier found it necessary to observe, in simplifying, to the rude understanding of the Indian damsel, the sacred history which he laboured to impress upon her. This must be left to the imagination of the reader, who will hardly fail to conceive the course, more readily than it can be compassed in unnecessary description. It will be enough to say, that the lesson which is taught by love, is one seldom found difficult of acquisition; and the history of immortal love, descending for the universal happiness, is one, of itself, too satisfactory and grateful, not to lessen the few difficulties which remain in the way of such a teacher. Ah! how much more auspicious to the reign of Christ on earth, and how much more blessing and beneficial to man, if, instead of cold constraint, austere dogmatism, and selfish intolerance, love alone could always be found or chosen to represent the religion of love. How many thousands more would gather before the altars, from which they are now driven by vain-glorious pride, and join in that glorious procession that proclaims where it goes, "Peace on earth, and good-will to all men."

CHAPTER V.

HOW RESOLUTION DEFIES DANGER, AND GENIUS FINDS ARMOUR AGAINST NECESSITY.

Weeks went by after this manner, and Vasco Nunez remained in Darien. Not that he remained either idle or inactive. The pleasant employments of his domestic life, such as we have faintly sketched them in our last chapter, were not suffered to interfere with his duties to the colony, nor to produce that luxurious desire of ease which has overthrown so many of the world's most boasted conquerors. With the ambition of Alexander, and the tenacious closeness of purpose, such as marked the career of the wondrous Carthaginian, he was yet too emphatically a man of thought and high moral purpose, to be enfeebled by the oriental delights of an Ecbatana, or to succumb to the more gross enticements of Capuan sensuality. His dress, habits and indulgences, were alike simple and manly. He drank no wine, pursued no sports, and with a sort of Roman self-denial, such as marked that people in the earlier periods of the republic, he countenanced no exercises but such as tended remotely or directly to the activity and improvement of mind or body. Mere amusements he refused, on his own part, though he denied them not to his people. He well knew that the inferior mind, having no such resources of thought and imagination as belong to the better taught and more endowed, always prefers those indulgences which do not task the understanding in their prosecution, nor require a reason for their sanction and justification. Such minds, like those of children, desire little more than the unrestraint which follows the absence of the governor and the lash; and though our hero refrained from the relaxing enjoyments

which his men had no such occasion to forego, he neither denied them their indulgence, nor frowned upon them while thus engaged. His employments were his sufficient pleasures, as they always prove to the better-minded of mankind. His cares for the colony absorbed all his time, and what with building dwellings, repairing vessels, and laying out lands for cultivation, not an hour was suffered to be lost which could be made available towards the grand object which he had in contemplation. His soldiers, though sufficiently indulged as we have shown, were yet kept well drilled, exercised in the use of their weapons, and employed in occasional adventure. His favourite captains, Pizarro and Colmenares, were sent out on expeditions,—at once seeking conquest and supplies. The rivers adjacent, the islands, and the shores of the sea, so far as it would have been justified of prudence for him to explore them, were traced out with an earnestness, truth, and fidelity, which have not been surpassed, nor even equalled, in latter days. Indeed, it is no less true than discreditable to us who admit the truth, that the Spanish maps of America are, to this day, in many instances the very best that we have. Nor were these the only toils and objects which gave our hero employment in the intervals of his leading actions. Were it our object to relate the history of his colony, rather than his own, we could recount a series of struggles with the Indians of an hundred petty principalities, attended with various fortune, in most of which, following the commands of their superior, the course of the Spaniards was marked by success and good fortune. Domestic troubles were at hand also for his annoyance,—even insurrection —in all of which, displaying the wisdom of a master mind, and the energies of a master spirit, the star of Vasco Nunez still continued to rise, soaring and spreading as it grew, until its bright glances glistened with unqualified lustre over the secret waters of the Pacific ocean. But we anticipate.

There were trials yet to be overcome—doubts yet to be dismissed, and dangers passed, before that happy consummation could be reached. It was while Vasco Nunez turned his eager but divided glance, at the same moment, to the seas which led to Europe, and to those frowning mountains that stood up between him and the mighty

prize for which he was contending—as if resolute to bar his progress—that the ungenerous fortune, which ever seems resolute to baffle those who rely rather upon their own resources of strength and genius, and scorn to pay blind allegiance to a deity, herself blind—with a malice no less mean than unreasonable—operated against him in the court of his sovereign, to the confirmation of all those fears which for so long a time had vexed his thoughts by day, and haunted his sleep by night with distressing visions. By the arrival of a vessel from Hispaniola, he received private advices from his messenger Zamudio, whom he had sent to Spain along with his enemy, the Bachelor Enciso, that the latter by a series of ingenious misrepresentations, had succeeded in arousing the indignation of the king against him, and had obtained from the royal court a sentence in his own favour, involving the original cost of his expedition, and all the damages which he estimated to have accrued from the defeat of his plans, and the usurpation of his government. Not satisfied with so much gained to himself, the vindictive Enciso had advanced against him a long list of criminal charges, such as having tampered with the fidelity of the soldiers, against the unfortunate cavalier Nicuesa,—the harsh treatment of the latter which ensued at their hands, and his subsequent melancholy death. To defend himself against these latter accusations, Zamudio informed Vasco Nunez, that he would soon be summoned to repair to Spain to answer in proper person to his sovereign.

This stunning intelligence, which was, however, unofficial, and consequently unknown to any in the colony but himself and such confidential persons as he thought worthy to be entrusted with the secret, for a time overcame his spirit and cast him down in strength and heart, leaving him incapable of thought and action. Bitterly in the recesses of his chamber, with no eye but that of the Indian damsel upon him, did he curse his confiding simplicity that felt shame at the bare idea of having any fear of such a creature as Enciso.

"He was in my power—my hand could have sealed his lips for ever, and defied all investigation, had investigation been a matter of which I had felt afraid. But do I fear investigation now? No! Would it could be had—would it were that the royal Ferdinand himself could have

beheld, with his most jealous eyes, the course which I have taken—the deeds which I have done, and every thought and feeling of my mind in all this business. It is not too late. He shall hear me now. He shall know—"

He paused, and a withering smile passed over his noble but inflamed features.

"What a child am I become! I dream of justice and truth among men, and among courtiers in particular, as if the first days of the earth were restored, and man, that walked with God and with the angels, was still scarcely less than an angel himself. What justice can I hope now from Spanish judgment, or in Spain? If I had not done so much in Darien—if the worst were not already overcome—it might be that I should have it—that I should be suffered to pursue my career of conquest, until the future became sufficiently easy for some sleek favourite of power to thrust me from the seat, and consign me to a dungeon. Jesu! can it be that I am reserved for such a fate as this! and thou—"

With a stealthy tread and closed lips, the Indian damsel had stolen to his side—where he now stood looking through the window upon the chafing waters of the bay—and sinking with the same unobtrusive stealthiness of movement upon her knees, took one of his extended hands in her own and carried it to her lips.

"And thou!—ah! my poor Careta, what then would become of thee?"

"My lord has heard evil from his own country. Has death gone into the habitation of my lord's mother? Oh, my lord, tell the poor Careta, that she may have sorrow too."

"Thou wilt soon enough have it, my poor girl," was the mournful reply,—"when the manacles are on the wrists of thy protector, and they bear him from thee, perchance, for ever."

With some difficulty the untutored Indian was made to understand the danger to her protector, which his words expressed. When she did comprehend it, she started to her feet—as she replied in language still more imperfect from the impetuosity with which she spoke—

"But who shall take my lord from Careta? Careta will go with my lord. She will not fear the big waters when she is in the great canoe—she will not fear any

thing when she goes with my lord. If they are strong to take my lord away from Darien, they will be strong to take the poor Indian girl, that loves him very much—she will turn her back upon Coyba—she will go every where with my lord."

Unbidden tears which he strove vainly to restrain and hide, gathered in the chieftain's eyes at a proof of affection such as his fortune had not made familiar to his heart. The memory of Teresa Davila—a memory which he vainly endeavoured to repel—arose to his mind at this reflection. How different had been the regard of that maiden, so long, so tenderly enforced—and we may add, so ably served in moments of greatest danger—by one whom she could invite and beguile, only to triumph over and reject. Still, though Vasco Nunez felt all this, there was mingled with his indignation a degree of regard and love, which he could not overcome; and he sighed, with a strange contradiction of thought, with the vain wish that the same accents of devotion which had been uttered by the poor Indian damsel, could have fallen from the lips of the proud Spanish beauty. How much dearer still, he fancied, would they have been to his ears, spoken by Teresa. Still, though thus labouring under the workings of a divided heart, Vasco Nunez was not the person to do injustice to the true, through a still lingering attachment for the false, woman. The very doubt which he felt that in thinking thus of Teresa, he was wronging the fidelity of Careta, led him to a still deeper sentiment of gratitude to the latter; and lifting her from the floor at his feet, he pressed his lips upon her forehead; then, placing her by his side, while he seated himself upon a rude bench in the apartment, he began more clearly to convey to her understanding the general tenor of those tidings which had just reached his ears, and had so painfully wrought upon his feelings. But while the damsel listened in profound silence to the narrative, which she could only slowly comprehend, the humility of her devotion was such that she could not maintain the position in which he had placed her. Sinking down with a movement so effortless that her companion, in his excited mood, failed utterly to perceive it, she was again in a few moments at his feet, and looking up with eyes in which consciousness was fast gathering in the shape of tears and a cloudy apprehension.

She heard the narrative of his past career in Darien, his rise over the colony, and the overthrow and probable punishments which awaited him. When, at length, the fearful truth burst upon her, and she learned from him that the danger even threatened his life, her agitation assumed a strength and character which her timid and shrinking deportment hitherto had not seemed to warrant. With the presence of the necessity, alone, the energies of the noble soul spring up to contend with it.

"But my lord has warriors. He is strong. Will he put the chains on his own hand, and go to the King of Spain, and say 'I am come.' Will he not do battle for his life?"

In broken language, such as we have striven to amend, it was thus that the Indian damsel expostulated with her protector against what she inferred to be his resolution.

"Ah, Careta," replied the chieftain, "to what would you counsel me? Would you have me defy my sovereign, and become a traitor to my country? What, if your father, the cassique of Coyba, summoned one of his warriors to come to him at Coyba, and answer for his conduct:—would he not slay him if he refused to come?"

The damsel was not readily confounded, but, after the pause of an instant, replied thus, in her own imperfect manner:—

"The cassique of Coyba should not do wrong to his warrior. If my father designed injustice to his tall men, it would be foolish in them to come to him when he summoned them. Wherefore should my lord go to his king, when he has strong men around him, with weapons that carry lightning in their mouths, and make the big hills shake with their thunder. Let him go to my father at Coyba, and put his feet among the mountains, and bid his warriors lie in readiness, and say to the king of Spain, I am here and I will not come to you."

"Alas! my poor Careta—thou little knowest. For every warrior of mine, the king of Spain has his thousands, and even these warriors are not mine but his. Let him say to them, bring me the head of your chief, and they will do it."

"Ah! but they shall carry the head of the poor Careta too, when they do such things. But my lord speaks thus only to frighten the poor girl of Darien. The king of

Spain cannot do this—he has no such power. It cannot be that there is a greater warrior than thou. Hast thou not driven Zemaco from the hills, and Ponca—no! no! my father says there is no warrior like to thee."

A noise at the entrance, and the approach of Micer Codro, interrupted the farther dialogue between the two. The astrologer was followed by the youth, Pedro, whom Vasco Nunez had tacitly adopted as his secretary. As yet, the unofficial intelligence brought to the cavalier in his private letter from Zamudio, had been withheld from the colony; and Micer Codro himself, up to this moment, was unapprised of the threatening tidings which it contained. It was not the intention, however, of Vasco Nunez, to keep the matter from one so entirely his friend, and at his entrance the communication was put into his hand. When he read it, the paper fell from his grasp—his cheeks were suddenly blanched, and tears—big, unrestrainable tears—such as spring from the heart which hope has deserted in the moment of its greatest seeming triumph—burst unbidden from his eyes, while a groan which seemed to come from the very soul, but no word, broke from his lips. Perhaps the manner in which the astrologer received this intelligence, conveyed to the Indian girl more forcibly than the explanation of her lover, the true extent of the evil predicament in which he stood. She clasped her hands, and her cheeks grew to a kindred paleness with those of the aged man, while, with a vague absence of purpose, she advanced a few paces towards him and remained in this posture, stationary in the apartment. The youth Pedro, alone, to whom the meaning of all this was a mystery, looked to one and another of the several persons around him with an air of wonder which he found it as impossible to conceal, as the rest of the company the emotions which affected them; and the face of Vasco Nunez, which, if sad, was firm, conveyed no explanation to his mind of the engrossing trouble which distressed them. His humble position, no less than the imposing solemnity of their aspects, prevented his making any inquiry into the mystery which yet filled him with the keenest curiosity. He was not destined, however, to remain long in ignorance. With a smile of bitter sadness, Vasco Nunez advanced to the astrologer.

"Ay, Micer Codro, thou may'st well groan. Thou shouldst groan as well over thy vain judgments as over my fortunes. Where now are thy predictions, thy promises, my hopes? What say the stars to thee now? These," crumbling the despatches within his hands, and hurling them behind him as he spoke—"these speak another language than thy oracles; ay, Micer Codro, and a far less questionable language. Which are we to believe? which"—here his tones were subdued almost to a whisper—"which will my soldiers believe, think you? Summon thy wisdom to thy aid, and thy lucent spirits, for, by the blessed Saint John, it will be marvellous indeed, if thou wilt not need all their aid ere thou findest an answer which shall save thy golden prophecies and solemn jndgments from the laughter and vexing scorn of all who have heard and hearkened to them. Not that the scorn will fall only upon thy head—no! no! They will have their laugh also at the ambitious and vain fool, who hath had a faith in them that hath ruined him."

"Indeed, my son, but these are sad tidings in truth; and well mayst thou be shaken with sorrow and vexation while thou readest them. Yet I know not that thou dost rightly to fling such reproach upon my head; for whether the stars be true or false, they had little to do with thy seduction. Ere my lips opened to counsel thee, thou wert a voyager with Rodrigo de Bastides, seeking adventures in strange worlds, and filled with fancies, deemed no less strange by thy companions than have been the predictions of Micer Codro. I did but confirm to thee, by the promises of thy natal star, what the ambition of thy own heart had promised thee long before."

"Ay, ay—mine own heart and my own ambition. Thou say'st well and rightly, Micer Codro, for, of a truth, had not my own heart too ably counselled, and my own ambition too fondly urged, be sure thy predictions had never moved Vasco Nunez de Balboa, to lift foot or finger on this daring progress. But think not, old man and old friend, that I reproach thee for thy promises—think not even that I repent me of this daring, which has brought me to the verge of a great empire; and which, whether I win the sight of the great sea of the south or not, has enabled me to point the pathway to its borders to the monarch who denies that I shall behold it——"

The flowing and free speech of the cavalier was interrupted by the astrologer, who, pointing significantly to the youth, Pedro, spoke in accents of warning:—

"Thou art not alone, my son. Is it wise to give forth these tidings yet?"

Vasco Nunez looked upon the countenance of the youth for a brief instant, then exclaimed—

"Nay, let him remain; he hath the soul of a man, if he be not one, and I fear not to trust him. I would that I had a thousand followers such as he. I should not then fear that the injustice of a king should prevent the glory, or dishonour with his judgments the name of his subject. Ere long, they will all know what we might conceal but for a brief season; and I am now in the desperate mood of the gambler who cares not what eye beholds that he hath flung his last counter on the board. Hast thou any counsel, Micer Codro, in this difficulty? I would have thee speak—I would have thee exhaust thy wisdom and pour forth thy full phophecy, that I may confound thee for ever after, by showing thee that I can do without the star, nay, in spite of it. When thou hast shown at full thy counsel and thy hope, then will I deliver mine. Meanwhile, I hear thee—I wait thee."

With features, the constant working of which showed the perpetually changing and active mood of the mind within, Vasco Nunez paced to and fro through the apartment, his eyes cast upon the ground, and his lips, though quick with life and frequently in motion, yet giving forth no sound or accent. There was a fascinating something in the whole air of the superior, in the tones of his voice, in his bitter smile, and hurried but firm gesture, that fixed the eyes of the secretary Pedro, even more than they did those of the wondering damsel, whose limbs seemed frozen to the spot to which she had advanced on witnessing the sudden and confounding effect of the despatches upon the astrologer. The youth could readily conceive, from what had been suffered to escape from Vasco Nunez and Micer Codro, the dangers and difficulties that hung about the fortunes of the former. None could know better than himself, the evils to be feared from a collision in that day between the subject and his sovereign, particularly when the mind and valour of the first had opened the pathway to treasures of which

the last desired to avail himself, without being liable to any of the concessions which justice might esteem the due of gratitude. He had already been apprised of the relation in which Vasco Nunez stood to the Bachelor Enciso—the memorial which he had copied but a short time before, had sufficiently apprised him on that head. Besides, he well knew from facts notorious to the colony, that the Bachelor was urging his specious charges against his rival, in the royal presence. With the first conviction that the man against whose life he had so solemnly sworn, was about to be convicted as a rebel to his sovereign, and was likely to suffer doom as such, his blood rose in tumultuous exultation, and his heart triumphed. But while he gazed and listened—while he looked upon the proud unbending attitude, the noble grace of movement, the keen, quick, sparkling eye, and the eloquent gesture—when, above all, he hearkened to those noble sentiments and fearless thoughts which gushed forth in free language from the threatened victim—the victim of jealous hate and mean rivalry alone—his hostile thoughts departed. He forgot his feelings of hate and exultation, and admiration succeeded with a most natural transition, to the more ungenerous feelings which had possessed him. The fearless resolution which made Vasco Nunez himself rise higher and stand more erect, and endowed his words and voice with a nobler energy, when the venerable counsellor who stood in no such danger, was cast down and trembled, had a charm in the mind of the youth which fascinated his attention, and made him breathless as he listened to a dialogue, which, as it involved the future progress of the cavalier, necessarily involved his fate. Slowly indeed came forth the accents of the astrologer, in reply to the demand of Vasco Nunez, and how wanting to the necessity—how vain and unsatisfactory did they appear! They offered no remedy—they led to none; nor, did it seem, that the speaker had striven at any suggestion which should do more than encourage the cavalier to hope. Hope, without action or effort of his own, to the proud, fearless, energetic mind, always resolute upon its own performances, is a mere mockery; and bitter, almost contemptuous, was the smile which overcast the face of Vasco Nunez, as the

astrologer spoke to him in some such language as the following:

"In truth, my son,—I know not what to say, or how to counsel you. These tidings are most unlooked for. Surely Zamudio hath done but little, and how could Enciso make such strange matters appear to our sovereign, as those of which these despatches tell us! It is truly beyond my thought and judgment. I know not how to speak; though, in truth, I do not yet despond—there may be something yet to come, which shall alter this judgment of the king, and I trust yet in the promise of the stars which have befriended us so long. Thou shouldst not be cast down—thou must still hope, my son. Even now—"

The impatient cavalier interrupted him.

"Cast down!—dost thou see it in my thoughts—in my looks—in my actions? Have I not told thee, Micer Codro, that when thy predictions fail thee, and thy words lack counsel, thou shalt hear then, that in myself, in my own heart and resolution, I need them not—nay, will triumph in their despite? And this is all that thou canst tell me, Micer Codro—Be not cast down—take heart—hope for the sunshine, which will come to-morrow! Hast thou nothing better than this to offer to thy friend in the hour of his tribulation, when the stars fight against him in their courses even as they fought against Sisera?"

"But they do not fight against thee, my son—even now they work in thy behalf with a greater lustre, which makes it the more wonderful to me those tidings which have reached thee."

"Oh, Micer Codro, wherefore wilt thou dream thus, and speak still of these old-time vanities? It was thus thou spokest to me even at the moment when the hurricane swept away to the bottomless ocean, the goodly vessel in which our joint fortunes had been treasured up. Hear me now—now that thy counsel falls thee as thy prophecies have failed me—now that, in thy silence, thou admittest that thy wisdom and thy stars, alike, avail thee nothing—know that I have resolved in spite of them and of these threatening tidings. By to-morrow's sun I set off for Coyba, and for the mountains and the seas beyond!"

"Surely, thou dost jest, my son. It cannot be that with

such force as thou hast in Darien, thou wilt dream of this perilous adventure. Thou hast scarce three hundred men-at-arms," replied the astrologer, in astonishment.

"I know it; but if I wait for more I shall have none. It may be that a week will bring me the commands of our sovereign which I dare not disobey; and take from me all power in Darien. Shall I linger for these tidings? No! I can but perish in my search after the life which is eternal, and if I remain till these summons find me, I shall not merely lose power, perchance, but life with it. Not that I dread death. No! By the blessed Jesu that died for all, I fear not the pang and the parting. But I would not lose the exceeding fame and the undying glory that is the first passion and desire of my mind. For that I would shrink from death. For that I would fly from these coming tidings, and await them, when they do approach, on the shores of that new world—that mighty ocean, which, if I once win, will take the sting from death, as it will leave to life no greater conquest or desire. But, that conquest made,—and even Ferdinand would scarce dare destroy the conqueror. Nay, he could not but confirm me in the conquest. And with such hope as this before me—and such a certainty of overthrow, if I seek it not—shall I linger here in apathy, awaiting the coming of the summons and the executioner? No! what matters it, though ten thousand savages beset the path—there is more glory to the few who yet dare to pursue it and reach the goal in safety. If the danger has a larger division among the few, the share of the treasure shall be great also among them; and this argument to the Spanish soldier, will give him tenfold strength, and a courage that will confront danger with a hardy love, so that he will seek her out even in the forest den where she is ambushed."

"They will not go with thee, my son, on this wild enterprise," said Micer Codro, absolutely confounded at the audacity of the design. "They will shrink back in terror, as they may well do, and with no shame, remembering their strife with Zemaco and Coyba."

"What, when I tell them that I ask them not to advance, but to follow! When I tell them that I myself will lead them at every step! Ha! ha! thou knowest them not, my father, and thou knowest not me. I tell thee,

these men shall serve me with more fidelity and success than the stars, which I shall flout with defiance. If I may not persuade the capricious and cajoling fortune,—by the Holy Mother, I will force her to my embraces. If thou canst not wed us fairly, Micer Codro, as her acknowledged priest, I will compel thee to behold her frailty in a new light, and thou shalt wink at the concessions, which she will be no longer in condition to refuse."

The astrologer was confounded. There was a savage delight in the eye of the speaker, indicating a drunkenness of heart, and the phrensies of a mood made desperate by long denial and the utter hopelessness of ordinary remedy. While he spoke, his face lighted up with the exhilaration of certain triumph; and that triumph sweetened too, to the anticipative mind, by the consciousness that it was to be wrested from the fates in their own despite, and against all the ordinary barriers of circumstance. It is in moments such as these, that genius makes itself obvious and feared. The common man would have sunk under the prospect before him. The accustomed hopes of such men were all withheld from Vasco Nunez. The probabilities were all in array against him—even the supports of friendship, and the encouragements of sympathy were unoffered or denied, in the general stupor which they felt under the unfavourable aspect of his fortune; and it is from the very incapability of all ordinary help and counsel, that the strong man, forced back upon his own soul, then asserts that native superiority and strength that can never be entirely known even to himself, till goaded into activity by the stirring and potential necessity. The cavalier laughed cheerfully, and as with a light heart, as he looked at the consternatian of the astrologer.

"Be not afraid, Micer Codro—didst thou not say that the stars were looking down upon me with favouring eyes? What then? Shall they be clouded with these tidings from Spain, which they must have known; and shall they not brighten when they hear of my resolve, of which they know nothing? Go forth, my friend—let the soldiers know that the hour is come, according to thy nightly observation, when it is decreed that Vasco Nunez shall achieve his greatest triumph. I will take more care than the stars seem to have done, that thy predictions be not belied. Away, my friend, if you love me, and warm

their hearts with the glorious fancies which, for so long a season, have made green and fruitful thine own."

Wondering still, and only half reconciled to a scheme which seemed far too daring for success, the astrologer yet saw that farther expostulation would be altogether vain; the mood of resolution being so unqualified and decided in the bosom of the cavalier. Perhaps, too, a little reflection served to convince him, that this seeming desperation of his friend was, in fact, the coolest and most manly policy. He knew how little there was to hope from the ungenerous judgments of Spain, when once the royal court of justice had taken consideration of the conquerors and their conquests. He went forth as he was bidden accordingly, to confirm among the soldiers that faith in the fortunes of their leader, which they had long since yielded to his wisdom and valour. Meanwhile, Vasco Nunez turned to the youth, Pedro, who still remained in his apartment.

"Thou hast heard, Pedro," he began after a brief pause, in which the ferment of his blood seemed somewhat to subside—"Thou hast heard something of this business, and may readily guess the rest. I have toiled here in Darien against open and secret foes,—I have saved this colony from utter ruin—I have won treasures that have greatly helped to fill the treasury of Spain, having reserved none thereof, such portions alone excepted, as were despatched to Española, to answer the demands of a few griping creditors;—and now that my world opens upon me—now that I have brought my sword to bear upon new empires, the treasures of which are perchance boundless—new seas, over which the fleets of Spain shall glide without rival—behold, I am summoned to surrender them all to some sleek favourite of the throne or the bishop, who will enrich himself by my labours, and grow great and insolent in the prosecution of my designs and thoughts. Ferdinand will gladly hearken to the base suggestions of Enciso, as they will yield him a pretence for seizing upon my achievements, which will yield him new powers of patronage; and the better to countenance this wrong, they will doom me, as a traitor, to the sharp and sudden death, that being the shortest way to avoid the reproach of innocence, or the vengeance which valour should be for ever prompt to take. But they shall not deprive me of my triumph. They may take from me my

treasure and my life; but, by the Blessed Saint crying in the Wilderness, I will win that sea of the south. I will stand within its waters, and launch my bark upon its bosom, and my sword shall point your eyes to the green islands of other empires, ere they do their will upon me. Thou hast the soul, Pedro, for such a triumph as this I promise thee? Thou wilt not shrink to follow me in this march of danger and of glory?"

Surprised into corresponding enthusiasm with the speaker, the boy rapidly promised to attend his superior, and the latter continued—

"Ay, boy, thou hast the soul and the spirit which shall achieve and shall make achievement glorious; but ambition is an eating fever, and produces its own pains and sorrows that come surely with all its tumults and successes. It will make thee enemies who fear and hate where they cannot rival—men who, as they lack the greatness to do greatly, will mock at the soaring of the nobler wing, which their eyes follow always, but their souls never. They will aim the shaft, which will strike a mark to which wings of their own can never rise. They will content themselves, though pulling down the lofty, to remain for ever low. But why should I discourage thy young mind with such doubts as these? Thou wilt run the race like all others, and wilt not believe, until the truth is proven in thy own experience, that such can be the truth. It is the fate of all who aim highly, and will perhaps console thee in the end, as it will soon be my only consolation, that greater and wiser and better men have had no other fortune. And this may be enough. The smooth way never leads to the eminence;—the good seaman learns not his craft when the seas are level, and the winds soft and favouring. So, to my mind, the glory were not of my getting and but little to my gain, if good fortune bore me ever forward with a friendly gale, and a bright star, such as the venerable man who left us but now, speaks of, hung over the path, to guide me where the spoils of glory are. Let my own eyes seek out the path, and I will care not that my feet should stumble, so that my spirit rose with every fall, even as my body rises after it. The toils which thou wilt begin to-morrow, Pedro, will be a service to thee when I am sleeping. Away, boy, and get thyself in readiness."

CHAPTER VI.

WINGS AMONG THE MOUNTAINS—THE STRIFE OF EAGLES.

THE next day opened in the town of Darien,—which, by the way, had been called Santa Maria by the devout Spaniards—with the clangour of trumpet and drum. Vasco Nunez proceeded to review his troops; and with an increased audacity which added still more to the astonishment of the astrologer, contented himself with little more than one half of his real force in the prosecution of his meditated enterprise.

"Were you new men," he said to his followers—"men of cloth and buckram, just from Seville, I should need a thousand of you to pass from Coyba to the great southern sea. But being what you are, I will lead two hundred of you with greater pleasure, and more profit to all of us. Nor let those complain whom I leave behind. They shall share the spoils which we win, equally with those who undertake the peril; since, well I know, with Zemaco watching them ever from the surrounding hills, they will have duties of as much toil and danger in Santa Maria, as we shall encounter in our march beyond the mountains. Know ye then that I need two hundred volunteers. Let the men who came with me to Darien from San Sebastian advance first—then, of those who followed the Señor Diego de Nicuesa, and came with Colmenares,—and lastly, of those who came from Nombre de Dios. The new soldiers brought by Valdivia will remain at Santa Maria, unless it be that I find not before me ready to embark on this new enterprise,—one, as I warn ye now, of the greatest peril,—a sufficient number of the scarred veterans who have followed me so long. I tell ye nothing, men, of the great glory, and the vast wealth, the gold and the pearls which ye may, perchance, gather in this expe-

dition. If ye know me not, it will be well that ye should ask, wherefore should we take this toil and danger upon us? If you know me, it will be enough that I tell ye that I, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, will march at your head, will guide ye in your true path, and lead the charge in every conflict. Sound, trumpets, and let the true hearts of Santa Maria show themselves with the golden burst of your music."

Seating himself upon a rock, the cavalier calmly awaited the result of a speech that was no less artful than simple, and seemingly unstudied. The proud Spaniards who had been with him from the first, and claimed precedence over the new-comers in all times of danger and all matters of new adventure, were greatly flattered by the especial preference which had been given them; while the others beheld nothing in the distinctions made by the commander, but a proper division of force, according to the natural pre-eminence and seniority. The shouts of all were mingled in the air, and rushing forward, as if fearing to be suspected of lukewarmness, the veterans surrounded the stone where the chieftain sat, and laid their long lances at his feet. When he had counted their numbers, and accepted their services, they ran about the encampment in a paroxysm of serious joy, which vented itself in clamorous invocations to the patron saint, concluding, as by common consent, with the praises of their leader. With a more decorous movement, but with no less real enthusiasm, the second and third classes which Vasco Nunez had designated, approached him in like number, and he soon found that to accept all who offered would far exceed his limitation. It was not easy to soothe those whom he was compelled to reject; but, as we have already said, and the various chronicles confirm, the persuasive powers of Vasco Nunez were scarcely less remarkable than his genius and valour. The discontents were made to conceive corresponding advantages resulting to themselves, no less than to the community, from their stay at Santa Maria; and to disregard the commiserating looks and speeches of the more fortunate of their number who had been chosen for the expedition. But many an invalid veteran wept bitter tears at the bondage in which fever, or the wounds of previous battle confined him, and it tasked all the leader's powers of soothing to

reconcile him to a condition which was the more irksome as it was inevitable. The enthusiasm of all parties filled the heart of Vasco Nunez with a grateful triumph.

"What creature courtier of Fonseca, think you, good Micer Codro, could win such followers to such free-will? Only two hundred say you; and your heart still beats with apprehension; but I tell you these two hundred Spaniards under my conduct are more to me than one thousand men had been to Ojeda; and, by the holy Saint John, I will work with them greater things in this wilderness of Darien than in thy own imagining, even thou, watcher as thou art of the visionary stars, could ever have dreamed of. Lo! you—their looks, their voices,—the madness of their souls, as they fling up their lances in delight, and leap among the hills. Sawest thou the grave sullen Spaniard ever in such mood before? If it were now the time to meet with Zemaco—they would go like the rage of the red lightning through his naked thousands. Such a temper would make their battle irresistible, though it would be fatal on a weary march. I will school this temper. It is not the wild horse which I need along the rigorous mountains, but the patient mule, steady and sure-footed; and thou shalt soon see these wild warriors become as such. Ho! Francisco"—addressing Pizarro—"I assign thee twenty crossbows, and ten firelocks—with twenty swords and lances. To Colmenares a like force—ye shall try the favour of these men so that ye may each have the warriors that most affect you. Let there be no loss of time—the brigantine is already waiting us."

"Now could I spoil this triumph at a word," was the unexpressed thought of the youth Pedro, as he gazed upon the glowing face of Vasco Nunez, and beheld the enthusiastic devotion of the soldiers. "It needs but to say to these capricious knaves, or to this envious and ambitious warrior in whom he so much confides, Francisco Pizarro —'know ye that this man is a traitor to his sovereign, under doom as such—that even now the ministers of justice and of vengeance are on their way to place him in bonds for judgment;'—and the smooth lips that now honour, would be roughened with the sharp bitter shouts of vulgar hostility. And shall I suffer him to triumph thus? Shall it be that a murderer,—one whom I am sworn to slay—shall go on from triumph to triumph—shall win

fame at every footstep, in my own sight, in my own despite,—having the blood of my brother yet reeking upon his hands, when a breath of mine can bring him to the dust? A single word to Pizarro, and Vasco Nunez is cut down—cast down, like the Philistian Dagon, his head rolling from his shoulders. Pizarro hath the envy which would make him glad to overthrow the superior—he hath the cunning which would move him to its performance with success. He shall know all. He shall be counselled to keep him in custody but a few weeks, and then deliver him in the same moment to the king's minister and to death. I will speak to him even now—there is no more fitting moment."

The youth, as if doubting his own resolution, hurried towards the spot where Pizarro was choosing his individual command. As he approached, however, his mind was busied with the train of thought which this subject and his design had opened upon him; and though he strove to continue in the same resolve, he found scruples gradually rising against it in his reflections, which cooled his temper if they did not qualify his hostility; and when, as he drew nigh to the man he sought, he encountered from him a bitter scowl, the fruit of his unwary detection of the fierce soldier's want of letters, his malicious purpose relented. His eye involuntarily put on a glance of corresponding hostility with that of the savage captain, and his brow assumed a scowling aspect, scarcely less stern and fearful than that of Pizarro. He no longer felt the resolution to destroy Vasco Nunez by such an agent.

"No!" he muttered to himself as he turned away slowly and proceeded to retrace his steps—"that the lion should rend the lion, or the eagle strive with the eagle unto the death of both, were not ungrateful in the eyes of valour and true greatness, but that I should arm the snake against either, were something full of shame. Besides, have I not sworn that my deed alone shall be my avenger, and shall I avail myself of so foul an ally as this? Neither have I sworn against the fame but only against the life of Vasco Nunez. Let him triumph—let him win these southern waters which are his dream, and these new empires which he fancies will reward his dream—am I not with him—can I not slay him at any

moment when this triumph is obtained? It shall be so. In that moment when his conquest is secure I will strike for vengeance. I will then destroy him."

The person of whom he spoke, at this moment called him to his side.

"I bade thee prepare to go with me, Pedro, on this expedition. I thought not on the feebleness of thy frame, and thy lack of skill and practice in fields of peril. It would be thy death to enter upon the weary march I purpose, and however great may be thy thirst for glory it were not fitting that I should suffer thee to risk thyself so much against thy ability. Thou shalt remain behind at Darien."

"Nay, señor, but thou wilt do me great injustice if such be in truth thy purpose;" replied the youth earnestly, and with an expression of sorrow in his face which was truly felt in his heart, and which he could not hide. "For what have I come to Darien but for the very perils of which you tell me. These are perils for which my soul pants, and the life passed without their pursuit were unworthy a care. It was thy promise, Señor Vasco, that I should go with thee ever; it was thy further promise that I should go with thee on this adventure. If thou dost not seek to put my forehead in the dust, I pray thee depart not from thy words, on the faith of which I came into thy service."

"Be not rash, Pedro," replied the other, "of a truth, I would choose to have thee with me ever, even as I have promised thee; but to take thee with me on a perilous adventure, such as that before me, were to mislead thy youth, and do wrong to the very faith which thou hast put in me; look you, boy"—here he lowered his voice to a whisper, and led the youth away, as he replied, from the hearing of all others—"know you not that the chances are thick against us in the perils which we go forth to encounter? Hast thou not heard the wisdom of the venerable man, Micer Codro, warmly awakened against my project which he pronounces a temerity savouring of madness? And wilt thou not believe me when I say to thee, that, even with my own hopes of final success, which I confess to thee are strong, I yet greatly fear that one half of the hardy men who go with me, will perish from over-toilsome marches, or the keen

and vengeful arrow of the lurking savage? Be wise, my son; let thy thirst for glory keep pace with thy strength and experience, both of which thou yet lackest too greatly for so great a danger as surrounds this enterprise."

Vasco Nunez pleaded earnestly with the boy, but the latter remained unmoved.

"If," said he, "I have hearkened to the words of wisdom from the lips of Micer Codro, I have yet also listened to the more grateful answer of wisdom and valour which fell from thy lips in reply. I have not forgotten the speech of either, and my resolve is no less the growth of my thoughts on this subject than a desire of my heart. I know all the peril; but as there is no glory without peril, it should be the care of him who seeks the one to be always foremost in the encounter with the other. Señor, I have thy promise—shall it be said against thy own well-earned glory, that thou hast failed to keep thy faith?"

These words, and the tacit reproach with which the youth concluded his reply, were conclusive with Vasco Nunez.

"Thou hast the true spirit for fame, Pedro; I would that thy father had endowed thee with a manhood of body such as God hath given to thy soul. Thou shalt go with me—it shall not be from thy lips that Vasco Nunez shall hear rebuke for broken faith. Get thyself in readiness—thou shalt have the glory which thou covetest."

It was on the first of September, says the historian, that this daring cavalier embarked with his followers in a brigantine and several large piraguas for the dominions of the cassique of Coyba; his daughter, Careta, who had acquired no small influence over Vasco Nunez, accompanied him in this expedition. Standing to the northwestward, he reached Coyba without accident in a few days, and was received with open arms by the cassique of the province. Here he made his final preparations for the painful and dangerous journey he was about to take; he offered up prayers to the Deity, and caused mass to be performed, with a degree of solemnity which, while it impressed his own people no less than the savages, with a feeling of religious enthusiasm, mingled with some little awe at the perils rising before their path, attested the soaring and serious resolution of their leader's mind,

making him appear, at the time, something more than the mere commander; and giving him the attitude and aspect of one of those stern leaders of the people, under God, commissioned to achieve miraculous conquests, and assured of the confirming smile of the Deity in every effort and adventure. It was, perhaps, no small help to Vasco Nunez, that such became the persuasion of his followers on this occasion. Nor was it simply as a stroke of human policy, that our hero imparted this reverential aspect to his proceedings. His own mind had been in truth elevated by the lonely and constant contemplation, amid all the changes of his fortune, of the one single object. He had gradually discarded from his desires the accursed thirst for gold, which was converting his own people rapidly into a more cruel set of savages than any that they came to conquer. The baser aims of humanity had all been purged out of his bosom, by the high, unselfish desire of opening the sealed barriers that led to another world; and the intentness with which he contemplated the legitimate purpose of a noble mind, had produced its natural effect, in bringing him nearer to the nature, and, consequently, to the knowledge of God himself. All his movements partook of this influence. All his words and thoughts were now marked by this triumphant and rising spirit; and while his mental pride was forgotten, and a just humility that knows its own make and measure, and trespasses never beyond the claims and against the spirit of its fellow, was growing hourly stronger in his heart, it was evident to all that there was a holy erectness in his deeds, his air, his manner, and his language, which insensibly subdued the spirits of those who beheld him. He showed none of the petty cares and jealousies that so often impair the grandeur of human greatness, and embitter its sweetest successes; but, as if the contemplation of a performance so far above the aims of his contemporaries, had also uplifted him beyond their ordinary strifes and enmities, his mood ceased to exhibit anger or passion, and a gentle and indulgent spirit distinguished his government, both of Spaniards and Indians, which formed a feature entirely new in the moral history of all the parties. It may be added that the boy, Pedro, was not the last to acknowledge this influence over his mind, which the high-souled superiority of Vasco Nunez

seemed to assert, with little qualification, over the minds of all.

Six days after the departure of the cavalier from Darien, he struck off for the mountains on his bold and perilous adventure. The Cassique of Coyba provided him with guides and a number of Indian warriors, who were used in carrying provisions, and in scouting along their intricate and toilsome path. Of his own warriors, brought with him from Santa Maria, he took but one half, the rest being left at Coyba in charge of the brigantine. But these were his tried men, chiefly armed with arquebusses, and they were attended by a large number of blood-hounds—a foe no less formidable to the Indians than their masters. On the eighth of September they reached the dominions of Ponca, the ancient enemy of Careta. He fled before their coming, as he had been commanded by Zemaco. But his retreat was discovered, and he sent in his submission to the invaders, and came, though with fear and trembling, into the presence of Vasco Nunez. His terrors gave place to a more subdued, though yet stronger feeling of reverence for the heroic Spaniard; and beholding in him a superior, as much distinguished by benevolence as might, he was soon converted from a distrustful foe into an obedient and devoted friend. Ponca revealed to him all the secrets of his native mountains. He pointed to the wealthiest valleys and waters—informed him of their grateful fruits, and freely brought him of his gold and treasures. But when he confirmed to him the proximity of the great pechry—the wondrous sea of the south, which lay beyond the mountains; and taking him to a little eminence, pointed out to his eyes a dim and distant peak which rose like a thin gray cloud almost into the heavens,—telling him, from that pinnacle he should behold the sea for which he searched,—the heart of the conqueror melted within him with an enfeebling joy, and once more sinking on his knees, he implored the Divine Power to strengthen and protect him on the toilsome ascent which was to yield that blessed prospect to his sight. Animated by the tidings of Ponca, and strengthened by prayer, he prepared to ascend the barrier mountains, under the conduct of fresh guides, which he procured from the cassique.

The implacable chief, however, who swayed all that

country—the proud and warlike Zemaco—did not view the departure of the Spaniards from Darien, and their appearance at Coyba, with indifference or unconcern. With spies at every point, it was not long before he became possessed of a knowledge of all the movements of the invaders. The virtual rebellion of Coyba, in forming an alliance with his foe, was already known to him, and the defection of Ponca he was apprised of almost as soon as the latter had made his appearance before Vasco Nunez. These events embittered his mind and impaired his judgment. He ascribed them to the very counsel which, perhaps, had preserved him so long in safety.

"See you not," he said to the fugitive Caonabo, "see you not that while we watch like silent dogs along the hills, the pale faces send their thunders into the valleys. Why have you counselled me to this forbearance? Shall it be that they shall go where they please, succouring my enemies, destroying my friends, and making slaves and women of my people, while my warriors groan that they may not fight, and call me a woman like the Haytian?"

"Zemaco hath not been idle, though he hath not gone down to do battle with the Spaniard. The wisdom of my counsel hath been shown already. The cassique of the Spaniard hath also remained in his bohio, and when he sent out his young warriors were they not met by the young warriors of Zemaco? Did they not fly before the keen arrows of thy braves, and were they not despoiled of their canoes, and the yellow dirt that they worship? Twice, thrice did the young warriors of Zemaco drive the pale faces from their path, when they came out in small numbers to gather gold and provisions."

"And is it not well, that my warriors should drive them again from the path? If they beat the Spaniards being but few, then shall they again beat them when there are many. Is it not wisdom in the warrior to try?"

"The warriors of Zemaco have never beaten the cassique of the Spaniard. They have only driven his foolish young men from the path, when they scattered themselves without wisdom in the thick woods. Let Zemaco hear Caonabo, who hath looked down from the hills of Xaragua on the deeds of this pale warrior. Zemaco hath been successful when the small bands of the Spaniards were far asunder. Even now they are far

asunder. But a few remain among the bohios of Darien —a few are left with the great canoe, and dwell with the traitor Cassique of Coyba; the rest follow their chief warrior among the mountains, under the guidance of Ponca——"

"Another traitor! It is because of thy counsel, Caonabo, that the hearts of my people are turned away from Zemaco. They would have me go down and do battle with the Spaniard."

"You have fought," replied Caonabo gloomily—"twice have you fought with the Spaniard, and your arrow has failed to reach his heart, and your war-club has failed to crush his head."

"Does the warrior lose heart for ever if he be beaten by the strange foe, whose weapons he knows not? The warriors of Zemaco fail not always. They cry aloud for the battle—it grieves them to look down upon the Spaniards while they march over the land. They shall go to battle when the pale faces gather in the paths of the mountains."

"It is well," replied the other. "Caonabo will fight for Zemaco as if he fought for himself. But the cassique of the Spaniards is a great warrior. You may not drive him when you look him in the face. The arrow of Zemaco may not penetrate the thick armour which covers his heart."

"You tell me that I am a woman," cried the chieftain angrily. "Thou wouldst have me fly from Darien and give up my country to the pale faces. Lo! you, Caonabo, if I show this counsel to my people, they will tear thee in pieces."

"It is not the counsel of Caonabo," said the other coldly but calmly, "I know that the people are angry with a warrior who has counselled them to safety, when they would have gone to death without doing service to Zemaco. They have grown blind because of misfortune, and sorrow hath made them unjust. They will think more wisely when the Spaniard hath his foot upon the neck of Zemaco."

"Ha! thou sayst!" replied the other, lifting his macana in sudden wrath above the head of the fugitive. "What if I strike thee dead for thy insolence!"

"Caonabo will lose life—a little loss to a brave man—and Zemaco will lose more than life."

"How! what meanest thou shall be the loss of Zemaco?"

"Wisdom, and a friend! I tell thee, Zemaco, if thou send'st thy warriors forth against the Spaniard, they will perish unless they can slay the cassique who leads them. If thou canst slay him, thy conquest of the rest is easy. He is their life as thou art the life of thy people. It is him thou shouldst seek to slay."

"Caonabo is wise indeed!" replied the other with a bitter sneer, "but can warriors be slain save by warriors? Have I not said, the warriors of Zemaco shall go forth against the Spaniard? Quarequa shall lead them against the Spaniard."

"Quarequa is a brave warrior," replied the other, "but he cannot fight against the cassique of the Spaniard. Hear me!" he said, as Zemaco was about to interrupt him, impatiently, "hear me, Zemaco. I will counsel thee to better things. Thou shalt gather thy men in three places, a thousand in each, and each under a trusty warrior. One to these shall descend upon the bohios of the Spaniard at Darien—a second shall fall upon him in the night time when he sleeps in the dwelling of Coyba—and the third shall lie in watch along the paths, when the cassique of the Spaniard ascends wearily the mountains. Yet I counsel thee not to face him even then in battle. There are ways to slay the Spaniard and yet not stand before his thunders. Thou shalt send him messengers of peace—thou shalt give him help to ascend the mountains of Darien. Thou shalt tell him Zemaco fears thee as an enemy, and would have thee as a friend. Lo! he sends thee tribute of gold and pearls, and here are fifty warriors to serve at thy bidding. Thou shalt do this, Zemaco."

"Ha! wouldst thou have me sell my people to the Spaniard? Am I to bend my back to his burden? Shall the woman of Zemaco plant maize for him in the fields, and bear his stripes when she faints beside the task? and shall the Cassique of Darien go to the pale face with a lie on his tongue, and say he fears him? Go! thou hast counselled dishonour to Zemaco, and wert thou one of my people thou shouldst die."

Nothing daunted, the other replied to him calmly—

"Thou art quick, Zemaco—thy bosom is filled with doubt and bitterness, so that thy ear catches not the true meaning of my speech. I counsel thee to speak thy fears to the Spaniard, but I counsel thee not to fear him. I bid thee send him thy warriors, but I bid them not serve him; and if thou giv'st him thy treasure, it is rather that he may have faith in what thou tellest him, than that thou shouldst give him thy faith. If thou help'st him to ascend thy mountains, it is only that thou mayst destroy him when thou hast him there—if thy warriors go from thee to the Spaniard, it is that they may be the better able to surround his footstep, and strike at him, and him only, in battle. Thou hast many braves who would die at thy bidding. Say to them—'Are there fifty of ye who are ready to die, that the enemies of Zemaco may perish?' They will answer thee—'Yea, we stand before thee.' Let them go down to the Spaniard, and say to him, 'We come from Zemaco. He sends you gold—he sends you the seedy pearl that is gathered from the sea. He sends you food and drink for your warriors that are famished, and he bids us guide you along the mountain paths where they are easiest. He would be your friend;—he will come to you when you gather on the mountain.' See you not, Zemaco? Your warriors will bring the cassique of the Spaniards into the narrow valleys, and there you will meet him with all your strength. Your arrows shall then speak for your friendship, and the rocks that sleep along the hill-tops shall go down in answering thunders to the thunder of the Spaniard. This is the counsel of Caonabo—his last counsel, for well I know, Zemaco, though you have told me nothing, that the young warriors of Darien clamour for the life of Caonabo, and will not sleep till they have drunk the blood from his heart. They would make him answer for the valour of the Spaniards,—and would sacrifice him to the war-demon, that they themselves should become wise and brave. Caonabo fears not death, but he would have vengeance on the Spaniard before the day is hidden from his eyes. See you then to the words he hath spoken, for I tell you, Zemaco, as one who sees the wing and shadow of death above him, that the cassique of the Spaniard, whom they call Vasco Nunez, is one to conquer all lands and all peo-

ple—before whose path your warriors will melt as the thick mists that gather in the evening shadows melt and vanish before the bright eyes of the morning sun. If he be slain, there are none to take his place, and lead his people over the mountains. His wisdom is a greater foe to the power of Zemaco, than all the thunder of his warriors."

Zemaco was impressed with the sagacity of the fugitive, and not less with the calm and dignified manner in which he declared his knowledge of a conspiracy against his life, to which, however friendly, even Zemaco dared not entirely oppose himself.

"Caonabo hath spoken truly. The young warriors of Zemaco hold him an evil counsellor, whose words have gone more deeply into the heart of his people, than the Spanish lightning. Even now they seek him that Caonabo may be given to the war demon as a sacrifice. But they shall hear what he hath counselled. Zemaco will declare the wisdom of Caonabo. Let the Haytien warrior go aside from the path of counsel, while the strong men gather to Zemaco."

The fugitive did as he was bidden, and retiring from the encampment, which now lay contiguous to the mountain paths over which Vasco Nunez prepared to lead his little command, he wandered among the rocks, gloomily, but in calm, brooding over the defeat of his plans, and the threatening aspect of his fortunes. He was joined by his wife, the devoted, true-hearted woman, Buru.

"Father, chief, Caonabo," she exclaimed, as she approached him—"know you that the chief who leads the Spaniard is he who would have saved the boy from the sharp sword of Garabito? I have seen him. It is he—he would have struck for the poor Zemi."

"The sharp sword of Garabito was a friend to Zemi—the cassique of the Spaniard is the foe to Caonabo. He must die!" was the stern answer of the fugitive.

"Alas! father—Caonabo! let not thy hand touch the life of the good Spaniard. Spare him! spare him!—Spare him for the sake of the poor Zemi—spare him for the sake of the poor Buru. Turn thy arrow from his breast to the breast of another Spaniard. Slay not him—not him!"

"Zemaco will slay all—he should spare none, if he

would be himself safe; and least of all, the cassique who governs the Spaniards. What matter, whose arrow goes into the heart of the Spanish chief? Will he feel more pain if the arrow come from the bow of Caonabo or of the basest warrior of Darien? Go, go! you are a woman—these things are for the warrior. The Spanish chief must die, but he will not die by the hand of Caonabo. Zemaco will send him warriors with good words, and when he inclines to them his ear, then will they set upon and slay him. Hear you,—Caonabo will go into battle with the Spaniard, but he will raise no hand against the chief."

"Ha! but the warriors who go with a lying word to the chief?" exclaimed the woman.

"They will set upon and slay him when he thinks not. Caonabo will be among the hills. He will not strike the chief."

"Alas! alas!" were the only words of the woman in reply, as she comprehended the meditated treachery, while with her hands she covered her eyes, from which the tears were streaming in profusion—the tears of the gentle-hearted Haytien to whom even the destruction of an enemy was productive of a sorrow scarcely less great than would have been the sudden bereavement of a friend.

"It is well that the keen sword of Garabito slew the boy," said her lord with more gentle tones than the words seemed to require—"thou hadst else made a woman of him like thyself, Buru. But the messenger cometh from Zemaco. Leave me, woman—I would encounter him alone."

When she had gone, he exclaimed—

"He cannot bring life to Caonabo—he may bring death. If I may no more serve my people, nor harm my foe, it is well that death should come. I will go forward and meet the messenger."

The latter simply brought him a summons to attend the cassique. When he reached the little hollow of the hill, where the council had convened around their sovereign, he met several of the warriors leaving his presence. From these Caonabo encountered nothing but looks of suspicion and ill-will. These he did not seem to regard with any other than a sentiment of pity. Conscious of having done for them what they never could have done

for themselves—baffled for months an invader whom they could not otherwise oppose—he gave himself little concern as to the estimate which they put upon his conduct. With that forbearance of soul, which is perhaps one of the highest proofs of its superiority, his chief, nay, his only feeling was one of regret, that, through their own ignorance and vanity, his genius had been all the while labouring for them in vain. In all probability, the rashness of an hour would defeat all the toils and the successes of the past. Without a word or look, either of scorn or hostility, in requital of those so freely bestowed upon him, he entered the presence of Zemaco, who received him with a more indulgent aspect than that which he had shown him before the conference. He had succeeded in pacifying the hostility of his warriors for a season, and this little triumph enabled him to bestow the favour—so he considered it—of prolonged life, upon one who had freely risked his life in behalf of the warriors by whom it had been so begrudgingly prolonged.

"Zemaco hath shown the counsel of Caonabo to his warriors. They love not Caonabo—they believe not in his wisdom—but they have hearkened to the wishes of Zemaco. Fifty warriors will go down to the cassique of the Spaniard with the words of peace, which Zemaco will put into their mouths; and when they rise among the broken rocks Quarequa shall lie for them in waiting, and shall set upon and destroy them. Is this good?—is it spoken as Caonabo would have spoken?"

"It is good," was the reply of the fugitive, whose features did not change, nor put on the appearance of pleasure which the cassique expected them to assume. He rather continued with a countenance and manner which insensibly put on the extreme gravity which marked the demeanour of the other.

"Zemaco hath declared to them that Caonabo will fight under Quarequa. Is it good?"

"It is good;" was the almost indifferent response. "Has Zemaco no other word for the ears of Caonabo?" was the inquiry of the latter, as he beheld an expression of anxiety in the face of the cassique, and observed that he hesitated and faltered in his speech. With something like an effort, as if he felt some of the pain he expected to inflict, the cassique thus called upon, responded to the questioner as follows:—

"There is more, Caonabo. The warriors of Zemaco will follow the counsel of Caonabo, even as they have followed it before; but they say—upon his head be it if we conquer not the Spaniard. He shall die upon the rock of sacrifice, even upon the altar of the war-demon of Darien."

He paused, and his eye sank from before the intent and earnest but cold gaze of the fugitive. A brief pause ensued ere the latter replied.

"This too is good, Zemaco. Now let the warriors go down to the Spaniard, while I join myself to the men of Quarequa. Caonabo is ready for the Spaniard or for the war-demon. But, thou, Zemaco!—think'st thou that one warrior like Caonabo will appease the rage of the war-demon? No! his tongue shall lap blood, when I perish, from a thousand necks in Darien, and thine too shall be among them."

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAYTIEN MOTHER—THE WINTER BIRD CAGED FOR SUMMER.

The warriors of Darien were convoked in a grand and general assemblage. The presence of the priests and women, in all the pomp and pageantry which are almost equally, in all barbarous countries, affected by both, served to render the scene one of imposing and gorgeous display; and the place chosen for the convocation was on consecrated ground. A rock of sacrifice rose in the centre of the plain, which was immediately surrounded by the magicians—the uninitiated crowd covered the hundred hills which looked down upon the spot. Between the great multitude and the officiating priesthood, occupying a little space to themselves, stood fifty of the bravest warriors of the people of Zemaco. These had offered themselves to the war-demon, and were to be present at the barbarous rites performed in their behalf, and for the better propitiation of the appetite of the cruel power to whom they dedicated themselves, and whose favour they invoked. They had sworn to sacrifice the cassique of the Spaniard to his anger, or to yield themselves up to death in the prosecution of their object. It needs not that we should dwell on the horrible details which distinguished the barbarous rites by which this pledge was to be consummated and rendered binding on the parties. It is enough to know that a wretched prisoner was sacrificed—a subject of the cassique of Coyba, and the blood of the victim absolutely lapped by the devoted warriors. A consecrated knife was put into the hands of each, with which, before he delivered it to its future possessor, the magician gashed his breast, thighs, and shoulders, with seemingly unmeasured and

sometimes dangerous strokes. The rites finished, the warriors departed on their mission of treachery and hate.

Among the spectators on this occasion was the wife of Caonabo, the unhappy woman of Hayti. The tender heart of the islander revolted at the horrible display she witnessed, so utterly foreign to the habits of her own people; and when she thought upon the cruel object for which the dreadful ceremony had been performed, an intense anxiety arose in her bosom which rendered her feelings—harrowed and torn as they had been by the savage orgies of the priesthood—scarcely restrainable. It has been seen that she now knew what Spaniard led the invaders. This knowledge had prompted her to the appeal made to Caonabo in his behalf. Watching along the hills the toilsome advance of the foe, her keen eyes had distinguished the majestic and graceful form of that warrior, who, once seen, it was not easy to forget; and whose features and carriage, impressed on her [redacted] most keenly observant and anxiously intense [redacted] life, had become, as it were, a very part of her [redacted] Never could she forget the prompt, though unavailing interference which he offered, when the sword of the murderous Garabito was lifted against her child—nor the no less prompt valour by which he would have avenged the barbarous deed by which she had lost the boy for ever. With her heart beating and burning with the gratitude which she felt for the good and gallant Spaniard, could she calmly behold the preparations intended for his murder? Could she hear patiently the dreadful imprecations of the savage priesthood of the Charaibee,—the profession of a religion the most savage of any known to the new world—and hear the promises of the young warriors to their cassique, to wreak vengeance by treachery, in the unguarded moment to which their falsehood should beguile him, upon the brave and noble gentleman to whom her maternal heart acknowledged so warm a debt of gratitude? Her eyes grew blind with their tears, when all others around her gleamed with triumph. The shouts in her ears, the fierce cries and savage exultation, which lifted all other hearts to furious satisfaction, went like the chilling stroke of death into hers; and while a singular, and, we may add, a patriotic sentiment of hope and rejoicing filled the immense multitude around her with the conviction that a

national enemy was about to perish, she had but the one feeling and the one fear, that she was about to lose no other than a friend. As yet the quickening resolution in her mind was still unformed; but she felt, when she retired from the assemblage, that she could not suffer the brave Spaniard to fall by this wily treachery. It was only after hours of confused thought that the course of conduct which her duty presented to her, rushed with the speed of fire to her mind; and she resolved at all hazards to forewarn the Spaniard against confiding in the professions of the devoted warriors who had undertaken the work of treachery. It must be understood that she little knew or little dreamed of the danger which threatened Caonabo. He had, with a tenderness rather due to his Haytien connexions than to his Charaibean birth, withheld from her the painful doom which awaited him as the penalty following inevitably the failure of his plans; and with the fond conviction that while she saved the noble Spaniard she harmed none, and least of all, the lord of her own life and affections, she resolved that very night to descend into the plain—availing herself of the absence of Caonabo, who was about to set forth with the army of his jealous enemy, Quarequa—and apprise Vasco Nunez of the purpose of those who would seek him with proffers of service, and bringing with them those treasures of gold and pearls, which, she well knew, would tempt the Spaniard to any degree of confidence, as they tempted also to any measure of rashness. Women are not apt to be good politicians in any country, and the good Buru little thought that her truth to the cassique of the Spaniard was only so much treachery to the protector of herself and husband, the cassique of Darien.

Circumstances favoured her design. It was considered advisable that the Indian deputation bearing the presents of Zemaco and his friendly protestations, should "fetch a compass" of some extent, in order to deceive the Spaniard as to the precise spot where the Indian army lay. The necessity of gathering the treasure from various quarters, was also a cause of delay, which contributed to the prosecution of the plan of the woman; and when she descended from the hills, and, on the ensuing night, entered the camp of the Spaniards, she was several hours in advance of the warriors whose purpose she was about to foil.

At midnight the sentinels brought the strange woman to the presence of the chief she sought. When she saw him she fell upon her face. She was reminded by his noble presence of the fearful event in which her heart was so deeply wounded—the murder of her son—and her sobs silenced her own speech, while they commanded the wonder of all around. Vasco Nunez raised her from the earth, and gazed steadfastly on her agonized features; but the rapid passage of events, and the continual change of faces passing before him, had almost obliterated her mild and humble, but truly beautiful, features from his memory, until, seeing the abstracted and inquiring expression of his glance, she exclaimed in accents still broken and impaired by sobs—

"Buru, master—Buru. The poor Buru,—the woman that danced for the Spaniard, when the boy—"

"Ah!" said Vasco Nunez, with a feeling of astonishment prevailing over all others,—"Can it be? You here, Buru? How came you here—in whose vessel?"

With more art than she commonly employed, she evaded this inquiry, and proceeded with as little delay as possible to declare her object, and apprise him of the dangers which awaited him from the approaching deputation. The eye of the warrior searched keenly her countenance, as she unfolded the details of a design which denoted a higher degree of artifice than was common to the Indian, and betrayed a kind of tactics which, if persevered in, promised to be more dangerous to his successes than any he had yet encountered in the new world;—he would have preferred to doubt her intelligence,—her faith,—but the plain and direct narration which she gave, and the simple and sincere expression of her face, at once forced upon him a conviction which he would not willingly have entertained.

"The star is working for us," said he to the astrologer, when the narration was over, "and truly the events are wonderful which belongs to this. How came this poor woman here, whom we left at Santo Domingo? Can it be that she has come with other of her people in vessels of their own? How is it, Buru, will you not tell me?"

"Let my lord suffer the poor woman to go to the hills," she replied, evasively, in imperfect Spanish. "Have I not spoken all for my lord's safety? Would my lord have

the poor woman say what shall bring sorrow to her people?"

"It were base for me to think this thing, Buru," replied the cavalier. "The Blessed Mother of God forbid that I should desire thy lips to declare any of the secrets of thy people, which shall bring them to harm. But why would'st thou return to the hills? Know'st thou not I am thy friend? I will not harm thee if thou keep'st with my warriors, but danger awaits thee among the hills, when I go up to battle with Quarequa. It is Quarequa who leads the warriors of Zemaco upon the hills, thou say'st?"

"Quarequa, and another chief—a great chief," replied the woman.

"And what name has the other chief, Buru?" demanded Vasco Nunez.

"Let not my lord ask the woman what she is forbidden to speak; but let her depart upon her way, up the narrow path upon the mountain. It were not well that the young warriors of Zemaco should behold her in the tents of the Spaniard."

"Shrewdly spoken, Buru—thou may'st depart; but thou shalt wear this for my sake around thy neck, so that when the Spaniard shall meet thee, he will say, this is one whom Vasco Nunez loves, and will leave thee unharmed. Nay, fear not—it is the image of the Spaniard's God whom thou beholdest—one who died a cruel death, Buru, that I might save thy child if I could, and be kind to his mother."

"Ah, master!" was the only exclamation of the woman, as he flung around her neck a little crucifix of silver, with the image of the dying Jesus attached. The tears trickled down her cheeks the while, and her thick rising sobs stifled all her farther efforts at speech. Vasco Nunez himself conducted her beyond the limits of the camp, and deported himself the while, without forgetting the air of the superior, with all the respectful deference of one who feels how much that is venerable is associated with the idea and the person of a mother.

"Micer Codro," he said to the astrologer, at returning, "our star serves us well at seasons, but I cannot help the thought which tells me thou hast not yet learned truly to decipher its language. From thy lips, whatever thou speakest of my fortune, thy language is ever one of omen

and warning when thy subject is woman. She that has ever been my hope and joy, is ever thy dislike and dread. What wilt thou say touching the humble and true-hearted woman of Hayti? Shall I doubt her story? Shall I hold her an enemy seeking to beguile me into danger—to lull me to sleep, or blind me against the truth, until I am shorn of my strength and fall into the hands of my enemies. Thou wouldst have me, I nothing doubt, reject her story, and give ear to these cunning savages, who would lure me with rich gifts and friendly speech, until they find fitting moment to destroy me."

"I warn thee, my son," replied the other, "against woman,—since I am shown that it is by woman thou wilt fall at last;—but I tell thee not that all women will do thee harm, and I say not that some women may not serve thee. The stars work for man sometimes through hostile aspects, even as Satan works in the cause of Heaven, even when he would seem most busy in his own."

"Then it is still a power beyond their own which brings goodness to woman, and prompts her to becoming works. Ah, Codro—I fear me it is in thy memories of youth, and in the great experience of thy heart in long past years, rather than in the stars of heaven, that thou seest this ill-favour in the nature of the woman. But, to the present need—shall I give ear to these tidings of Buru, and hold these savages that are to seek me with friendly speech, as I should hold lying enemies? What aspect shall I put on before these messengers of the cunning Zemaco?"

"I would not have thee treat them as friends, nor yet as foes—for the woman may have mistaken the words of Zemaco, or she may have spoken falsely—"

"No! no!" cried Vasco Nunez hastily, interrupting the old man—"No, Micer Codro, I should as soon look to thee for falsehood as to that meek woman of Hayti. But thy counsel nevertheless is good. I will not treat the savages as foes,—but I will guard them as if they might be so. Were I sure that they came on purpose of treachery, I should give them to the dogs for punishment. Ho there! Colmenares!"

The lieutenant made his appearance.

"Get thee thy men in readiness—see that their matches be lighted, and all things prepared for hidden strife. Double your guards, and let your swords be out, for we may

have close conflict. I will put these savages in chains—all but one—who shall bear the tidings back to his master, of the bad success of this most cunning scheme. He shall see that his treacherous practice speeds with no better fortune than his daring. Away—be ready."

Before the dawn of day, the fifty messengers of Zemaco appeared in the camp of Vasco Nunez, and so far confirmed the truth of the tidings brought by Buru. They were received by the Spanish cavalier with a cold indifference of manner which effectually concealed from them his discovery. The preparedness in which the Spaniards stood for battle, did not alarm them, since, under the command of Vasco Nunez, the Indians had never found them otherwise. They delivered up the rich presents which they brought, and he beheld them placed at his feet with a countenance that underwent no change. He heard with a like inflexibility, the glowing protestations of the orator, who headed the deputation, and described for Zemaco, the fond and friendly interest which his master entertained in the fortunes of the Spaniard, in language, the warmth and exuberance of which, fitly corresponded with its insincerity. When he had finished, the cavalier regarded his unsinking, unabashed countenance with a piercing gaze, that might have made less rigid muscles than those of the Indian, quiver with shame and apprehension. But the orator met the glance with a stare of utter immobility.

"What name do they give thee among thy people?" said Vasco Nunez to the speaker, after a brief pause.

"I am Bacheco," said the orator, "but my people call me Canomee-calichee, or the bird that sings in winter."

"Indeed!" replied the Spaniard with a smile—"I will cage thee, Bacheco, that I may hear thy voice in summer also. It should be good at all seasons."

Then giving a signal to Colmenares and Pizarro, which had been previously resolved upon, the Indians were in an instant surrounded by the soldiers, and so sudden and complete was the surprise that they were disarmed of the consecrated knives which had been conferred upon each, before they could think to use them.

"Thou," said Vasco Nunez to one of the prisoners, whom he commanded to be released, "thou shalt go back to Zemaco; tell him that the Spaniard sees into his heart and knows all its falsehood—that he hath spoken to me

with a lying tongue, and I will put his warriors to death if he will not come to me in person. Away! I will be upon thy steps with the sun of another day."

The Indian thus released, looked at the Spanish chief though without obeying him, until a glance from the eye of the chief of the deputation, Bacheco, the orator for the occasion, seemed to authorize his departure. Then, bending almost to the earth, with an air of the profoundest deference, at the feet of Vasco Nunez, he turned gracefully from the presence and was soon hidden from sight in the crowd of gathering shadows that thicken at the coming of the dawn.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE REMAINS, THOUGH HOPE FLIES, IN THE CONSTANCY OF MISFORTUNE.

"Ha, Buru! Wherefore hast thou followed me from the hills where Zemaco keeps, and where is safety? Knowest thou not that the warriors of Quarequa lie in wait for the coming of the Spaniard? Knowest thou not that the path of the Spaniard is upon these hills? Thou hast come where the storm threatens, Buru—I would thou hadst kept with Zemaco."

Such was the salutation of Caonabo when the woman of Hayti stood before him on the evening of the day which followed that night when she sought the tents of the Spaniard. The gentle tones of the cassique's voice, and the earnest solicitude which he expressed for her safety, smote her heart sorely, for, after leaving the Spaniard, she grew half conscious that she had played the traitor to her husband no less than to Zemaco. It partly reconciled her to her breach of trust, when she felt that she could declare with an approving conscience that she preferred to share the danger with him to the safety which he did not share.

"If the storm is for Caonabo, the storm is also for Buru. If she feared not the black waters of the sea when Caonabo was in the canoe, she fears not the black wings upon the mountain if he be lying beside her. Buru sees not the danger when she looks on Caonabo."

"It is well," replied the fugitive, in melancholy accents, which as they were unusual to him, went more piercingly into her heart than any words which he might have spoken in anger. "It is time that thou shouldst cease to behold the storm—its black wing has been above our eyes since

the Spaniard first found his accursed yellow god in Hayti. The storm is on all the hills, and thou hadst found it with Zemaco as thou wilt find it with Quarequa. What we must see, that we need see not. It is there—let us not look. If it destroys,—well. If it spares,—well. If it threatens,—wherefore should we tremble, when it makes us not to tremble even when it slays? I have gone from hill to hill that the storm might not touch me;—and lo! the very sunshine that I saw afar, had a black storm hidden in its bosom. I am weary of flight. I will fly no more. I would have left thee in safety with Zemaco, Buru, but it is better that thou shouldst be here. When the keen sword smote the neck of the boy Zemi, dost thou think he felt pain, Buru? Look! I would take this little javelin, Buru, and I would make in thy heart a small mark, no bigger than its point—why dost thou tremble and shrink?—I will only do so at thy prayer:—and thou shouldst never see the cloud, nor fear the storm any more."

"Ah, father, chief!—thy words are strange and terrible to the poor, weak woman of Hayti. Oh, speak not thus—as if thy heart had forsaken thee. Be angry with the foolish woman—lift thy hand and strike her with thy anger;—but let not this heavy spirit be in thy speech. Wherefore shouldst thou lose thy heart, now, when thou hast warriors at thy bidding, and the great cassique Zemaco calls thee even to his secret counsels?"

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed the fugitive, with a laugh of bitter derision—"thou art but a woman, Buru—thou knowest as little of the hearts of men as of their counsels. Let us say nothing of the warriors which are led by Caonabo, or of the counsels that he gives to Zemaco. When the Spaniards come up the mountain, thou wilt ask after these warriors, but I know not that they will answer—and if Zemaco takes counsel from Caonabo, and the counsel be unwise and unsuccessful, it may be thou wilt then ask, and have no answer, when thy question is of Caonabo. But thou hast not said the thing I asked of thee. The sharp sudden stroke of the Spaniard when it smote the neck of Zemi, the boy—dost thou think it brought him more pain than when they put the lash on his back at the Encomienda of Ribiero?"

"Oh, no! no!" was the prompt reply.

"Thou hast a quick and true thought of it, Buru. The pain of death is a pain here and here"—touching his head and heart as he spoke—"and if these care not to live, there is no pain. If I put this sharp flint into thy bosom—"

"Oh, father, chief, Caonabo, what wouldst thou—wouldst thou slay the woman of Hayti—the mother of the boy?"

She shrank back impulsively from his grasp, as, half baring the swelling bosom which was still beautiful, as she was still young, he rested the edge of the keen javelin upon her heart.

"If thou biddest me,—yes!" was the calm reply—still terrible, though nothing could exceed the mournful tenderness of his tones. "I would not slay thee, Buru—No! But thinkest thou to live when the strife rages—when the Spaniard has put his foot on the neck of Caonabo?"

Her shriek silenced him, and falling on her knees before him, she implored him to forbear.

"Ha! what is this, woman!" he cried in fierce accents, as, falling from the bosom where she had concealed it, the silver cross given her by Vasco Nunez became revealed to his sight.—"Speak!—say, before I slay thee—why is it that I find upon thy neck the image that the Spaniard worships?"

He seized the sacred emblem as he spoke, and tearing it from her neck, while she vainly endeavoured to arrest his arm, flung it over into one of the wild abysses of the mountains where they lay. His fierce demand which received no answer, was again repeated, and, still incapable of speech, she sank prostrate upon her face before him, while his wrath, rising into almost ungovernable violence as he surveyed her, prompted him to spurn her with his lifted foot.

"Thou hast fled the gods of the Charaibee and the Haytien to which thou wast sworn. Thou hast sold thyself and them to the gods of the Spaniard. It is because of this that they aid us not—it is because of this that the Spaniard drives us to the hills and slays our warriors. What black spirit has possessed thee, woman, to deliver up thy people to the foes who have slain thy own child? Speak, that I may be moved with fury to slay—it is because I look on thee with horror that I cannot strike."

The moaning, inarticulate prayer for mercy alone reached his ears; and her eyes were not once uplifted from the ground. Suddenly the air resounded with the clamours of an hundred war conchs, a token that the army of Quarequa was rising into activity, and a summons that demanded the presence of Caonabo for other duties. His tone and whole manner suddenly changed. His words and accents were alike mournful.

"Oh, Buru—woman that has been the mother of the Charaibean son, and has slept on the bosom of Caonabo, was there not enough of sorrow for the chief that thou hast done this thing? Was the grief slow to hunt him that thou hast invoked a false god to be my enemy? Did I speak to thee even in anger—did I beat thee with cruel blows—did I gash thee with flints—did I drive thee forth beneath the tempest in winter? Why hast thou taken the dead god of the Spaniards to thy bosom and east from thee the living god of the Charaibee? It is well for thee that Caonabo has no anger left him now—it is well that he feels so base that he can no longer strike any but the Spaniard. He hath heard the threat of Zemaco in his ear, and he hath spoke no defiance. He hath beheld the scornful glance of Quarequa, and he hath lifted no hand to slay. If he spares Zemaco and Quarequa, shall he not spare the woman? and yet, Buru, I tell thee that if thou hast taken the god of the Spaniards to thy heart, thou hast done more harm to Caonabo than the threat of Zemaco and the scorn of Quarequa."

He left her prostrate where she lay and went forth to where the warriors were assembling. There, in the presence of the host, Quarequa informed him of the messenger from the Spanish chief and of the fortune which had befallen the fifty warriors.

"And thus saith Zemaco," continued the jealous and malignant savage, with an exultation which gleamed from his eyes and which he did not seek to hide, "if the cassique of the Spaniards fall not in the strife to-day, it is because of thy counsel; and thou shalt atone, on the stone of sacrifice, to the war-demon of Darien, for the warriors that have perished."

Caonabo gave no answer, and the smile of pity which overspread his countenance as he witnessed the hostile air of his enemy, was quickly succeeded by a look of wo,

which, however, took its rise from a far different source than any solicitude for his own fate. The war-conchs sounded, and the command of Quarequa compelled his attention to the band of warriors which he was required to lead. But a moment was left him for speech with the poor woman, his wife, who had followed, with all the adhesive attachment of the dog, the steps of the master who had punished.

"Woman, I now know thy secret. Thou hast been down the hills and hast spoken with the Spaniard. Thou little knowest the evil thou hast done. Thou hast saved him, but thou hast slain thy husband. It is well. I reproach thee not for this, for I tell thee I am weary of life. But thou hast given me to a cruel death, and thou hast betrayed thy people to a more cruel enemy. Lo! I am merciful. Get thee in readiness to die when the battle is over, for as sure as the god of the Charaibee is a god of strength and terror, so surely will I sacrifice thee to his wrath when the strife is ended with the Spaniard."

Slowly she followed after his footsteps, as he went to the spot where his warriors awaited him, but he spoke to her no other word; and many and mixed, indeed, were the thoughts of dread and danger in her mind, and of sorrow in her heart, as she heard the far music of the Spanish trumpet coming up to the combat on the mountains.

But of the danger to herself she had the most childish unconsciousness. Though he had spurned and threatened her, she thought only of his danger, and of that strange and sad hopelessness of heart with which he had spoken in their late interview. With an eye that never lost sight of his person, she followed all his movements; and when the Spanish files began to appear in sight, winding slowly on their way up the uneven hills, she sat down upon a rock which overlooked the ambush of the Indians, resolved to watch over the fugitive Caonabo, as if her mere watch could suffice to disarm some of the danger, or defeat some of the foes which might lurk around his path. It was the watch of love still lingering, even after the flight of hope, and no less constant in its devotion than that envious fortune which had driven from the side of the warrior all his other and abler friends.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST FIGHT OF THE CHARAIBEE—THE WAR-DEMON HAS HIS VICTIM.

The justly-minded reader will seldom find much pleasure in the perusal of narratives which dwell largely upon the conflicts between the accomplished cavaliers of Europe, and the simple, half-naked warriors of the new world. The inequality of the combatants revolts the mind at all solicitous of justice. The war between these adversaries was most generally all on one side,—and the poor Indians obtained their occasional successes—with some few exceptions, among which may be named the long contest of the Spaniards with the Araucanians—simply through the contemptuous negligence of their adversaries. Their battles, so called, were usually little else than massacres, in which each butcher slew his thousand victims. Mere numbers on the part of the Indians, so far from increasing the difficulty and the merit of conquest to the Europeans, in reality facilitated greatly the dreadful business of arquebus and sword; since, as the Gaul said to the Romans, "thick grass is always easier cut than thin." The policy of Caonabo had been to reconcile this inequality between the parties, by a resort to that only ally which could possibly effect the object; but which, strange to say, our European casuists have always found particularly detestable when employed by any other than their own people,—namely, treachery. As if the injured and inferior people were not —not merely authorized, but—bound to resort to any and every practice in order to repel and destroy the invader, who, without pretext or right, descends upon foreign and peaceful lands, and relying on the superiority of his arts and arms makes unequal war for the destruction of the unoffending.

Zemaco had no other idea of war than that taught him by the hardy valour of his people, in which personal agility and strength furnished the chief sources of power, and no arts were practised but those which enabled them to fling the javelin to its mark unerringly, and in the close strife to wield the heaviest club with the lightest effort, and grapple the most formidable foe with heart and muscle equally inflexible and unrelaxing. The small, and seemingly effeminate Spaniards, were, until the influence of their strange and godlike weapons were made known, regarded with scorn by the gigantic warriors of Darien, who, rushing upon them without fear, thought to annihilate them without effort. The result of the combats of Zemaco with his new enemies is already known to the reader; and a demonstration to the mountain warriors of the utter inadequacy of the arms and practice to which they had been accustomed for successive generations, to oppose assailants who carried thunderbolts always lighted in their hands, left them for a brief period in a state of hopelessness which was truly pitiable. The counsels of Caonabo had produced a beneficial effect upon their spirits no less than fortunes; as they taught them to oppose caution and cunning to superiority, and to avoid the enemy with whom they did not openly dare to contend. They fled from well-drilled and well-commanded bodies of the Spaniards, but still hovering along their path, they descended upon them in their hours of indiscretion or repose; and by this partisan policy, cut off stragglers, foragers and explorers; gradually thinning the numbers, always few, of the power that was destined never to prove itself more formidable to the poor Indians than when it seemed least numerous and most feeble. What effect this policy of the fugitive cassique might have had upon the progress and the fortunes of Vasco Nunez, if continued, may not be so readily affirmed; but the inference is fair, from what is already known, that, with the slender forces of the Spanish conqueror, his insecure position in the regard of his sovereign, and the restless, reckless and impatient character of the men whom he commanded, he must have been baffled sufficiently long in his march across the peninsula, to have made him so unpopular with both sovereign and people, as to have led to his deposition; and this event, by placing the Spaniards under the command of inadequate leaders,

would, more certainly than any other, have produced that equality between the parties which was the chief object in all the labours of Caonabo. But the favour which the fugitive had found in the sight of the cassique of Darien, led, naturally enough, to a jealous hostility on the part of those native warriors, who, hitherto, had been the exclusive agents, and, perhaps, directors of his power. The fierce chieftain to whom was assigned the task of opposing the progress of the Spaniard over the mountains, first kindled the spirit of discontent among the people of Darien at the honours bestowed upon the stranger. A faction had sprung into existence, of which Quarequa was the head, the power and claims of which Zemaco found himself unable to withstand. But the cassique did not yield without an effort to save the fugitive, and to his resolute defence of Caonabo may be referred the indulgence which had been given him, by which his life was made to depend upon the success of his own plans. The failure of one important item in these plans—the attempt upon the life of the Spanish captain—was, Caonabo well knew, equivalent to the failure of his last hope, and a sure forerunner of his own doom;—and it would not be easy to describe the pang which the doomed warrior felt, when, in the last moment of his interview with the wife of his bosom, he was driven by the force of circumstances to the conviction that to her treachery the failure was attributable wholly. Suffering as she did, the pang would have been far greater at her heart than any at work in his, could she have known the dreadful consequences, following, to the chief whom she did not less reverence than love, from an act which seemed to her one of unmixed benevolence and good. It was, perhaps, the noblest proof of his love for the unhappy woman, that, in the moment of his own conviction of the truth, he yet withheld it from her knowledge. Had he but spoken out what he knew—had he but declared the true meaning of that vague charge which he made her at parting, then the death with which he threatened her had been the very kindest boon ever offered by his hands.

But though indifferent to life, Caonabo did not go into battle as one without hope. He did not suffer his private wrongs, and the hostility of Quarequa, to blind him to the remembrance that the Spaniards were their national enemies. He prepared to exert all his capacities against

them, as much so as if the country which he toiled for was his own, and he possessed the warmest confidence and affections of the people. With this aim he sought out Quarequa, while there was yet sufficient time left to suffer them to elude the arms of the enemy and even to escape his sight. He declared himself averse to battle, advised that the warriors of Darien should harass the Spaniards from the heights, and still retreat at their approach. "It will be easy," he said in brief, "to destroy the dogs with our arrows when unsupported by the warriors, and by their death we deprive the Spaniards of one of their most powerful agents of destruction. Their thunder we can ourselves escape behind the hills, to the tops of which we only rise for an instant to aim a shaft or a javelin, and by timely flight from hill to hill, baffle equally pursuit and aim of the enemy, who, covered with heavy armour and without horse, cannot hope to follow us. The ambuscade you have set for them now, will surprise but not destroy them; and failing to do this, when you have once met them, you cannot then avoid a general conflict."

Such was the amount of the last advice which the fugitive offered to his uncompromising enemy. It was answered in the language of insolence and taunt.

"Let the women of Hayti fear the Spaniard. There are men in Darien. Caonabo can go back among the mountains, if he loves not to behold the strife—let him hide behind the hills, and shoot his arrows down into the plain by stealth, even as he counsels; but he cannot fly death always. Hath he not heard the words of Zemaco? If we conquer not the Spaniards this day, it is because the war-demon of Darien is hungering for his victim. Caonabo will do well to prepare himself for the Spaniard, if he loves not the rock of sacrifice."

For a moment the natural indignation of the man got the better of the calm, forbearing spirit of the patriot, and the fugitive chief replied to the insulting warrior in tones and language which were not unfelt even by the savage enemy whom he addressed.

"Were it not that there is an enemy before us, Quarequa, I would tear thy dog tongue from thy throat. It will be well for thee if the thunder of the Spaniard strikes thee down this day, for, as surely as the war-demon of Darien clamours for one victim, I will give him, if I survive this

battle, another; and thou shalt go to his altars tongueless, that thou mayst neither taunt the brave warrior with thy foul speech, nor brag of thy own worthless deeds. See that thou make thyself worthy of death by my hand in the doings thou shalt this day show."

Nothing but the prompt interposition of the surrounding warriors, and the rapid approach of the Spaniards, prevented the mortal issue which the chiefs equally desired, and the words of Caonabo had invited. They separated with eyes breathing fire, and hearts in which the flame of mutual hostility was burning almost as keenly as that which they individually felt towards their invader. Though maddened to momentary forgetfulness, the fugitive chief did not suffer himself to lose sight of the cares which gathered before him in the approaching conflict; nor did he spare any of his efforts of mind or body to make the battle, so unwisely risked, more hopeful on the part of the Indians. He scattered his men along the most broken ledges of the heights commanding the advance of the Spaniards, and lessening the distance in an air line between themselves and the foe, in reality lessened the danger. Many of these, in addition to their ordinary weapons, he provided with heavy rocks, which had been previously heaped conveniently together, and lay in little piles on the verge of every declivity. He commanded his men to sling their clubs to their necks by the thong with which they were usually tied for this very purpose; and by a command so very unusual among the savages of Darien, on the approach of battle, he furnished a check to that impetuosity of disposition, which most generally led them to rush forward to the combat hand to hand, in utter despite of the superior arms borne by the Spaniards. Another result of this arrangement was to compel them at first to the free and exclusive employment of the weapons left them,—namely, the missiles provided on the hills, and the arrow and javelin, in the use of which no people could be more expert. These were the weapons which were chiefly feared by the Europeans, since a well-aimed lance or arrow in the hands of an Indian, was most frequently quite as fatal as the rude firelock of that early period, and perhaps, in a closely-wooded country, not much inferior to the more deadly rifle of our own day. Their value as a weapon of war against an invader, one chief part of whose strength lay in bloodhounds, was

incomputable; since a deliberate warrior, having an elevated position, might very well disable every such assailant, if his approach could be seasonably distinguished; and the heavy rocks which garnished the heights were no less good against the slow, uptoiling soldier. Thus prepared, Caonabo waited with impatience the progress of the foe, and his war-conch was the first to open with the signal music of battle.

Vasco Nunez was a wary captain. He saw no foes while ascending the ambushed pass, but his quick military eye readily conceived the excellence of such a position for the purpose to which Caonabo had preferred it. He commanded a halt, and resolved to devote some time to a survey of the ground in order to the choice of a less perilous pathway. But, fortunately for his little army, the rash character of the cassique who led the main body of the Indians, now doubly stimulated to temerity by the exciting controversy which had taken place between himself and the fugitive chief, and no less encouraged, perhaps, by the unexpected show of caution on the part of the Spaniards, hastily emerged into sight from the cover which concealed him, and rushing forward with all his force, himself entered upon the passage, the heights overlooking which were lined with the still hidden warriors of Caonabo. Exulting in the feeble vanity of his heart, at an exhibition of courage which he thought every way beyond his antagonist, he shouted aloud to the fugitive, whom he passed in his rapid onset, to do likewise if he was a man.

"Fool! fool!" was the bitter exclamation of Caonabo in reply—"he hath ruined all. He hath given me, and himself, and his country, to the barking dogs of the Spaniard."

The prediction was accomplished almost in the instant after its utterance. The onset of Quarequa relieved Vasco Nunez from any apprehension of danger from the heights, and, pouring in a dreadful volley from his arquebusses, he rushed forward to the *melée*, leading the way himself for his no less resolute followers. Quarequa paid for his temerity in the first joining of the battle. A shot struck him in the brain, and he fell without a groan, his own headlong followers rushing, unconsciously for a while, over his prostrate body. The Spaniards bearing bucklers at once closed with the more forward Indians, and the terrific thunder of

their first-used weapons was scarcely more imposing in its effect than the short keen cut-and-thrust, which was the common weapon of the time. Still the Indians fought manfully. Indeed, they had no choice but fight. Their own immense numbers, crowded and still crowding into the narrow passage into which their leader had so rashly descended, not only defeated their own capacity to fight with profit, but utterly prevented those from flight who bore the whole brunt of the unequal battle. Meanwhile, Caonabo looked down from his heights in an anguish that cannot be spoken. Not an arrow could he send, not a javelin could he fling, without danger to his own people. The Spaniards were effectually incorporated with the confused and blinded crowd, and the bloodhounds, now loosed, were pulling down victim after victim without the pause of an instant, and almost without injury in the conflict. The brave Carib felt that he could no longer maintain his position—that he must descend also to the hopeless strife—giving himself up to share the dangers of the miserable victims, led like sheep to the slaughter by the improvident and insolent rashness of the incompetent fool who had them in command.

"Yet, were it not well," he demanded, looking round upon his men, "if we slay the Spaniards with our rocks, not seeing that there are people of our own below? Let us fling down these mighty masses which shall crush them all, and give us freedom for ever. Zemaco will lose many warriors, but oh! my brethren, the Spaniards will all perish—all! all!"

The terrible proposition was received in profound silence. There was no answering word or action. The warriors commanded by Caonabo had imbibed no small share of that jealousy of his power which had led the native chiefs to a factious rashness; and though they had seen how easy it would have been for them to have absolutely annihilated the power of the Spaniards, under the sole guidance of the fugitive chief, yet the daring and the death of Quarequa had redeemed his rashness and folly in their eyes. The appeal of Caonabo fell upon unheeding ears —none responded to his suggestion, and a sullen reply from more than one proposed to descend to close combat in the already crowded gorge. With a sigh from the bottom of his heart—a sigh which denoted the loss of the last hope—the chief bade them get their war-clubs ready, and

leading the way, he brought them into conflict at the somewhat auspicious moment when the Spaniards, driving the fugitives before them, were about to ascend the table-land of the mountain. His war-conch sounded cheerily and encouraged the flying party, as much as it startled the successful, by announcing the coming into combat of a fresh band of warriors. The voice of Caonabo rang through the field, clear as a Spanish trumpet, in encouragement to his men. He spoke in the native dialect of Darien. He used, in brief, every argument and phrase of bitter import which could make them more reckless and ferocious in the conflict.

"The war-demon looks down upon you," he cried—"he claims, he clamours for ye all. Ye will all perish, whether ye fight or fly, then why should ye fear this bursting thunder of the Spaniard, or why should ye shrink from his biting sword? Will ye not bite again with a keen tooth—will ye not grapple him with a hearty hate? Lo! men of Darien—I a stranger—a man of Hayti, where ye hold the men as women—I will show ye how to grasp the Spaniard—I will lead ye to the sort of strife ye love! Look, where I go, ye who now tremble—let all follow, and take ye hold, each, on some such enemy as him I seek; then, if ye die, Zemaco will have no more need of warriors, since he will have no more enemies. Lo, ye! Follow! follow! 'Tis a woman of Hayti shall show the warriors of Darien how to seek their foes."

Without heeding the effect of this taunting speech, and seemingly only solicitous to gain the thick of the combat, the fearless fugitive rushed forward, and it was not long ere he attained what seemed his object. Once more he confronted the Spanish captain, and opposed his war-club of palm, to the keen edge of the Spanish sword. Vasco Nunez recognized his opponent at a glance.

"Ha! thou art a bold knave to face me again, but thou shalt not escape me now. Yet, before I strike with thee, let thy people throw down their arms and receive mercy. Thou seemest to be their leader—command them, that I may spare their lives."

"They want no life from thee, Spaniard—they seek thy life, as I do—they will give their own lives to win it."

"Have at thee then, for a bold savage—thou deservest the blows of one."

Once more the well-tempered steel of the Spaniard severed the macana of the Indian, but the sword flew in twain also with the stroke. Some secret fracture in the blade, or the uncommon hardness of the opposing wood, rendered it unequal to the collision; and the Spanish chieftain, still confronted by the Charaibee, bore no weapon but the fragment of the blade, scarcely a poniard's length, and without the point of the poniard, to make it useful as such. The Indian meanwhile threw aside his equally ineffectual club, and grasping Vasco Nunez around the body with one arm, heedless of the repeated strokes which the latter bestowed with his broken weapon upon his head, he raised a dagger with the other hand, the stroke of which was only baffled by the keen eye and quick movement of the Spaniard. Practised in every sleight in the use of his weapon—proverbially "egregius digladiator,"—Vasco Nunez caught the uplifted arm of his tenacious foe, and flinging away his own broken weapon in the same instant, with a strength which awakened the Indian's wonder, and which he vainly endeavoured to resist, he wrested the dagger from his hold, and ere he could recede a pace, he drove it, with unrelaxing arm, deep into the eye of his enemy, the sharp point of the steel meeting its first resistance only from the skull behind. The hard struggle—one of the hardest to which in a life of warlike enterprise the Spanish cavalier had ever been subjected—was over; and he threw from him the expiring body of a hero, who, in his own savage empire, and during his exile in the empire of other savages, betrayed virtues of patriotism and courage which had done honour to the histories of a people far more advanced in those arts which secure the awards of glory and posterity. With the fall of Caonabo, the battle, though not over, will need at our hands no farther developement. Enough, that the Indians fighting valiantly still, fought against hope and in the very mockery of valour. A carnage followed, which Vasco Nunez vainly endeavoured to restrain; and it was with a rebuking and gloomy spirit that he walked over the bloody field, and surveyed the grim, fearless faces of the thousand savage warriors whom he had slain, and who seemed still, even in death, to gaze upon him with a stern defiance. But when he came to the spot distinguished by his own desperate conflict with the fugitive cassique, he was startled to hear a faint moaning arising from the place,

and to behold a woman outstretched beside the corpse of the unconscious warrior. A second glance revealed to him the Haytian mother—the now utterly desolate and miserable Buru.

"Buru!" he exclaimed, stooping to the ground and striving to raise her from it as he spoke, "is it thou, my good Buru! What dost thou here, and who is he, the warrior beside thee?"

She resisted his efforts to lift her, and clung with something of violence to the corpse.

"Let Buru die with the chief!" she exclaimed, "Buru would not have help from the Spaniard—she would die—she would die."

"But thou forgettest, Buru, I am thy friend—I would help and save thee. Thou shalt go with me and be in safety among the tents of the Spaniard."

"No! no! not with the Spaniard," she replied with a passionate shriek and gesture, "not with the Spaniard. He hated the Spaniard—the Spaniard was the enemy of the chief. He will be angry with Buru if she goes to the Spaniard."

"And who was he—what was he of whom you speak, Buru? What chief is it that you lament—can this be Zemaco? It is no Haytien, it is a Carib!"

"Zemaco! no! Zemaco sleeps in safety on his hills towards Darien. He!"—and she spoke in lower and reverential tones while she pointed to the body—"was he not the great chief of the Carib—was he not Caonabo, the father of Zemi—and was not Buru the mother of the boy?"

A passionate flood of grief followed this revelation; the sobs of the woman who still clung to the corpse of the warrior, utterly preventing all farther speech at the moment.

"This, then, was the mountain warrior that baffled our best warriors so long—this was Caonabo."

The half spoken eulogy which fell unconsciously from Vasco Nunez, renewed the provocation to sorrow in the mind of the hearer.

"Alas! for the woman—alas for the poor Buru. It is Caonabo no more. The chief is silent like the rock, and cold—cold. Caonabo! father! chief! He will not hear me, or I went down to the Spaniard, and told him of the

young warriors! He is angry with the woman, and she must die. He hath sworn when his sleep is over, to give me in sacrifice to the angry god of the Charaibee. Buru must die!"

The words of Vasco Nunez tended in no way to settle the grief of the woman. She was possessed of an idea—one, most probably, common to her people—that, as he had doomed her to death, the doom would inevitably be fulfilled by some agency under the instigation of the cruel demon which the Charaibee worshipped; and all her words and actions tended, after this, to reveal the strong hold which this faith had upon her mind. She suffered them to remove the corpse and to bury it—a degree of respect especially shown to the unhappy widow, and of which she seemed acutely conscious, as she closely regarded every movement of the warriors to whom this duty was assigned. But this done, she proceeded to offices which truly indicated the insane direction of her mind; and in the tent to which Vasco Nunez had her conducted, and in which she was carefully watched and tended, she busily employed herself in those preliminary rites with which the doomed victim prepares herself for death. She cut away her hair and consumed it by fire. Fearing that she might employ the same instrument upon herself, Vasco Nunez had it removed from her possession and control. But this seemed to give her no concern. She carefully performed her ablutions, arranged her garments, and seating herself at the entrance of the tent, appeared like one in waiting for a messenger. The tears were dried upon her cheek, and she uttered no farther complaint. But the eyes lacked all lustre, and looked out with a stare quite as full of unconsciousness as indifference, though the busy movements of the warriors returning from pursuit of the fugitives, and gathering spoils and repairing armour, were all going on before her. Vasco Nunez encamped that night on the field of battle; his sentinels were placed and his preparations made, as if he had not been the victor, and as if the forces of his foe were still lurking along the hills around him. Silence rested upon the encampment; so deep that the very footfall of the watchful and walking soldier disturbed the drowsy echoes, and wakened them to startle for a moment the hungering beasts that had descended for prey to the field of carnage. Sound, indeed, was the

sleep of that weary band, with few exceptions, which had toiled and fought so freely and with such success. But no ear was so dull with sleep, but would have been pierced by the terrible and strange shriek which rang at midnight throughout the host. It came from the tent, the only one in the encampment, which Vasco Nunez had assigned, with a considerate humanity, to the widow of the cassique. Once, twice, thrice, was that shriek repeated, and every heart trembled into instant consciousness and apprehension, as the shrill sounds came back in prolonged reverberations from the hills. Vasco Nunez was one of the first to leap from his place of rest, and, snatching up his arms as he heard the cry, to rush to the spot whence it proceeded. One of the sentinels was already at the tent which he had not yet entered, but from which he averred himself to have seen a tall and shadowy figure depart, the moment after he had been startled by the screams. The cavalier called to the woman within, but received no answer. All was ominous silence. He entered, and his first step was arrested by something which seemed like a human body at his feet.

"Bring torches—torches!" he cried aloud, as his own anxiety grew almost intolerable. Fearing to harm the person at his foot by any forward movement, he was about to recede, when he felt, with a nameless horror, his sandals almost fastened to the earth by some clammy substance, the nature of which he too readily divined. Lights were brought, and he found the unhappy woman on the ground in the person before him. She was already insensible. The blood, streaming from mouth and nostril had sluiced the earth around her, and had exhausted the precious fountain at her heart. There was no wound, no sign of violence upon her person. The conflicting emotions of her heart had been her executioner, and the sanguinary god of the Charaibee had despatched an avenger, as silent and certain as he had been noiseless and pathless. The poor woman had expiated her involuntary treason to her lord; and it may be permitted to fancy, to believe that, restored to his favour, she still attends him, and the child she loved, among those blue hills and green sloping valleys which make the heaven of the humble-hoping savage.

CHAPTER X.

THE CROWNING EMINENCE—VASCO NUNEZ SURVEYS THE PACIFIC OCEAN FROM THE PEAKS OF DARIEN.

THE victory gained over Quarequa removed from the path of Vasco Nunez all farther obstructions from that savage in his passage onward. That warrior with six hundred of his followers lay on the field of battle, having paid, in this manner, the penalty of his impatient valour, and of the mean and fatal jealousy with which he regarded the progress of the fugitive cassique in the confidence of his superior. The next day his conqueror reached the flourishing village in which Quarequa dwelt, where he found abundance of those spoils of gold and jewels, which had been sufficient reward for most Spanish conquerors, and amply compensated his followers for all their wounds, toils and perils. To him, however, whose heart was set on schemes of far higher object, and whose spirit yearned with that audacious ambition which seeks life beyond man's ordinary limits—seeks life among men even when the grave has covered over the feelings, the fears, and the fortunes of his petty hour and mortal part—the delights shown by his followers at these acquisitions seemed no less ridiculous than base. He turned from the glittering heaps as they underwent division among his soldiers, and his eye watched with anxiety inexpressible, the only mountain still towering in his path, which remained for him to overcome. From the peak of that mountain—so his guide assured him,—might be seen the placid waters of that secret sea, the sight of whose waters was to reward him for years of apprehension, months of toil and peril, constant strifes, and the eating cares of that often-defeated hope, which had grown sick under a thousand disappointments, and only revived in the

compelling fervour of that resolving genius which had sustained him and it alike, and forced the very stars of destiny in the direction of its desires. That single mountain, at the foot of which he stood, lay between him and the object of his quest. His heart bounded within his bosom —his spirit, scarcely restrainable, impelled him forward;— but when he looked round upon his weary and diminished band, only sixty of whom remained for this last effort, he felt that the toil was too much to be undertaken, in the exhaustion of the day, no less than of his soldiers. And still, —at least for one night longer—his hope was to be baffled. And what might be the events,—the defeats, the disasters of that one night! Even now, with the empire within his grasp which was to crown and render glorious all the previous toils of his life, it might be plucked from his possession, and he himself hurled down to that obscurity, worse than death, which was the antipathy of the fervent and leading passion of his soul. Such were the thoughts that kept him wakeful that long and weary night; and apprehensions which put on the shape of fear that his soul had never known before, now made him tremble with a weakness, the result of that superior height of aim and position, which too often leads to dizziness in the triumphant aspirant. "Even now," thought he, "the messenger of Ferdinand may be on his way, pursuing me, even into these pathless solitudes. His footstep may sound in my ears ere this night be over; and if he be of the temper of the base Enciso, as of too many of those who represent our sovereign in the new world, then may he, in the insolence of his mood, deny me even to look upon the wondrous empire which I have sought out at so much peril."

This reflection brought with it a new resolve. Once more his eyes gazed upon the mountain. The stars were sleeping over head. The winds gently swept down the precipitous sides of that barrier, which, reduced in the imperfect starlight to his eyes, seemed easy of ascent, and almost stooping to his feet. His ear fancied that the murmur which he heard—that of the breeze at dalliance with the lofty firs along the steep—was the solemn murmur of the contiguous ocean.

"I will ascend it while they all sleep. It cannot be many hours ere I reach the top—ere dawn I must; and none then may deprive me of the sight. Why should I

pause? It is not for me now to sleep. I feel no weariness, but that of this delay; and have no fears. St. John, of the Wilderness, be my strength and guide!' Help me, thou that hast so long given me thy help, so that this goodly work of mine, which thou hast greatly favoured, may be made secure at last! Let me behold the glowing empire which shall make me forget the scorn of women and the persecutions of men—which shall enable me to triumph, so that I may look on the messenger of fate with a smile, and at least give to Spain the empire which she will not let me keep! I will go forward—this night, at least, is my own."

The tread of a light footstep behind him, touched his ear, and arrested the soliloquy of the speaker. He turned and beheld the youth Pedro, his secretary.

"Ha! boy! Is it thou? thou shouldst be at rest. Art thou not weary? thou shouldst be! I have seen thee do better service this day than it seemed to me possible for thy slender arm to accomplish; and it was my resolution to rebuke thee for a forwardness against which thou hadst my counsel in the morning. Why didst thou adventure thyself so rashly?"

"I but followed thee, Señor Vasco. Thy example was of more authority than thy precept, when the blood was in fever, and the arrows of the Indians were goading the most timid forward. Could I have thought at such moment of thy morning counsel I had not so erred; but, in truth, the hour of thought had gone by, and I found myself in action, and the action over, ere I thought again. I trust, as my offence was involuntary, that it will be forgiven me."

Courage is any thing but a fault in the eye of the courageous, and the answer of the chief was approving.

"But thou shouldst be weary now, Pedro—why dost thou not seek thy rest?"

"It is, señor, because I have something of thy yearning to-night which keeps me wakeful. I heard from the guide given us by Ponca, that yonder summit would give us glimpses of that great southern sea, and though I deemed not we should gaze upon it this night, I yet desired to place my feet upon the mountain which stood in our pathway."

"And how knowest thou, boy, that we shall behold it?"

replied the chief sharply, "didst thou hear my words ere I saw thee—didst thou hearken to my secret speech?"

The answer of the youth was prompt and rather rapidly spoken. There was something in the tones of his voice, which seemed to denote vexation at the suspicion which his coming had incurred.

"I heard thee, señor, but with no intent to hear. I knew not that thou wast near me, till I heard the sound of thy voice, and I then drew nigh that thou shouldst see me. I heard nothing but thy expressed determination to ascend the mountain this night, and thought to pray of thee permission to go up with thee."

The entreaty of the boy to accompany him in his proposed adventure, at once opened the eyes of Vasco Nunez to the full extent of the wild undertaking which he had contemplated.

"What!" he said, "thou hast heard then that mad resolution. I were a boy, Pedro, like thyself, of little wit, were I to go on this adventure or suffer thee to do so. The impatient, yearning spirit got the better of the sober reason; and, perchance, hadst thou not come to awaken my wiser thoughts, I had in truth, set forth on a journey over ways unknown, perchance thickly spread with abysses and cavernous descents, the wild tiger at my head and the brown serpent with his deadly venom at my foot. Now that thou cravest the adventure, I see all its danger. We had fallen in the dim light among pitfalls to which day never comes—among dens of savage beasts, and nests of coiling reptiles—and this danger, for no sort of necessity or use, since the dawn of another day will bring with it the triumph and the prospect which we cannot now lose, and which we should but imperfectly behold at night. It is the boyish impatience of my blood which would have led me to a folly such as might be becoming in thee, but would be inexcusable to one having my experience, and the charge of all these brave soldiers on my hands. Let us to our rest, boy, subduing our yearning passions for this long night as best we may."

At the cool and bracing hour of daybreak, the little army of Vasco Nunez was in motion. The steeps before their eyes which the chief, in the heated mood of his spirit, would have undertaken without guide or companion in the past night, frowned rudely and discouragingly upon them;

and the toil, for men already so much wayworn, promised to be neither light in burden nor limited in extent. The gloomy forests which, in the starlight of the previous evening seemed small, if not softened, now opposed a continual succession of difficulties to their forward progress. But warmed by the encouraging hopes set before them in the glowing language of their leader, they persevered amid their difficulties, and about ten o'clock in the day, they emerged from the close and difficult forests, and found themselves upon a level and lofty region of the mountain. Here the guides pointed out an eminence beyond them, from which they declared the Great Sea to be visible. "Upon this," in the language of the historian, "Vasco Nunez commanded his followers to halt, and that nō man should stir from his place. Then, with a palpitating heart, he ascended above the bare mountain top. On reaching the summit, the long desired prospect burst upon his view. It was as if a new world were unfolded to him, separated from all hitherto known by this mighty barrier of mountains. Below him extended a vast chaos of rock and forest, and green savannahs and wandering streams, while, at a distance, the waters of the promised ocean glittered in the morning sun."

The heart of Vasco Nunez was in the same instant lifted and humbled within him. Lifted, as he felt his triumph, at least secure, and the dream of his soaring genius realized at last. Humbled, as he surveyed the mighty and magnificent maze before his eyes—the tangled and unbroken forest—the boundless and waveless ocean, given as it were by an indulgent Providence, in compliance with the prayers of a mortal—one still governed by earthly desires, and those vain and vexing passions which seem so utterly unbecoming to the heart whose ambition grasps at the golden honours of immortality.

"God! I thank thee!" he exclaimed chokingly, as he sank upon his knees and pressed his lips to the now consecrated earth. "I thank thee that thou hast honoured me thus, in giving to my eyes the first look at a realm of wild and ocean, never before vouchsafed to European. Merciful and mighty Father, thou hast favoured and blessed me with a wondrous favour, and most base and wretched were my spirit should it henceforward turn away from thy paths and be traitor to the sacred trusts which thou hast confided

to my care. Here, I pray thee, Father of the heavens and of the earth—of the new oceans and lands, no less than of those long known to thy working people—I pray thee so to strengthen me in thy grace, that I may faithfully perform my trusts, and deliver them up without hurt or blemish, whenever it may please thee to require them at my hands. Here, alone, in thy presence, with my people afar, I pray thy forgiveness for all and sundry the errors of my thoughts and heart; those errors wherein I have suffered, nay, counselled them, to follow me, when perchance, it was my better part, as in duty bound to my earthly sovereign, to have awaited his messenger in Darien and forborne this labour of greatest peril but still greater triumph. Let it be, I pray thee, Father above all, still a trust given to my hands, to perfect this mighty conquest; toiling still in that spirit which shall tend the more perfectly to thy honour, to the majesty and greatness of my country, and to the human improvement of the miserable heathen who runs savage through this land."

Such are some of the sentiments, expressed in more specific language, which were preferred to the throne of grace from that wild mountain peak of Darien. Never was the true religion of peace and goodwill to men, and humble allegiance to the only true sovereign, more completely felt, and more devoutly and earnestly expressed, than by that single-hearted conqueror, in that solemn presence—standing above the waters of that strange ocean—an ocean whose slumbers the eye of the European had never before seen, nor his footsteps broken—which had striven for ages with the tempest, or given back unnoted melodies to the lingering zephyr, without a single murmur of its waves falling upon the ears of those whose busy prows penetrated to all other waters, and whose angry thunders affrighted the slumbering echoes of every other land. Having prayed, Vasco Nunez turned once more to his people and summoned them to approach him from below.

"Behold, my friends," said he, "that glorious sight which we have sought so long, and with such great toil. Let us give thanks to God, that he hath vouchsafed this great honour and advantage to us. Let us implore that he will still guide us in our path of conquest—that he will give to our arms the sea and land which lie before us, and in which Christian has never yet set foot to preach the

Evangelist. For yourselves, be you, as you have hitherto been, faithful and true, and, by Christ's favour, ye shall become the most fortunate Spaniards that have yet beheld the Indies—ye shall have the advantage and eternal glory of all that is here discovered, conquered, and made convert to the holy Catholic faith."

Solemnly the Spaniards promised to follow their gallant leader to death. The priest lifted up his voice, the people knelt as by an unanimous impulse, and with one voice chanted aloud the usual hymn of Spanish discovery—*Te Deum Laudamus*. A cross, hewn from a gigantic tree, was raised upon the spot whence the ocean was first beheld, and in the name, and for the promotion, of the holy religion he professed, Vasco Nunez took possession of the lands he stood on and the seas which he surveyed, as part of the dominions of the sovereigns of Castile, to whom he renewed his oath of allegiance in presence of all his men. All the usual forms practised by Europeans in making great and unwonted discoveries, were rigidly performed on this occasion, by which the authority of Spain was supposed to be rendered legitimate in the regard of other nations. A mound of stone was raised, inscriptions set up against the venerable trees of the mountain, and a record made of the solemn event, and signed by all present. This great discovery took place on the 26th day of September, 1513, and was the most memorable event that had yet occurred in the history of the new world. "The imagination," says Irving, with a pencil that appropriately adorns whatever it touches, and of the guiding lines of which we have freely availed ourselves in the progress of this illustrative romance—"The imagination delights to picture forth the splendid confusion of their thoughts, as this boundless field of conjecture opened before the wondering Spaniards. Was this the great Indian Ocean, studded with precious islands, abounding in gold, in gems, and spices, and bordered by the gorgeous cities and wealthy marts of the East? or was it some lonely sea, locked up in the embraces of savage uncultivated continents, and never traversed by a bark, except the light pirogue of the Indian?" Time has solved this inquiry, but imagination has a wing more fleet and vigorous, more daring and more upward, which ever advances before the slow but certain progress of time; and

worlds beyond, and empires of a civilization no less perfect, but unlike that of the European, grew up before the eyes of the Spaniards who surveyed that glorious ocean, bordering its tributary waves, and sending abroad their fleets of wealth, their stores of treasure, gems of a strange brightness, jewels of unnamed character and richness, bartering with rival nations in trade, or striving with them for supremacy. The no less excursive but better taught vision of Vasco Nunez, saw much more of the truth, and through a medium no less glorious and inviting. Already—the waters of that new sea scarce beheld—his daring spirit meditated to embark upon them. Already the realms of Atabalipa were unveiling their splendours to his piercing gaze,—and Imagination, the great surveyor and architect of man, passing the broad realms of ocean that lay between, and throwing open the golden mansions of the sun, had taken her seat upon the lofty throne of the Incas.

"Nations! nations! strange nations, and a wondrous people; not savages—not slaves,—yet both. How they pass,—how they rise before me. Wings now,—wings now, Francisco,—these are all,—all that we want—to win empires more wonderful than all that Colon ever gave to Castile."

The hand of the conqueror was outstretched, as he spoke, towards the golden regions of Peru. With gloating eyes the savage soldier Pizarro, who stood beside him the while, followed the direction of his finger, and listened to the enthusiastic outpourings of a thought, which he remembered in long days after, both to his glory and his shame.

"Yes," continued the chief, speaking to the astrologer, "could we now fly, Micer Codro,—could we but follow the swift thought and the delighted fancy, what wonders should we win—the spoils of time, locked up in the solitude—the wonders of ages, unnoted in the waste. But, even though it be not given to us to win these worlds, this ocean is ours. This, at least, is mine. It cannot be denied me this crowning glory, and whether I stand or fall, whether I live or die, whether my enemies overcome me or I baffle them, the royal Ferdinand himself, misled by the malice of Fonseca, cannot wrest this possession from my grasp. The name of Vasco Nunez belongs as firmly to this mighty rock on which we stand, as the rock to the

mightier sea, that sleeps like a giant at its foot. My heart is light, my friends—very light,—for the triumph of my soul is sure! Give me your hands, Micer Codro, Francisco, Colmenares—and you too, boy—give me your hand too, Pedro. Forget you the last night, boy, and your dreaming folly, and mine? Let that be secret, Pedro. Men would laugh in mockery did they know what children we had been, though for a moment only. Give me your hands, my friends. We shall all sleep soundly and happily to-night."

CHAPTER XI.

NEW AUGURIES—THE MALIGN ASPECT.

But the conqueror did not sleep that night. How could he sleep? The creature of his sleep,—the vision which had haunted him so long, and kept him wakeful when he would have slept—the vague but unvarying hope—the rich expectancy of fancy—the dream, the shadow—the ambition of a long life—were all realized at last. He could now triumph over the scornful and the hostile. He could now retort the sneer and despise the assailant; and oh! who can describe the proud feeling in the heart of him whose wholesome hope and vast design, have brought upon him the epithet of the visionary and the dreamer, when, by the resolute endeavour, and the calm, immovable, yet active thought, he has made his fancy a form, and given to the image in his mind the substantial attributes of a thing in theirs. Much had his proud, yet sensitive heart, suffered from the unfeeling malice of the vain and ignorant. He had, though not always, borne patiently the sneer and the sarcasm, in which the witless commonly seek to revenge themselves upon the great for the consciousness of inferiority. His plans were not canvassed ere they had been denounced, and, if canvassed, his judges had been pert pretension, and flippant, undiscriminating conceit. Even the worthy had been blinded to his merits, by the judgments of the vain; and with the inevitable fortune which attends true genius every where, he had succeeded rather against the spite of man, than by his support or countenance. He stood no longer in need of either for the support of that judgment—that genius—which had been the mockery of all. He could forgive, in his crowning triumph, the hostility which had denounced at first, and baffled his

hope so long. He could forget, as the noble mind for ever strives to forget, the petty malice, and the witless sneer in the consciousness that his mind and its aims were no longer subject to the control of theirs—in the proud conviction that it was now in charge of that highest human court known to men and nations—posterity.

"I have written my deeds upon this rock—my name must live so long as these waters roll."

How easy for a man with such proud fancies to forget all the toils, all the trials, the small troubles, though vexing, and the jealous strifes and unfriendly wrongs which formed so great a portion of all his previous endeavour. He who is conscious that posterity has his deeds in keeping may well smile at his own feeble generation—may well forgive the little enmities of the vanishing crowds around him. Vasco Nunez had forgiven all. He was not conscious of one feeling in his bosom which did not declare peace and good will to all mankind. But this benign consciousness of soul did not make it the less sleepless. Virtue itself may sometimes keep awake in the sweet consciousness of a new conquest; and that ambition, which, struggling for the good of man, is also virtue, kept our hero wakeful. He went forth, when all slept, or seemed to sleep, in that solemn starlight. Once more he ascended to the eminence from which, at midday, the mighty ocean had first met his eye. There it lay, glimmering in the imperfect light, murmuring along among the tracts of reedy forest upon its margin, and making a fitting midnight chorus with the continual voice of the restless wind among the distant woods. Never had the skies appeared to Vasco Nunez so bright with stars. No cloud obscured the prospect whether upon land or sea; but thin, gray mists, that seemed transparent as the gleam of infant stars, rose from the distant mountains, and floating away in spiral wreaths, hung at last, like a pale white mantle above the ocean, where, mingling as it were with immensity, it rolled on far beyond the piercing gaze of the conqueror. There was an awe-inspiring presence in the massive silence around him; and the feelings in his soul amply corresponded with the gentle melancholy of the scene, making it holy. Alone, standing upon the shores of that new-found sea, vainly conjecturing of the thousand empires and nations beyond—then, with as rapid a flight of thought, winging his way to that

old world from which his human destiny was to come—he stood as it were in the presence of two worlds—of the past and the future—his own being reduced to a point, but that point a pinnacle, surveyed equally from the gigantic sister seas, now for the first time revealed to the knowledge of each other. The feeling of his own great eminence, destined so soon to be as conspicuous to the world as it was now to himself, possessed his heart with a sense of awe and humility, and he was ready to exclaim with something of the inspiration of the ancient prophet—"What am I, Lord, that thou hast chosen me for this mighty work—wherein am I worthy of this, thy crowning confidence? Why hast thou saved me, over all others, for this great service?" Who shall describe his sensations at such a moment! A change of spirit—which years never could have wrought nor the counsels of man, nor the fears of enemies, nor the quest of wealth—suddenly came over him; and, from the mere soldier, in the instant of his wonderful discovery, he became the sage. He was no longer the creature he had been, when, in his boyish mood, all things had been things of promise, and every promise brought with it delight—when, amid the throng at evening, his happiest employment had been to hearken to the sweet melancholy of the young maiden's song, or join with her in the lively dance;—or, as the years followed in the unrelaxing progress of the hours, which brought him the strifes of manhood—to seek more fell employments in the field of battle, ever rashly adventurous, grappling first with the tawny Moor, then with the forest savage, a kingdom, in either case, not unfrequently depending on his arm. The light-hearted and the ruthless mood, so foreign to each other, yet so nearly allied to the sanguine and sleepless temper, had all departed from the warrior in the realization of his great conquest; and in their stead came a higher thought to his mind, a holier hope to his bosom, which made him happy even with the sleeplessness which they occasion. His adventurous spirit felt its own wing at last, and knew its strength, and was prepared to soar into the heavens. Eagle-like, brooding upon the verge of that skiey pinnacle, he meditated with the first blush of morning, to dart into the void—to descend into the region of conjecture and farther conquest—to launch upon the strange waters, gleaming and flashing in the dim distance at his

feet, and wing his flight,—he knew not whither—but surely to empires which the sun, lingering last upon, must love the longest, and endow with the richest treasures of his smiles. The waking dreams of Vasco Nunez were not yet over, and with thoughts and feelings, beneath the awful majesty of which, his frame trembled, he sat down upon the peak of the mountain, and drew unmeaning strokes with his sword-point upon the ground. Micer Codro came to his side unheard, while he was busied in this employment. The hero became conscious of his presence only with the sound of his voice.

"Thou here, my father?" said he, to the old man—"but I should have known it was not for thee to sleep at this hour any more than myself. Thou hast too deep a feeling with me of the wondrous fortune which has crowned our enterprise, not to grow watchful in its contemplation. Strange and beautiful, indeed, is the scene before us,—so strange that, ere thou camest, I had begun to question its reality, and to persuade myself with fear and trembling that I was deluded by a vision of sleep. Yet, thou art beside me,—I hear thy voice, I see thy form—and there, below us, afar—if it be not a delusion of water, such as wins and vexes the wayfarer in the desert of the Arab,—there lies a mighty ocean,—glimmering clearly beneath the starlight, and sending up a voice which seemeth to reach me here. Of a truth, Micer Codro, my soul is oppressed with its own convictions—there is a pain that thrills my heart, in the very joy of my spirit."

"It is thine—it is thy triumph, my son—and glorious indeed shall be the renown of thy name in this and all succeeding ages. Thou hast wrought even beyond my own faith in thee—thou hast won thy fortune in despite of thy enemies, and even against the fears of thy friends. I am proud to look on thee, my son, and to think of thy past strifes and sufferings!"

"Jesu! but they should now be over. Micer Codro, it would scarce be in the power of Fonseca to harm me now. Spain would cry aloud against the wrong—Europe herself would speak with a single voice—and the whole world of Christian man would upbraid, if Ferdinand suffered the malice of a priest, or the hatred of a rival, to do harm to the warrior who hath yielded him a new empire of the sea and land, henceforward to be the care of Christ, and of his

missionaries on earth. Methinks, I should now dismiss the doubts which have vexed me in this matter."

The astrologer answered with a sigh:

"So should it be, Vasco Nunez, and such might be the confident hope in our hearts, were it not that we know the blindness of royal favourites, and the madness of royalty, which so often wounds itself through the bosom of its most deserving subjects. There is danger to thee, my son—I read it this very hour in the stars—there is danger to thee, though it may not come from thy sovereign."

The cavalier smiled as he replied in gentle language:

"Vex not, Micer Codro, if my faith in the stars hath found some diminution. It is strange to me that thou art still so firm in thy confidence. Should not my fortune, as as it hath already gone against thy frequent predictions—should it not teach thee to doubt also?"

"Sometimes I have doubted, my son," replied the other with humility. "There have been signs which seemed to contradict themselves, and the doings of men on earth and their fortunes have been at seasons far other than they have seemed to me in the heavens—"

"As in the wreck of the Maragnon,—as in my weary bondage in the cave of the iron mountains, hidden from the pursuit of Obando, and threatened with death for a crime of which I was no less innocent than the unborn babe," replied the other, interrupting the speaker.

"Yet never, perhaps, my son, spoke the stars more truly than at those moments."

"Ha! but thou speakest strangely."

"Nay, let us reason upon their language, and thou wilt find that the misjudgment lay in our minds, and not in their voices. They said that the day of thy glory and thy greatness was approaching—it was our weak imaginings that declared the means of thy greatness to lie in the ship that the seas swallowed. They promised thee the triumph upon which thy soul was set, and which thy mind so nobly counselled. But they said not that thou wert not to have sorrows, and strifes, and many losses. They declared thy approaching glory, but they said not that it should be this day or the next; and that they have spoken truly, thou seest, since here thou art, on the desired eminence, with the mighty ocean before thee, in search of which thou hast toiled so long. It was in our narrow judgment that we

found defeat of fortune, in the loss of the little goods which man too much regards as fortune. What mattered it to thee hadst thou lost ten thousand ships, yet still attained the triumph for which thy ships were built, thy stores bought, thy soldiers and mariners provided? Here, in truth, has thy fortune been made ready to thy hands. Hadst thou been left to thyself, had the Maragnon still survived the hurricane, perchance, at this very hour, instead of standing where thou dost, with thy great conquest at thy feet, thou hadst been striving at dagger-point with the wrong-headed Alonzo de Ojeda, or the vain but courtly Nicuesa. The stars have driven them from thy path, fighting in thy behalf and against them, even as they fought against Sisera, and in behalf of God's chosen. Thou hast been God's chosen in this great work. I have seen the golden writing from the first, written with his eternal finger, where I now see it, on the eternal walls of Heaven. Look up, my son. Verily, there is that which deeply affects thee in those sad but lovely characters which glitter overhead."

"What dost thou see?" demanded Vasco Nunez, looking up as he was bidden, and not unimpressed by the reasoning which he had heard, and the solemn manner of the speaker. The other paused for a brief space, and when he again spoke, his voice had grown very tremulous with its increasing solemnity.

"My son," he continued, "when we last were at Moguer, thou wilt remember how fondly thy old mother sought of me to know thy fortunes. Thou wert already known to fame, and she delighted to speak of thee in the language of all around her. Full of the great successes, which her heart, governed only by its hopes, assured her should be thine, she prayed that from my art I should confirm her fond predictions. This I could do safely; and satisfied that thou wouldst grow even more famous than her own warmest fancies had promised, she pressed me nothing farther. I told her not of the evils, the sorrows, and the dangers, which were before thee. It had been of little use and most unkind to do so; but even then, I beheld a sign which led me to tremble for thy safety, and moved me to long and painful study of thy scheme of nativity. On thy voyage out, when thy course was shaped to Salvatierra, I traced thy fortunes more closely, and gathered, amidst many conflicting mazes and doubts,

much of the truth as thou hast since found it. Every step which thou hast since taken, whether in peace or war, whether in court or camp, in peril or in ease, grew visible, if not clear, before mine eyes. I saw thee trace thy journey through the wilderness, though it was beyond my art to speak of means and appliances, and those minor agents of fortune, which help men to the consummation of their ends. But the ends I saw, in thy final, full success, up to this very moment, when the incessant waters at our feet are given to thy sway, and murmur with a voice for the first time audible to Europe, the glory of Vasco Nunez de Balboa; giving thee the praise of that genius, whose piercing eye sees the hidden ore in the rock, the fine spirit in the cloud, the pure, pale blue jewel in the deep. Here then, are we both now, and thy fortune, even as it has been read nightly by these aged eyes, is all confirmed in this thy wondrous conquest."

"And now, now! What dost thou read now?" exclaimed the warrior impatiently. "Let me know all, Micer Codro. If I hold not thy art so certain as thyself, I do yet esteem it. Let me hear then what thou hast to show me. Fear not to speak—speak boldly—and think not that thy words shall make my heart shake or my knees tremble. There is no fate now—this secure—which I cannot battle with a smile, and with a spirit long accustomed to the conflict with wild seas and wilder men. Give thy thought words, old man, and let the future stand before me, though it wear only frowns upon its face and carry nothing but a threatening terror in its hands."

The reply of the magician was prompt in compliance with the demand.

"When I read thy fate in the gathered stars, there was one hostile aspect—one remote and solitary light—which gleamed ever upon thy planet with a malignant eye. Of this I have ever warned thee, though I read, that, while it kept station afar from the western heavens, it had no power of harm upon thee. But when, with daring flight it made its way to the gray circle, from which evening suspends the golden lamp that hangs above the chambers of night, then the hour should become dark to thee with a bloody peril—nay, death itself was before thee with an awful sign of the axe and scaffold."

"Ha! sayst thou!—the axe! the scaffold! Well."

"The axe and scaffold. Once, twice, already, have I seen this malign planet posting on with hostile spirit to the western mansion. Once, the night when Garabito fell by strange hands, did I see it shake a hand of bloody augury above thy breast—the sign of a dagger in its grasp. Thy fortune triumphed and the baleful aspect fled back to its foreign station. There it has hung, threatening, but motionless until the day when thou met'st with Quarequa. In the morning watch of the night before that battle, it rushed, speeding onward to the west, and my soul trembled when I saw it glaring upon thy star with all the malevolence of hate, exulting in the hope that the hour of his blow had come. The fight was won, and again was the evil eye baffled—and again, though for a brief space only, did it recede from thy path. It threatens thee once more—it is even now within the rim of that halo which circles the star of thy nativity; and though thy better fortune may once more baffle its hostile rage, as it has baffled it already, it still threatens thee with a danger which should task all thy calm strength, and thy thoughtful, deliberate courage."

"Let me look upon that hostile aspect," said Vasco Nunez. "I have never shrunk from the face of mortal enemy, and shall gaze with spirit unawed upon this inhuman one. Guide mine eyes, Micer Codro, to this evil planet."

"Look forth into the west," said the astrologer, while, with his finger, he strove to direct the eye of the cavalier to the region, where, mingled with myriads of shining dots, hung the small red orb that teemed with such malignant fires. "Dost thou not see one light, keeping a place as it were apart from all others, though immediately among them? It seems single, as it gleams with hues which the pure orbs of heaven never partake. Thou wilt know it from the redness of its rays, and the subtle yellow fluid that seems to environ it like a halo. Such it ever wears when it seems most nigh to the destruction of its victim."

"I see it," said Vasco Nunez, "but I have no instinct that tells me it is fearful. I look on it without apprehension. I see nothing to warn me of an enemy. Surely, Micer Codro, this is but a common star, one of the thousand, all seemingly alike, which crowd together, as if seeking communion when the night is dark."

"It is more, yet less, than a star, my son. To thy

eye and that of most men, it may seem no other. But it is no less than an evil spirit. Thousands float nightly through the firmament, shining in places, not fixed, but moving according to their hostile moods; sometimes gliding upwards, audaciously, even into the highest mansions; sometimes descending to rest upon pinnacles of earth, misguiding the wayfaring mortal whom they hate, till he falls among evil places, and miserably dies. Such is this that thou lookest on now. They are not of the class in the midst of which they yet shine—their lights are unlike those among which they burn, nor have they the same blessed and benign influence over the things of earth, as it is appointed that such shall always have which God hath made stationary in man's behalf. Yet hold they a power scarcely less great, though for evil only, over earthly things, over man and the creatures that follow and obey him. Being ever at war with God, they seek for the annoyance of his creatures—impede their fortunes, or encourage them awhile, as this may have done with thee—so that when they hurl them down to the abyss at last, they may fall from a height most perilous. The gentler lights of heavenly providence, shrink from them as from a most foul contagion, so that they stand separate from all the rest. Over some a power is given them—we know not wherefore,—but we behold them, almost nightly, flung from their high spheres by these malignant spirits; their pure lights parting from them as they fall; losing themselves at last in abysses of the deep, more fitting to their diminished lustre than the pale brightness of the mansions they have lost. In like manner, a power over men have these evil aspects, as they, like the erring stars, shoot out from their destined places. Over thee, my son, this malignant spirit now hangs with a threatening brow, and hath marked thee for its victim. Jesu be thy friend, my son, and keep thee still, as he has kept thee ever, secure from the fearful presence."

"Amen!" exclaimed Vasco Nunez, rising from the spot, and speaking with a manner which, though solemn, was any thing but apprehensive. "I have heard thee, Micer Codro, and believe that there may be truth in what thou hast said. But thou tell'st me of nothing worse than death—a bloody death—and that I have confronted boldly with the Moor of Grenada, and with the more tawny and savage Carib of the west. It is no new terror which thou

portrayest to my thought; and death is nothing, surely, to him who has taken bond from fate, for a life which is eternal, sealed on these impenetrable rocks, and witnessed by yonder unfathomable and rising waters. Still," he continued, after a brief pause, "I confess to thee, Micer Codro, though I fear not death, I yet love life. I would not die—not yet—not, at least, till I have launched my bark on yonder ocean, and sought the wondrous shores which my prophetic spirit assures me lie beyond it. To-morrow will I descend to those waters, and assure myself by feeling, no less than sight, that they are real—that they live and move—have breath and being, and, with each rising and sinking of their billows, lave far-distant and rival continents. That done, what matters it whether death approaches me in the gentle guise of slumber, or with the harsh visage and sharp stroke of the royal headsman? Death must needs be welcome when the great work of life is done."

CHAPTER XII.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS—THE MINGLED DRAUGHT.

With the dawn of day, Vasco Nunez prepared to descend the mountains, and accordingly divided his little band into three several bodies for the discovery of the easier routes to the sea. The whole country lay in the tangled intricacy of the original forest, undefiled by the axe, and totally uncleared for the footsteps of the wayfarer. The task was still no easy one to reach the ocean, which lay yet in sight. But these difficulties were soon surmounted by the enthusiasm of the chief and the buoyant spirits and hardy frames of his followers. The marvellous discovery was held to be complete when Vasco Nunez, marching waist-deep into the waves of the ocean, claimed its possession and dominion in behalf of the sovereigns of Castile, Leon, and Arragon, Don Ferdinand and Donna Juanna. It is not our present design to trace his farther progress among the wild lands and wilder nations of savages, which he deemed it necessary to overrun and subdue, in order to the better confirmation of his conquests. These events belong rather to history—to the history of the times, and of the Spanish nation,—than to the great man by whom the expedition was led; and in what we have written, our object has not been so much the illustration of known events, as of the peculiar fortunes of the person by whom they were achieved. It will be sufficient for our purpose to state in brief that Vasco Nunez returned to Coyba, sick but in safety; having survived a thousand disasters, having baffled as many dangers—overcoming all the savage tribes which opposed him, and winning golden spoils at every step in

his progress. Here he found the simple devoted Indian damsel awaiting him with an anxiety fitly proportioned to the extent of her fears at the perils he had undertaken, and in which, greatly against her desire, his tender regard would not suffer her to share. Her love, subdued by the superior awe which she felt in the presence of his greatness, would not permit her to return the fond embrace which he gave her, but she sunk down at his feet and clasped his knees in her arms, and kissed, sobbing all the while, the warlike hand of which she had possessed herself. Having rested for a few days at Coyba, he re-embarked for Santa Maria, and reached the river of Darien on the following day. Great was the delight of the inhabitants at his return—a delight not a little increased when they beheld the profusion of wealth which he brought, and which they were allowed to share equally with the adventurers whose valour had procured it. It consisted of gold and pearls, mantles, hammocks, and many varieties of wrought cotton, chiefly intended for garments, and many captives of both sexes, with whom the conqueror contemplated the prosecution of certain plans of colonization which were to disarm them, by means of appropriate labour, of their more rude, savage, and, not uncommonly, cannibal propensities. A fifth of the spoil was set apart for the royal treasury, and the rest shared equally among the adventurers.

Thus, says the historian, ended an expedition which may be considered one of the most remarkable ever undertaken by the early discoverers. With a handful of men, its hero had penetrated far into a wild and mountainous country, filled by tribes, all numerous and warlike, and tenacious to the last of their savage independence. His skill in their constant defeat, no less than in the management of his own followers—stimulating their valour when it flagged under fatigues and privations that seemed to justify discontent; soothing or compelling their obedience, when suffering moved them to insubordination; and still, under all circumstances, attaching their affections to himself as their friend and fellow, no less than their commander;—amply attested the surpassing merits of his generalship. Add to this, that his personal courage and resolution were no less conspicuous at all moments. For ever first in danger, he was still the last to leave the field. He shrank from no toil, avoided no difficulty, feared no

peril—watching, fighting, fasting, and labouring, equally with the meanest of his men, he secured a place in their affections no less firm than that which he held in their esteem. Frank affability, the invariable companion of true greatness in every character, marked his deportment to all around him, without disparaging his dignity or impairing in any respect the energy of his resolves. He forgot no follower whom he had ever known, but consoled him in misfortune, visited him in sickness, and soothed him by gifts and friendly offices, which win the heart more than any gifts. Nor, though in battle, realizing all the terrors of the warlike mood as described by Shakspeare, can the sin of unnecessary bloodshed be laid at his door, if we consider the character of the age in which he lived, the peculiar barbarism of many of the foes with whom he fought, and the perils of his condition, which seemed to call for and to justify it. That the savages themselves acquitted him of the stain of cruelty, may be fairly presumed from the singular and unbounded confidence which they reposed in him, by the firmness of their friendship, and the affectionate homage which they offered him, once known to them, wherever he came. Nor is he to be considered the merely skilful and successful soldier of fortune. Justly considered, there was a nobleness in his aim, a grandeur in his genius—in his persevering pursuit of the one great object—in its first conception, and in the elastic resolution which never suffered him to waver in moments when all other men had been lost.

When Vasco Nunez surveyed the piles of treasure which had been set aside from his spoils for the royal coffers, he flattered himself that whatever might have been the previous judgment of the avaricious monarch against him, his decision would be altered at a sight of such unusual magnificence, and at tidings of so much greater importance which he was prepared to send him.

"Have I not," said he, speaking to the astrologer on this subject, "have I not given a new ocean to his crown? —Cristovallo Colon gave new lands only!—and how many tributary shores and empires lie within that gift? I have outspread the Spanish flag to the embraces of a foreign breeze, that comes, blossoming in its odour, from gardens of the orient—spicy realms, that give token of their being, though a thousand leagues of sea yet lie between us and

their sight. It cannot be, Micer Codro, when they hear of these tidings in Spain, that Ferdinand shall mete out harsh judgment against me. It were against reason to believe it. No! no! I have nothing now to fear."

That day he prepared his despatches, in which he gave a full detail of his expedition—setting forth all that he had seen or heard of the great southern sea, and of the rich countries that lay upon its borders. In addition to the royal fifth, he prepared from his own share a present for his sovereign, consisting of the most precious pearls which had been collected. These he sent by Pedro de Arbolancha, an intelligent follower and tried friend; and having thus, as he thought, presented to his monarch a claim to his favouring consideration, which could not be set aside, he resolved to dismiss from his mind all anxiety about the event. The emissary, after a delay protracted to a length most injurious to the fortunes of his superior, appeared at length in the royal presence, and announcing the successes of Vasco Nunez, laid before him the rich treasures which he had brought, the gold and the pearls, which attested alike the value and the truth of his discoveries. "King Ferdinand," says the historian, "listened with charmed attention to this tale of unknown seas and wealthy realms added to his empire. It filled, in fact, the imaginations of the most sage and learned with golden dreams, and anticipations of unbounded riches." Old Peter Martyr, who received letters from his friends in Darien, and communicated by word of mouth with those who came from thence, writes to Leo X. in exulting terms of this event. "Spain," says he, "will hereafter be able to satisfy with pearls the greedy appetite of such as in wanton pleasures are like unto Cleopatra and Æsopus; so that henceforth we shall neither envy nor reverence the nice fruitfulness of Trapoban or the Red Sea. The Spaniards will not need hereafter to mine and dig far into the earth, nor to cut asunder mountains in quest of gold, but will find it plentifully, in a manner, on the upper crust of the earth, or in the sands of rivers dried up by the heats of summer. Certainly, the reverend antiquity obtained not so great a benefit of nature, nor even aspired to the knowledge thereof, since never man before, from the known world, penetrated to those unknown regions." All Spain rang with the name and glory of Vasco Nunez, and he, who but a few months before had been adjudged a law-

less adventurer, was now lifted to the same eminence with Columbus, and lauded as his most worthy successor. Ferdinand repented of his hasty judgment, and commanded Fonseca to find a mode for rewarding his transcendant services; but while these honours were preparing for him in Europe, Don Pedrarias Davila, whom, at the instigation of Fonseca, the king had appointed governor of Darien, was speeding far and fast over the ocean, and rapidly nearing the province which had been thus prematurely assigned him. With a fleet of fifteen sail, and a splendid and well-equipped army, consisting chiefly of the accomplished and graceful young cavaliers of Spain, the new governor, who was a man of a proud, ostentatious temper, contemplated the overthrow at once of every thing like opposition on the part of the hardy warrior he was sent to supersede. He was accompanied by his wife, a noble lady, who would not be left behind in Spain, and who was probably moved to the journey by the contiguousness of her daughter Teresa, whom the reader will remember to have left at San Domingo, and whom she had not seen for years. It may be that Pedrarias was presented to the mind of Fonseca as governor of Darien, as well because of his connexion with the new world, as because of the partial favour in which he was regarded at the court.

Meanwhile, equally unconscious of the honours preparing for him in Spain, and of the approach of that armament which had been commissioned to consign him to punishment or obscurity, Vasco Nunez, throwing aside the habits of the soldier, devoted himself, with paternal solicitude, to the cultivation and improvement of Darien. Already, under his master-mind, the town contained more than two hundred houses, with a population of five hundred Europeans and fifteen hundred Indians. Orchards and gardens had been laid out and filled with fruits and vegetables, native and European. One leading object of the chief was to render the settlement independent of Europe for supplies. Spaniards and Indians worked equally in the fields and upon the dwellings, and the toils of the labourer were relieved by the sports of the cavalier and soldier. He devised various means to enliven the tediousness of a life, no longer passed in exciting and hourly adventure. The national pastimes were accorded them on frequent holidays; and tilting-matches, of which the valiant

Spaniards of those days were extravagantly fond, were studiously encouraged. A general communion was opened with most of the Indian neighbours, and so successful had he been in securing the friendship of the savages, that the roving Spaniard was no longer solicitous of his weapons when he wandered away into the forests. Zemaco, baffled, beaten, and dispirited, had buried his shame in the sullen fastnesses of his distant mountains.

Vasco Nunez was thus employed when, in the month of June, the fleet of Don Pedrarias Davila appeared in the Gulf of Uraba. The heart of the conqueror swelled within him, at the sight of this armament, with conflicting emotions. Was it the messenger of reward or punishment? Was this powerful array sent in compliance with his entreaties, or in opposition to his rule? He was not suffered to remain long in doubt and anxiety. The Spanish cavaliers who came with Davila were eager to land and see the wonders of the place, but the governor, who had been warned of the resolute character of Vasco Nunez, and could readily understand the difference between his own silken followers, and the 'iron men' who had followed the fortunes, and shared in all the miseries which had befallen Ojeda, Nicuesa, and Vasco Nunez, was cautious enough to restrain their desires, and instead of approaching, in compliance with their clamours, he anchored his fleet at some distance from the settlement. He then despatched a messenger to announce to Vasco Nunez his arrival and authority. At the first intimation of the truth, his friends gathered about the chief, and the veteran warriors who had followed him so long, seizing their weapons, surrounded his dwelling, and swore to maintain his cause in defiance of any numbers. They prayed him to resist the summons of Pedrarias, and, in their clamours against the injustice which he suffered, did not spare their sovereign. Their officers goaded them by their exhortations, and Francisco Pizarro was the first to propose that they should display themselves at once, and resist the landing of the enemy. The astrologer looked on with a moody silence, while the youth, Pedro, grasping suddenly the hand of the chief, while his eyes flashed fire, and his cheeks were kindled up with enthusiasm, exclaimed—

"Oh, señor, you will not surely give up to this insolent demand? You will resist,—you will send back defiance;

and there is not a man in Darien that will not maintain your battle. Shall it be that you have taken these toils and perils, only to reward the idle creatures of the court? It must not be. It were shame and sorrow to think so."

"Nay, Pedro, you mistake," replied Vasco Nunez—"I have not taken this toil and peril for others. They may take from me the government of Darien, but know, boy, that no injustice—no tyranny can take from a man the reputation of his great deeds. These are mine, that Pedrarias cannot take—these are mine, that I cannot lose, though I lose all other possessions."

But a strange struggle took place in the warrior's feelings as he approached the veterans who surrounded his dwelling, and strove to compose himself while he spoke to them. Their arms sank down as he stood forward—their clamours were suddenly stilled; as suddenly as the cries of inferior forest tribes, when the lion, rising from his lair, suddenly walks forth from the jungle. Vasco Nunez had already come to his resolution, but there was a strong human impulse which he found it difficult to subdue, and which still continued to war against it. He did not the less feel the injustice for which his followers, with less discretion, would have had him become a rebel to his sovereign, though he had determined patiently to submit to it, leaving it to time, that calm reviser of man's judgment and injustice, to do him right, though it might be after the delay of many days. There is a majesty in patience which is superior to the greatest display of passion; and Vasco Nunez lost nothing of his dignity, in the regards of his people, when he declared his intention to submit to the authority set over him.

"Go back," he said to the messenger of Pedrarias, who stood trembling at his side, the witness of a fury on the part of the enraged soldiery, which, at one moment, threatened to destroy him—"go back to Don Pedrarias Davila—tell him that Vasco Nunez, for himself and his followers, assures him of their welcome and his own. Say that I congratulate him on his safe arrival at Darien, and am ready, with all here, to obey his orders."

A deep groan burst from the crowd as they heard this message.

"Wherefore doth this resolve displease ye, my friends?" demanded Vasco Nunez, while the big drop gathered in

his eye, as he beheld it in the eyes of many around him. "Is it so uncommon a thing for the soldier to suffer injustice from the sovereign he has served, that ye should behold my wrong beyond all others, and hold it so very grievous? Let it not be thus, I pray ye. King Ferdinand hath surely right to choose his own governor and the governor of his people, and neither ye nor I should complain of this. In submitting to Pedrarias, you submit only to our sovereign; and the love I have borne ye, and the toils through which I have led ye in safety and good fortune, give us no right to defy the authority of our king, and him whom he sends to command in his place. Let it be our prayer that he shall command ye, as it has been my desire to do, to the prosperity and the glory of all. So shall ye always triumph, in all times and in every country. Be not angry with me, my friends, in the moment when the tie is severed that hath bound us so long together. It may be that, when the royal Ferdinand shall hear of our doings, and shall know the truth, he will again suffer me to lead you to other no less wondrous discoveries that crowd upon my thought even now. Freely do I give ye up to another, but not with joy. My heart is even more sad than yours."

"It is done!" were the words of Vasco Nunez, as he retired to his apartments, secluded from all but the devoted Indian damsel, who watched with trembling emotion, but without speech, the varying shadows of his countenance. His eye was suddenly fixed upon her anxious features, and a keen, painful memory of Teresa Davila, forced itself upon his mind.

"Truly," he murmured, "there may be something of truth in those words of Micer Codro, and the evil genius of Vasco Nunez may yet prove a woman. Should this haughty knight, Pedrarias, of whose pride they speak such things, look on me with ill favour, it were fuel to his wrath to know that I have striven for his daughter. Careta!" he exclaimed, after a brief interval, "come hither! I had forgotten thy lessons in the troubles of other things. My heart feels weary and sad—it will turn me from heavy thoughts to give ear to thy childish prattle."

"My lord is sad—let him not give himself care of the poor girl of Darien. Let him lie down in the hammock,

and she will put the fever balm upon his forehead, and sing him a song of Coyba, which shall make him sleep."

"Sleep! sleep! would I could sleep for a while; but no! I must go forth and meet this man who bears with him my destiny. Careta, my child, should any harm happen to me in Darien, thou shalt make thy way back to thy father in Coyba. The old man, Micer Codro, whom thou seest with me so often, will help thee to a means of flight."

"Harm to thee—harm to my lord!" exclaimed the damsel in language more broken than usual from the rapidity of her present utterance, "what means my lord, by harm?"

"Should my enemies make me captive and send me to Spain, Careta."

"I will go with my lord—yes! yes! Careta will go with my lord wherever they send him."

"Should they hate me—should they kill——"

"Ah, no! no! no! they will not—they cannot. My lord has strong warriors—he numbered them at sunset—they were many. They will do battle for my lord."

"But, should mine enemies prevail, Careta—should they put chains on my hands and put me into the dungeon——"

"Careta will hold up the heavy chains, and sing to my lord in the dungeon."

"But if they doom him, Careta—if he dies."

"Careta will die too."

"Truly, there is mercy even in the wrath of God, and sweetness amid all the bitter of evil. Wherefore should I be cast down because of the loss of this earthly power, when I have a power over men's hearts—when not even the decree of a monarch can take from me the affections of these wild warriors, and the love of this simple savage. Come to me, Careta!"—he stooped and pressed his lips upon her forehead,—"I trust we shall escape both the prison and the death. I trust to live so long as thou shalt love me."

Her eyes brightened up as she threw herself into his arms, exclaiming—

"I will love my lord for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONQUEROR IN CHAINS—TRUTH OF ENEMIES—TREACHERY OF FRIENDS.

The veterans of Vasco Nunez, "the old soldiers of Darien, hardened," in the language of Peter Martyr, "to abide all sorrows," looked on the approach and splendid array of Don Pedrarias with faces which did not conceal their vexation. But whatever may have been the emotions of the conqueror, they were all suppressed, and he met his successor with profound reverence, without the least show of disappointment or disquiet, and promised him implicit obedience. His habitation, thatched with straw, was given up to his guests, and a banquet of the simple fruits and vegetables which the country produced was spread before them. The modesty of his carriage surprised Don Pedrarias, who looked for nothing less than violent resistance and brutal hate, from a man who had been represented by his enemies in Spain as an outlaw and desperado; and a long conference which the two had together, seemed calculated to produce a more respectful and better feeling of regard in the minds of each for his opponent. But the frank and confiding nature of Vasco Nunez was ill requited by his successor, who began the conference by a falsehood. He assured the conqueror, that he was instructed by the king to treat him with all favour and distinction, to consult him on all measures concerning the colony, and seek from him, in preference to all others, the desired information relative to the surrounding country. Suspecting no guile, the conqueror threw aside all that reserve which had been the natural result of his position and of the injustice done him, revealed all that he knew, and at the expressed desire of Pedrarias, put in writing

not only the circumstances of the colony, its resources, strength, alliances and wants, but his own conjectures of the neighbouring provinces, seas, and rivers, and the detailed plans which he had formed for exploring and possessing them. Among the particulars given, he described the route by which he had traversed the mountains; the discoveries made upon the coast of the south sea and the gulf; the situation and reported wealth of the island from which had been taken those rich pearls which had dazzled and charmed the eyes of the Spanish monarch, the rivers and ravines most productive of gold, and the names, disposition and strength of the numerous cassiques with whom he had formed intimacies or treaties. Having, after repeated examinations, in all of which he preserved the most friendly countenance, beguiled from the unsuspecting warrior all that he deemed necessary to the prosecution of his conquest, the perfidious Pedrarias dropped the mask, and to the astonishment and indignation of all, proclaimed a judicial scrutiny into his conduct. "Señor Vasco," he said, giving a signal to his guards at the same moment, "you have done well and have served worthily, if your own statements were only and altogether to be relied upon. But know you that there are serious offences of tyranny and abuse of power charged against you, for which you are held to answer. Meanwhile, I must see that you be kept in security. Juan de Ayora, do your duty."

Though wounded too keenly by this conduct not to speak his indignation, the proud spirit of the conqueror did not utter aught that might have tended to soften the severity of his enemy. With a natural burst of indignation, starting to his feet as he beheld the officer approaching, he exclaimed:—

"And wherefore, Don Pedrarias, have you spoken smoothly with me until now? Why, if you held me traitor to my sovereign, have you foreborne his justice until this moment? Know, señor, if it was for the poor knowledge which I possessed, for which you have so far forgotten the dignity of truth, I could have spared you this degradation, and the unworthy toil of deception. Were the block before me, and the sword uplifted, I had declared this knowledge which you deem needful to the interest of my sovereign, unmoved by the injustice of his minister, as freely as I declared it but a moment gone."

"Away with him, and see that he be kept safely, till the alcalde mayor shall decide upon his cause," was the angry command of Pedrarias, who gave no other heed to the bitter speech of his victim.

"So!" exclaimed the secretary as he beheld his employer hurried away to prison—"the stroke falls at last, and by another hand than mine. I could have slain him many times—by day, by night—at night when he would have climbed alone the high mountain looking on the sea; and when, the mountain gained, he went forth at midnight to fill himself with the sight of his conquests. Little did he think—he and the old astrologer—that a foe stood watching behind them, with a sharpened dagger, of whom the stars said nothing. Why then did I forbear to strike? His armour was thrown aside—the iron escaupil no longer covered his defenceless body; and one bound, and one blow, would have sealed his conquests in blood—ay, and spared him this degradation. Why did I stay the blow? why did I spare the victim I had sworn to slay? In truth, my oath has been too easily forgotten. I heard his sweet deep voice,—I hearkened to his proud, and eagle-lifted thoughts—and my cheeks crimsoned with a scalding heat—I could not strike the heart that seemed so little human in its greatness. It matters nothing now. The doom which Micer Codro read for him in the stars, awaits him—the headsman and the scaffold. I read it in the eyes of this new governor, whose cunning alone equals his vindictive malice. Well! it is a blow spared me and a peril. He takes the labour from my hand, and the blow is no less certain. And yet!—would he had not slain my brother!—the elder born—he whom my young heart yearned so to follow through the world. He has made me desolate—wherefore should I grieve that he is destined to the ignominious death?"

"Pedro—boy!"

The harsh tones of Pizarro's voice reached the ears of the youth. He turned, and the other stood beside him. Hitherto, the unwitting wound which had been given to his vanity by the unconscious secretary, had rankled in his bosom, leaving its traces in his features visible enough whenever they had encountered—but now the lips were smiling—the features soothed into hypocritical sweetness,

and the eyes full of kindness, as the desperate soldier addressed him.

"Well, Pedro,—these are rare doings. The Señor Vasco stands in peril of a sudden dismissal to Saint Peter;—and you are in office no longer. These bright, shining cavaliers from Spain put us old soldiers of Darien out of countenance. Think you that they will wear their colours so gayly in the face of the wild warriors of Zemaco? I trow not. What think you?"

The boy, wondering at the unusual condescension of one who had never been careful to conceal his hostility before, was not less disgusted at the levity with which he spoke of the probable fortunes of the chief who had ever bestowed upon the speaker a large share of his confidence and kindness.

"This man," he thought to himself, "is no less base than malignant. Even I, the sworn enemy of Vasco Nunez, feel no triumph and no joy at his doom—still less can I feel indifference. And he, who has found but friendship and favour from his captain, speaks without feeling of his wrong, when his sword should be among the first to leap from the scabbard to avenge it."

To these thoughts, however, he gave no expression. Concealing his disgust as he best could, he replied evasively, affecting a dulness on the subject of his patron's position, which Pizarro well knew did not comport with the usual intelligence and aptness of the youth.

"Hark ye, boy—there's some business for you which may give you better pay than the secretaryship, which you may look upon as an office lost for ever. I can help you to favour in the sight of Don Pedrarias—nay, get you the place in his employ which you but lately held with Señor Vasco; but there is service to be done for this. Pedrarias is not the person to bestow his favour without consideration. Come, what say you?"

"Will the Señor Francisco speak out what he would have?"

"Ay, that I will, Pedro, when I once know how you stand. I trust you are not one of those fools who let idle feelings of regard for a falling man prevent them from making favour with him who hurls him down. We soldiers were poor knaves indeed, to follow fortunes which no longer keep the sun. It is your policy now to look to Pedrarias.

If your eyes seek the Señor Vasco, lo!—they rest upon a gloomy prison."

"That is true, Señor Francisco," replied the youth, "but can it be that you have thus soon found the sunny side of Don Pedrarias?"

"Ha! would you dive, boy!" replied the other with a laugh, though colouring the moment after;—"let that give you no concern. Enough, that I can help you to his favour whether I myself enjoy it or not. Are you willing to be in the sunlight, Pedro?"

"It is the soldier's policy, Señor Francisco, as thou sayest, and there is wisdom in it. I see not how it can do me harm, or Señor Vasco harm, to have the smiles of his enemy."

"Hum! there may be some doubt about that, Pedro, but—what need to beat about the bush? What I unfold to thee, boy, must be secret. Do I have thy promise?"

After a moment's hesitation the boy gave it.

"Nay, that is not enough," said the other, "thou shalt swear upon the holy cross," presenting the hilt of his dagger as he spoke—"and on the same cross I swear to thee, Pedro, shouldst thou betray what I now reveal to thee, thou shalt taste three inches of its blade in the choicest places of thy bosom. Thou knowest me—I am not the man to fall from my oath."

"Nor I one to depart from mine. I will keep secret what thou tell'st me," replied the boy, with a calm dignity which surprised the rough soldier, and reminded him of his former captain.

"By the holy shrine of Santa Maria, Pedro, but thou hast dwelt so long in the presence of the Señor Vasco, thou hast caught some little of his favour in thy countenance. But come with me aside—there be too many loungers in the Plaza to-day."

The youth followed the soldier, until, reaching a clump of woods which lay on the edge of the town and secured them from sight, the latter began his revelations.

"Thou knowest," said he, "or should know, that the Señor Vasco is shut up on charges which go to affect his life. Pedrarias holds him guilty of usurpation, tyrannical abuse of power, and disaffection to the sovereigns of Castile. The licentiate, Gaspar de Espinosa, has it in commission, as alcalde mayor, to convict him of these things—

and he will do so if he can prove them. Now, when I tell thee it is the wish of Don Pedrarias that such proof should be found, thou wilt guess what I would have of thee."

The soldier paused, but the youth would not comprehend the unexplicit suggestion, and he was forced to resume.

"Thou art less apt than I thought thee, Pedro. Know then, that it is looked to thee to establish many, if not most, of these facts against him."

"Me!" exclaimed Pedro, with an astonishment which was quite as unmeasured as it was unaffected.

"Ay—you!" replied the other coolly. "What's the wonder in that?"

"But, Señor Francisco, how can I establish facts of which I know nothing?"

"Pshaw, boy, thou art fighting against good fortune and common sense. Thou knowest enough to prove all these matters. Thou canst prove that Vasco Nunez instigated the colony against the Bachelor Enciso and the Señor Diego. It will go near making the Señor Vasco answerable for his death if this be shown."

"But these things happened, Señor Francisco, long ere I came to Darien. If these charges be true, there are many soldiers in Darien who will be better able to speak from their own knowledge."

"Ay, ay—thou art keen as a notary, Pedro; but thou shouldst know that these old soldiers of Darien are the last persons in the world to say what shall harm Vasco Nunez."

"But thou thyself art one of them."

"Yes," replied the other, "but there are reasons good why I should not appear in this business. The Señor Vasco has been my friend."

"And mine!" repeated the youth gloomily.

"Ay, Pedro, but thou holdest no such place in the regards of men as I. It would lose thee no esteem among the old soldiers of Darien to speak what thou knowest of Vasco Nunez—it would take from me, whom they follow, all respect and consideration."

"And what I know of the Señor Vasco, if spoken so loudly that the royal Ferdinand himself should hear, would do him far less hurt than honour."

"Dull, foolish boy!" exclaimed the other passionately.

"Dost thou think I ask of thee to speak only what thou knowest?"

"And what else should I speak, Señor Francisco?"

"That which will prove these charges of Don Pedrarias,—which will convict him of treason to his sovereign, tyranny to the subject, wrong to his better, fraud, peculation, and a thousand other offences, the least of which will bring him to the block."

"And Pedrarias is resolved on this?" inquired the youth in accents of increasing gravity, as he listened to this bold avowal of villany.

"Ay, fixed as the hills of Darien."

The youth was silent—a crowd of thoughts were struggling in his mind, and one rose pre-eminent over all the rest. "Truly," thought he, "fate delivers my victim unto me. But a few moments past, and it was my reproach that I had suffered my vengeance to be taken by another. This desire of Pedrarias puts the dagger into mine own hands. My lips may yet declare his doom." A fierce but brief struggle followed in the mind of the boy, but the noble spirit triumphed. "No!" he said inly—"let this cold-hearted, malignant, base-minded and brutal soldier, stab by a lie—I will not. If they have thus resolved to destroy Vasco Nunez, it will be easy for them to find many in Darien to swear falsely against him. But, though he never perish, I will not join with these."

"Señor Francisco," he said aloud, "I am not the person you think me. I cannot do you this service. I have eaten of the bread of Vasco Nunez, and have hearkened to his confidence. I am not the man to betray it."

"Hark ye, boy, speak not too quickly. Be counselled. You have none to shield you now in Darien from the anger of Don Pedrarias—nay, humble though he be, from the hate of Francisco Pizarro. Vasco Nunez can serve you no longer—you have nothing now to hope at his hands. Wherefore should you refuse this service to Don Pedrarias, seeing that it helps you to fortune and protection, both of which you need. Take a wiser thought to your mind, and speak as I counsel you."

"Never, Señor Francisco—never! I will not speak falsely even of mine enemy."

"You are not resolved on this!—there is yet time,

Pedro. Bethink you. Don Pedrarias will at once take you into his service."

"I thank him, Señor Francisco, and thank you; but my resolve is already spoken."

The keen, fierce, fiery eyes of the soldier were fixed steadily upon those of the youth, but they turned away baffled after a protracted stare, in which hostility and inquiry were mingled equally. They saw no fear, no faltering, no uncertainty in the glance of the boy. Hoarsely he spoke after this brief examination was over, and while he turned from him in angry disappointment—

"You are resolute on ruin. Beware!" He shook the unsheathed dagger as he went, and the last word which came to the ears of the boy was, "Beware!"

A burst of uncontrollable anguish issued from the lips of Pedro, when the other had retired, and showed the humiliating and chafing feeling ever present in his soul, and the prompter of many of his wayward moods.

"Why, oh! why," he exclaimed, "are my limbs feeble? Why, with a spirit proud and impatient as is mine, are my arms sinewless, and the muscles more soft and yielding than the woman's? Could I wield sword or dagger with hope, would this brute soldier have dared assail mine ears with his base offer and his threatening insolence? Would it were!—But no!—let me not, by vain regrets, proclaim the weakness of my soul to be no less great than that of my body. I must bear with these shames as I may. How much greater are those of this great man, whom I must hold an enemy, but whom I cannot hate:—taken in the toils when his discovery had insured him honours, and betrayed by his most trusted followers at a moment when even the sworn foe of his life feels sorrow at his misfortunes. Would it were that I could wish that he might live!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HEART SICK WITH HOPE DEFERRED—THE EAGLE PINES IN HIS PRISON.

But Vasco Nunez was not altogether deserted by his friends, in the gloom of his evil and overshadowing fortunes. With the first intelligence of his situation, the faithful astrologer sought, but was denied, access to his dungeon. The harsh mandate of Pedrarias had consigned him to utter solitude, no less than imprisonment. Indignation filled the soul of the venerable old man, but reflection as to the modes of redress and relief only taught him his own helplessness. There was but a single resort left him, and that lay in an appeal to Quevedo, the chief church dignitary in Santa Maria, who had been sent from Spain as Bishop of Darien. Some conferences had taken place between them already, and a sort of intimacy established, which led the astrologer to hope for some favour at his hands, and that he might move the interference of the prelate in behalf of his friend. Nor was his hope unfounded. His eloquent yet unvarnished narrative of the great deeds of Vasco Nunez, his perspicuous array of the noble virtues of his mind, and the great courage and hardy energies of his body, awakened the admiration of the bishop, and aroused all his sympathies. He took the matter in hand, went instantly to the petty tyrant, who had already shown so much hypocrisy and injustice in his brief career of authority, and demanded, as a right, those indulgences for the prisoner, which could not be withheld, without wanton cruelty, from

even the convicted felon, and which placed on the same level with him, one who, according to his showing, was not only not likely to be unconvicted, but actually deserving the highest rewards in the gift of the Spanish monarch.

"Beware what you do in this business, Don Pedrarias," said the bishop, continuing his exhortation, "if this which I tell you be true, you cannot wrong this gentleman, or wrong him with impunity. You cannot keep him in bonds—you must liberate him,—nay, more—it may become needful that you should do him honour."

The governor was troubled by what he heard, but his pride would not suffer him to make such a concession. He made that one, however, which was demanded of him, and granted permission that the friends of Vasco Nunez should visit him in his confinement. The good prelate did not stop here. He carried his friendly offices still farther, and having considerable influence over the Licentiate Espinosa, to whom, as alcalde mayor, the investigation was confided, the examination of the case was commenced in a manner most auspicious to the hero. The judge went largely into the subject, reviewed all his discoveries, and put on record a true representation of the nature and extent of his great services. The good bishop was delighted at the confirmation of his statement, and declared his exultation to the governor, to whom the facts brought nothing but vexation and alarm.

"This examination," said he, "proves hourly more and more favourable to the Señor Vasco. Truly, it is my wonder that mortal man could have done so much, under the most favouring circumstances: and he hath done it against the most adverse. You will do well, Don Pedrarias, to discharge the Señor Vasco from custody, for, I tell you, this investigation will lift him beyond reach in the admiration of the king, who will regard with corresponding ill-favour, the man who hath treated him so hardly."

"Never!" exclaimed Pedrarias, almost furious with rage —"Thou art deceived in this man, Quevedo. He is a base, black-hearted, malignant traitor, whom I will confound. Thou hast heard but half the story—but one side of it. Thine eyes shall be opened ere many days, when thou wilt regard him as I do—as one deserving of the axe, which he shall surely feel."

"Don Pedrarias," replied the bishop, mildly, but with

solemnity—"thou speakest in the language of passion and hate, rather than of justice. Be warned; all this I will be required to repeat of thee in Spain, if wrong be done to this brave man."

The warning, though it prompted the governor to more reserve in his anger, did not lead to any abatement of it. Alarmed at the course which the inquiry was taking, and fearing, as the prelate assured him, that, when made known in Spain, it would only redound to the elevation and honour of the man he had resolved to ruin, he stimulated with increased earnestness that dishonourable course of conduct, of which a sample has been given, in the brief interview recorded between Pizarro and the secretary. Through the means of this and other agents, he suborned certain base followers of Ojeda and Nicuesa to give testimony against their late commander, of the kind required. But this testimony failed entirely, being triumphantly answered and rebutted by the unsolicited evidence of a hundred others. The dishonest testimony was spurned by the alcalde and the bishop, and the active course pursued by the governor, in his interference with the designs of justice, brought down upon him the rebuke of the bishop and the solemn protest of the alcalde. They acquitted Vasco Nunez of all the crimes which had been laid to his charge. The fury of Pedrarias at this acquittal knew no bounds. Haughty and insolent by nature and education, and pre-resolved against the noble gentleman whom he succeeded, the opposition of the court which tried the prisoner to the evident will and wish of his oppressor, aroused all his anger, which did not keep within bounds even in the presence of the reverend prelate.

"You have decided that this man is innocent, when I have shown you by good proofs that he is guilty. Think you I will confirm your decision? No! I will keep the beggar, where he should be, in chains, until the brigantine sails for Spain, when I will send him thither to receive the reward of his crimes."

"Do so, and you destroy yourself, Pedrarias," replied the bishop, mildly;—"send him to Spain, you send him to triumph—put chains on his limbs, and Ferdinand himself takes them off, and may put them on the limbs of him who dared to do so monstrous an offence, no less to greatness than to humanity. The clamour of the nation, once

possessed of the facts which may be given them by the licentiate, or myself, or an hundred others, will compel the king, if he would have it otherwise himself, to restore Vasco Nunez to the government of Darien, and give him higher honours than you could possibly deprive him of. Do thus madly if thou wilt, and thou committest a suicide of thy own sway, and destroyest thyself for ever."

The angry governor was startled by this new aspect of the matter, which he could not deny was a reasonable one; and an unlooked-for ally came to the assistance of the Bishop in his prosecution of the claims of the hero. This was no less a person than Doña Isabel, the wife of Pedrarias and mother of the capricious coquette of Santo Domingo, the lovely but heartless Señora Teresa. Doña Isabel, who had received from the Bishop a true version of the deeds of Vasco Nunez, and had listened with more faith and charity than her lord, felt nothing but respect and sympathy for the discoverer. She joined her prayers and pleadings to those of the Bishop, and, though unsuccessful in effecting his release, her interposition had some effect in mitigating the probable severities of the governor. Unwilling to set him free, and equally afraid of the consequences of punishing him or sending him to Spain, in opposition to the decree of the court which had acquitted him, the perplexities of Pedrarias ended in leaving him where he was—in prison—until other events forced upon him a different policy, in which it will be difficult to say whether the good or evil star of the conqueror prevailed.

Meanwhile, however, secure in what had already been obtained from fortune, the soul of Vasco Nunez remained serene, and though sad, it may be, at the denial and restraint put upon its energies, it was at least as unroubled by fear as it was utterly unconscious of any guilt, such as had been charged against him. When the result of the trial, and the resolution of Pedrarias, by which he sought to baffle its acquittal, were made known to him by the astrologer, the communication scarcely awakened any emotion—none at least, was visible.

"The malignant sign is in the ascendant, Micer Codro," he answered with a smile—then, with features instantly changing to an expression of intense gravity, he concluded by asking for Careta.

"She only awaits my permission to come to thee."

"How! thou hast not refused her, Micer Codro?"

"No!—I have but restrained her. Thou knowest we were all refused by Pedrarias, and but for Quevedo we had not had permission now. But for him, indeed, thou hadst been condemned. The alcalde is a youth of feeble spirit and vain temper, and fickle as the wind. He had gone against thee but for the authority of the bishop."

"Ay, ay! it matters not—but wherefore keep Careta from me? Thou knowest, Micer Codro, that she hath none to help her in Darien but Vasco Nunez; and the poor Indian would find but small kindness from Pedrarias and the brawling cavaliers about him, if they but knew how close is the tie which I hold with her."

"It was this thought which moved me to restrain her. Wouldst thou have had her go to Pedrarias for permission to share with thee thy prison as thy wife? however wanting the decree of the church, still, my son, in the eyes of God and of thy own heart—thy wife."

"Now God forbid that she should declare this thing to Pedrarias," was the devout exclamation of the cavalier. The astrologer misunderstood the character of the exclamation and the fear from which it arose.

"Ay, he had spurned her with his foot," said the old man. But, at that moment, the only thought of Vasco Nunez, by a strange and mysterious will of his nature, that rose in utter defiance of the dictates of his reason, was of Teresa Davila. It was from Pedrarias, as the father of the proud beauty, and not as the tyrannical governor of Darien, that he would have withheld the knowledge of his commerce with the Indian damsel; and, if this secret could not be kept, at least, the avoidance of any obtrusion of it upon his notice.

"She followed thee to the prison door when she first heard of thy arrest, but Ayora drove her from the entrance. She would have gone thence to Pedrarias but that I stayed her on the way. Truly, my son, she hath been as one of the most wretched among the wretched, until I bade her await my return this morning, and then I would bring her to thy dungeon."

"Poor Careta! It were an evil hour for thee, that which beholds me on the scaffold. Micer Codro hast thou seen aught of the boy Pedro?"

"Little. He hath been wandering among the hills. He

loves not the crowd—these gay flaunting cavaliers from Spain have their sports and tilts daily, yet the boy looks not on them. He is ever in the solitude of the rocks and forests."

"He is another who would lose were I to perish. And thou too, Micer Codro——"

"Speak no more of sorrows, my son," replied the old man, "thy heart grows sad with their contemplation, and thou should'st hope, as thy friends strive always, for the better days of fortune. In thy death I should feel my own as desirable if not nigh. In thy loss I lose the chosen object of my old and lonely affections—the one companion to whom my heart has clung, only, for many years. Then should the doom be a welcome one, shadowed out by the living stars, many years agone; and mine eyes should turn down the path whence the grim spectre of death should come, with a painful solicitude that he might come quickly and bring me to the final place of rest."

"Thou hast seen thy own death in the stars, Micer Codro?"

"Ay, my son, as clearly written as if the hand was even now upon the wall beside thee. Many times have I beheld the scene which mine eyes are to survey ere they close upon the things of earth for ever. A green and lovely islet shall yield me rest in my dying moment. The sea shall roll around me with a falling chime and a murmur that shall soothe me into the sacred slumber, even as the low song of the mother calms the feverish mood of the infant. Under the shade of the palm-tree will my form repose, and the wing of a bird shall pass before mine eyes, wheeling around me at a great distance in the heavens. It is my fancy, my son, that thou, and the image of this noble bird, shall be the same; for now do I know, that thou shalt go before me into the dim world of gigantic shadows."

"Ha! thou *knowest* this then?" exclaimed the hero, in tones softened almost to a whisper, while his hand rested gently upon the arm of the astrologer.

"Ay, Vasco—it is written—I know that thou wilt die many days before me."

The astrologer was conscious only of an increasing pressure of the fingers which rested on his wrist, but the subject of this destiny neither started nor betrayed emotion.

His eyes were fixed with a calm attention upon the white venerable beard of the astrologer, and the natural thought in his mind was one of wonder that a man of his great age should speak with so much confidence of surviving a youth and vigour such as he felt alike in soul and person.

"It may be as thou sayest, my father. Indeed, my present position would seem to confirm thy prediction. He has little security for life from hour to hour, under the sway of one who is as little moved by justice as by fear and affection. But *he* is always secure against the sting of tyranny who is above the fear of death. Enough—my father, wilt thou suffer this poor girl to come to me now? My heart chides me with her apprehensions—my own troubles have led me to give but little heed to hers; and, by the Blessed Mother, the girl hath but too much need of care, she a Pagan, among those who treat a Christian as if he were one. She were better at Coyba, and, with the first show of a better fortune, thither shall she go. Mixer Codro, I would see thee at evening. There are thoughts working in my mind of mighty import, and of these I would speak to thee. If Pedrarias suffers me to live, he cannot long keep me in bondage. He will need me ere long. He is no commander for this people, and he brings none who can hope to be successful. My deliverance is sure from this dungeon ere very long, whether my chains be removed by the friend or the executioner; and if by the friend, then will it be less easy for Pedrarias to keep me from conquest than to keep me from freedom. Of this, to-night. It is a marvel Pedro seeks me not:—the young love not ill fortune:—yet, suffer Careta to come to me. She is true—ay, and innocent, and should not be forbidden."

The tumult of joy with which the poor Indian girl bounded into the presence of the conqueror touched his heart to the centre.

"My poor Careta, how they have made thee suffer. Hast thou feared for me? Didst thou think they had taken me from thee for ever? What didst thou fear?"

The inquiry of the conqueror brought her back to all her terrors and griefs.

"Oh, my lord," she exclaimed, looking around her, as if she dreaded the presence of an enemy at every turn, "they will not do thee harm now. The wise man, who

looks by night from the hill-top at the stars—he loves thee too—he says they will do thee no more harm. He tells me, they will bid thee go out of the dungeon very soon. And then, my lord—"

She paused, and again looked around her with an air of apprehensive caution. Her words, spoken in whispers, were renewed:—

"And then, my lord, we will steal away by night time, and go to Coyba. We will hide where the Spaniards do not come. There are hollows among the hills at Coyba, and high places, where the water tumbles. There the woods are thick. The tangled briar is around it—the wild grape is knotted every where among the small shrub trees, and the soldier cannot see between the leaves of the thicket, and thou wilt lie in the shade, and pluck the blue sweet berries that cluster over thy head. When they come to seek thee in anger, thou shalt hide in those places, and I will bring thee cassava, and the oily nuts, and tell thee when thy people are gone. Oh, my lord, it will be a sweet place when we are there, for thou wilt be safe, and the poor Careta will be with thee to watch thee all the while, and to be happy in thy love."

The plan of the Indian girl, expressed in her imperfect Spanish, at once touched the heart and amused the mind of Vasco Nunez.

"I think thou lov'st me, Careta."

"Oh, do I not, my lord—do I not? Oh, I was so foolish, like some idle bird that had nothing to do, but to sing in foolish song, until I loved thee; and now—and now, my lord, it is so sweet even to weep, and I care not to sing now any more; and my heart is happy only when I can think of my lord, and be sorry when he is sorry, and be ready to die when the bad men are angry against him. But when they set thee free, we will not fear the bad men. We will fly from them to Coyba, and my people shall be thy people, and they will serve thee better than thy own."

Fondly the chief caressed her, while he replied, in mournful language:

"Nay, Careta, thou shalt fly to Coyba, and I will come thither to see thee at seasons. But I must not leave my people for thine. I must live with the Spaniard, even though he hates and may seek to destroy me."

"Ah!" replied the girl, with a tender reproachfulness

of voice and manner,—"did not Careta leave her people for the people of my lord? Careta loves my lord more than all the people of Coyba. She will not leave him. When my lord would send away the poor Indian girl that loves him, let him bid the soldier smite her with the sharp sword. It will be then good for her to die."

"Thou shalt stay with me to the last!" was the reply. "Victim or conqueror, chained or free, thou shalt stay with me, Careta, while it shall please thee to do so. Thou, at least, art true. If thou art so willing to die for me, it will be the kinder fate to suffer thee to die with me."

"But we will not die—thou wilt not die;—the old man who looks upon the stars,—he tells me thou shalt very soon be free."

"Death is freedom!" was the reflection at that moment of the gloomy chief, but he suffered it not to be heard from his lips. The hopefulness of heart which the astrologer had encouraged in the simple Indian, seemed to make her so happy, that Vasco Nunez felt that it would be cruel to impair the impressions which she had received on this subject: and his words were uttered to strengthen her hope, though, wearied by his own mental excitements, and that restraint which is the most humiliating of all influences to the restless and impetuous nature, and made somewhat gloomy by the predictions of the astrologer to himself, he had little faith in any of his own promises. Still, she lacked the art of seeing into his. Her own heart, like the rivulet that runs along the wayside, revealed all its depths at a single glance to every eye—was it strange that she should be satisfied with the surface of all other hearts? We smile at the guileless and unsuspecting nature, and yet it has always the best chance of happiness, since the enduring jealousies of a distrusting heart are always a greater evil, than the disappointment and sorrow springing up in the betrayed one. Sorrow may be subdued by time, and circumstances may soften even grief into sweetness; but distrust hardens with years, and the heart becomes a mass of petrifaction, ere the body falls into that corruption which the melting tendernesses of the affections could alone make endurable to life. With the inconsiderateness of a child, the Indian girl forgot all fears for him, and all her own griefs, not to say all concern of the future, while she hung upon his neck in the dungeon. Vasco Nunez was not

insensible to her caresses: but though he looked fondly in her face, and spoke in a tone of mournful sweetness to her ears, yet his eyes watched, with an inevitable constancy, the iron bars of the windows; and his ears detected, for ever more mingling with the accents of her love, the heavy tread of the soldier in the court of the prison, and the occasional ring of his arquebus on the rocky earth. The eagle may not heed the scream of his mate, as she proclaims her freedom among the hills without, while he is vainly dashing his wings against the bars of his cage.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FREED EAGLE—HOPES REVIVED AND BAFFLED.

One of the predictions of Vasco Nunez was soon verified. The colony soon found occasion for his services. In the absence of his genius its fortunes sunk, its enterprises miscarried, and a pestilence which fell upon the people during the oppressive heats of summer, contributed to fill the measure of its misfortunes to the brim. Pedrarias lacked nearly all the necessary qualities for a great commander. Though treating the conqueror with such severity, he yet availed himself of many of the plans which his wily hypocrisy had extracted at his first coming from the simple and unsuspecting confidence of the other; but he adopted them only to mar them; and many of them were left unattempted through the pressure of calamities which contributed among other apparent evils to humble in some little degree the vain insolence and pride of heart, which made the governor so utterly regardless of truth and justice. The malaria of Darien prevailing in the heat of summer, carried off, in the brief period of one month, no less than seven hundred of the gay and youthful cavaliers that composed his army—many of them fled to Cuba and Spain; and Pedrarias,—himself sick, and thus deserted—was reduced to the humbling necessity—after vainly attempting to lead his troops in his own person in several expeditions which proved fruitless—to release Vasco Nunez from his chains, and yield those enterprises to his hands which had suffered nothing but miscarriage in the hands of others. His generals had traversed the country explored by Vasco Nunez, and in the wantonness of their power had practised a thousand excesses, which soon converted all the friendships

which he had formed with the natives into bitterness and hate. Their wives and daughters were seized upon, and subjected to the most brutal abuses, while their prisoners of every sex and age were equally subjected to the most cruel tortures in order that they might reveal the secret places of their fancied or reported treasures. Among these victims were many of those Indians whom the humane policy of Vasco Nunez had altered from savage foes into faithful allies; but who now, goaded to desperation, rose in unanimous warfare on every hand, and baffled at every point the ruthless invaders whom they did not always fail to destroy. The old scarred soldiers of Darien now spoke out with boldness on the subject of the wrongs of their late commander. They pointed to the invariable defeat of all those who had followed him over the ground on which he had been as invariably successful. Their reproaches and sarcasms had probably much more effect upon the irritable Pedrarias than even the necessities of his condition; and he resolved to employ the man who was so much the idol of the people, in such a manner as should do more to lessen his popularity than to ensure the success of his services. A perilous expedition—one which, tried before, had already more than once resulted in the defeat of the Spanish arms,—was proposed to the discoverer, who was only too happy to obtain his release from a prison in which his soul sickened, to make any serious objection to the terms. The rich mines of Dobayda—the golden temple of that Indian province—had long been a subject of fruitful anticipation among the Spanish cavaliers, and the discovery had been once attempted by Vasco Nunez himself without success. The enterprise was invested in the imagination of the time with more than ordinary dangers. The savages who held the country were as adroit as valiant—well practised in the arts of stratagem, and fought quite as well on water as on land. Their country was particularly favourable to their ambuscades and various modes of warfare. It was intersected with bays and rivers, dreary fens and morasses, which were also infested by every species of reptile. The vampire bat lurked around the soldier while he slept—the cayman plunged through the water, and assailed man and horse with equal audacity; clouds of gnats and musquitoes were ever on the wing, and every where; while, rendered

obtuse to their attacks and invulnerable by custom, the savage lurked in the same abodes with these natural enemies of the European, forming ambuscades with his fleet canoes at the mouths of lagunes and rivers, from whence he launched the sudden death on the flinty tongue of his venomed arrow. Nor, as if these terrors were not enough for the discouragement of all ordinary adventure, did fable withhold its marvels and monsters. The dragon and the harpy were also the supposed tenants of Dobayda, and the guardians of those golden treasures in search of which Spanish cupidity and courage proved in the end more than equal to all the perils involved in the adventure.

Vasco Nunez only smiled when his friends strove to dissuade him from the command, which, it was well understood, had been proposed to him by Pedrarias rather in hate than affection. He was too anxious to escape from the pining solitude of his prison, and the cankering cares of inactivity, to regard the presence of dangers to which he had been long familiar; and with the natural confidence of true genius, he was too well assured of his own powers to apprehend other than the most favourable results to an enterprise of which he had the entire conduct. But, it was his misfortune not to have the entire conduct of the adventure. The jealous Pedrarias, when he discovered the readiness of Vasco Nunez to undertake the enterprise, associated with him in the command one Louis Carillo, a creature of his own, who, in addition to his utter want of character, laboured under an equal deficiency of ability, and served only, as doubtless Pedrarias calculated, to embarrass the purposes, and finally defeat the enterprise of his associate. When this after-resolve of the governor was made known to Vasco Nunez, his ardour was chilled, and but that he had passed his word, he would freely have withdrawn from the command. His honour, however, was now concerned in the successful prosecution of the enterprise, and he resolved to go through it with his accustomed cheerfulness and spirit. But before departing he had a conference with the youth Pedro of whom he had seen but little while in his dungeon.

"Thou hast almost fled me, Pedro—thou lovest not the air of a prison. Thou art wise, but thou shouldst not desert thy friends."

"I do not, señor—it may be that I have served thee without better than if I had sought thee within."

"Perhaps so—it is not unlikely. It had been of little help to thee or me in the eye of Pedrarias, to have made thyself familiar in my prison. I doubt not thy friendship, Pedro, and would try it farther. Wilt thou be faithful?"

"If it be with me, señor, thou wilt find me in the moment of death the nearest to thy side."

"Enough—hear me. I have but little hope from this expedition now. This Carillo is a fool—and no less vain than foolish. His presumption already moves him to confound my commands, and this presumption, natural enough to the man, is strengthened and increased by a knowledge which he has of the treasured hostility of Pedrarias to my fame and fortunes. He will probably defeat the enterprise. Against this I would be prepared. I would be free from Pedrarias. Here then is gold—it is the small remains of my spoil on the Southern Sea. Thou shalt take this to Cuba and procure for me a brigantine, well armed, and with seventy resolute men. With these I will leave Darien for the South Sea, and explore the country beyond it without fear of this petty tyrant."

"I will do it, Señor Vasco," replied the youth.

"It was surely unwise," said the astrologer, after the other had departed, "to give so great a trust to one so young."

"Alas! Micer Codro," replied the conqueror, "thou speakest as if Vasco Nunez had his choice of warriors among a thousand. The youth is young indeed, but he is thoughtful—he is feeble but he is bold; and far better is it to trust the thoughtful boy than the thoughtless graybeard, and more sure is the strength of the heart than the strength of the body. The small dog pulls down to the earth the heavy bull, and the little bird with a fearless heart speeds with an arrow's swiftness upon the big but trembling fowl that wanders near the dwelling of his young. This boy hath a generous spirit and a good mind. Even were it otherwise, as I have told thee, there had been none but thou—"

"I had gone for thee, son Vasco."

"No, no, Micer Codro—it is not fitting at thy years that thou shouldst toil for youth, in such labours as should only fall to the lot of youth. I had thought of Francisco

Pizarro; but I have remarked that he hath been frequently in command under Pedrarias, and his eye looks not into mine when we speak together. He hath ever been true to me I think, yet I like not this. He too hath, I fear, but little love for friends in a dungeon."

"He is a brave, bad man," said the astrologer, "who hath no such nature as thine, and will only be thy friend when it helps his fortune to be so. Still, he had done better than the boy."

"Nay, I know not that," replied the other as if willing to dismiss the subject. "I have faith in that youth, and it needs not valour nor strength to buy brigantine and hire soldiers. He will do well I doubt not."

The enterprise of Vasco Nunez failed; he reached the province and river of Dobayda, but was not destined to win the golden temple. His small fleet of canoes was surrounded by thousands of savages in vessels of the same description, which they were taught to manage with more skill than the Spaniards. The fight was long and bloody. The savages fought with a degree of desperation as singular as it was successful. They assailed the invaders with lances and arrows, which were sent with a force which impelled them through buckler, escaupil and body, and only failed against such Spaniards as had the good fortune to wear mail coats. While one swarm of warriors carried on the combat with these weapons, others plunged boldly into the river, grappling the canoes of the enemy with their hands, and dragging them beneath the water; stabbing with their short spears the struggling Spaniards who vainly strove at the same moment against their implacable opponents and their own weighty armour. One half of the Spaniards were slain; among them Carillo, to whose rashness the surprise was wholly due. Vasco Nunez, himself wounded, succeeded in beating off the enemy and retreated safely to Darien, amidst horrors and privations, which fully confirmed the worst features of the dreadful tales which they had heard of this fearful region. Pedrarias and his partisans exulted in a result which they had alike desired, and taunted the friends of the hero with his defeat. But they had their sufficient answer, when they mentioned the name of Carillo, to whose blind insolence, the surviving soldiers of the expedition ascribed its unfortunate termination. Vasco Nunez himself was silent amid all these dis-

cussions. His spirit seemed depressed and cowed in the consciousness of evil fortune, and, with hourly increasing reverence, he nightly looked with Micer Codro at the aspect of that evil planet which still hung with threatening augury within the horizon of his own. The expectation of the vessel from Cuba, and the hope of better tidings from Spain, alone cheered him up against the oppressions of his tyrant on earth, and those predictions of evil which seemed written against his fortune on the dim curtains of heaven. There was a time when, the summit of his greatness being won, it seemed to him that death would have been a small evil; and such was his conviction when he stood upon the peak of Darien and watched the living waters flowing at his feet below. His thought now, like that of all great minds, was, not of what he had done, but of what yet remained for him to do. The height was gained, it is true, but the illusive glory lay beyond it still. Other heights were to be reached—other seas crossed—other nations overcome—and then, the employments of ambition are yet to be begun. Weary with watching, sad with many and conflicting thoughts, he turned from the astrologer—he turned from the few soldiers, the scarred veterans whose eyes declared the sympathy which it had been unwise to speak in more emphatic language—he turned from all men, and from all the schemes of men, as fruitful only in affliction, and yielding no other increase than strife; and sought his only consolation in the unobtrusive but watchful devotion of the Indian damsel. The care which wasted him was also busy at her heart; and his departure from her presence, and his return, brought her equal anxiety. She knew enough of his position in the colony, to be now aware of his dangers, and when her knowledge failed her, her apprehension underwent due increase. To the ignorant, the unknown is always full of dangers, and the ignorance that loves is always the most timid of creatures.

"Oh, my lord," she was always ready to exclaim when she saw him return—and while her fingers played with his long, brown hair, which intense thought and many cares were prematurely sprinkling with gray—"shall we not go to Coyba, and hide among the hills? There is danger to my lord in Darien—there is death here. Will not my lord fly with the poor Careta, where safety sits in the bushes among the hills—where the cruel Spaniard cannot come?"

"Ay, Careta, there is danger here and death—but where are they not? Coyba is not more secure than Darien—thou hast heard my thunder among its hills, and the Spaniard will dwell in Coyba as in Darien. There will be no part of this wild land which can be secure against his warriors. But I would send thee to Coyba, to thy father, my poor Careta, if this were in my power. If harm comes to Vasco Nunez—if death——"

"No, no, no! no death for my lord."

"Bethink thee, my girl,—if death comes to me, what will become of thee? Where wilt thou hide thee? What wilt thou do? Thou wilt be at the mercy of this tyrant, who hath but too well shown to me what are the mercies of the wicked."

A smile faintly overspread the lips of the damsel, as she gradually comprehended the speech of the conqueror—but she made no other answer. None other was necessary to show at that moment the feeling in her soul. The subject was one which she did not care to examine. It was enough for her to know that in his death, her own cares of life would all be extinguished.

CHAPTER XVI.

VICISSITUDES: NIGHT AND DAY STILL COME TOGETHER—A STORM BREWING.

The failure of Vasco Nunez in his late enterprise, furnished an excuse for his non-employment, of which Pedrarias readily availed himself; and, though freed, the unfortunate hero laboured under the obloquy and discredit which naturally enough followed the hostility of the ruling powers. He saw Pizarro and Morales, his own officers, despatched on enterprises to the shores of that ocean which his eagle-wing had explored; and he saw them return, baffled and beaten by the savage tribes whom they provoked by wanton indignity and wrong to desperate hostility. In vain did the good bishop of Darien, who still continued to be warmly his friend, labour to change the unaccountable and bitter hatred of the governor. In vain did he dwell upon the shame and the dishonour which rested upon him in consequence of his injustice. The sole effect of this interference was to save the hero from those positive indignities, and that harsher treatment, which the envious spirit of Pedrarias would not have forborne, but for the prudent fear which the resolute expostulation and occasional threats of the bishop, continued to inspire in his mind. Arguments of even more solid policy, tending to produce a change in his treatment of the hero, were equally ineffective.

"Look," said the bishop, "at the condition of the colony, and you will see that this man alone can save it. You have tried your own and his best officers, and they have failed in every adventure."

"He himself hath failed," said Pedrarias.

"Speak not of that," replied the other significantly—"it

had been a blessed and wondrous miracle had he done otherwise with such a wretched creature as Carillo on his back. But look at the miserable band brought back by Pizarro from his expedition to the Pearl Islands. Sixty veteran warriors reduced to sixteen; and this terrible massacre of the force led by Becerra—one hundred and eighty men—all slain by the poisoned arrow of the Indian, and but one left to tell the story. The defeat of Ayora by Tubanama, who hath made banners, after his own fashion, of the bloody garments of the Spaniards he hath slain, should be to thee sufficient warning of the fate awaiting us, unless thou restore to command this captain, who, with a force infinitely smaller than any which the savages have lately destroyed, traversed the same paths of terror in the same country, and by arms or arts—which are no less worthy of the warrior than arms—made friends where thy lieutenants have found but enemies. And now, what is our condition in Darien? The savages, grown bold by our constant defeats, beleaguer us in our dwellings. Our people stir not forth but to see enemies, and rise at midnight to meet the harassing assault. They see foes in the long grass of the plains, and countless canoes rise up on every wave of the ocean. Do as thou wilt, Don Pedrarias, but I hold it my duty, as in a season of great peril, to cause prayers to be put up, and proclaim fasts, that the calamities hanging over the people of God's church, like storm-bringing clouds, may pass away. Thou wilt be able to say to thy sovereign whether thou hast taken the best means for the safety of his people and dominion."

But the heart of Pedrarias hardened within him, and his neck grew more stiff amidst the misfortunes of the colony. To yield to the solicitations of Quevado in behalf of Vasco Nunez, was, in fact, only to admit in brief the tyranny and gross injustice of his conduct; and for this the pride of a small mind was unprepared. But, about this time, events were in progress which were calculated to effect a change, either for good or evil, in the fortunes of our hero. A vessel arrived from Spain, bringing important despatches to the governor which stung his vanity, mortified his pride, and filled his soul with new rage and an increased hatred for the rival he had so unworthily treated. In a letter from the king, he was instructed to consult Vasco Nunez on all public affairs. To the latter, a letter was also written,

in which he was constituted governor of the provinces of Panama and Coyba, with the swelling title of Adelantado of the Southern Sea. The base Pedrarias withheld the letter from his rival, and strove to keep the knowledge of its contents, and the purport of his own despatches, from the public. But the seamen who came in the vessel which brought the tidings, were unrestrained by any such motives as prevailed over the honour of the governor, and the important intelligence soon reached the knowledge of the parties most interested in it. With a soul burning with honest indignation, the courageous bishop ascended the pulpit, and denounced the conduct of the governor as an outrage upon the sovereign no less than the subject.

This public exposure drove the governor to other measures, and he called a council of his public officers, to whom, making a merit of necessity, he opened his despatches. The bishop at once demanded that Vasco Nunez should be invested with the dignities and power which the king had conferred; but this proposition was resisted by the alcalde mayor, who had been brought over to the party of Pedrarias, and who, making a pretext of the late inquisition into the conduct of Vasco Nunez, which still remained unfinished, strenuously insisted that the offices ought in no wise to be given to one, whose public conduct was still in some sort the subject of official investigation—not, at least, until the king had been apprised of the nature and results of the inquest. The other councillors, who were all creatures of Pedrarias, held the same language, and the bishop stood alone in his opinion. But, though alone, he neither lost heart in his cause, nor suffered any diminution of boldness in his tongue. His vehemence and strong language effected more than his arguments.

"I will denounce ye, Don Pedrarias, as disloyal to your sovereign, inasmuch as you deliberately defeat his desires, and refuse to obey his commands. He asks ye not to qualify his judgments, and to rectify them where they fail—it is he who shall correct your judgments, and, let me add, shall punish them too, when it shall be that they err as they do now, from passion and prejudice, and the most rank injustice. I tell ye no more but this—Ferdinand shall know from me, not merely of your disobedience, but of the evil malice from which your disobedience springs. A malice which, in seeking to destroy a man, hath come near to the

destruction of the whole colony, and hath too certainly destroyed a thousand men. Look to it, señores—ye are all the officers of the king—he shall know from me, if you amend not your judgments, certainly and soon, what hath been the character of your loyalty."

The resolute indignation of the bishop produced its effect, but did not altogether reach the end it aimed at. Pedrarias well knew that if the jurisdiction, implied by the titles given to Vasco Nunez, were once vested in him, it would leave his own government of Darien but a very insignificant command. He adopted a middle and more cunning policy.

"Let Vasco Nunez give security that he will not attempt to enter upon his jurisdiction, until the king hath knowledge of the inquest upon him, in the business of the Señor Diego de Nicuesa and of the Bachelor Enciso, and the titles shall be conferred upon him forthwith. Thou mistakest me, Quevedo, if thou think'st I would wrong this man, or withhold from him any right, however little I may deem him deserving of it. I have striven against him only as I held him worthy rather of punishment than favour."

"Be it so," replied the bishop, with a scorn he was unable entirely to conceal. "The Señor Vasco can have no fear in submitting his cause to the king. Indeed, he hath long since submitted it, and these honours and this power, which ye are so reluctant to bestow, are his final judgments upon the cause. But, as thou wilt. I will go forth and greet the Adelantado of the Southern Seas with his new and deserved dignities."

The title was caught up and found a thousand echoes in Darien. The old soldiers of Vasco Nunez crowded around him with applauses and shouts of exultation, which galled the angry Pedrarias to madness. He looked with a jealousy, the parent of innumerable fears, to the high place which his rival maintained in public opinion, and began to apprehend the presence of an enemy, who was destined to usurp his power and overthrow himself. It was while these fears and feelings were uppermost, that Francisco Pizarro sought him in secret, and furnished a new source of disquiet to his mind, and a new motive for injustice.

"The adelantado is already busy, Don Pedrarias," said the ambitious soldier, who well knew that his own elevation was retarded only by that of one so superior as Vasco

Nunez—"Look forth, señor, upon the harbour,—thou wilt there see as handsome a brigantine as ever swam in salt water. See,—she comes not to the quay—she rides securely at a distance, some six leagues off. But there are tidings already in Darien which speak of her objects, and for whom she comes. A messenger hath left her for the shore, and is even now in close conference with the adelantado."

"The adelantado!—demonios! But speak out, Señor Francisco—what are their objects—what brings she?"

"Arms and soldiers!"

"Ha!"

"As I live,—true, señor. There are men and arms on board,—I know it from the Señor Vasco himself. Look to it! He hath many in Darien to follow his banner, and if, as I doubt not, the soldiers in the brigantine be numerous, then will he have a force at his bidding to which thou canst oppose nothing. Look to it—thou hast yet time to do all—an hour may leave thee without strength for any thing."

The governor grasped the hand of the traitor with a cordial pressure.

"Pizarro,—I thank thee—thou shalt be remembered for this. Ho! there!"

A servant appeared.

"Away!—to the Señor Ayora—bid him instantly attend me."

The officer stood before him in a little while after, and the vindictive governor at once gave him his commands.

"To the dwelling of Vasco Nunez with an hundred picked men, and arrest me that black-hearted traitor. Do thy bidding without hearing plea or prayer, and cast him at once into the dungeon from which he was so lately and unworthily set free. Away."

The adelantado was conversing with the youth Pedro, who had so well executed his commission, when the officer of Pedrarias with a strong guard entered for his arrest. At the first sight of the soldiers, Careta, the Indian damsel who sat near the entrance, screamed aloud. Hearing her voice, Vasco Nunez who sat within the chamber, behind a curtain which half covered the doorway, and who saw nothing of the soldiers though he heard their tread, started to his feet, and caught up the sword which lay on a table

before him. The next moment Ayora entered the apartment followed by a force which rendered unavailing every offer at defence.

"What means this intrusion, Señor Ayora?" demanded the adelantado.

"Your arrest, señor,—I am commanded by Don Pedrarias to convey you to prison."

"How!—Don Pedrarias—it cannot be! On what pretence?"

"Nay,—I know not that, señor,—nor is it for soldiers to ask the why and wherefore of their commanders. I must obey only, as, I trust, wilt thou."

"Surely—there must be some mistake in this. Nay, Careta, be not foolish—make no plaint,—Don Pedrarias will soon find his error, and I will return to thee directly. Pedro,—thou wilt be careful to keep things as I leave them."

There was a meaning in these parting words of the chief which Ayora did not see, but which was readily understood by the person addressed. He followed the party to the Plaza near which stood the prison of Darien.

"Now," said he, in hurried soliloquy as the door closed upon the chief—"there is no farther charge upon me to serve Vasco Nunez. The business I have taken for him in hand is done, and he hath declared himself well content with my performance. Surely, I have toiled for him sharply, and as one who loved him. I forbore to slay him when he was striding on with the pace of a giant to the wondrous triumph which he achieved; a secret blow at that moment, had been base like the shaft of the peasant who lies in the cleft of the rock and strikes the mighty bird when he is towering over the mountain. Wherefore did I delay when he had made his triumph secure—wherefore do I delay now, when his good fortune no longer attends him?"

A well known and harsh voice at his side interrupted his soliloquy. The boy started, and shrunk back with a feeling of loathing, which the other interpreted into one of fear. His grim smile betrayed something of triumph in his mind at such a conviction.

"What! thou hast not forgotten, Pedro—thou art resolved to remember old grudges. A truce to thy folly, boy, and hearken to sober sense. Thou seest the fortunes

of thy old master. They will be thine if thou heed not. He hath gone to the prison—he will go from thence to the scaffold. Thou startest, but I tell thee truth; and thy own danger is to come. Pedrarias knows not that thou hast been the agent of this new treason of Vasco Nunez. He knows not that it was thou who gottest ship and soldiers for him in Cuba, that he might overthrow lawful sway in Darien, and rise in rebellion against his sovereign. A word from me will give thee to the same fate; and I will speak that word, unless thou dost my bidding."

The sallow cheeks of the youth grew red with indignation. His lips quivered and the gleam of his eye was darkened by an expression of such unusual ferocity that even the brutal Pizarro beheld it with silent surprise. But the feelings in the striving heart of the boy were checked with the conviction in his mind, that such a man was to be encountered by art only; and stopping the angry defiance which his first impulse had carried to his quivering lips, he changed the temper of his reply in an instant.

"And what would the Señor Francisco have me do?"

"Thou art willing—it is well. Thou shalt declare all these things to the alcalde when he shall sit in judgment on the Señor Vasco."

"What things dost thou speak of Señor Pizarro?"

"What things? Have I not said? Hast thou not taken money in his behalf to Cuba, and brought him hither a vessel filled with armed men that he may overcome Pedrarias and possess himself of the command."

"Nay, Señor Francisco, thou errest—the adelantado hath had no such object; and there are but seventy men in the brigantine."

"Nay,—thou shalt swear there are seven hundred, and it is needful thou shouldst also swear his object to be as I have declared it, and as thou knowest it to have been. Thy own safety rests on thy readiness to do this."

"Let me have time to think of it, Señor Francisco," said the youth temporizingly. A new feeling rose in his mind, and a new resolution, which, friendly to the fortunes of the oppressed conqueror, sprang rather from his dislike to the man who strove to suborn him to perjury against him, than from any more becoming sentiment of justice. He saw that the myrmidons of Pizarro were at hand, and

a word from their master would have thrown him into fetters also.

"Thou shalt have till to-morrow noon," was the reply—"meanwhile, know for certain that the Señor Vasco cannot escape the anger of Pedrarias. Even shouldst thou fail him, shouldst thou do, as it were thy death also to do, there is sufficient proof of his treachery. Beware, boy—thy fate hangs, in this matter, on a slender thread; and thou partakest of the crime against which thou wilt not boldly declare thyself. More than this, thy compliance will bring thee reward—thou wilt win the favour of him who can protect thee, in lieu of that which thou losest, and which is of little worth to any now."

"And if such be thy base policy," murmured the youth as he sped from the presence of the malicious traitor, "such is not mine. No! If thou that hast followed him in the day of his prosperity with the smiling sycophancy of the selfish slave, turn'st upon him in his misfortune like the base cur that yelps at the heels of the wretched, it is reason enough for one who did not strike his enemy in his hour of pride, to avoid and utterly reject the counsel of which thou givest him so fitting an example. I will not lift my voice against him when all others shrink from his side, and such as thou art every where his foes."

But all had not shrunk from the side of Vasco Nunez, and every voice was not lifted against him in the day of his evil fortune. While the youth sped along the thoroughfare, and whenever the voices of a group reached his ears, he heard nothing but murmurs against the new act of tyranny which the governor had committed. Angry censures were spoken out with little caution, and the professed followers of the adelantado did not forbear to mingle threats with their execrations. That sympathy with greatness which had hitherto operated to discourage the youth from putting into execution his vow of vengeance, even when the opportunity was frequent, and had made him labour faithfully in behalf of his destined victim, now served to move him to yet further performances, of greater peril to himself, and of like generous tendency. A sudden impulse, a thought rapid as the lightning, rushed through his brain, and he stopped short among the speakers.

"The secretary of the adelantado!—So, Señor Pedro,

what news is this of the Señor Vasco and of Don Pedrarias? Shall the old soldiers of Darien be always made footstools of these new-comers with their fine coats? What are we to have next?"

"What you please!" replied the youth. "Ye are men—strong men—and as ye know your own wants and wishes, so also should ye, by this time, know how to obtain them. Lo, you! Have you not arms, and fear you these silk-shodden gentry? You are scarce less numerous, and, a word in your ears; see you yonder vessel—a signal brings her in two hours to the shore, and another signal adds an hundred stout soldiers to your ranks. Put yourselves in readiness—say nothing—arm secretly and gather behind the pillars of Santa Maria del Antigua two hours hence. So shalt thou know what can be done for the adelantado. Arguello will meet you there and be your leader."

"Ha, Señor Pedro, dost thou swear this—how shall we believe you."

"By the pillar and the cross, I swear. I go now to Arguello—and to make signal to the brigantine. Keep your counsel—trust none that ye know not—keep your lips shut and your hearts firm, and meet me where I tell you, in two hours, with lighted matches."

From group to group the enthusiastic youth sped with all the haste of one warmed with a new and agreeable employment. A single word to one, a sentiment to another, a judicious hope held out to a third, and a flattering speech to a fourth, sufficed to give vigour and concentration to those floating feelings of indignation, which the renewed ill-treatment of their favourite commander had inspired among the greater number of the old soldiers of Darien. There were others of a higher order of intellect, if not of feeling, to secure whom Pedro was not less mindful. One of these, whose interests he well knew to depend very much upon the release, as well as the favour of Vasco Nunez—one Hernando de Arguello—he sought out with arguments equally convincing and provocative. This man, though no soldier, and a notary merely, was yet popular in the colony, and was possessed of a considerable private fortune. Much of this was invested in certain agricultural schemes of Vasco Nunez, and in the erection of a new town called Acla, which the latter had founded at a port to the west of Darien, which, in compliment to the Indian damsel, had

been called Careta. To alarm him on the subject of these interests, the youth well knew, was the most easy way to bring Arguello into the field.

"Let Pedrarias convict Vasco Nunez of treason, and all his property is confiscated. Your interests are so hidden among his, that they go together in loss, equally as in good fortune. Who knows, besides myself and ye two, that you are equal owner with the Señor Vasco of all the fields of Santa Maria?—who knows that your wealth has raised from the base more than two-thirds of the houses at Acla?"

"But you can prove these things, Pedro, before the alcalde," replied the other in alarm.

"I prove! Ay, and what would be the value of my proof in the ears of Pedrarias, when it is his desire to get this property into his possession? It were as much as my head were worth to give such testimony. I should look to be found guilty of the same honourable crime with the adelantado, and be despatched after him, as a secretary that knows quite too much for the good of better people. No! no! Señor Hernando,—your hope is to save the adelantado from the jaws of the denouncing governor—in his safety you are safe, and I tell thee if Vasco Nunez dies as a traitor to King Ferdinand, then, the bare suspicion that thou hast a claim upon property held as his, will go far to bringing you guilty of the same crime, and will ensure you the benefits of a like sharp judgment."

"But to take command of these soldiers for his rescue is treason."

"Ay, but strong treason is always respectable, and makes its own terms. Weak treason is a cur that barks without teeth. Already they regard you as such a cur, and the Señor Vasco is himself not without the imputation. If, indeed, he had been less loyal, Pedrarias had not suspected him of treason. Had he but shown his teeth at the first indignity of this governor,—I tell thee he had this day been sole master in Darien. It took from my admiration of the Señor Vasco, that he was so patient, and so loyal, under all his injuries. It is for him and his friends, now—it is not too late—to show that they have teeth, and will not wait for too much provocation."

"Thou art wise beyond thy years, Pedro—thou shouldst have been a soldier."

The boy looked down at his own shrivelled limbs, and a bitter smile passed over his features.

"Ay, ay,—but I am not, and what is worse, can never be—but, Señor Hernando, I have teeth, and can show them too when there is need. There is need for thee to show thine now."

"I do not fear, Pedro, as thou knowest; but, in truth, I am as little soldier as thou. I cannot array men for battle——"

"It shall be done to thy hands, señor: I will be at thy side and will prompt thee. Fear not that I lack. I tell thee—and I tell thee with sorrow rather than with pride,—I have looked on war and battle with a strange pleasure,—a pleasure that was ever dashed in the next moment with a bitter grief, that I could only be a looker-on. But enough of this. We are bound for speed. The men gather at the Pillar of Santa Maria, and the signal is thrice made for the soldiers of the brigantine. Get thee thy weapon, señor,—and be surely at the Pillar within a proper time. Thou art a lawyer, too—it were not amiss if thou conned'st some flattering speech for the soldiers. Thou canst tell them of the gold and the glory, of which thou well know'st how small is the share which they ever get. But this latter is a truth scarcely wholesome to be said by those who need their succour. They will take thy promises on trust, and ask for no proof such as would trouble thee to procure, satisfactory to them as well as to Pedrarias. Señor, thy fortune rests on thy speed, and by our Lady of the Pillar, I tell thee, as in truth I believe, thy head hangs on thy shoulders, when that of the Señor Vasco is off, only by thy modest forbearance to claim any interest in his forfeited possessions."

"I will be there, Pedro—I fear not Pedrarias. Thou art sure of the temper of the men?"

"Would thou wert as sure of thine arm, señor."

"Nay, mistrust me not. This Pedrarias shall feel me. He hath dealt foully with the Señor Vasco,—nay, I know he strives only at his possessions; but there shall be blows in that bargain. Thou hast said nothing to Pizarro?"

"Pizarro! No! Beware of him,—he is a thrice black traitor to the Señor Vasco, who hath kissed his lips when he carried poison on his own. I tell thee, if any hath counselled Pedrarias to these doings, other than his own

vexing spirit, that other hath been Francisco Pizarro. Keep thou from his sight, señor, until thou tak'st the lead of thy men, then if he approach thee, as it will be but seemly in him to do, with a traitorous speech of friendship to thee and to Vasco Nunez, give him thy dagger in his mouth for an answer, and let a short cord lift him to a high tree. There is not a blacker heart in all Spain, than works in the bosom of Francisco Pizarro."

"Thy phrase is that of an old soldier, Pedro. Thou wilt be a captain yet—nay, I will make thee my lieutenant now. See that thou fail me not at the Pillar,—I shall have little wisdom to command without thy help."

"Be thou there, señor. I will no more fail thee, than I will fail the Señor Vasco in the last moment."

CHAPTER XVII.

STORM SUBSIDING—GLEAMS OF SUNSHINE.

The first intelligence of the second arrest of Vasco Nunez brought the astrologer to the dwelling of the bishop of Darien, and the latter, immediately after, to the presence of Pedrarias. The good bishop was not less astonished than vexed by this new indignity—one that seemed as utterly unaccountable as shocking. He resolved to keep no terms with the governor, but to denounce his conduct to his sovereign with all the harshness which he thought due to offences that he now could only ascribe to a mean and reckless jealousy of the superior talents and popularity of his rival. He found the governor in a fury of wrath, which savoured much more of madness than of even extraordinary indignation. Before he would hear the bishop, his lips broke forth into clamours which for a while prevented any conference.

"Thou hast pleaded for this arch-traitor—thou hast stepped between him and the just punishment to which, but for thee, I had doomed him long ago—and now see what has come of it. This virtuous man, this loyal captain, this great hero and wondrous genius—this lamb whom the wolf was seeking to destroy—he whom, in the warmth of thy benevolence, thou hast styled thy son—thy noble son!—ho! what canst thou say for him now? what is thy new plea? what thy pretence? Methinks thou shouldst now be silent, Quevedo, and forbear all thy opposition to the course of justice. Thou wilt surely now give me way to do with this traitor what I please."

"Of a certainty I will do no such thing, Don Pedrarias. Even were it not hostile to the general purport of justice,

that thou or any man should do as it pleaseth him in his evil mood to the prisoner in his bonds, or the subject within his sway, thy ungovernable temper at this moment would be sufficient cause to move me to resistance to thy will. With such a mood upon thee, it were impossible for thee to do justice—nay, it were not possible for thee to do aught, with this spirit, which would not be the most rank injustice. What is it now that thou hast, in the fever of thy hate, brought against this persecuted man?"

"It is even as I thought. Still, thou thwartest me—still thou givest help and countenance to the traitor. What will convince thee, my Lord Bishop of Darien? What evidence wouldst thou need for the conviction of Vasco Nunez? Wilt thou have the blessed angels from heaven? Will Michael and Gabriel and Raphael suffice? Perchance the Blessed Virgin might answer thee—but, surely, nothing short of miracle will avail against thy forejudging favour in this disloyal man's behalf."

"Beware, Don Pedrarias, that thy madness leads thee not to blasphemy. It may be that I shall be compelled to show thee a commission which gives me, as a brother of the holy office, power even above that of the Governor of Darien."

"Dost thou threaten me too, Quevedo, in behalf of thy favourite?"

"I warn thee, Pedrarias—I warn thee against thy own passions, which lead thee to wrong me no less than this man. He is no favourite, only so far as he deserves my favour. Show me that he merits punishment at thy hands, and I will speak no more in his behalf. Until this be done, the passion which thou showest in speaking against him, is a proof of thy hate and not of his crime. The judge who pronounces sentence against the prisoner, having a burning wrath in his heart such as now works in thine, is the devil's officer and does the work of hell only. Thou darest not sit in judgment on Vasco Nunez, hating him as thou dost."

The energetic language of the bishop at once awed and irritated the governor anew.

"By the blessed cross, my lord bishop, thou wouldst have this man change places with me. Thou wouldst make me criminal like him. What! Can it be that we

may not hate the offender because of his offence? If I loathe this Vasco Nunez, it is because of his deeds."

"I fear me, because of his good and great deeds, Don Pedrarias, since I have seen no other of his performance, and thou tell'st me of none. Wherefore hast thou again thrust him into prison?"

"For a newly-discovered treason—one greater than all the rest. What if I tell thee that he hath secretly despatched his secretary to Cuba—that he hath brought an armed vessel into port, and, but that I had timely warning of his designs, had ere now, perchance, raised the banner of open treason in Darien, and seized upon the province?"

"A province which thou, in thy sovereign's despite, withhold'st from his command. But who gave thee this timely warning?"

"Nay,—this matters nothing. Enough that the proof is to be found in the fact itself. The vessel is already in the river of Darien, filled with arms and men, who wanted only the lead of the traitor to seize upon the government. But his head or mine before that hour."

"Thou hast moved rashly, Don Pedrarias, and greatly do I fear that these doings of thine cannot soon be amended. Some evil counsellor, who hates Vasco Nunez, and thou no less, is busy to use thee for his destruction. Hast thou seen this brigantine—hast thou numbered the men she brings? Thou dost not deny to the adelantado the right to bring a brigantine into Darien, having proper objects?"

"Ay,—there it is,—but the objects, as I have shown thee, are not proper. Have I not told thee that he purposes to seize upon the government?"

"Thou hast said this thing, but this I believe not. Thou hast been misled, and but that thou fearest this chief, thou hadst not so readily hearkened to a story which the facts themselves disprove. This brigantine is a little bark scarce large enough to bear an hundred men, and what would such a force do with thy command in Darien. Truly, Don Pedrarias, such fear as this shows unseemly in a commander of such repute in valiancy as thou."

The swarthy cheeks of the governor grew fiery red as he replied—

"Dost thou think I fear this man, Quevedo, or is it fitting that the teacher of peace should taunt the warrior with words of such scorn as thine? I tell thee, Quevedo, that

but for the duty which I owe my sovereign, which forbids that I should expose his subjects to unnecessary risk of life, it were my pleasure to set this traitor free, to bid him bring on his hireling soldiers, and, foot to foot and face to face, challenge him to make good against me in mortal strife, the skill and prowess which it is the boast of his followers are so much beyond the possession of all other Spanish cavaliers."

"I were loth, Don Pedrarias, for thy own sake, that thou shouldst make so wild a venture."

"I tell thee," cried the other, angrily, "thou knowest me not,—and whatever may be thy fears, I have none. This moment could it be—ha! what sounds are those, Quevedo?—Doth it not seem like the tread of martial men?—And those noises?—they seem like the shouts of soldiers."

A rushing sound, like that of a swollen and upward-heaving sea, came to their ears at this moment, and a few minutes sufficed to answer the inquiry of the governor. The cries and clamours below increased, and rushing into the presence with their drawn swords his affrighted guards announced the first outbreak of that movement in behalf of the imprisoned hero, the first preparatory steps for which we have already followed. Hastily putting on his armour, Don Pedrarias, who lacked any virtue but courage, put himself instantly forward, and commanding his officers to their several places, prepared, as well as the sudden necessity would admit, to meet the attack of the antagonists.

"Thou seest now!" he cried to the archbishop, with a scowl of bitter reproach. "Wouldst thou have more proof of this man's treason than those shouts contain? Dost thou hear the cries—the insolent threats of these scum—ha!"

But the bishop was not without his answer.

"Nay, I see no treason of Vasco Nunez in this—I see nothing but the indignation of his soldiers, driven to fury at the injustice and the cruelty with which thou hast treated a popular favourite. It is my wonder that thou hast not seen this spirit before—I warned thee of its presence."

"Thou wilt believe nothing!" furiously exclaimed the governor as he rushed below.

Pedrarias fearlessly put himself at the head of the troops

which had been hastily gathered to his help; and though he beheld his dwelling environed on every hand, he had no other thought than one of fight and defiance. The two parties were nearly equal in strength. The insurgents were less numerous, but they were men—old soldiers, who delighted in the prospect not merely of releasing their leader, but of obtaining a triumph over the more gay and gallantly-equipped soldiers of Pedrarias. Thus stood the parties, both ready for blows,—swords drawn and matches lighted, and the flame of civil war about to blaze up in a colony, upon which the vengeful Indian looked down from the surrounding heights, with the eager solicitude of the vulture in waiting for his prey. The wisdom of the archbishop, at this moment, interposed to appease the tumult and dissipate the storm. He advanced boldly between the two parties, and implored, with hands uplifted, a brief pause, in which he proffered himself as a mediator between them. This was granted, and he drew the still angry but bewildered governor aside. He pointed out to him, not merely the injustice of his proceedings—which the other would not admit—but the evil to the colony of strife among its citizens—a strife which, sooner or later, would place both parties at the mercy of the watchful and implacable savages.

"There is but one remedy for all this—set Vasco Nunez free."

"Never!—His head or mine."

"Madness, Pedrarias—this is the very insanity of hate. Hear me. Why persist in driving a man to become your deadliest enemy, when it is in your power to bind him to your side as your firmest friend."

"Impossible, Quevedo! This man hates me, and has ever hated me from the first, and will always hate me as one who hath superseded him in office and driven him from power."

"This is thy jealousy, not his. It was my wonder that, at thy first coming, he offered thee no resistance, which he might well have done and safely, since, as it appears afterwards, our sovereign approved of his authority. This was thy wonder also. But there are some facts lately come to my knowledge from the lips of the venerable man, Codro, the astrologer—"

"A traitor no less than him he serves."

"Nay, hear me through. This Micer Codro, whom I hold to be a good though visionary man, hath advised me of certain facts in the history of Vasco Nunez that fully account to my mind for his singular forbearance towards thee."

"What facts?"

"Know you that he hath once sought your daughter Teresa in marriage?"

"Ha! Well! 'Thou know'st this?"

"Ay, ere Ojeda went on his last voyage—he sought her in Española; and, as it is said to me by this man, Codro, he sought her with a passionate admiration having no bounds, heedless of all interest while in the pursuit, and sacrificing fame and fortune, and leaving them at waste and riot, in the sole solicitude of that love which he held for your daughter."

"Can this be true?"

"I nothing question of the truth, since it so well accounts for the wondrous forbearance toward thee amid repeated wrongs and indignities, of a man known to be no less daring and valiant than cool, ready, and determined. Besides, it is the assurance of Codro."

"And what is thy hope from all this?"

"Thou hast sent thy commands to thy daughter to meet thee here in Darien. Ere this she is on her way hither. Give her in marriage to this man whom thou countest thy enemy, and thus bind him to thy interest and side, thy friend for ever. You will then," continued the bishop, "have a son-in-law of great merit and popularity, an hidalgo born, and a favourite of the king. You are old, he is in youth and vigour. While you repose from the toils of the command which you yet enjoy, he will carry on the enterprises of the colony, and your family and name must necessarily share in all the successes and the glory of his arms. 'Thou hast no wiser course, Pedrarias, than to give him 'Teresa Davila."

"Can this be done? She hath rejected him, thou sayst. Holds he his favour, think you, for one who 'hath scorned him? Methinks, Quevedo, if rightly I comprehend thy thought, thou wouldst have me, the father of Teresa Davila, proffer her maiden hand to one, who will only rejoice to fling it back from him with disgrace."

"Thou knowest neither the lover nor the man. Vasco

Nunez is a being too noble to regard woman with other than noble homage; and he who hath ever loved, as it is assured me this man hath loved thy daughter, will gladly forget the rejection and the scorn in the compliance which at last yields the prize that he hath sought. Be thou not afraid of this. Suffer me to direct this matter, and peace shall be restored to thy people, and thou, Pedrarias Davila, shall be bound in friendship and affection with one, worthy of the best affection, whom hitherto thou hast treated most unworthily as well for him as for thyself. Am I free to speak in this business?"

The stubborn father at last consented, since the plan opened to him new views of safety from one, whom the open admiration of the soldiers in Darien, evinced in their present rebellious attitude, invested with powers too dangerous in a rival, and too valuable in a friend and ally. The words of the archbishop, whom they knew to be well disposed to our hero, quelled his angry followers. He assured them that he went to set Vasco Nunez free, having the full consent, nor merely the consent, but the approving favour and cordial kindness, of the governor, in his behalf. The insurgents received this news with rejoicing, but when the bishop called upon them to disband, the youth Pedro whispered in the ears of Arguello, who was their leader, not to comply until Vasco Nunez were released and present to command them; and, resolutely maintaining their ground and weapons, they patiently resolved to await the result of the bishop's visit to the prison.

The bishop had done much towards pacification, but there were some difficulties in the way of his object, about which, like a wise man, he did not seek to deceive himself. He had been truly advised by the astrologer, of the nature of the intercourse between Vasco Nunez and Teresa Davila, and of the intense admiration with which that cavalier regarded her. Her rejection of his suit was not shown to the bishop, without being accompanied by a farther showing which fully revealed to him her cold, capricious heartlessness of character, and her utter deficiency, in all those respects, in which a man, devoted and earnest like Vasco Nunez, would chiefly desire that his wife might be complete. The immorality of coupling together two such persons, did not, however, appear so objectionable to the bishop, when the policy of the proceeding, in a pub-

lic point of view, was the subject of consideration; and the chief difficulty to his mind, in overcoming the objections of Vasco Nunez, seemed only such as might arise from the mortified pride and wounded vanity of the latter, who might not be so ready to forget his previous rejection. To smooth his difficulties in this respect, the good bishop took Micer Codro with him to the prison, though, as they went, the venerable astrologer listened to the scheme of his companion with a heartfelt sorrow which his lips did not fail to declare. Their dialogue, as it unfolded the arguments for and against the measure—regarded only as a question of policy on all hands—may be briefly stated as follows:

"This woman hath no affection for Vasco Nunez," said the astrologer—"she hath scorned his prayer in the hour of his adversity, and is utterly unworthy to be his wife. What trust can be put in her hands that she would maintain. She would betray him to his enemies, and be hostile to his friends. Truly, Quevedo, I fear me, that it is a firebrand thou wouldst bring for soothing."

"Nay, Codro, thou speakest of the follies of a giddy girl with too much solemnity. At her age no woman knows her own mind, and the thing which is her utter hate to-day, is her cordial love to-morrow. Woman is a thing of change, proverbially fickle as the moon. If Teresa refused Vasco Nunez when he was in adversity in Española, lo! you, she accepts him now when he is in no less adversity in Darien."

"Ay, but there is a policy in it here which had not governed her action there. It is Don Pedrarias that accepts Vasco Nunez, not his daughter."

"Well, let me tell you, Micer Codro, the damsel who heeds her father will be very apt to heed her husband also. The woman is a good woman enough—a foolish jade, no doubt—but young enough to grow wiser, and sensible enough to grow better. Besides, what avails this discussion? I see nothing better for our friend, and if he has ever loved the damsel he will be satisfied surely. If this plan of mine be not taken, what follows? He lies in prison under suspicion of treason, which, thy own sense will perceive, is strongly grounded. Lo! his men in arms—headed by his copartner in schemes of fortune, and

counselled by his secretary. A vessel suddenly, and at the very moment of the outbreak here, comes into port filled with soldiers, acknowledging no authority but that of Vasco Nunez, lying off from shore as fearing or intending harm, and, as if counselled by himself, her troops secretly land, join their arms to the insurgents, and even now clamour in open rebellion around the dwelling of the lawful governor. I tell thee but for this, Micer Codro, we had defied Pedrarias. His hate and suspicions have now some reasonable grounds, and were he now to send Vasco Nunez to the block, these events would be ample justification for the deed before the royal council. Thou wilt say, there must be blows struck ere it come to this—these old soldiers will not tamely suffer their leader to perish. Be it so—and what then? Will it give thee or me pleasure to see these miserable people cutting each other's throats. The troops of Vasco Nunez may do harm to those of Pedrarias, but they cannot serve their chief. One signal from the governor, and his guards will fling the head of that brave man into the ranks of those who now strive for his rescue."

There was too much staggering truth in this representation to be withstood by the astrologer.

"Yet," he spoke musingly, "have I read it in the stars that his chief danger come from a woman."

The bishop put his hand upon the arm of the old man while, smiling, he replied—

"It needs not the stars, Micer Codro, to reveal this truth to any son of Eve. Thy prediction is history, and may be read for every man that ever walked beneath the stars. But if there be reason for thy fear in particular, how shouldst thou know that Teresa Davila is the woman signified. At present she is the star of his safety, not of his destruction, and thou wilt do well to second me in the goodly work of making peace through her medium between these two leaders, without which there can be nothing but war and bloodshed in the land. Thou dost not surely prefer that these soldiers should strive with each other in deadly combat, that the murderous ambition of their chiefs should be gratified with an elevation obtained through blood, and which, if war be chosen, can only end in the death of one or both. Thou wilt see how greatly the chances are

against him who is already in chains, and whose life hangs upon the merest whisper of his enemy."

The astrologer sighed, but made no other answer, as they went forward to the prison. Long and arduous was the conflict in the mind of Vasco Nunez, ere he could be brought to yield consent to a measure for which, at the same time—strange weakness of the strong man's heart,—every pulse and feeling in his bosom yearned. The indignation which the levity of Teresa had aroused within him, the pang following the rejection of a suit which she had seemed to encourage, were all forgotten in the strength of that passion with which he had contemplated her from the first. The sure suggestions of the bishop—the announciation by him of the arrangement made with Pedrarias, by which Teresa—the long-worshipped object of his affections—was finally offered to his acceptance, and at his disposal,—at a moment, too, when in prison, at the mercy of his bitter rival, he felt hopeless even of life—produced a tremulousness of heart and nerve which left him for a time speechless. But if the scorn and levity of Teresa ceased to be remembered in the renewing gush of his early love—if the worthlessness of the object was forgotten—there was yet an obstacle in the path of the conqueror that he dared not contemplate. The thought of the poor, devoted Indian damsel rose in his mind—her form stood before him—under the instant touch and prompt arrest of his conscience, he saw the upbraiding sorrow in her eyes, and felt the keen justice of those reproaches which he fancied were rising to her lips, but which yet they did not utter. Long and weary was the struggle—vainly protracted—since the man was overthrown. Passion triumphed. Life, death! were before him, and the alternative so presented to his mind, his heart, his ambition, alike, that he yielded to that which seemed his fate. To have refused the terms offered him of freedom, to reject the hand of the woman whom still he loved with an ungovernable passion, was, in fact, to invite the stroke of the executioner. To accept, was at once to spring to freedom, to power, to those conquests for which his soul pined.

"Do with me as you please," he cried to them, "do with me as you please. I need scarcely declare a will,

since I am moved about by fate—its miserable puppet—wholly insecure, at any moment, of the possessions of the past."

The conqueror was freed, but when his eye met that of the Indian damsel—when, ignorant of the conditions of his freedom, her eye encountered him with a rapturous expression of delight, which the screaming joy of her lips equally attested—his eye sank before her glance—his lips were glued together, and the high-soaring Christian conqueror quailed with a conviction of shame in the presence of the almost adoring, and unsuspecting savage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE AVENGER STRENGTHENED FOR THE STROKE.

The marriage-contract between Pedrarias on the one hand, for his daughter, and Vasco Nunez on the other, was formally drawn up and signed in presence of the good bishop, who having, as he flattered himself, completed the work of peace between the parties, set sail shortly afterwards for Spain, leaving the colony in a condition of quiet and hopeful promise, which it had not known for many months before. "Behold now," says the worthy chronicler, Fray Agapida, "behold Vasco Nunez once more in the high career of prosperity. His most implacable enemy had suddenly been converted into his dearest friend; for Pedrarias, now that he looked upon him as his son-in-law, loaded him with favours." The favours of highest satisfaction to such a mind as Vasco Nunez were, however, those only which gave it employment. To carry on the conquest which he had begun, to explore those waters from which he had taken off the seal of ages, and, with that insatiate appetite which distinguishes the soul of genius, to leave nothing to the unknown which man might know, were now the grand desires of his heart: and in their prosecution we find him—the moment that he was freed from the tyranny of Pedrarias, and secure, as his future son-in-law, in his confidence—preparing to build, at vast pains and labour, an armament for the navigation of the great southern sea. The spot chosen for this labour was the port of Careta, already known to the reader, and named after the Indian damsel. A town had been founded at this port called

Acla—houses were built, a fortress raised, and the civil interests of a flourishing community, already active in all respects, under the justly governing influence of our hero. Two hundred men, under his sole command, enabled him in a short time to do that which Pedrarias, with a thousand, had failed to do in the weary space of protracted months; and the labours of Vasco Nunez were carried on with a degree of industry that derived no little impulse from another cause than that of his ambition. There was a gnawing and reproachful thought in his mind which he vainly strove to banish. The consciousness of wrong haunted him and kept him sleepless. Every glance at the Indian maiden, whose humble but devoted affections he had betrayed,—however necessary to his safety seemed the wrong—stung him with a sorrow that drove him to labour as to relief, and prompted him even in search of danger, that he might escape the worse goadings of his conscience. Meanwhile, the poor girl herself, was the most happy of the happy. She knew nothing of the terms by which Vasco Nunez had been released—she did not dream that she herself was the sacrifice—but she knew that he was no longer in danger from a power which had harassed him from the first with every sort of oppression; and in this conviction she was satisfied. With the privilege of one who loves entirely, she chided his downcast looks, his reluctant eyes, and the lethargy which stifled the free tones of his voice and the graceful life which had once distinguished every movement of his limbs.

"When my lord was in the prison," she said, "it was a time for him to be sad. But wherefore is his sadness now? Is he not free—hath he not warriors to do his bidding?—and the governor, who was once his enemy, is he not now his friend. Let not my lord look sorrowful—the heart of Careta trembles with fear when my lord looks not upon her with love."

"Be not afraid, Careta—why should you be afraid?" But the mind of the speaker was evidently wandering as he made this answer; and the coldness of the tones, and the lack of all expression in his eyes, as he looked upon her, conveyed far more fear to her heart than his language brought consolation. He noted this effect, and making a commanding effort, thus endeavoured to soothe her—

"Have I not many toils and many cares, Careta? Behold my labours—thou seest that I rise ere the dawn, and my toils are not finished with the night. Thou also knowest that I meditate adventures across the mountains and the new sea with my vessels,—it is such meditations as these that look like sadness in my face. Let not Careta behold them. Let her believe that I think, not that I grieve."

"Ah!—did not my lord think when he first came to Coyba? Then he had the great mountains to cross that stood between him and the southern sea—then he had few warriors, and many enemies among the warriors of Darien, who are now his friends. My lord had meditations then, but his steps were light, and he smiled upon the poor girl of Coyba, and he laughed aloud, and he looked up to the hill-tops, and not upon the earth at his foot. Ah! the thoughts that trouble my lord at Acla, are not the thoughts he had at Coyba, and when he crossed the great mountains to the southern sea. The heart of my lord is changed—it is sorrowful within him;—will he not tell Careta of his sorrows that she may be sorry too?"

"Be you not sorry, Careta, because I am thoughtful. These thoughts that trouble me will pass away, and thou shalt soon behold me smile, as I used to smile when I first came to Coyba. But I have been troubled as thou knowest. Thou hast seen me stripped of power, and thrown into chains, and threatened with death, and these things have brought gloomy clouds over my face, which are not yet dispersed."

"But my lord has power more than before—he is free from chains, and the governor that threatened him with death, now loves him and seeks to do him honour. Careta thinks it strange that he should love thee of a sudden, when he once hated thee so badly, but her heart is glad that it is so. My lord, there is one thing—"

She paused, and looked up, with a sad earnestness, into his face.

"Speak, Careta," he replied encouragingly.

"When my lord was in prison he was not so sad as now when he is free. When the governor said he should die, he laughed, and said to Careta—'Fear nothing, Careta, I shall not die—he dare not slay me—thou shalt lie in my bosom many long years yet to come.' Such

were the words of my lord, when the chains were on his hands, to the poor damsel of Darien."

"No more of this, girl—no more, Careta—thou madd'st me, I tell thee. Leave me—leave me. Why shouldst thou tell me of all this now? The time is past—the chains are no longer on my hands. Seest thou not that I am free?—ay, free! Thou art glad of my freedom art thou not? Well! Thou knowest nothing of its price, else, it might be, thou wert not half so glad."

The girl, stunned by the sudden and vehement language of the chief, shrank back in silence, not utterly unaccompanied by fear. But there was nothing brutal in the character of Vasco Nunez. He saw that his manner gave her pain, and in another instant, recollecting himself, his tones were changed to those of tenderness, as he spoke again.

"Come hither, my poor Careta."

The smile upon his lips, but, more than all, the tear within his eye, which was clearly visible to her, unsealed the fountains of delighted joy within her heart; she rushed forward with a scream and threw herself into his extended arms. He pressed her warmly for an instant to his bosom, then released her, and rapidly hurried from her presence.

"Ay," he muttered to himself as he moved from the dwelling where this scene had taken place—"ay, I have indeed bought my freedom from chains, and my security of life, at a grievous price to thee, Careta. Of a truth it is a damning sin to sell this poor Indian's hope, as I have sold hers, that I might look upon the sunlight, and prolong the miserable hours of a life which has now so little left for performance. And thou too, Micer Codro, hast counselled me to this! Thou, too, one ever pleading for the poor Indian—ever hostile to the woman whose charms, too powerful in my heart, have made me sacrifice one whose soul is more true and lofty by far in its forest ignorance, than is hers for which I yield it up, in all the glow and glory of her beauty, in all the grace and majesty of her courtly skill and royal education:—thou hast moved me to this cruel barter which makes me tremble, with the consciousness of wrong, even before the simple heathen of the hills. There is an evil destiny in this. It is the toil of the stars against the mortal. Vainly have

I brought to the game, courage and skill, fond and earnest thought, cunning scheme, and adventure that has taken counsel from the desperate wing of the eagle, soaring aloft when the storm was gathering among all his hills—the cast of the dice has prevailed even against the plans I have made—the defences I have set up—the skill, the audacity, the hope; and my enemy hath forced conditions upon me which, though they leave me life, leave me but little honour. It is a snare of the foul fiend, and it hath fastened upon my soul for ever."

His secretary stood beside him.

"Despatches from Santa Maria, my lord," he said, handing him letters. "There is word of a new governor coming out from Spain for Darien."

"Ha! Say'st thou, Pedro—a new governor from Spain—superseding Don Pedrarias! Strange! How hearest thou this?"

"Lope de Olano, who comes as alcalde to Acla, brings report. He hath sent you these advices, and will soon report to you in person. It is farther mentioned that the Señora Teresa, the daughter of Don Pedrarias hath just reached Darien from Española."

A rush of weakness went through the heart of Vasco Nunez at the name, and the papers were shaken in his hands by the trembling fingers which grasped them nervously. Teresa was then once more near him—that scornful beauty! He should once more behold her:—nay, more, she was pledged to him as his. Love was to be triumphant at last—and love was to be sacrificed. The star of the haughty Christian, in love, as well as in war, prevailed over that of the humble pagan!

"Poor Careta!" was the half muttered exclamation of the adelantado, as he turned away to peruse the documents; and while he read the page his thoughts were wandering away to the heathen damsel, and all her devoted humility;—the love that hopes much, and fears much, and suffers much, grew visibly embodied to his mind's eye, and rose more and more lovely to his thought, as he remembered the haughty capriciousness of that prouder beauty, whom his own heart had still been too ready to receive as the price of that precious sacrifice which he was about to make of her worthier, if less beautiful sister.

The secretary contemplated the changing features and sad, spiritless eye of his superior, with something more of scorn than surprise. From the moment when Vasco Nunez had accepted his life and freedom at the hands of Pedrarias, he had sunk rapidly and greatly in the estimation of the youth.

"I had thought this man perfect—the very model of dominion, and a mighty spirit among men; and with this thought, my own resolve to slay him was set aside, nay, almost forgotten, in the contemplation of his greatness. He hath indeed achieved a wondrous conquest—a vast discovery; but this baseness to the poor Indian, who deems herself his assured wife—she who hath clung to him with a devotion like that which her people pay to their pagan deities—hath stained the image in my mind—hath tarnished the pure lustre of his fame. Wherefore should he buy himself from the bondage of Pedrarias, when brave men stood ready to set him free? Wherefore, to give freedom to his body, sell his soul and its affections to a woman who hath already spurned him from her feet? He hath too surely fallen from his great eminence by this wretched baseness, and in his fall, I too have become freed. Never was spirit more enslaved than mine in the contemplation of this man's greatness. I sought him with the resolve of one, who beholds in his enemy a brutal and common stabber; yet, when I looked upon him, I forgot the purpose in my mind, the dagger in my hand, and the sweet revenge which I had sworn to take upon him for a brother's murder. I forget them no more. Vasco Nunez, thy weakness hath strengthened me. I am awake, and henceforward I sleep not again until thou art laid for thy final sleep. The oath is renewed, though my lips speak it not—here, looking upon thee—here, with heaven looking into my heart—I bind myself to the spirit of the dead against thee, as the unsparing avenger. Hadst thou kept thyself white—hadst thou not fallen into shame through a worthless love of life—I had not found it in my heart to have aimed weapon at thine. But that is over,—and now I only wait my time."

Such were the reflections rapidly passing through the mind of the youth as he stood before the adelantado. That very day the latter set off for Darien, leaving the Indian damsel behind him at Acla.

CHAPTER XIX.

VASCO NUNEZ MEETS WITH TERESA DAVILA.

THE reception of Vasco Nunez by the Lady Teresa, was such as might gratify any lover. That capricious beauty had been sufficiently schooled by her father's will; and the proud eminence to which the hero had attained, whom once she regarded as a wandering visionary, induced her now to hold him in another and a more endearing light. She had, with all that art which seems so like instinct in the bosom of the habitual coquette, banished from her countenance and speech that levity which, even in the moment of his greatest admiration, had somewhat impaired, in his judgment, the excellence of her charms. She appeared to him now the very perfection of modest and unassuming grace, as she certainly was that of imposing and commanding beauty. Her dark eye was lowered beneath his glance—her lips scarcely parted when they gave utterance to the trembling timid accents with which she greeted his presence and replied to his salutation, and none of the most endowed of those skilled in dramatic personification could have more ably persuaded the spectator of the absolute truth of her portraiture, than did Teresa Davila impose upon the love-blinded understanding of one who held among men the highest station for mental aptness and intelligence. Few were the first words of the hero—many were his thoughts—strange his sensations—a mingled anguish and delight disturbed his spirit, and rendered uncertain for a while the true feeling which possessed him. Long he watched her, and doubts warred in his mind with his own hopes and the assurances which had

been given him. The words of the astrologer—one of those vexing speeches which he had been so much accustomed to make in San Domingo, when Vasco Nunez was first a hopeful lover—seemed to ring in his ears with solemn emphasis, even while he watched the maiden.

"If you are famous, and achieve the greatness which is now a dream in the estimation of all Española, then will the Lady Teresa receive you gladly as her lord. Fail in this—be nothing but the wandering cavalier, seeking service in the ranks of other captains, and she will regard your homage as indignity, and meet your adoration with scorn."

"Can this be so?" was the inward question of Vasco Nunez. "She hath surely been thus scornful in San Domingo. Can I ever forget that night—that night when Garabito was slain—when, in my agony of heart and passion of supplication, she answered me with a vain song? Ha! Am I to be laughed at thus? Shall it be? No! She shall know me for one neither blind to the indignity, nor insensible to the shame!—Teresa!"

"Señor."

"Teresa, it is long, very long since we have met."

"Yes, señor—very long."

"Dost thou indeed feel it to be so very long, Teresa?"

"Ay, señor—wherefore dost thou ask?"

"It is no unseemly question, Teresa—it is no unwise one. Dost thou remember that last meeting, Teresa—that night when I came to thee with a resolution only wrought within me by utter despair of fortune? The seas had swallowed up my hope—and, save my own heart, and mind, and sword, I had nothing reserved from the overwhelming rage of the hurricane. In that hour I turned to thee. I said to my secret soul, 'It matters little what the tempest sweeps away.' I looked on thee, Teresa, at that moment, and I smiled at the loss, as if nothing had been lost, but all rather had been won. I had borne thee from the ruins in that hour. My arms had bound thy waist. Thy cheek lay upon my bosom, and while thy heart seemed almost to cease its beatings, mine throbbed with the convulsive pulses that seemed only proper to thine. It throbbed with no fear, Teresa, with no fear for myself, though there might have been

many for thee. It throbbed with hope and tumultuous rapture, because thy own was pressed against it."

"Ah, señor, I have been too long ungrateful. It is to thee I owe it that I now live."

"Nay, my strife to save thee was a selfish one. I had known no greater pang than to behold thy death. But I should not speak of this. I have brought back to thee that fearful hour, to show thee that it was only in the utter desperation of my fortunes that I dared to hope. I sought thee—thou know'st the night!—I sought thee with the devoted fervour of a heart that beheld nothing but perfection in thine, as in thy form and face my eye beheld, as did the eyes of all others, a like perfection. Teresa!—Dost thou remember that night—dost thou remember thy answer to my prayer?"

A streak of living crimson passed over the cheek of the maiden, then, as suddenly receded, leaving it paler than marble; and the emotion was unaffected with which she replied, though the reply embodied none of the feeling which gave birth to that visible glow upon her cheek—

"Ah, señor, thou shamest me with this recollection. I pray thee to forget that hour of my folly. Wilt thou not forgive the wayward temper of a child—one too vain of her power to fear its loss, and only reminded of her weakness in the flight and scorn of the person whom she wronged—only repenting of her folly when her repentance seemed unavailing."

"Was it so with thee, Teresa?" demanded Vasco Nunez in trembling but earnest accents, approaching her while he spoke.

"Alas, Señor Vasco, what shall I say to thee? Wouldst thou have me confess to thee every woman weakness in my heart?"

"No! no! no!" exclaimed the too soon forgiving and forgetting hero. "Confess to me but one—but one! Thou didst love me even then, Teresa—then, when thy wilful lips drove me from thee in desperation."

The answer of the maiden was contained in a deep sigh, which seemed to escape her bosom unconsciously. Her head sank still lower on her breast—her eyes were upon the floor, and her little foot played in sight, as if free from the watchfulness and control of its mistress. Vasco Nunez was on his knees beside her in another instant.

"Teresa," he said, "I believe thy silence much more than I had ever believed thy language. Hadst thou spoken, I had still doubted the lips that, speaking to me now of love, had once spoken to me only of scorn. I am too happy to receive thy sigh, thy look, thy silence, as the sweet assuring answer, more grateful to my heart than stronger sounds could have been, of the dear knowledge which I seek. And yet, let me not forget. Teresa, it is but fitting I should speak to thee with more resolution of the man—that I should discard this weakness for awhile —nay, more, that I should seem to doubt thee still. Thou, perchance, dost not know the strange events which have brought me a second time to thy feet; and, the Blessed Virgin forbid that I should avail myself of the necessity of the father to command the affections of the child. It may be, thou hast constrained thy heart to favour me, even when thy affections are elsewhere set, because of the command or the prayer of Don Pedrarias. Fear not that I will wrong thee, Teresa. Fear not to speak to me if this be true; for, I tell thee here, and now, with the solemnity of one speaking before God, that, though I know nothing half so precious to me as thyself, yet would I rather lose thee for ever, and lose life—nay, yield myself back to the chains of thy father—sooner than that thou shouldst wrong one true feeling in thy heart. I hold no power over thee, dear Teresa, from the pledge which has been made me by thy father in thy name:—I take no right by what thy looks and thy sighs, rather than thy language, have spoken. Be thou free as air, from this moment, to love whom thou wilt, if it be that thou canst not, of thy own free will, yield thyself to my solicitings."

"Does the Señor Vasco desire release—would he be free?"—

The proud, artful beauty paused in her speech, but never did look or accent more clearly denote the dependence of a humble heart—a heart suffering sacrifice and utter loss, in the very moment when it declares its resignation to its fate.

"Teresa, no! Canst thou believe me thus faithless—thus fickle. Give thyself to me freely, and I take thee with a joy inexpressible, as the most precious of all the gifts of fortune."

"Ah, Señor Vasco, I have no will opposed to thine."

And she sank in his ready arms, as these words, tremulously spoken, fell from her tongue, and the kiss which his glowing lips caught that moment from hers—the seal, as it were, of the precious bond between them—seemed no less sweet to his heart, than if it had been taken from the lip of truth and innocence, in the world's morning, and in the happy garden devoted to its yet unsinning parents. Conscience slept awhile in the sudden, passionate sway of all-controlling love; and the poor Indian damsel, pining at Acla, and looking forth with woful anxiety for the hour of her lord's return, was utterly forgotten by him in the deep, stifling sensations of those sweet embraces which he now shared with the Spanish beauty. The hour of her misery was yet to come. Neither doubt, nor fear, nor suspicion, yet approached her heart. She sorrowed for delayed enjoyment, not for its loss. Strange that love, the being of a thousand instincts and of a wondrous prescience, should yet lack all foreknowledge of its own desertion. It worships and still confides—believes to the last; and only doubts in the end, when nothing is left it but despair.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DAGGER AND THE SMILE.

For three days Vasco Nunez gave himself up to all the delights inspired by his new situation at Darien, and every hour of increased converse afforded him new promises of happiness in the contemplated connexion with Teresa. That capricious beauty, maintained, in all this time, the most equable humility of temper; and whatever doubts her lover might have entertained before, in regard to the love she bore him, were all dissipated by the gentle confidence which she now bestowed upon him, and the devoted pleasure which she seemed to feel in his society. But the pressing emergencies of his settlement at Acla, demanded the attention of the adventurer in that quarter, and as the marriage was appointed to take place at a remoter period, it became necessary that he should forego the happiness, however great, which he felt in Darien, and hurry away to the scene of his labours. This he did with a reluctance easier imagined than described; and his regrets at separation were only surpassed by those of the maiden. Tender, and frequently repeated, were the assurances which she gave him of lasting fidelity and warmest love; and whatever may have been his sorrows at parting with so dear an object, they were all softened by the fond conviction that she was at length securely his—that his period of probation would soon be over, and he, who, long baffled in all respects, had at length triumphed over fame and fortune, should at length be followed by no less success in his labours in the field of love.

The new feelings of hope and love awakened in his bosom by meeting with Teresa, could now, separated from the object of his attachment, be quieted by employment only; and his first care on reaching Acla, was to get in readiness for transportation over the mountains of the isthmus the materials of the four brigantines which he intended to launch into the great south sea. The timber was felled and hewn upon the Atlantic seaboard, then, with the anchors and rigging, carried by human labour over the land. The only roads were Indian paths, which meandered through forests almost impervious, across swollen torrents, through rugged defiles, and along the sides of dangerous precipices. The labourers were chiefly Indians and negroes. The Spaniards, though more hardy than their employees, of better muscle, and better capable of bearing fatigue, were yet few in number. Together, however, with hearty goodwill, they toiled forward with their massive burdens, ascending with slow steps the bronze-like mountains, under the glaring fervour of a tropical sun. Many of them perished on their way, but the genius and perseverance of Vasco Nunez triumphed in the end, and after a thousand delays and disasters, which tasked all his patience to endure, and all his genius to remedy, he had the proud satisfaction at last of launching upon the great ocean he had discovered. Piece by piece had he carried the materials for his ships over a wild ridge of mountains, occupied by a savage people that hung in hostility around his footsteps, and amidst dangers, fatigues and privations, that might well have daunted a less ardent spirit. The exultation of his heart may be fancied by the reader, when he found himself for the first time upon the bosom of that wondrous ocean, and in the very pathway, perhaps, to no less wondrous lands that lay along its borders. "None but Spaniards," says Herrera, with a pardonable boast, "could ever have conceived or persisted in such an undertaking; and no commander in the new world but Vasco Nunez could have conducted it to a successful issue."

Of the cruise of Vasco Nunez in the southern sea, of his visit to the Pearl Islands, and his conquests over hitherto unknown as well as known Indian tribes that rose in hostility upon his path, it is not within our pro-

vince to speak. These matters may be found in history, and are already recorded by Irving in his very interesting chronicles. It may be stated, however, that but for a change of wind, Vasco Nunez would in his very first voyage upon the Pacific have discovered Peru,—an adventure reserved for one of his followers—the least worthy, though not the least brave, of any among them. Providence, however, did not seem willing in his case, any more than in that of Columbus, to permit him, who led the way to conquest, to perfect its details. There is a moral justice, perhaps, in reserving for succeeding times and genius, those achievements which, by increasing the wonders in one man's performance, might strengthen too greatly his claims upon the gratitude and admiration of mankind, insomuch as sometimes to weaken the hold of the Creator himself upon them. It is enough for genius to lead the way at first;—if it did not tend to the evil result already contemplated, it might at least subtract from the renown of the discoverer, were he to carry on his labours to the minute developement of all its results. The ice once broken, the petty voyager may make his way in safety—it is glory enough for Columbus and Vasco Nunez, that they possessed the eye to see and the wing to reach, in advance of all, the realms which they respectively gave—not to Castile and Leon, merely, as the epitaph of the former idly expresses it—but to the world. Let the humbler adventurer penetrate its rivers, dig its mountains, and cast nets into its seas for the pale, white jewels of the deep.

While Vasco Nunez was thus triumphantly riding the billows of the southern sea, the youth, Pedro, watched all his movements with a hostility duly sharpened by each day's additional experience. When the former, with that daring spirit which alone seemed to have effected all his purposes, was pushing his way to conquest, as it were, in very spite of fortune, the admiration of the youth had been superior to his hate. His resolves, and the influence by which he was wrought upon to suspend the stroke of his meditated vengeance, are already known to the reader in the progress of this narrative. It is also known by what circumstance he was prompted to renew his oath of hostility, and to forget those more generous sentiments by which he had hitherto been

governed. An abstract passion for justice, stimulated into feverish restlessness by the presence of a continually goading enthusiasm, rendered him fanatical in his angry mood; and the weaknesses of heart by which Vasco Nunez had resolved upon an act which would sacrifice the Indian girl who had confided in him so entirely, provoked the indignation of the youth anew. He saw nothing now but the infidelity and baseness of the man whom he was sworn to slay for a crime which personally wronged him. He now brooded with constant thought upon his resolution; the difficulties in the way of performing which he never disguised from himself.

"I know that I must perish," he would mutter to himself; "his arm would crush me at a blow; and even my stroke, however well aimed, his unarmed hand could parry if he beheld it. Thus should I lose life, yet fail in my purposed vengeance. I must do it while he sleeps. If the blow be just—if the vengeance be due to the crime—then is the mode most fitting which is most certain and most secure. There is no dishonour, as fools fancy, in such a deed. Yet, would it were that I could encounter with him as the strong man loves to encounter with his fellow. But the wish is idle—it may not be. This powerless arm!—what could it hope against the muscle and sinew of Vasco Nunez?"

He surveyed the small and shrivelled member with a bitter smile, and his skinny and childlike fingers relaxed the hold which they had hitherto kept upon the dagger as he uttered these words. The weapon fell upon the ground at his feet. He stooped, and without lifting, sat down beside it, and leaning forward with his elbow upon the long grass, he looked forth upon the broad ocean purpled by the setting sun, and dotted in the far distance by the white sails of one of the brigantines in which Vasco Nunez was then coasting. They were then upon the lovely shores of Isla Rica, in which the adelantado had fixed his temporary abode. The waters of the ocean were as serene as those of some mountain lake, locked in by a circlet of protecting hills. The tide, rising, threw its successive billows upon the bleached sands of the island with a gentle violence that murmured only and did not complain. A deep blue sky, almost as transparent as the waves which reflected its every aspect, re-

lieved, not impaired, by a few floating islands of white fleece, hung above him; soft, bright, and beautiful enough to declare the heavens behind, which it yet curtained from his gaze. The scene impressed itself upon the spectator, but did not alter his mood.

"Even now," said he, gazing upon the distant brigantine as if he could behold upon her deck the person of whom he spake—"even now he is looking forth upon these waters, without a thought that they will change. He beholds them soft, almost smiling—scarcely less beautiful than the folding skies above—to him more beautiful, as they promise to carry him forward to conquests greater than any he has yet achieved. His fortune, too, has at length put on an aspect of peace and promise. His bitterest enemy has become his best friend—the woman who had scorned, smiles upon him. On all hands the hostile fates seem to have given up their warfare, and to have folded their adverse wings in token of amity. Grown confident of fortune he has now no fears, and he would as soon—nay, sooner—look for the hurricane in yonder thin speck of fleece, as look for an enemy in me. He would laugh—ha! ha!—he would laugh, were he to be warned against my dagger. He would stretch forth his arm, and smile as he surveyed it, and dismiss all fear of mine. Let him not be too sure of his strength and of my weakness. They must both be tried. This night"—he resumed the dagger as he spoke—"this night will I seek him where he sleeps. He hath no guard, and the Indian girl only sleeps beside him. It were easy to pass among the leaves which shroud them, yet awaken neither sleeper. One blow, and thou art avenged, my brother. Thou shalt chide me no longer with this profitless service in behalf of thy murderer. Thou shalt haunt me no longer with thy frowns."

It was night ere the brigantine drew near to land. That day Vasco Nunez had made many discoveries, which filled his heart with joy; but it needed not new discoveries to produce this sensation in his bosom, now that he found himself in possession of the desired power, and in the path of his desired conquests.

"Lo! you," he said to Micer Codro, as in the mild breath of that lovely evening they sat together by the sea-shore, and looked upward and around, beholding in

sky and ocean no aspects but those of beauty and repose—"Lo, you, Micer Codro, if I err not, that evil star of which thou hast spoken to me so oft, still hangs red and ominous within the rim of my good planet. Is it not so?"

"It is even so, my son," replied the other with gravity; "the aspect is even more evil now than on the night when I guided thine eye to it at first."

"Behold then," continued the adelantado with playful humour, "the wisdom of those who would suffer such predictions as thine to baffle them in their labours, and prevent them in the performance of their most noble works. Had I put faith in thy predictions, Micer Codro, I had gone to my prayers rather than to my works, and, perchance, had suffered the defeats and death which lay within thy prophecy. Even now what error can be more clearly shown than this of thine. Looking on that star, which seems innocent enough to mine eyes, as surely it hath so far shown itself harmless to my fortunes, thou wouldst even now declare that I am in imminent peril of my life;—yet, here am I—within reach of all my wishes, sound in health, the favoured of Pedrarias, with four brigantines and three hundred brave men at my bidding. Nay, more—the hopes of my heart, which had been so long baffled and denied, now made secure in the acceptance and the avowed love of Teresa Davila."

"It is in the calm that the storm has its birth, my son," replied the astrologer with increasing gravity—"death follows life like a shadow, and he only can fall far who is uplifted high. I rejoice me that thou hast so far triumphed over the fate which has lain in waiting for thee. It is my prayer that it may yet be baffled, and that thou mayst pass from triumph to triumph, and from joy to joy, with a heart and hope growing younger at every step which thou takest. But when thou thinkest the fate baffled which has pursued thee, it may be delayed only. All day the tiger, that ever-hungry beast, pursueth with hot haste the affrighted traveller, till, as he reacheth him, he croucheth low, and for the first time stays him in the pursuit—not that he relenteth—not that his limbs have grown weary, or his tooth no longer gnasheth for the feast of bloody flesh. No! he pauseth but to crouch, and he croucheth but to spring. Even such is the pursuit of the hounds of

fate when once they are set upon the footsteps of the victim she hath chosen. Be not too bold, then, to think—for that thou no longer hearkenest to their hungry bark—that she hath relented of her hate, that she hath called them in to the leash, and hath altered her resolution. If thou hopest thus, yet be not so confident in thy hope, as to forget thy caution, thy moderation, thy humility. He who would be great enduringly must never forget that he is human. To secure immortality, it is a condition that we should also feel our state to be some time mortal. Oh, Vasco Nunez, my son, think not that I speak to discourage thee. Though I warn thee, I would not thou shouldst ever despond. If I speak to thee of gloomy things, it is because I look on gloomy sights. Thou hast grown doubtful of the language of those blessed signs of heaven, which I reverence, and wouldst hear me with a scornful smile, and give little heed, were I to tell thee now that thy hour approacheth—that—ha!—"

The adelantado would have spoken—he would have said in the language of deprecation, that he did not scorn the science which the old man loved;—but the other suffered but a few imperfect words to escape ere he interrupted him with a vehemence, the result of a sudden impulse, of which he did not himself seem to be conscious—

"Ha! what is it that I see?—the clouds rise, they part—a curtain is drawn aside—I hear cries and clamours. Holy Mother, Blessed Jesu! what may this mean?—what terror grows before me—what danger waits? I see it now, as once before, when I stood among the iron mountains. The bloody signs are again before my sight. Oh, Vasco Nunez, my son, my son!—thou art again threatened with the smile and the dagger. The axe swings in air above thee—thy knees bend—thy neck is bare to the stroke. Spare him—Father of Mercies!—be nigh to save him. It is not too late. Let the arm be stayed—let the cruel judge relent—bid the headsman go down from the altar-place of death. Jesu! the cloud rolls back—the curtain falls—I am blind—I can see no more. Dost thou yet live, Vasco Nunez—do I see thee, do I feel thee yet, my son? Ha! It may be that the danger has gone by. Thou mayst yet be spared."

"Nay, Micer Codro, thou dreamest—I am yet beside thee."

"Ha! ha! but indeed I saw thee not. That dreadful sight—that sudden danger—my soul was tossed in terror—my mind was gone. But I see it no more. It was a bloody vision."

Vasco Nunez arose from his recumbent position upon the grass, as his ear caught the sudden and wild accents of the excited astrologer. The transition from the grave and temperate speech with which the old man had begun, to the impetuous torrent of full and frenzied rhapsody with which he concluded, absolutely stunned him for the instant. He drew nigh, and would have interrupted him in the midst of it, fearing a sudden paroxysm of madness; for never before, in all his experience, had he beheld him in such a mood; but the other heeded him not, and did not seem even to see him. His looks were elsewhere,—his soul seemed set on far other objects. He sank upon his knees—his eyes were wild, staring and starting, as if the bloody vision which he described was indeed at that instant passing before them. His hands were convulsively shot out from his body, as if in arrest of the threatening blow,—his voice—raised hoarsely, almost shriekingly, as if dreading to be unheard—excluded all other sounds but its own. Big drops rose upon his forehead, and stood out clear to the sight of his companion in the rich evening starlight. His limbs shivered while he spoke, as some aged and decaying tree of the forest in the quick, keen blasts of December; and, at the end, when the scene which his imagination beheld, seemed shut in from his sight, in the far western eminence of heaven, he sank and fell forward upon his face, seemingly without life as he was without motion. Vasco Nunez lifted him from the ground, and seated him beside him upon the turf. His eyes were open, but the expression was wild and vacant; the mouth was wide, almost spasmodically parted; and the stiffness of all his limbs was such as to induce an apprehension in the mind of his companion that they had already become fixed in the unrelaxing grasp of death. But at that instant, without speaking, the old man lifted his hand and pointed suddenly to the quarter of the heavens in which he had watched the star of his friend's nativity. The eye of

Vasco Nunez instinctively followed the direction. At that moment, a cloud, which he had no where seen before in the heavens, passed over the rival stars—the good and the evil aspect alike—and completely shrouded them from his gaze. The hand of the astrologer dropped almost lifelessly beside him; and the strong man and fearless warrior, however greatly his experience had moved him to question the certainty of the astrologer's prediction, was yet moved with a feeling of reverential awe, which he vainly strove to dispel. He would have spoken the language of mirth, or indifference, at least, but his voice failed him—a husky whisper escaped his lips, and no more. The tongue clove to the roof of the mouth, and a silence, like that among the stars, hung over the two for the space of many minutes.

The old man resumed the conversation.

"I cannot mistake these signs, Vasco Nunez. I tell thee danger awaits thee. The fate which has so long hunted thee still hangs upon thy heels:—it is for thee still, by diligent watch and calm wisdom, under God's smile and sanction, to elude it, as thou hast done heretofore. Thou hast still to watch and pray, my son: watch for the foe, and pray for the deliverance. But my soul is heavy in thy behalf, Vasco. Full fifteen years have we sped together, and I have loved thee as my own son. Thou knowest how I have loved thee—with a feeling no less strange to age than to youth. Thou hast seemed to me from the first, one commissioned to do wonders, and I have yearned for thy greatness as if it had been a greatness of my own. Would I had been called at the blessed hour when we stood together on the peak of Darien, and beheld for the first time the silver waters of the strange sea below. I had been spared a constant apprehension, which leaves me now, as thou seest, faint, feeble and cast down, as with a nameless affliction. Give me thy arm, my son. I need thy help even to the shelter of yon tree, where I watch, rather than sleep, the starry evening away."

"Shall I give thee help, señor?" demanded a voice at the side of the adelantado, while he assisted the aged man from the earth.

"Ha! thou there, Pedro?"

The astrologer looked on the youth with a keen, piercing glance of his light gray eye, and then remarked—

"Surely I have seen that face but now—it has passed strangely before me to-night."

"True, my father," replied Vasco Nunez, "it is Pedro—thou shouldst know—the secretary."

"Ay, ay! that I know, my son," continued the old man sharply, "but methinks I have seen him elsewhere to-night—I have not beheld him on the island."

A fear touched the mind of Vasco Nunez that the thoughts of the old man wandered, and saying nothing to provoke farther excitement, he assisted him to the shady palm, under which his sylvan couch had been prepared.

"Hast thou heard this old man's prophecy to-night, Pedro?" demanded Vasco Nunez, when they had left Micer Codro to his repose.

"No, my lord," answered the other hesitatingly—and falsely. "I drew nigh at the moment when he claimed the help of thy arm. What is the prophecy, señor?"

"Nay, Pedro, if thou hast not heard, it will be of little profit to thee now to hear. Away to Francisco Compañon, Pedro, and bid him get the brigantines in readiness by dawn. The breeze will favour us at morning, and the longest life were too short to see all the wonders of this vast ocean. I would make the most of mine. Away,"

"Ay!" exclaimed the youth, as he proceeded on his way to the brigantines where Compañon commanded—"Thine will be shorter than thou thinkest. Yet, is it not strange that this old man, Micer Codro, should hit so rightly upon the danger of Vasco Nunez? True, as he would say, never seemed fortune more favourable to man than his at this hour to him. Should there be, indeed, a language in the stars which one might read! Yet why should it be thus imperfectly written? Why should Micer Codro, if he beheld it, go no farther? He spoke of a scaffold and public execution, yet of this there is truly no danger. There was something of a smile and dagger—the dagger is surely in my hand, but, Blessed Mary! I have not smiled this season, nor do I think I shall ever smile again. But here are the brigantines."

Meanwhile Vasco Nunez proceeded to the pleasant grove which had been assigned to Careta, and where, with a fond but usual impatience, she sleeplessly awaited him. A rude tent formed the sleeping apartment, in the front of which, the free use of hatchet and axe had robbed the primitive wood of another chamber, scarcely less compact and close. A narrow entrance through the dense shrubbery was concealed by a heavy dark Spanish cloak suspended from the branches, and no eyes but those of the unsuspicious stars were able to penetrate the thick enclosure.

"Ah, my lord, thou art slow to seek the poor damsel of Darien. When the great cannon of the big canoe made thunder to tell of thy coming from the sea, I looked for thee, but thou camest not."

"But I am come now, Careta."

"Ah, yes, my lord, and I should be happy, and should now forget that thou wert ever gone, but that I fear, thou lovest not the poor Careta as once thou didst. Thou art ever in the big canoe, in which I fear to go, and if thou comest to me at last, it is to leave me soon again."

The reproaches of the girl were not wanting in truth, and they went to the heart of the hero, who, whatever might have been the greater warmth of his feeling toward Teresa Davila, was too gentle in most respects, and too conscious of the right, even if he did not pursue it, not to recognise the justice of her complaints.

The conscience that smote him for his treatment of her, made him sometimes anxious to avoid her; and to a proud man the very feeling which sometimes compelled his eye to sink when it met the sudden glance of hers, was a source of mortification too humiliating to be felt complacently, or incurred without regret and disquiet. He now sought her chiefly at night, when all his emotions were concealed from all eyes. It was a pang still which he could not quiet, when he found that there were eyes in his own soul from which he could conceal nothing.

"But now that I am come to thee, Careta, thou shouldst forget all things but that I am present."

"Oh, I do, I do, my lord; even when I tell thee of thy delay, I tell thee with a smile upon my lips and a joy within my heart. But now thou wilt not need to delay so long. Thy ships are built—thou wilt stay here at Isla

Rica, or thou wilt go to Coyba—thou wilt go no more to Darien, where thy enemies dwell."

"Nay, I have now no enemies, Careta—thou need'st suffer these fears no longer. All now are friends to Vasco Nunez, here and in Darien."

At that moment the youth, Pedro, lifted the cloak at the entrance, and slowly crawled within, sheltering himself among the leaves and branches of the outer apartment. He heard the words and clutched the dagger firmly, while he was conscious of a derisive smile that passed over his features.

"By the Holy Cross, this Micer Codro hath speech of the devil. Said he not the smile and the dagger? Of a truth they are here together." And his resolution of revenge derived strength in his mind from his remembrance of the astrologer's prediction.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOVE BAFFLES THE SHARP STROKE OF VENGEANCE.

The winds slept, and the waters of the sea broke in gentle murmurs that night upon the lovely shores of Isla Rica. The serene clouds lay smiling among the troops of stars that gathered in watchfulness above the secret lands which were soon to be revealed to less holy eyes and less gentle powers than their own. No sounds but those of the ever-sounding deep broke upon the ear of the evening. The little island on which the warriors of Vasco Nunez slept, scarcely felt the motion of those cradling billows by which it was encircled; and to the half-opened eye of the dreaming cavalier, some more curious stars than the rest, as if deceived by the universal silence on the shore, stooped down from their high places, and swung in air just above the hammock where he slumbered. The deep, sweet, half-suppressed breathing of the zephyr came afar across the waves, even from the gardens of the Incas, and dropping odour where it lingered, added the charm of mystery to the holier spell of silence; —and strangely sweet, indeed, to those who still kept wakeful among the Spanish host, were the passingly serene effusions of that solemn night beside the sea; and late, indeed, was the deepening hour when they all slept. A sensation of fond disquiet, that prompting hope of the future and the doubtful, which is always a discontent with the ambitious nature, prolonged the musing meditations of all; and, to a certain extent, the vague hopes and expectations of Vasco Nunez,—the dreams and the fancies, such as grew up naturally in the mind of one who had found so many wonders, and was now professedly in search of more—were also those even of the meanest soldier under his command. The Spaniards of that day, whatever may have been the avarice and brutal bloodthirstiness of their natures, were yet of a soaring

and swelling temper. There were few among them utterly insensible to the desire of making themselves famous among their fellow-men; and there was none so humble of heart, or so lost to that desire to challenge the moral echo which prolongs a favourite name among the habitations of humanity, as to encourage no favourite fancy, no chosen idol of his individual worship, sometimes, indeed, even at the expense of the great idol of his tribe. Each had his own faith in the particular influences of fortune, and none of them despaired of the realization of those dreams which, in another and a soberer hour, they had themselves smiled at and derided. In a scene such as that which they then occupied, in a night so surpassingly lovely, on an island surrounded by the billows of that ocean but a little while before discovered, and upon which they had just then launched for the first time—their prows pointed to strange lands, to the dominions of people of whom wonder already spoke in winged and fairy accents, while experience stood silent in no less wonder—sleep might well grow a stranger to their eyes. It was in vain that their leader strove to sleep. The very hopes in his mind and heart—the successes which he had achieved, and the wonders which his imagination yet continued to create for him still to conquer,—grew painfully exhausting to the spirit which they suffered not to sleep. Hour after hour had passed by, and still he watched, with burning and impatient thoughts, the twinkling lustre of the starlight, as the dropping silver of its rays fell among the green leaves by which he was surrounded. The damsel, in the innocence and confiding fondness of her heart, already long since had sunk into a pleasant slumber beside him. He gazed upon her imperfectly-seen but lovely features with a painful interest; and his conscience smote him with a keen pang when he thought of his engagement with Teresa. She was the more beautiful, but how true had been the Indian damsel—how faithful and how fond. How she had clung to him when the danger from Pedrarias first threatened him—how she had rushed to him in prison—how she had declared her willingness to die for him, as for him only she seemed to care to live. These thoughts renewed the recollection of his own conduct and the self-rebuke which was inevitable in a mind habituated

by education, and strong also in natural instincts, to love justice for its own sake, and to idolize virtue. He shrunk back from the subject on which his heart did not seek to justify, and failed utterly to excuse itself. Great as Vasco Nunez was in the contemplation of the warlike and adventurous world, he yet lacked that important essence of genuine and enduring greatness, the rigid resolve, in spite of passion, of prejudice, human fear or human hope, in all cases to be just. The seductions of beauty, the clamours of the crowd, the thirst for continued conquest, all combined to make him set aside, if he was not utterly unmindful of, the claims of the poor Indian; and with a guilty weakness at his heart,—a cowardice of which the shame that he felt could not relieve him—he turned his eyes away from the placid and sweet features of the confiding woman whose head lay upon his arm, and strove, with closed eyes, to shut out, in forgetting sleep, the obtrusive and exciting thoughts, no less than the reproachful memories which had kept him so long wakeful. At length he slept. His deep breathing soon apprised the anxious and revengeful Pedro that the hour was come, and the victim at his mercy. He put aside the tangled leaves among which he had shrouded himself, with a calm and careful hand. He advanced into the area of the sylvan antechamber, and finally stood at the entrance of that into which it led, and where Vasco Nunez lay. He stopped at this spot. His grasp of the dagger, had taken hold, along with the handle of the weapon, of a part of the long sleeve of his doublet. He cautiously rolled up the sleeve, and it was a subject of satisfactory surprise in his mind that he felt himself so cool and collected. His limbs seemed as rigid as if the flesh had been all muscle. He stept, and felt as if his nerves had on a sudden been hardened into steel.

"This is as it should be," he muttered to himself. "If there be little strength in my limbs, there are, at least, no tremors in them. If my arm be feeble, there is yet no feebleness or fear in my heart. A single stroke—but one —well given and well placed—will acquit me of this sworn performance. Hold your lights fairly, ye stars, that I may see where to rest the keen point of my dagger."

The same resolution attended him as he advanced into

the chamber. Not a nerve yielded as he stood beside the rude forest couch on which Vasco Nunez and the damsel slept. The broad manly bosom of the adelantado, from which the covering, in the warm summer night of that bland atmosphere, had been discarded, lay bare to the stroke. He stood above him, and his arm was uplifted. Deep sleep was upon the warrior. His limbs lay motionless. But an ill-directed stroke—a blow to graze the breast, not reach the heart, would rouse him into instantaneous and dangerous life. For the first time, the assassin felt an emotion. It was not fear, but anxiety that moved him. Not the dread of his enemy, but that failing to strike fatally, he should be for ever after defeated in his purpose. He would most probably fall before the powerful arm of the stricken man ere he could strike a second. His own breathing for the first time became suspended. It was needful that his blow should be justly aimed, and he stood between the starlight and his victim's breast. He changed his position—the full, broad chest of the warrior, scarred already by many weapons, and bronzed by frequent exposure to a fierce sun, lay open to his sight and weapon. With an eye as clear, and a spirit as free from any sentiment of fear or apprehension, as might be found in the most obdurate of all bosoms, Pedro prepared himself for the performance of his act of vengeance. Yet, perilous as was delay in such a situation, his nature was one of that contemplative character which did not seem satisfied merely to strike. It was thought, however erring, not impulse—not blind hate, or unreflecting passion—which made him resolve to be an assassin; and, indeed, but for this thought he had not proceeded so coolly to his dreadful work.—He, a mere boy, feeble of limb, unfamiliar with deeds of strife, unskilful with the very weapon which he wielded!

"One blow, truly aimed, and this mighty man sleeps for ever. This man that has conquered nations and is a wonder to his own—whose giant energies have overpassed and broken down all barriers—whose courage has dared all dangers, and whose genius has left all other wings behind him—lies now at the mercy of the feeblest follower of his train. What a blow will that be which slays him. Acla and Darien will hear his last groan. His fall will shake, not Darien only, but Spain—and I!—

Will they know me for the assassin,—will they ever hear that the arm which struck the man of most might in this strange world, was that of one feeble as a woman? It matters little to me what they know or hear. It matters less what they conjecture. Enough that I am sworn. Jorge, my brother, be nigh me at this moment and approve! This blow avenges thee on thy murderer! Vasco Nunez, the smile and the dagger meet above thee—thou diest!"

The bright steel gleamed suddenly upon the opening eyes of the damsel. A wild shriek from her lips answered his half-spoken soliloquy, while her hand, thrown up by the prompt instinct of affection, caught and arrested the arm of the assassin, ere the blow could reach the heart at which it was directed. The dagger's point hung suspended above it—its course controlled and defeated by the two opposing hands.

"Ha! my lord! awake! arise! Help, help for my lord!" was the rapid and renewed cry of Careta; but her words were spoken in her native language. Forgetting her imperfect Spanish in that moment of her terror, she could articulate none other than her own. And vainly, by its fervent and frequent repetition, did she strive to arouse the sleeping warrior. Her terrors increased as she found that, in spite of all her clamours, and the struggle going on above him, between herself and the assassin, she could not break that apathetic sleep which enveloped his person; and which, so tenacious was it of the hold taken upon the wearied limbs of the chief, almost led her to fear that some blow, given by the murderer ere she awakened, had already taken fatal effect upon his life. His deep breathing only reassured her at length, and but once, amidst all her cries and struggles, did it seem to be suspended. He turned uneasily for an instant—muttered some indistinct words, and relapsed into a sleep as heavy as before. Bitter was the exclamation which in her own language she made, as the conviction reached her mind that the assassin might escape from her grasp and renew his assault, before her efforts to arouse the sleeper to his danger could prove successful. Her prayer was now in Spanish to that protecting mother whom she had been so recently taught to invoke. Her own strength was fast

failing her, and the struggle was continued with renewed violence on the part of the assassin.

"Blessed Virgin! Holy Mother of God! strengthen me!—preserve my lord!"

A whisper from the assailant reached her ear. The voice was disguised—the accents came to her with a hoarseness that tended still farther to terrify her.

"Pray rather that he may be destroyed—he loves thee not, Careta."

"Who speaks thus to Careta—who art thou?"

"The enemy of Vasco Nunez."

"Ha! Then I hate thee. Ho! my lord,—my dear lord! Arouse thee—awaken! There is an enemy beside thee. A man who would slay—"

"Fool! Thou takest pains against thyself. He loves thee not. He loves and is to wed with Teresa, the daughter of Don Pedrarias, who is now at Darien. Give me way, that I may avenge both thyself and me!"

But his words tended only to impel the faithful woman to renewed clamours and greater efforts. The struggle, long as it may have taken to describe, so far had lasted but a few moments only. The assassin vainly strove to induce her silence, by whispering words of startling and vexing import to her ears, and, failing in this, as he could not hope that the warrior would possibly sleep on in spite of the continued shrieks which she uttered, it became necessary on his part to make an effort, at least, for his own release. The desperateness of his situation rendered this effort effectual. He broke from her hold, not without some difficulty, and then, as he saw that Vasco Nunez still slept, and unwilling to forego the opportunity in availing himself of which he had been so far baffled, he prepared in the next instant to renew his attempt. But the moment of his extrication from the grasp of the damsel found her erect, between him and his sleeping victim, and ready to receive in her own bosom the weapon, if she was no longer able to baffle it. But her clamours, though even then they had failed to waken the destined victim, yet roused up others in the encampment. less rigidly bound than himself in the chains of sleep. Lights waved in the woods and glared among the leaves, and the sound of approaching voices might be heard in more than one quarter of the encampment. Cursing his

weakness of hand or perversity of fortune, the assassin prepared to depart. A single imprecation escaped his lips, as his eye glared with furious animosity upon the woman who had baffled him, and upon the victim, who still lay, so far as his own powers of resistance were involved, completely at his mercy. But the moment had gone by, and he was now compelled to think of his own escape—not that life might be saved, for of that the avenger had little care—but that his vengeance might yet find an opportunity, and use it with better fortune. Still collected and resolved, he made his way out of the enclosure with equal certainty and stealth, by the aperture through which he had entered; and in the uncertainty of vision produced by the glare of the approaching lights, Careta knew not that he was gone until, under the guidance of her now awakened lord, the search made after him proved utterly unsuccessful. It was no small addition to her annoyance that Vasco Nunez ascribed her terrors solely to her fancy. He laughed at her fears—boldly declared the assassin to have been the creation of her dreams—for—

"How idle," he continued, "to suppose that such a strife should take place over a soldier's bosom—he quick to waken at the smallest alarm,—and be prolonged, as thou sayest, Careta, for such a space of time. Thou hast dreamed a frightful dream, Careta; such as might have troubled thee when I lay in prison at Darien. But thou forgettest I am in Darien no longer—that my enemies there are now my friends—that—"

The tears filled her eyes, and her accents—for she interrupted him at this moment—were tremulous with pain and fear. A new recollection filled her mind, and one of the events of the struggle already related, came freshly to her recollection for the first time since it occurred.

"It may be a dream, my lord; nay, now that I think of it, it must have been a dream. I had speech of the assassin—he spoke of thee, my lord, as his enemy—nay, more, he said thou wert mine."

"Thine—thy enemy!" exclaimed the chief, with a laugh; "that is enough to show thee it was a dream that troubled thee. None had surely told thee so great a folly with a hope to have been believed in his falsehood."

"I did not believe him, my lord; but he said thou wert

to wed with the daughter of Don Pedrarias at Darien—that thou didst not love thy poor Careta."

"Ha! said he this, Careta?" demanded the adelantado; and could she at that moment have beheld his pale and guilty features, she would have found in them but a melancholy confirmation of what his lips denied.

"Even such were his words, my lord."

"It was a dream that troubled thee, Careta," said the chief, in slow accents, and after a brief pause. "Let it trouble thee no more. Get thee to sleep, my girl—get thee to sleep."

But he himself returned not to the couch to which he despatched the damsel. There was that of guilty reproach in his heart, which would not suffer him to sleep. There was a strange apprehension also. Things, so far, strangely tallied with the prediction of the astrologer. The dagger had threatened him—and the fact stated by Careta, as having been communicated by the assassin, convinced him against his own assurances to her, that it was no dream. There was an enemy near him, hostile to his life—base enough to attempt it while he slept; and, though baffled for the moment, yet no doubt sufficiently earnest in his resolution to renew his bloody purpose. The threatening danger aroused his wonted promptness and decision. He put on his armour, and went forth into the encampment—commanding at the same time the presence of all his little army at the brigantines. His suspicions, if he had any in particular, lay among his officers. He knew the jealousy and vain ambition of that class of Spaniards, and his eye, in the keenness of which he had great confidence, seemed to search their very souls while he looked into their faces. But he dismissed them, without discovery, to their several duties.

"With the dawn," he said to Francisco Compañon, the captain of one of his brigantines, "be in readiness for the cruise among the Pearl Islands. It lacks but little more than two hours to the time. I shall be upon your deck with the first glimmer of the gray. See that you be not sleeping."

Pedro, the secretary, appeared with the rest, with a countenance more calm, and nerves less discomposed than any among that array of hardened men. When

the rest were dismissed, the two walked together toward the tree where they had left the astrologer to his repose. While they went they spoke of the late alarm in the encampment.

"I should have thought it but a dream," said Vasco Nunez, "even as thou say'st, but for the speech which Careta tells me the assassin made her."

He then related the communication touching his projected marriage with Teresa.

"But why, my lord, may she not have dreamed this also?"

"Scarcely, unless she had some previous knowledge of the fact."

"This she may have had."

"Impossible! I have studiously withheld it from her; for, to speak to you a truth, Pedro, my heart misgives me that I do her grievous wrong. I would it were not so—I would that she had less feeling for me—I dare not send her from me; yet, ere long she must know all—and then—"

A smile of bitterness passed over the secretary's lips as he spoke: "What need the Adelantado of Darien to heed this matter so greatly? The girl is but an Indian—"

"Hush, Pedro! I like neither the words thou say'st, nor the tone in which thou speakest them. The girl is but an Indian—but what an Indian! How true—how fond—how faithful! True, fond, and faithful to Vasco Nunez when nearly all other hearts in Darien were false. No more of this. The matter is strange enough to make me thoughtful, and threatens enough to make me careful. Henceforward thou shalt sleep in my outer chamber. I can trust thee, Pedro—thee, perchance, and none other in all this array, unless it be Micer Codro."

"I am sworn to thee, my lord!—even in death be sure I shall not be far distant from thy side," replied the youth with a warmth that seemed to confirm the force of his words, the equivocalness of which was unperceived by the speaker.

"I thank thee, Pedro; and it is of no small consolation to me in the strife with so many open foes, and so many secret traitors, that I can turn to one, even though his arm be feeble like thine, with confidence and trust."

"Thou wilt not always deem my arm feeble, señor—there will come a time—"

"Nay, Pedro, think not I reproach thee—I deem thy arm strangely feeble, only when I contemplate the strength of thy spirit. But this should be the tree. What ho! Micer Codro!"

The summons was unanswered.

"Methinks," said Pedro, "I behold the old man walking upon the beach before us. His white beard gleams like so much silver."

"It is he. Let us join him."

"My son," said the astrologer, when they met, "since thou left'st me I have been watching these strange signs. The dagger threatens thee no more. It is the smile only which thou hast need to fear."

"Nay, I have no fear of either, Micer Codro, though if all that is said be true, thy prophecy is sadly out; for this night have I been threatened by the dagger when there was too little starlight to behold a smile. But come—get thyself in readiness for the brigantine—get thy scales, thy glasses, and thy measures. This day will I take thee over all the Pearl Islands, where, I trust, the treasures of earth which thou shalt find, will make thee for awhile forget those capricious and deceiving lights of heaven."

"Shall I not also attend thee, señor?" demanded the secretary.

"No, Pedro; thou wilt need this day to finish the despatches for Don Pedrarias; and I have a note which thou shalt copy for Hernando de Arguello. The Leon brigantine departs for the Balsas this day, should the wind favour, at noon; and that hour thy despatches must be in readiness for Lope de Olano, whose messenger, with tidings from Darien, will be at the Balsas awaiting her arrival. There must be no delay in this. In our next voyage thou shalt go with us—but now—there is yet another reason"—in a whisper—"Keep thine eyes about thee here at Isla Rica. Thine eyes are keener than most others. I mistrust that some creature of Enciso is among us. None other could have sought my place of rest with the dagger of the assassin. Seize, if thou suspectest—I give thee full power to this end."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FLIGHT OF THE AVENGER—LOVE KEEPS THE FIELD.

An hour had scarcely passed from the departure of Vasco Nunez on his course for the Pearl Islands—the brigantine in which he sailed was hardly out of sight—when the secretary, Pedro, was surprised by the visit of one, the last person he expected, as it was, perhaps, the last person he desired to see. This was no other than the damsel of Darien. She chose a moment for her visit when the secretary was alone. He started to his feet as he beheld her. There was some little precipitateness in his manner, but a solemn deliberateness about hers. He offered her a seat, but she refused it. He would have urged it upon her with that respectfulness of attention which he had been ever accustomed to pay to one so distinguished by his employer, and who, however equivocal might be her station in a social point of view, or however inferior her birth and connexions in the estimation of a European, had been always with him a subject of sincere regard. He knew that, though deceived, she was virtuous; and though lovely and possessed of power, she was no less gentle and complaisant than good; and at a time when his Indian wife was a favourite topic of sneer with the meaner enemies of Vasco Nunez, he was one of the few who never deemed her undeserving of that high distinction. Indeed, his own hostility to the adelantado was renewed as he discovered the injustice of the latter to the damsel, —as he beheld the weakness and deficiency of a mind which could sacrifice such profound devotion and so pure a heart because of its savage origin—giving a preference to another, simply—as he believed—because of her European birth,—or in compliance with a yet baser argument, for the rescue of a forfeit life. She rejected his courtesy, and for a few seconds contemplated his features in silence,

but with such a look of deep, serious regret, that his apprehensions for the first time grew quickened on the subject of his last night's adventure, and without being able entirely to conceal his impatience, he desired to know of her the purpose of her visit. He was soon answered.

"Señor Pedro, I have discovered the person who would have slain my lord last night."

"Ha! can it be, señora? Speak, Careta—dost thou indeed know?"

Her eyes were riveted upon him with the piercing keenness of fascination, as she replied—

"Ay, Señor Pedro, it is a great sorrow with me that I do know—the more so, as the criminal is one whom my lord greatly trusts. Señor Pedro, thou art he!"

"I,—ha!—Who! Careta, this is a strange jest. Why should I do this thing?—why should I seek the death of the Señor Vasco?—he who hath been so good to me ever—who—but it is thy sport, Careta. It is thy mood to sport with me to-day."

"Alas! for me—it were a great sin if I could think to sport on so dreadful a matter. I have no heart for sport, Señor Pedro, for next to the sorrow which I have at my lord's danger from his enemies, is the great grief at my heart, Señor Pedro, that thou shouldst be among them—thou whom he has ever trusted among the first, and to whom, as thou thyself hast said, he hath ever been a firm friend."

"But I am not among his enemies, Careta; and as for this strange humour of thine—if thine indeed it be—that I have lifted weapon against him—some evil person hath possessed thee against the truth—"

"No more, Señor Pedro," she interrupted him with solemn emphasis; "speak no more in denial of thy own shame. The truth is against thee, and there is proof."

"Ha! Proof, say'st thou—what proof?"

Without a word she unclasped one of her hands which had been hitherto so closed as to conceal its contents, and revealed to his eyes the fragment of a frill, such as were commonly worn at the sleeve by the gallants of that time and nation. His eyes instinctively fell upon the wrist of his right hand, where the other portions of the frill, rent and torn, were at that moment visible. Hitherto, the injury which it had sustained in the scuffle had en-

tirely escaped his sight. His thoughts had been too busy elsewhere to suffer his eyes to do their ordinary duties; and though writing with the fragments continually presenting themselves before him, he had not been in the slightest degree conscious that they exhibited any other than their usual appearance. This sudden revelation—the action, look, manner of the damsel, all announced to him that in her mind she had arrived at the fullest conviction of his criminality—and the sudden paleness of his cheeks, and the sinking of his eyes beneath her glance, against which he vainly strove, and of which he felt painfully conscious, were enough, he well knew, to confirm her suspicions, by whatever doubts they may have been qualified before. He stammered out a farther denial of the accusation, though admitting what he could not deny, that the frill was his. But his words failed utterly to affect her convictions. She answered him calmly and without hesitation. She forebore all language of hate and denunciation. The enormity of his offence, indeed, seemed to deprive her, in the consciousness of her imperfect modes of speech, of all power of reproach.

"This, Señor Pedro, is from your sleeve. I found it in the tent of my lord, and beside his couch where he slept last night. It lay in the very spot where I struggled with the person who came to slay him. Oh, Señor Pedro, how you have deceived my lord! How will he hear—how will he believe that you, whom he so much trusted, have been the person to seek his life!"

The secretary went to the entrance of the tent, which he carefully examined before answering; then returning, he prepared for a conference, the details of which might have moved a hardier villain, yet were inadequate to disturb to any great degree the fixed and fanatical resolution of his mind. He saw that the circumstance which had apprised Careta of his guilt was one that, once known, must be almost equally conclusive to all other persons. Feeling assured that any attempt at denial would be vain, he resolved upon a bolder, and, perhaps, more manly course.

"Wherefore should he hear it, Careta—why shouldst thou tell him of this?"

"How! Wouldst thou have me take part with his enemy?"

"Ay, if his enemy is your friend. If his enemy, doing

himself justice, avenges you at the same moment. Hear me, Careta,"—seeing she was about to interrupt him with a very natural expression of indignation—" Vasco Nunez has deceived you. He told you that you were his wife according to the Christian law, but the Christians regard you not as his wife, nor does he himself give you such a title, nor have you such a claim. Ere long he will tell you otherwise—ere long he will give that title to another. Know from me—I spoke the words in your ear last night, but you would not hear and would not believe —he is sworn to wed Teresa Davila, the daughter of Pedrarias, and his late visit to Darien, when he left thee behind him at Acla, was to meet with and to see her."

" I believe thee not—I believe thee not now, no more than I did last night. My lord is ever good and honourable. He took me from my father at Coyba as his wife, according to the law among the Christians, and such I am, and such he will make me ever. He can make no other his wife. He hath ever called me such, and if it be as thou say'st, that he went to Darien to see this lady, wherefore is it that he hath left her—wherefore is it that I lie even now within his arms?"

" Yet is all true that I tell thee, Careta. The condition by which Don Pedrarias released him from prison in Darien, was that he should marry with his daughter. This he hath sworn to do—and this, Careta, I tell thee, will he do, utterly regardless of thy affections, and the promises which he hath made to thee and to thy father."

" Señor Pedro, it were death and shame for me to believe thee. It were death to me, since it were such sad shame to my lord. I cannot believe thee. My lord hath been ever true to me and good. He hath ever kept his promise to the poor Indians, my people—and to me, that, if there be truth in thy speech, am the poorest Indian among them. It is not true, for my lord hath never spoken to me of this."

" Nor will he, till it may be questioned no longer. Thy first knowledge, Careta, of the truth from him, will be heard when the Lady Teresa stands before thee as his wife, and commands thee as his slave."

" Slave thyself, and liar as thou art! Leave me—fly, I tell thee, thou bad man, that speakest of my lord such things as belong only to thy own base thoughts! fly,

while he is yet absent from this island. Speed thee away in this ship that goes to-day to Darien, for, so sure as my heart is true to my lord's nobleness, will my lips tell him of thy crime."

Her lips quivered with her gradually increasing emotion, which, swelling against restraint, now burst all bounds, and poured itself forth in language in which her inadequate Spanish was liberally filled out by the rapid rushing sounds of her native tongue. The veins upon her brow were risen into ridges, and those upon her throat seemed cords that grasped and threatened her with that suffocation which appeared also to be no less threatened in her thick and choking utterance. Her figure, which was naturally small, seemed to rise and expand with the provocation, and her extended hand, as she bade him fly, was lifted with a majesty which might have furnished a lesson of united grace and dignity to the most polished and finely tutored princess of the royal race of Christendom. The now inflexible eye of the secretary gazed on her with a mingled expression of pity and admiration. In his thoughts, at that moment, he felt no anger, and nothing but sympathy. Her scorn, and the keen language from her lips did not vex him. He only thought of the moment when the truth should become known to her, no longer to be doubted, which she now denied with such warm confidence and hostile expression.

"Yet, Careta, but awhile. If this should be true that I tell thee—say that I prove it to be true—that Vasco Nunez is to wed with Teresa Davila—"

"Thou canst not prove it—it is not true," she replied impetuously. He patiently repeated the words, and proceeded—

"If I can prove it to thee by the lips of Micer Codro?"

"I should sooner believe that Micer Codro had grown false like thyself, than believe this baseness of my lord. Let me not hear thee longer. How should I believe thee—thou that speakest to me evil of my lord, only when thou hast been thyself shown guilty of the worst of evil designs against him? Thy dagger has been lifted against his heart, even when his heart most believed in the goodness of thine. Señor Pedro, I would not have thee die by a cruel death. Go—leave Isla Rica ere my

lord returneth; for it may not be that I shall keep from him the truth."

"Hear me, Careta—shall I prove to thee by thy lord's own words that he is bound to wed, by his own promise, with Teresa Davila? Look, here is his own letter to that damsel, new written, and to be sent this day to Balsas."

She turned away her head in haste.

"I would not see it even if it be true, and, as thy falsehood, I still would look away from it, as dishonouring my lord. Thou canst not persuade me, Señor Pedro. I will believe nothing against my lord which is spoken by his enemy."

"Wilt thou not believe me when I swear?"

"No! How should I believe thee, when thy daily life is a lie? Dost thou not walk beside my lord—dost thou not smile when he speaks—and dost thou not hearken to his secret thoughts, and counsel him as if thou wert his certain friend, even when thou wouldst strike him with thy weapon? Shall I believe his words, whose actions are so false? No, no! From thy lips I will believe nothing."

The secretary paused a moment. Rapid thoughts rushed through his mind. It was necessary that he should resolve quickly. He saw at a glance that there was no relenting on the part of the Indian damsel; that no assurance of the faithlessness of Vasco Nunez could produce a like faithlessness in her, even if he could succeed in persuading her to credit his own assurances. Her resolution seemed equally certain—as, indeed, there could be no reasonable hope on his part that it should be otherwise—that the return of the adelantado from his cruise would be the hour of his own exposure. A desperate resolve passed through his mind—a horrible idea—by which he hoped to escape this danger, and remain at the same time in the neighbourhood of his victim.

"Shall I now," he thought to himself, "be driven by this woman from the revenge which I have so long meditated—which is an oath written in heaven, and which the spirit of the injured dead hath been invoked to witness? No! Driven hence, I lose all present prospect of my vengeance, and the tongue of this woman leaves me to the hostile and destructive rage of Vasco Nunez, who will inevitably pursue me to the death. That were nothing, could I destroy, also, in the hour of my own

destruction—but that cannot be. There is yet another mode. Careta!"

The last word was spoken aloud, and he advanced as he spoke towards the damsel. Without suffering his eye to lose its immediate hold upon hers, his hand, unobserved by her, possessed itself of a dagger, which hung with other armour against a tree, around which his sylvan tent had been erected. Grasped firmly in his left hand, the blade was turned upward and concealed behind his arm. He approached her with slow steps, and his ear as he moved was keenly alive to the stillness of the scene without. As if unassured, he looked once more to the entrance of the tent. The very billows seemed sleeping upon the shore. The hundred details of a cruel scheme of murder and concealment went through his mind in regular order in the short minute's space in which his eyes were thus employed.

"A single sudden blow," thus ran the terrible musings of his mind, "and she is silenced for ever. This wide waste of waters will bear her beyond sight of the keenest eye, and there are none near to behold the stroke—to hear the cry—to see or to speak. Careta!" he exclaimed returning; "thou art resolved then to hear nothing—neither thy lord's crime against me, nor that which he has meditated against thyself. Of what avail will it be to thee that thou shouldst tell this to Vasco Nunez, and show that thou lovest him in spite of all his injustice, when, but a little month shall pass, and thou wilt be doomed to behold another in his arms?"

"Thou hast already filled my ears with this, Señor Pedro. Have I not said to thee that I believe it not?"

"Thou art then resolved to give me up to the vengeance of thy lord—nothing but my death will appease thee?"

"Nay, the Holy Virgin forbid that thou shouldst die. I wish not that. Do I not tell thee to depart ere my lord cometh? Were it not for the safety of my lord, my lips should be sealed—he should never hear of thy crime. No, no! Go where he may not find thee. Go, where thou mayst turn to be sorry for thy evil thoughts. In the country far over the waters my lord will never find thee —nay, I promise thee I will beg that he will never seek after thee. I will beg him to forgive thee, and to forget thy crime."

"Poor fool!" exclaimed the secretary half aloud; "in a little time what will thy prayers to him avail thee—and thy promises to me? Thou little dreamest thy own discarded destiny. Thou little knowest thy own wrongs—the abiding hopelessness of that heart which is so completely the slave of another's that it will believe no evil of its tyrant. Thou wilt yet pray for me—for thy avenger! —I cannot strike her now. It were a blow against the purest innocence. I am not sworn against virtue but against evil—not against the weak but the strong—not against the just and gentle, but the bloody-minded and unjust. No! There is yet another mode. I will try that. Careta! I will obey thee. See! I mean thee no evil—this dagger was but now lifted in my hand to slay thee. I had sworn against the life of Vasco Nunez—thou wert in possession of my secret, and when, in thy blind devotion to that man, thou refusedst all ear to my accusation against him, my first thought was to silence thee, that I might still be nigh to work out my vow of vengeance. But I look on thee with too much admiration to strike—I pity thee, for what the future will bring thee, too much to heed the opposition of thy will to mine, and the scorn and hostility which thou breathest against me. I will leave Isla Rica, even as thou counsellest—but the hour will come, Careta, when in thy secret thought thou wilt say, the blow which was aimed by my hand at the breast of Vasco Nunez, and which thy woman hand hath baffled, had been a blow no less sweet to thy heart than its success had been to mine."

"Never, never! The Holy Virgin strengthen and preserve me from such a sinful thought. It glads me, Señor Pedro, that thou goest from Isla Rica. Thy dagger alone could have kept me from speech to my lord of the crime which thou hast meditated against him; and Careta had been only too happy to have died for him, could it be that her death had saved his life. Go!—I forgive thee for what thou hast thought against me; but I cannot forgive thee that which thou hast felt against my lord. Thou mightst have slain me, Señor Pedro, but even with the blood going out of my heart, I had told thee that my faith in my lord is fast. Thou canst not move me in that, whether I live or die."

"Thou art worthy of a better faith, Careta," replied

the secretary, gazing on her with pity and admiration, "and I would that my prayer might find thee a better fortune. Alas! for thee, I shall one day see thee more desolate than myself. I leave thee."

"Go, señor, and let thy prayer be for thyself and not for Careta. The Christian God hath been very kind already to the poor Indian. I am bidden to have faith in him, and from what he hath already shown me of his favour, I were blind and foolish had I not. May he favour thee, Señor Pedro, and make thy heart wise to love only that which is good."

"Thou wilt yet curse him and die!" exclaimed the secretary, as he left the tent and moved towards the seashore.

She made him no answer, but her hands were clasped, and her eyes lifted up to heaven, with an expression in which the serene, relying, hope shone out with a tenderness of aspect that looked most like love, and yet was religion. In another hour and the brigantine left Isla Rica for the river Balsas, bearing in her the secretary of Vasco Nunez, no less revengeful in his mood than before, and, perhaps even more resolved upon its execution, from that defeat of his design which had ended in his exile from the victim.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE AVENGER BUSY AT A DISTANCE.

THE secretary of Vasco Nunez sped with all despatch from Balsas to Acla, and from Acla to Darien. It was fortunate for his purposes that just at this time the usual objects of the exploring expedition required that a large brigade of soldiers and labourers, still employed in the transportation of materials and supplies across the mountains, should set out on their return journey. As the confidential secretary of the Adelantado of the South Sea, bearing his despatches to Pedrarias, the representations of Pedro were received without question, and his forward progress facilitated without any scruple, by those officials who might, upon any hint of the truth, have readily arrested him. But the ill fortune of the conqueror prevailed, and his enemy reached Darien in safety, and in a space of time, for those days, and in that difficult and perilous journey, of unusual shortness. It was then that he came to the final resolution—a resolution which a sense of personal pride had baffled long before—of making others the agents of that vengeance which he had found himself unable to execute. As soon as his mind felt itself undivided in the pursuit of this one object, he dismissed his former scruples. A ready sophistry reconciled him now to agents and artifices which he had scorned before; and his first visit in Darien was to one whom he had sufficient reason to know was the bitter enemy of Vasco Nunez. This was Francisco Pizarro. The scornful smile, the sharp, contemptuous question, and the rude, brutal demeanour of this bloody soldier, did not now offend him.

"Señor," said he, "I have now the means to serve you—to meet your former desires, and please Don Pedrarias.

I have it now in my power to convict the Señor Vasco of treason—to show that he designs to throw off the government of Darien, and with his brigantines pass to the provinces bordering on the great South Sea, beyond the jurisdiction of Pedrarias."

"Thou art late with thy proof," replied Pizarro. "How know we that Pedrarias will believe these things of one pledged to be his son-in-law? What are thy proofs of what thou sayest? Whose testimony beside thy own canst thou offer in support of thy charge?"

"Proof shall not be wanting," was the answer; "and if thy former desire hold on this subject, Señor Francisco, thy question might have been spared. Thou mightst easily get proof which will maintain the truth of my assurances. But this shall not be lacking, as I tell thee; and when I assure Don Pedrarias, moreover, that it is scarcely the purpose of Vasco Nunez to become his son-in-law—that he still clings to the Indian woman—"

"Couldst thou show this, perhaps?"

"It were easy. Pedrarias hath no love for Vasco Nunez. It was in a moment of fear that this treaty of marriage and reconciliation was patched up, and only by the means of the Archbishop Quevedo. He is no longer here to keep his agreement whole, and help his ally through thick and thin. How many enemies hath Vasco Nunez made here in Darien, all of whom rage against him. The Bachelor Corral hates him with an unforgiving hate, which would destroy wherever he might dare. Alonzo de la Puente is no less his foe. Thou, thyself, hast found a ready confidence, in what thou sayst, in Don Pedrarias; and methinks there is a natural bias against the adelantado in his mind, because of the rivalship and better fortunes of Vasco Nunez, which will make it easy to persuade him of the truth of my declaration. Nay, more, I have papers of the adelantado, under his own hand, which will greatly help to establish it against him."

"Let us go to Pedrarias on the instant," was the answer of Pizarro. "Thou art in the right spirit for good fortune, Pedro—see that thou shrink not from it. Speak to Pedrarias as thou hast spoken to me, else it shall be worse for thee now. I am not to say these things as from thy authority, from which thou thyself shalt after-

wards depart. Be thou firm, and mislead me not, if thou wouldst not eat my dagger."

"Thou wilt find me no less firm than thyself," replied the youth. "Nay, I should prove myself so even more if in thy dagger's spite, and utterly in scorn of thy threat. Such have I shown thee already, Señor Francisco, of a temper which needs no word from thee to make it resolute, whether it be in defence of a friend, or in prosecution of just vengeance on a foe."

"Thou shouldst have a better strength for thy dagger, boy—better limbs and more masculine manhood for thy tongue. Thy spirit were more becoming were it more modest, for audacity and weakness, when they go together, make the geese grin—thou shouldst know the proverb. But I speak not this to anger thee," he continued, as he beheld the ghastly paleness on the youth's cheek, and the dark crimson hue which succeeded it—"since thy boldness angers not me. Be thou as resolute before Pedrarias, to repeat what thou hast said to me, and thou wilt find no better friend in Darien than Francisco Pizarro. I rather like the frankness which becomes insolent, than the timidity which grows treacherous and strikes, like a hidden snake, with full venom at the heel. Yet,"—a brief pause followed at this point, which seemed sufficiently appropriate after the utterance of a sentiment so truly at variance with the real principles of the speaker, and one which brought something more than a smile upon the lips of his companion—"yet, Pedro," he continued, "though in truth, it will nothing help this business forward, yet would I know wherefore now thou shouldst be the enemy of Vasco Nunez, that, but a little space ago, was his most trusted and serviceable friend. These changes happen not without a cause; and yet, according to thy own showing, to the moment when thou leftst Isla Rica thou wert still his approved secretary."

"I have served the Señor Vasco, and served him faithfully," replied the youth gravely, "but I never was his friend. From the first I have been his sworn but secret foe. Nay, more, even when I served him—when I declined to serve thee against him—I was sworn to slay him. Ask me not farther of this matter, Señor Francisco. It is enough that I am now resolved to put my oath in execution. I have been a foolish boy—flattered with

shows of greatness and dreams of glory, and blinded no less to the truth than to my duty. That hour is past—the scales have fallen from my eyes, and though I wield not the dagger with my own hand for his destruction, it is not the less effectually my blow, when I arm with it the hand of another more capable to strike."

"That is true, but here is the Plaza," said the rough soldier, comprehending in part only the somewhat mystical solution which his companion gave him of that moral perversity in his course, which it required a nicer judgment than his own readily to reconcile. "Now, Pedro, see that thou keepest to thy story. It will not be hard, as thou sayst, to make Pedrarias believe. He fears the successes of Vasco Nunez, and will not be slow to hate where he fears. I will move him to these fears by other facts of which I have knowledge; and there is more to alarm him in this matter touching Vasco Nunez and his daughter, than thou dreamest of. This damsel, when she dwelt in Española denied Vasco Nunez, in his prayer for love; there is nothing strange, but much that is reasonable in the thought that he means not to wed her now—that he will fling back her hand into her father's face, when he has once laid a clean keel on the waters of the great South Sea. Let me but show this image to the mind of Pedrarias, and the jealous old man grows furious. Boy, thou shalt speed well for this."

As Pizarro anticipated, it was any thing but difficult to awaken in the mind of Pedrarias all his old suspicions of Vasco Nunez, and all the hostility accordingly, which had so persecutingly pursued him before. Many circumstances contributed to swell the torrent of imputation which was raised against the distant and unconscious cavalier. A long interval had followed his last departure from Darien, and he had failed to communicate to the governor his projects and achievements. The very despatches which he had prepared to send by the brigantine which bore the secretary to Balsas, were in the possession of the latter, and suppressed for his own purposes from delivery. To this it may be added, that there were in the hands of the secretary some documents which, in their imperfect and incomplete condition, tended in some considerable degree to confirm his misrepresentations. It was shown clearly that Vasco Nunez had not

been without some idea of ridding himself of the governor's control, in the event of his being able to launch his vessel upon the great sea which he had found; and though, to the unprejudiced and unembittered mind, it would have appeared equally clear upon inquiry, that these memoranda had been made, and these ideas formed, at a period preceding the late compromise between the parties, yet the pertinacity of Pizarro, and the positive asseverations of the secretary, completely blinded the despotic governor to all consideration of reason or justice on this subject. He yielded, as had been predicted, to a passion of fury, which only suffered itself to be quieted at last by the conviction that his enemy, as he deemed him, was beyond his power; and believing, as he did, the representations of the conspirators, his natural fear and inference were, that, being now fairly in possession of the means equally of flight and independence, Vasco Nunez would soon bid him defiance. It was not the policy, however, of those who sought the destruction of the latter, to suffer him to rest in this last conviction; and Pizarro showed many reasons for his assurance that it was the policy of the cavalier to maintain an appearance of good faith with his superior for some little time longer. It was at length the conclusion of the parties that Vasco Nunez was a traitor, and should suffer the punishment of one. But how to get him into the power of Pedrarias was now the only difficulty. If his designs were such as had been ascribed to him, it was scarcely reasonable to suppose that he would tamely yield himself to punishment—it was equally improbable that he should not exercise a large degree of precaution towards the man in relation to whom he meditated so much faithlessness. He had now four brigantines, all well manned and afloat, upon an ocean, the whole world of which was fairly before him, where to choose. Three hundred picked men—his own devoted followers—"the old soldiers of Darien"—men who had already shown their love of their commander, by the readiness with which they had turned out at the summons of a mere boy, for his rescue from the prison to which Pedrarias had consigned him—these were at his bidding, and immediately under his command. They could not be withdrawn from him on any pretence not calculated to provoke suspicion, and any open attempt

even under the seeming sanction of the law, openly to arrest him, would, it was evident enough to every understanding, arouse him to instant defiance and insurrection. The governor was bewildered, until the more wily secretary came to his assistance.

"It seems to me, your excellency," he said, "that this matter is not so difficult as you suppose. To summon Vasco Nunez to Darien, to answer charges against him, would be, it is true, most likely to defeat your object. But why do this? The easier course would be to express no suspicions—to utter no charges—but to write to him, as before—to invite him, not to Darien, but to Acla, whither he well knows you have already resolved to go. There are motives enough which would justify your desire to meet with him, if it were only to confer on the subject of the intended expedition; and the more effectually to disarm his suspicions, should he have them, it were not unwise to counsel your daughter to write him, as if of her own heart, desiring his presence also. Meanwhile, care should be taken that such of his known friends as are here in Darien, should be seized and silenced. Hernando de Arguello, who hath large interest in the fortunes of Vasco Nunez, should be at once arrested on any plea—but kept from communication with Acla and the Balsas. There are others, his officers, one of whom is here and two at Acla, whom it were no less important to arrest with all despatch. These are Valdebarrano, Hernan Muños, and Botello. I know that these men counsel Vasco Nunez of all the doings in his absence at Santa Maria and Acla. This done, silently, and what more? Nothing—but to await at Acla for the coming of the traitor, with a force strong enough to secure him. The Señor Francisco, I doubt not, can bring together in short time a strong band to go forth and seize him, while he comes unsuspectingly with the messenger whom you despatch for him to Isla Rica."

Such were the counsels of the secretary, and they were such as readily commanded the entire ear of Pedrarias. They were accordingly adopted, and measures taken for their prompt execution. Arguello was arrested that very night, and Gaspar Nino, a man known to be faithful to Pedrarias, yet one who was equally well known for his mild and just deportment, was chosen, with three

others, equally inoffensive, to bear the deceitful despatches to Vasco Nunez, and to accompany him to Acla. To this man, though the words of Pedrarias conveyed no knowledge of his sinister determination, his manner, at once angry and restrained, conveyed a signification of the truth, which the arrest of Hernando de Arguello contributed to strengthen. He said nothing, however, but set forth without scruple in the performance of his duty; leaving the conspirators in anxious expectation of the results of a scheme, of the success of which, forming their inferences rather with regard to their own evil objects than to any just appreciation of the character of their noble victim, they had as many doubts as expectations. These doubts were stronger in the mind of the governor, than in those of his counsellors and agents. They were more sanguine, from a better knowledge of the frank, confiding simplicity of Vasco Nunez, of the success of the expedition; and Pizarro, exulting in his hopes, was in no wise sparing of the applauses which he now bestowed upon his heretofore despised coadjutor by whom the plan had been devised.

"That was a shrewd notion of thine, Pedro," he said, "to get the letter from Teresa Davila, for of a certainty Vasco Nunez loves that woman; though she hath, if I may believe the eyes of woman, but little thought of him. That letter will bring him, be sure, even were all other artifices to fail. He will put his head into her lap, and she will call the enemy, even as the worthy Jeronomite father tells us was the case with the strong man of old made captive by the heathen Philistines. It were now worthy question, if Pedrarias declared the truth to his daughter ere she wrote the letter."

The curiosity expressed by Pizarro was echoed by the secretary, and remembered by the latter long after the former had forgotten the sentiment. The question was one which, considering the past tenor of our narrative, may possibly arise in the minds of our readers also; and it may not be ill advised briefly to detail the particulars of the interview between Pedrarias and his daughter when the former sought her with this object. He suppressed all the knowledge which he had obtained by the secretary, except the simple fact of his arrival; and this circumstance alone, as the latter had brought with him

no communication from her lover, or, at least, had delivered none to her, was, of itself, enough to occasion some suspicion or surmise in her mind, that all things were not as they should be. Still she smoothed her features into that simplicity of expression which innocent confidence ever wears, and cunning sometimes imitates so well, and listened calmly to the language of her father, whose success in a like effort to be calm was scarcely so successful. But Teresa saw not, or affected not to see, the half-stifled disquiet struggling in his features and rising even in the tones of his voice.

"Teresa, my love, despatches will leave Darien by to-morrow's dawn for the Balsas on the Southern Sea—it should give thee pleasure to send greeting to the Señor Vasco. I would have thee write him a letter filled with thy fondest follies. He is a brave, noble gentleman, yet he seems to love these things—be no wise sparing of them—thou mayst safely requite him; for, of a truth, I think he loves thee very much."

"Yea, my father, so, truly, would it seem. His love hath taken from him all power of speech—all expression! There hath come—if the tale be rightly told—there hath come his secretary, directly from the Señor Vasco, yet he brings me no word, no speech, no token. Even were it a matter of so great speed that time were not suffered for a letter, yet, methinks, there are pearls of that Southern Sea not unseemly as a token from its adelantado for the damsel to whom he hath pledged hand and heart, and for whom his love is held to be so excessive. When he hath shown more heed of Teresa Davila, he shall have like heed from her. It were scarce seemly that I should pen missives to one who hath shown no such remembrance of me."

"Pshaw, Teresa, would thy father demand of thee any thing unseemly? There is nothing in this, believe thee—nothing to make thee doubtful of the regard of the Señor Vasco. He hath had great trouble in launching his brigantines—there were matters calling for his eye and hand, so that time has not been left him for these passing tokens. But he did not forget thee—there were words to which, truth, I paid little heed, which the secretary poured into mine ears, and which were solely meant for thine—and now, I remember me, they were words of such custo-

mary tenderness that I held it scarce needful to give them very watchful ear. He hath not forgotten thee, Teresa, be sure."

"The secretary shall take like words of tenderness back," replied the maiden quietly; "thou shalt tell him as from me, my father, what in thy own wisdom would be seemly for a damsel to say to her betrothed.—Thou—"

"Demonios! I will do no such thing. I tell thee, it is my wish, Teresa, that thou shouldst write!" exclaimed the other impatiently. "It is of use—it hath an object beyond what thou seest in thy girlish simplicity. Thou shalt write to the Señor Vasco—thou shalt speak to him in that idle language in which girl feelings overcome the better and properer sense, and tell him of thy love and of thy lack, and of the joy which his presence should bring thee. Nay, more, thou shalt implore his presence at Darien, as of a wish in thy own heart, which, I trust me, he will be scarce able to withstand. Dost thou hear me, Teresa—dost thou hearken to my words?"

"Truly, my father, these are strange requirements. What is thy meaning—what wouldst thou have of me—what of the Señor Vasco?"

"Of thee, obedience—of him——But why do I prate? Do thus, Teresa, and let it suffice thee, that all things—thy father's government—his fortune—nay, perhaps his life—all rest on the presence of Vasco Nunez here in Darien. Seek not to inquire farther. Is not this enough?"

"Enough?—Ay! But still, wherefore, my father, wherefore, if the presence of the Señor Vasco be so needful in Darien, dost thou not send thy own despatches?"

"Would he obey them—would he come?" demanded the other precipitately; then, conscious of having intimated a doubt which he would rather have suppressed, he continued, though confusedly, in an awkward endeavour to qualify or explain his hasty utterance—"Launched on that strange sea, and, perchance, on the eve of new discoveries, it may be, Teresa, he would not so much regard my wishes—but thine—thine! Teresa, write me as I would have thee. I tell thee again, it is a matter of great need, and life—thy father's life—is, perchance, a

thing to depend upon the success of thy despatch in this matter."

The daughter keenly eyed the old man's countenance as he spoke, and read there that language which he had been vainly striving to hide. His anxiety on the subject, and the utter absence of any good reason why he should not summon Vasco Nunez himself, if he desired his presence at Darien, and if he meditated nothing hostile against him, or had no suspicions of his fidelity—furnished strong conjectures to her mind, which led her very nearly to the truth. Had she really loved Vasco Nunez, she would have obeyed without reflection, since to have the loved one near her, would have led her instantly to that obedience to a father's commands, in the recognition of which the desires of her own heart were so immediately consulted. Without such a feeling she was enabled to analyse his, and calmly to reflect upon what he said; and her conviction, the result of her prompt examination of the matter, apprised her of the truth as clearly as if her father had confided to her his true motives for the urgent wish which he declared. Her deliberative silence, while she thought of these topics, and the growing intelligence which appeared in her countenance, at length compelled his deliberation also; and a moment's calm survey of her features, the first, probably, which he had made during their conference, almost led him to the belief that his secret was discovered, or, at least, strongly conjectured. This presented to his jealous mind a new subject of alarm. Thinking it not improbable, in spite of her refusal of Vasco Nunez, that she might now have some attachment for him, as, indeed, nothing would have seemed more natural than that she should entertain some such feeling for one, who was at that period the admiration of a whole world, he began to fear that she might not only refuse to second his wishes, but apprise his enemy of the danger that threatened him at Darien. His keen, earnest, and anxious glance, when she perceived it, startled and offended her; and a deep crimson suffusion of her cheeks attested the presence in her mind of another consciousness which the governor could not so well appreciate. If she believed the designs of Pedrarias to be hostile to Vasco Nunez, she was absolutely conniving against her betrothed to hearken to the application of her father; and

a sense of propriety, even if she lacked all love for the destined victim, made her feel her present conduct, if she was convinced of his danger, criminal in the last degree. On this head she had no scruples so long as she preserved her secret; but to suffer her father to believe that she conjectured his designs, was to compel her to declare against his application. Her momentary fear that he had made this discovery, produced the accusing blush which mantled her cheeks for an instant. A happy thought accounted for the suffusion and her scruples at the same instant.

"My father, you ask too much from your daughter. Must I seek the Señor Vasco, who surely hath been little heedful of my claims? Shall I write to him in the language of my heart, when he hath been so chary of the expressions of his own? It is a hard duty, and my cheek may well burn me and glow like fire while my thought dwells upon it. But thou hast said—thy will shall move me to this, when it would better please my own to say nothing to one who, perchance, at this very moment, has no thought of me. But ere I write, I must see and speak with this messenger. I would hear from him the language of the Señor Vasco, that I may be the better able to shape my own in reply."

"Thou shalt—yes, thou shalt see him—though, truth to speak, it is but a little matter that he will tell thee. But let not his tidings move thee to speak coldly to the Señor Vasco. Let thy words clip and cling to him, Teresa—be warm—be fond—I will not chide thee, my child, though thou breathest a fondness which would pour fire into the cold veins of a Jeronymite, so that thou bringest him to thy feet—so that thou bringest him to meet us in Acla."

There was yet another suffusion on the cheeks of the maiden.

"It is thy danger, my father—the danger to thy life only, my father, which should move me to such unseeming fondness as that thou speakest of."

"Wouldst thou have better reason? I tell thee, Teresa, as the holy friars would tell thee, that holding ever the good end in view, even the employment of the evil agent becomes a hallowed necessity before God."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SCALES CLOSING FAST OVER THE EYES OF THE EAGLE.

THE secretary of Vasco Nunez received his instructions from Don Pedrarias before he was despatched to the presence of his daughter.

"She hath consented—she will write," were his words, "and write as we would have her, beguiling the lion to the pit, though she knows nothing of our purpose. She would, however, first hear from thee those pleasant remembrances, so sweet to dreaming boys and half-fledged maidens, which, to such are natural enough, and which I have persuaded her the Señor Vasco entrusted to thy keeping for her ears. I have given her to believe that but for pressing toils and urgent necessities, alone, he would have written those tender matters at large, which he hath otherwise been compelled to give to thy charge in spoken words. I am but ill suited to repeat these toys which thou wilt manage better than myself. See that thy invention be more fertile than mine—let thy fancy couch fairly, and spring with a free pinion, for I trow such is the sort of speech of most lovers, and of the Señor Vasco, chief among them. He hath a high and swelling utterance, as if all Castile was mighty in his throat. Manage thou thy part rightly, and this swelling spirit shall be brought as low as revenge itself could wish. Remember, only, she hath no thought of this. I fear me she loves this traitor—traitor as he is—and would warn him of the danger, did she fear it, though the warning sped the arrow of death at the bosom of her own father. Be ripe, Pedro, in thy caution. Weigh thy words—let none which are light escape thee. Seest thou not

how I am beset all around? My own wife deems nobly of this wily traitor, and hath not spared her censure when she hath found me hostile. Wife, daughter, friend, captain, all hath his cunning moved to work against my will. Be thou faithful, and thou shalt grow superior to them all in the favour of Pedrarias."

The secretary heard this communication with ill-concealed scorn.

"This base creature, who would make his own child the instrument to destroy one whom he deems she loves, he fancies that in this behalf I toil for him. Would it were that I did not. That it were not needful, in securing my own purpose of revenge, I should toil for his also. I am his tool, his agent. Ha! ha! Have I not sharpened his dull wits and jealous fears, that he should be mine?"

Such were the thoughts of the secretary, as he left the presence of the governor. The commission entrusted to him now was in no wise disagreeable. A minor sentiment made it gratifying. He was curious to note in how much the maiden might suffer loss by the death of Vasco Nunez.

"I believe not," said he as he went, "this story of her love for him. The old man, Micer Codro, hath more than once, in mine own hearing, counselled Vasco Nunez against too much faith in her words; and from other tongues than his, I have learned to look upon her as one selfish, cold, jealous, and malignant as Pedrarias. We shall see. It is well I destroyed not the letter of Vasco Nunez. It will help this purpose to yield it to her hands. But how? It hath been told her that I brought none. Stay! There is no trouble in this. The tender speech of lovers is nothing for public ear. The doves go apart from the flock in the season of their affections, and it is easy to say, I was bidden to give this letter in secret to my lady's own hands. This will do—this will do; and for the rest, as the skies counsel."

Teresa Davila was surprised by the presentation of the letter from her lover—a circumstance that somewhat added to the difficulty of comprehending the relation in which her father stood with him. The plausible talk of the secretary which naturally accounted for the ignorance of Don Pedrarias on the subject of this communication,

contributed still more to the conviction that there was something wrong between them; and, it followed, in the perusal of the letter, which in fact contained nothing more than those ordinary expressions of attachment which were to be expected in such a communication, that her prompt imagination did not fail to detect much that was occult and mysterious. Single expressions were seized upon here and there, upon which to build some considerable structures of suspicious conjecture, and when, from her conversation with Pedro, she discovered that Vasco Nunez was in fact, if not in law, utterly independent of her father, and might bid him defiance and prosper, her subtle mind readily understood the fear which had seized upon that of the governor, and in which she did not fail with equal promptness to participate.

"With four brigantines, and nearly four hundred men, Pedro," said the lady, "the adelantado must surely meditate some great exploit. He will not linger at Isla Rica. He hath launched too boldly forth upon this strange ocean to pause now, and return. Will he not adventure upon noble conquests? Meditates he nothing of this sort? Methinks thou shouldst know, being his favoured secretary; methinks it were not unfitting that he should stretch his sails for strange lands, of which we have not heard in Darien. It were, perhaps, something against his orders, but thou knowest the Señor Vasco is a great favourite with the king, and such little excess might be suffered in consideration of the wondrous discoveries he hath already made, and may yet make in his journeys. It were, I doubt not, easier for my father to forgive his wanderings, than for me to forgive his absence."

The secretary answered the maiden with a degree of subtlety even greater than her own. He saw which way her suspicions tended, and encouraged them. He gave a glowing picture of the passion of adventure—another name for ambition—on the part of his master; of whom he declared himself a devoted admirer; and with an enthusiasm which seemed to arise from the simple overflowings of his zeal, he cunningly depicted the delights of that sort of life to which he described Vasco Nunez as particularly inclining. Isla Rica was declared to be a paradise—the South Sea a world of wonders, which amply atoned for the absence of all the world beside—and

in the seeming fulness of his heart, which seemed to forget the claims of the person before whom he stood, he let fall certain judicious hints of the Indian damsel—of her beauty, and her invariable attendance upon all those expeditions which formed the constant business of the chief.

"Enough, Pedro," said the maiden, with an air of hauteur which fully assured the secretary that he had gained his object; "enough! ere sunset you will receive a letter from me for the hands of the Señor Vasco."

"She hath it!" exclaimed the secretary, exultingly, as he left the presence. "She hath it, and he will have it soon. The shaft hath hit the true mark, and the wound rankles, and will be sore enough till all is over. A proud, cold creature! Truly doth the Señor Vasco deserve his doom, if it were only for the foolish crime of doing wrong to one so pure, so lovely as Careta, in tribute to one, lovely though she be, yet scant of soul, and utterly heartless, as is this Lady Teresa. She, too, is my instrument—she, and the vain old fool, her father—and the base and brutal Pizarro—they are all my instruments—my tools of might, my weapons of vengeance. I am weak and feeble, am I!" He surveyed his slight frame and slender arms as he spoke, while a smile of mingled bitterness and triumph overspread his lips. "Who shall say that I am weak, when I wield such instruments as these? The strong man moves the sword, and I move him. The ambitious and the cunning leap into station and gain the eminence, and I command all the powers due to their station. It is a just providence, indeed, that my superior wit and wisdom reconciles the inequalities of mere brute capacity. What is the lion's strength to the serpent's fang—the rage of the wild bull to the agile anger of the mountain eagle? Neither the strength of the beast, nor the speed of the bird is in my limbs. Shall it be forbidden me that I meet their anger with the wisdom and the venom of the serpent?"

The letter of Teresa Davila was in readiness at the time appointed. Shall we add that it fully answered the contemplated objects of the father—that it answered the fond protestations of her lover, with such protestations as lovers are wont to love, yet fully kept itself within that nice, yet well-marked boundary of reserve, which seems

to be an instinct among women, only forgotten or disregarded when they are willing to forego what may also be designated as a womanly policy. And yet, while she penned the epistle which was intended to bring to her feet the person whom she so professed to love, she felt more than doubtful of the reception which he would get from her father. She saw that the suspicions of Don Pedrarias were already in arms, and all his caution failed to blind her to the truth, that, if he had not determined to hate where she was sworn to love, it was not her love that would keep him from a condition of mind to which he was rapidly hurrying, and which would give activity to hate, and arm it with all the weapons of unsparing hostility.

Pedrarias had already prepared his despatches for Vasco Nunez, and these, no less treacherously designed than the letter of Teresa, were placed in the hands of the messengers, who set forth for Acla by dawn of the day following. When a day had elapsed from their departure, he commanded Francisco Pizarro to put the whole force of the settlement under arms. These he reviewed, and from these selecting a strong body of the stoutest veterans, he placed them under the command of the fierce soldier just named, and sent him forth to meet the returning messengers with their victim. This commission against his old commander was readily received by the unscrupulous Pizarro. No less base than bloody, the ambition of the vulgar and selfish mind by which he was wholly governed, made him regard with indifference, or, at least, without shame or compunction, the office of arresting a leader who had always treated him with distinguished favour, and shared with him freely of his spoils and glories. He followed the course of the messengers, prepared with cool resolution to perform a farther part in that treachery in which his share was already so considerable.

It was not to be supposed that these things could take place in Darien, and these movements be made without attracting some attention, and provoking some suspicion among the people of the real purposes of the governor. The arrest of Arguello, the special friend, and, indeed, the partner of Vasco Nunez in several leading enterprises, was enough to alarm the few persons in Darien who were favourable to the adelantado. These, however, were too

few and too timorous to seek or find any opportunities for apprising him of his danger; and the emissaries reached Isla Rica and delivered their despatches to the warrior, without his having the slightest suspicion of the true object of their mission. The letters of Pedrarias were couched in language of the most friendly confidence and affection, and that of Teresa Davila, was a spell upon his understanding, through the medium of his heart, which at once deprived it of all acuteness. That she should use such tender language—that she should declare so earnest a desire for his presence, was a charm too potent to be withstood. And while he pored over the beguiling billet, he utterly forgot the Indian damsel, whose eye watched his countenance the while with feelings of that instinct apprehensiveness which is, perhaps, never utterly absent from the bosom which truly loves. Long and fondly had he lingered over the page, whose every accent found so ready a response from the deepest chambers of his own heart, ere his eye caught the sad, earnest, but sweet gaze of the Indian girl, and then his conscience smote him, and he averted his glance from hers while he said, in tones as much hurried by delight as by his own rebuking spirit—

"Careta, I must leave thee—I am summoned to Darien. Here are despatches from Don Pedrarias, urgently commanding my presence. I will leave thee here at Isla Rica, or thou wilt go with me to Acla; and—and—Careta, wouldst thou not wish to go to thy father in Coyba for a season?"

"Does my lord wish that Careta should go from his sight? Is my lord sad to look upon the Indian?" she demanded mournfully.

"Nay, Careta, why shouldst thou speak in this fashion? Why should I be sorry to look on thee? Thou art lovely to the sight; and do I not know that thou art good, Careta, as thou art beautiful? Why, then, should I be sad to look on thee?"

"Wherefore, then, would my lord send me from his presence? Wherefore should I stay in Isla Rica when he is away at Darien?"

"Nay, if thou wishest it, Careta, thou shalt go with me to Acla. Thou canst remain at Acla in more safety until I come from Darien; though, it may be, thou wouldst better prefer to go for a season to thy father in Coyba?"

"Father and mother and people, did I leave to follow my lord. Does my lord now say that I shall not follow him?"

"No, Careta, I say not this—but wherefore shouldst thou suffer the toil of this journey? It would kill thee to go with me whithersoever I go, among dangers which thou canst oppose with no strength, and taking upon thee a fatigue which is needless, full of pain, and without profit."

"I have no pain—I feel no fatigue—I fear no danger—when I can look upon my lord. I will go with thee, my lord, to Darien, as I have gone with thee every where before."

Her pertinacity, expressed at the same time with so much fondness and humility, gave him no small uneasiness. A guilty conscience all the while working in his breast, added to his annoyance, and enfeebled his judgment.

"I must put an end to this," was the muttered resolution of his mind. "If she goes with me to Darien, it will be impossible to keep from her this knowledge. She will see Teresa—she will hear from all around her, what hitherto I have kept from her ears, and the worst will be that Teresa will learn that which might be for ever fatal to my hopes. On each side is vexation—but on that is something more. Better she should know all at once—better she should hear the truth at Isla Rica, than at Darien. But I cannot speak it. Her looks crush me with a weight of shame. Her sad, tearful eyes, sadder of late than I have noted them before—her words of imperfect speech, full of a mournful tenderness—these go to my heart, and reproach me with the sorrows she has yet to feel. I would to God I had never seen her. It were less cruel for me to have slain her, after the brutal fashion of our people, than to have taught her hopes and feelings on which the cruel necessity makes me trample, as if I cared for them nothing. It is a pledge to Pedrarias and Teresa—it was the condition of my life and release. I cannot, in honour, fly from this marriage. That is written—and she—poor Careta—I dare not meet her eyes."

His own desires taught Vasco Nunez a sophistry which, under other circumstances, his judgment would have scorned. If his honour was pledged to Teresa, it

was no less bound to the Indian maiden, whose claims, however inferior they might be felt in some respects, were at least superior from priority to all others; and the fact that he obtained his release from prison, and probably his life by such pledges, was no justification for a man no less brave than honourable, who had faced death a thousand times before, and should have faced it upon the scaffold, sooner than have departed from that sworn faith which formed the basis of another's love and life. Nor, indeed, did Vasco Nunez succeed in justifying himself by such reasoning. While he strove thus to deceive himself, the burning blush upon his cheek, and the sinking of his eyes when he met the glance of the untutored and inferior Indian, were conclusive even to himself of the dishonourable and worthless character of the plea. All that may be said in his behalf, will fail of his defence in this grand, and, we may add, almost the only leading error of his conspicuous life; and it is only to be extenuated by the fact that he was the victim of oppressive circumstances, and of a passion which has been so long found to be tyrannical, as almost to furnish a justification for those perjuries of its victims at which Jove himself is said to laugh. Vasco Nunez could not meet the eyes of the poor Indian whose deep devotedness and fervent love made his own infidelity so cruelly unjust. But his determination was made, to apprise her of his engagement with Teresa, as the only means, short of absolute harshness, by which to prevent her going with him to Darien. To do this in person he found to be impossible, and he sought the friendly aid of the astrologer.

"Micer Codro, to you in part I owe my present position. You made it the condition of my release with Pedrarias, that I should wed his daughter. The time is at hand. I return with these messengers to Darien, and if I may presume upon the contents of the letter from Teresa, we shall then be married. It will not do that Careta should go with me to Darien; yet she persists in the desire to do so. She must know the truth—she will know it ere very long; and it were the best policy that she should know it now, and keep from Darien. I would have sent her to Coyba, but she is resolved to be with me —to follow me wheresoever I go—and there is but one way to check this resolution—and that is by a full de-

claration of the truth. But I dare not tell her. Indeed, I cannot. My voice cleaves to my throat when I approach the subject, and my strength leaves me. It is to you I turn to do for me this painful office."

"Painful indeed!" replied the other, "painful and pitiful. No Christian spirit was ever more pure—no woman that ever lived, more fond, more true, more worthy of the love of man. Vasco Nunez, my son, I share with you the dishonour and the pang; and bitterly now do I repent me of the share I had in this deed, since I feel the difficulty that attends escape, and the faithlessness which, one way or another, the attempt to escape involves."

"There is no escape," replied Vasco Nunez.

"Ay, but there is," said the other, "and I have thought painfully and long upon this matter, and not without the hope that the Blessed Mother would guide my thought rightly to the just conclusion."

"What is thy thought, Micer Codro?"

"That thou shouldst not wed Teresa Davila."

"Ha! This is strange! How canst thou counsel me thus?—thou, too, from whom came that other counsel which has led me to this tie."

"A sad error of mine, but made in thy necessity—committed when thy cause was hopeless—when thou wert threatened with a sharp and sudden death. It was the condition of thy release—I prayed thee to accept of escape and life, but not this woman. Thou know'st, at all other times, how I bade thee beware of her bonds."

"Ay, ay! But thy connsel at the last was of easier performance than all thy other counsels; and thy success too great to leave thee or me hope of escape now."

"Nay, but there is hope. Better thou shouldst break with Pedrarias—and with Teresa, than do the great wrong to this poor daughter of the heathen, which will follow thy marriage with Teresa. She is worthy to be thy wife—make her so."

"And make Pedrarias mine enemy, and break my plighted faith—my honour—"

"That is broken if thou wed other than this Indian damsel. Thy honour binds thee doubly to her. Hear me, son Vasco. Thou hast now no reason to fear Pedrarias, and as little to love Teresa Davila. They neither

love thee for thyself—they have no care for thee beyond thy achievements."

"I believe not that," replied the other hastily. "Thou wrongest Teresa, as thou hast ever wronged her. Hadst thou read this, Micer Codro," lifting the letter as he spoke, "thou hadst held other language."

"No! no! Hypocrisy speaks sweet words, when love speaks only the truth. I care not for the letter—I would not read it. Do thou, my son, do this Indian damsel justice. Let the Jeronymite friar, Becerra, wed thee after the custom of the Holy Church."

"Micer Codro, it is too late. I am sworn otherwise. Besides, were I to do this, it were at once to arm Pedrarias against me."

"And what needst thou care for the hate of Pedrarias, and wherefore shouldst thou fear his arms? Can he hurt—can he overtake thee? Hast thou not four strong, well-manned vessels at thy command. Are not thy warriors brave and numerous. Movest thou not upon this great and glorious sea, which has never done homage to any prow but thine own, and mayst thou not bid defiance to the hostility of this tyrant, who hath but too long trampled upon thy rights and upon thy feelings, with all the insolence of power and all the malevolence of hate. Thou art free, Vasco Nunez—free at last—and no will but thine own can again enslave thee. The winds are at thy wish. The barriers of the sea are down—there is nothing to chain thy footsteps—nothing to curb thy wing; and thy own thought has already counselled thee to strive for a richer dominion than any—ay, any—ever yet given to the Spaniard. If thou wilt not obey these calls to glory—if the summons to freedom—the trumpet summons of the soul—still sounds unheeded by thy spirit; then take counsel even of thy fears, and be warned against this union with Teresa. Nay, more—be warned against obedience to this invitation of Pedrarias to meet with him at Darien. There are bloody signs in the firmament—there is death upon thy backward path. The blessed stars counsel thee to flight—the threatening star striving against them with unabated malignity. Oh, my son, hearken for the last time to thy friend—to one who hath

ever loved thee with a father's love. In wedding Teresa Davila, thou weddest thy fate—thy death. Take this Indian girl to thy heart in the eye of the Holy Church, then speed, with the blessing of God upon thy path, from the sight of Pedrarias. Speed to those southern lands of which thy thought is so lively, and thy speech so warm. Speed from thy foes to thy conquests—to what is more, and what thou canst never have while thou hast communion with Pedrarias—to thy freedom."

"No more! no more! I cannot hear thee, Micer Codro. I am pledged solemnly to Pedrarias and his daughter. Truth, justice, honour—all forbid that I become a traitor to my troth."

"Truth, honour, justice—all forbid that thou shouldst marry other than Careta."

"Thou thought'st not thus, when thou thyself pledged me to Pedrarias for his daughter."

"The pledge was worthless, made by thee in bonds, and with the terrors of death before thee."

"I cannot think so, Micer Codro. I must keep my faith."

"Alas! my son—it is love which pleads against the poor Careta—love pleading against love; and oh! worst of all, pleading in behalf of hate—of heartlessness!—"

"Be it so!" exclaimed the other, interrupting him. "It is now too late."

"No! no! Not too late,—there is help—there is flight!—"

"Let me die first!" said Vasco Nunez, resolutely. "I am resolved, Micer Codro—wilt thou speak with Careta?"

"I dare not! I cannot, my son. Looking in her eyes,—beholding her sorrows so deep, so undeserved—I should curse myself for my share in them—I should curse thee too that can witness them in vain."

"Enough! The task must be my own. Bitter as it may be, I must perform it. I have lived too long, if my tongue may not utter without fear, the resolution of my soul!"

"Cruel! cruel resolution! Vasco Nunez, thy words will kill her. This, from thy lips, will be her death. If thou art, indeed, thus resolved, I will see her. She shall

hear the bitter tale from my lips, though, while I speak, I invoke heaven's vengeance on my own head and thine."

The head of Vasco Nunez rested against a palm-tree, hot and heavy, while a strange sickness of heart and feebleness of limbs seemed to paralyse his faculties. He would have called out to the astrologer as he departed, but the tongue refused its office—his lips were parched, and even had they been willing, there was no coherent thought in his mind to which words could have given utterance.

CHAPTER XXV.

BONDS AT ACLA.

The old man performed the office which he had undertaken, painful though it was, with sufficient resolution, nor did he spare himself in his narrative. He accused himself of the counsel by which Vasco Nunez had been led to the engagement which robbed the Indian damsel of her rights; and though he did not seek to excuse his course by the plea of necessity, he yet unfolded the circumstances by which he had been persuaded that the adoption of such a course alone, could have rescued his principal from the iron tyranny of Pedrarias, which, as the reader will remember, at that time threatened him with death. Sad and solemn were his accents, and bitter, indeed, the grief which he expressed at the part he had taken in the business.

"Thou, my daughter," he said, "hast been dear to me, and art dear to me as my own child, and gladly would I offer up my life this day, could I save thee from this deep affliction. But it may not be. The honour of Vasco Nunez requires this sacrifice of thy own and his affections. But thou shalt be cared for. Henceforward I will be thy father and thy friend; and neither pain nor care shall afflict thee, while it is in the power of Micer Codro to baffle their approaches."

Careta heard him in silence. The power of speech had been taken from her when she listened to the utterance of those first words which declared her isolation. Her eyes were dry; and they glared with a vague apprehension, rather of mistrust than fear, upon the countenance of the speaker. The pulsation at her heart seemed suddenly to stop, and when the astrologer ceased speaking

she continued to gaze upon him in a silence which he found, in the activity of his own suggestive conscience, more full of reproach, than could have been any words from her lips. Again he spoke, not in palliation either of himself or of Vasco Nunez, but accusation of both.

"It might be avoided, Careta—this cruel deed—this departure from that faith which Vasco Nunez has pledged to thee and thy father, not less earnestly than to Pedrarias and Teresa Davila, and which—"

She broke the silence which had sealed up her lips so long.

"It was the truth then that Señor Pedro spoke!" she murmured in barely audible accents; "it was all truth. I have heard of this before, my father—from the lips of Señor Pedro I heard it, the night when he came to slay—"

The choking emotion stifled the accents in her throat when she came to speak of him; and the event to which her memory brought her—the event of that night when, in the devotedness of her heart, she stood between the dagger-point of the assassin and that bosom which now proved itself so utterly regardless of hers—stung her with a keener pang, when, by a natural reflection, her sense of justice assured her that such devotion, alone, should have secured her the lasting love of the man for whom it had been so strongly shown, and without which who could not have survived to requite another's love, or prove so faithless to hers. The consciousness of utter abandonment—the feeling that she was now, on a sudden, cut away from all the ties which had sustained her—that, where she had set her soul, she was denied to rest for hope, for love, for nourishment—was too overwhelming for farther expression, and slowly she sank from the rude bench on which she had been sitting, and crouched and cowered upon the rush-strewn floor of the habitation, uttering neither word nor moan, and with face bent to the ground in a seeming stupor, from which, with a mistaken kindness, the astrologer sought to arouse her. She had neither swooned nor fainted, nor was she unconscious, as at first he thought; and when he renewed his assurances of his own continued and increased regard and protection, she answered in a manner which sufficiently betrayed her entire indifference to her future lot.

"He told me of all this, but I believed him not. Nay, when the thought sometimes troubled me with a strange fear, I trembled lest my lord should see it, and dreaded lest he should think I doubted him. I told him not of the dark tale which Pedro poured into mine ears, and my cheeks scorched me as if with fire for shame that I should think of it again. Yet to think now, that it is all true—that—that—oh, my father, why may I not die at once, and go down into the cold earth without more feeling? Why, why should he not stab the poor Indian to the heart, and let her perish? The keen edge of the dagger were not half so bitter as these bitter words of death, which wound me even as with an arrow that is poisoned, and yet do not kill."

"Nay, my daughter, think not so deeply upon it. Thou shalt lose no friends—nay, indeed, thou shalt lose even little or no love. Vasco Nunez loves thee not less because of this new tie—he will be to thee even—"

"Tell me not this, my father. Had I not been taught in other lessons than those which teach my people—had he not taught me of other gods, and of things more sacred which forbid such thoughts—I might believe thee, since the women of Coyba behold daily the heart of the warrior divided among many. But the faith which he has given me, since first he took me from my father at Coyba, is a better faith for the poor woman who has but one heart, and gives it all to one warrior. Alas! alas! she must die, if he cares not for the possession."

"But he cares for it, Careta. I tell thee, Vasco Nunez loves thee not less because of his pledge to Teresa Davila—"

"No, my father, no! He never loved the poor girl of Coyba, or he had not given her up. Say to him that Careta is very sad—very sick and sorry—but she will not vex him by her sorrows. Tell him she does not complain that he leaves her for the Spanish lady. Should he not love the woman best who comes from among his own people?—and yet, my father, never did Careta see among her own people, a warrior to love as she loved my lord. When I am gone tell him this. Let him not ask for the Indian woman—she will go among the hills, and in the thick woods, where none may see her:—and she will die there very soon."

The old man's heart melted within him.

"My poor girl, would it were that I could spare thee such pangs as these. If my words could save thee and avail—"

"Do not speak them, my father. If my lord is not willing that I should sleep upon his bosom, wilt thou make him willing? Thou canst not; nor, if thou couldst, would I again place my head upon the heart which beats only for another. No! no! Let him take the Spanish lady in place of Careta—Careta will pray to the Blessed Virgin that she may love my lord as well as the Indian woman loved him. Tell my lord I will pray for him while I live. I will not be angry with him, nor chide him, though my heart feels very strange and very sad."

"He deserves not such love, Careta; he deserves not thy prayer."

"Go, my father, and say not this. If he deserves not, shall I, who love him so well, speak of him so unkindly? No, no! Go to him, and tell him to wed the Spanish lady, but not to fling her from his heart when he is tired, as he has flung away the poor Careta."

"Blind heart! blind heart!" exclaimed the astrologer as the Indian woman turned away and sought the inner chamber of her cabin,—"to cast away so sweet a treasure, so dear a gift from Heaven, to give place to one so worthless and vain as she for whom his admiration is a madness not less ungovernable than blind. But I will be the father to this forest child; she shall be my care while I have life. The Christian seed is in her bosom—a choice plant in a fitting soil;—and if mortal love be denied her, Jesu help the labour that would compensate her heart with love that is eternal."

"Thou hast told her all!" exclaimed Vasco Nunez when the astrologer joined him.

"Ay, my son; I have endured a pang of hell within my heart, while beholding with my eyes an image of heaven. God grant there be no other pangs like this. God grant that thou suffer not for this sacrifice—a sacrifice no less blind than cruel, and in which thy loss is far more than that even of this injured woman."

"Spoke she bitterly, Micer Codro?"

"Bitterly! Ay. If to pray for him who wronged her be a bitter prayer, then was her speech full of bitterness. It

is not too late, Vasco Nunez! Spare this woman; take her to thy arms, reject the alliance with Pedrarias, and fly from his dominion. I swear to thee, my son, there is life and happiness at thy bidding, if thou dost this; if not, defeat, ignominy, strife and death. Say not thou hast had no warning; the stars toil to counsel thee if they cannot save."

But the astrologer spoke in vain.

"The fates will have their victim!" he continued, as he heard the slow but inflexible resolve of his companion.—"Alas! my son, how would those scales fall from thine eyes, were thy heart free from the snares of Teresa Davila. How much wiser and juster wouldst thou be if thou lov'dst her not. It is thy blind passion which dooms the poor Careta, not thy sense of what is due to Pedrarias. Thou wilt go as the sheep to the shambles—into the very den of the butcher. Sad to think! Sad to think! when an hour's sail upon these broad billows would bear thee to safety and new renown."

"Thou wilt take Careta under thy care, Micer Codro. Provide her a place in the brigantine, where I may not see her. I will send her to Coyba when we shall have reached the Balsas."

"Thou wilt then send from thee thy guardian angel. Thou hast ever been fortunate since she has slept within thy arms."

"Goad me not farther, Micer Codro; my sense swims with strange doubts and fancies. I am not surely myself within this hour—nay, not since I have read this letter and resolved upon this thing. Do not madden me with thy farther reproaches."

"Thou art under the bondage of an evil sign," replied the other; "that letter and she who writes it, have turned thy heart within thee, and made it a fountain of strange and warring waters, which will vex and madden thee for ever. Wert thou wise now, the holy man should quiet this strife and soothe those waters, and lay the troubling spirits with a spell, which the good angels would rejoice to smile upon. Thou shouldst bind thyself to this woman, whom thou lovedst when a pagan, and whom thou desertest when a Christian. I go to her now, Vasco Nunez, to bid her be in readiness. Oh! be wise ere I

leave thee, and let me gladden her heart with a single word from thee."

The word was unspoken. The passion, long suppressed, which he had entertained for Teresa Davila from the first moment when he beheld her, swayed with arbitrary power every feeling in his bosom. His whole heart was subject to her fatal rule; and though he could not but feel deeply for the wrong done to the Indian woman, his heart was too weak and too submissive to reject or resent the dominion which impelled him to such injustice. The fatal letter was still in his hand; its contents were in his memory—every word; and while there, and with such perfect supremacy, he lacked the courage no less than the will to resist their influence. He suffered the astrologer to depart upon his mission, while he joined the messengers of Pedrarias, and prepared for his journey to Darien.

Lone, wretched, but resigned, Careta was conducted to the vessel by Micer Codro, and the little cabin of the brigantine given up entirely to her possession. But a solitary glimpse of her person, during the brief voyage to the Balsas, did Vasco Nunez behold, and he shrank away from the contemplation of those features whose sorrows were his shame. He shrank away from beholding her, and his eyes never again wandered to that part of the vessel which contained her form. She saw not him, and, indeed, saw none while the voyage lasted. The astrologer sought her to console, but his words seemed to be thrown away upon her. She gave him no heed, or at least seemed to yield no thought to what he said. If she answered at all, it was evident that her comprehension of his objects was imperfect, and the effort painful to respond to them. When they reached the Balsas, and the messengers for Coyba, to whom Vasco Nunez had given it in charge to conduct her to her father, were prepared to commence their journey, she was no where to be found; and though she had been seen but a little while before the vessel entered the river, the reasons were strong for supposing she had thrown herself overboard before it did so. Search was made for her along the shore wherever it was thought possible for her to secrete herself, but in vain; and Vasco Nunez was subjected to the cruel conviction, that his criminal injustice had

prompted her to commit self-murder. He had been equally fatal to her happiness and life.

It would be needless to dwell upon his misery as this conviction forced itself upon his mind. He now felt, for the first time, the full force of his cruel and criminal proceedings; and could she at that moment have been restored to his arms, it is certain that in his penitence he would have done her justice —he would have re-resolved with a better regard to the dictates of honour; and, adopting those counsels of the astrologer, which he now acknowledged he had been too ready to reject, he would have placed it out of his own power to have repeated the injustice. He would have made her his wife, as he pledged himself to her father to do, and bidding defiance to Pedrarias with a more manly and daring temper, would have spread his adventurous sails for the golden shores of Peru. Even now would he have done so, had he entertained any doubts of the faith of Pedrarias. But this he did not; and with a spirit more oppressed and humbled—more troubled with doubts and misgivings, the inevitable fruits of a guilty conscience—he proceeded on his way to meet his insidious enemy. Sad and silent, he crossed again the weary mountains over which he had toiled with an eagle spirit, how far different from that which nerved him now. Even the remembrance of Teresa, and the thought that he was on his way to meet with one, who, unhappily, had been ever too dear an object in his regards, failed to soothe and to sustain him under the heavy weight of his self-reproach, which the disappearance of Careta cast upon his mind; and, with the look of one conscious that the unrelenting fates were closing the toils around him, he went forward, until even the messengers of Pedrarias began to feel a sentiment of regret, and, perhaps, remorse, when they beheld one, whom they esteemed noble in every respect, going forward blindly to his doom. This sentiment became stronger as they approached Acla, and at length the kinder feelings of Gaspar Nino, the chief of the messengers, getting the better of his caution and loyalty, and touched with the melancholy that weighed upon the mind of the adelantado, he revealed to him the facts so far as they were known in Darien, the suspicions entertained by all parties, and the one circumstance, which, to a more suspicious mind than Vasco Nunez, might have seemed conclusive, the arrest and imprisonment of his friend Ar-

guello. But Vasco Nunez, though aroused and astonished by this recital, would not believe it.

"These are conjectures only," he said to Gaspar Nino. "Arguello has been guilty of something which may merit imprisonment, and though Pedrarias might have spoken to me of the matter, yet I see not that his omission to do so, makes any thing in favour of thy suspicion. Besides, I am conscious of no evil intention, no wrong, no crime, no injustice, to Pedrarias, for which I have any cause of apprehension; and this letter"—here he spoke to his own thoughts rather than to Nino, for he refered to the fatal letter of Teresa,—"this letter is proof against thy story. No, no! Gaspar Nino—thou art mistaken—thou art led away, like all our people, by quick and groundless suspicions. If Pedrarias be troubled by any jealousy of one to whom he hath pledged his daughter in marriage, my readiness to seek him and place myself in his power, will banish all such notions. Yet, I thank thee, Gaspar Nino—thou shalt find favour at my hands for thy readiness to show me favour. I thank thee and thy companions for the good feeling with which you have all spoken of a danger, which, if well grounded, I had had no claim upon you to disclose."

"Señor Vasco, be not too certain of thy position with Don Pedrarias. This same suspiciousness of temper which thou well say'st is common to us all, is, if possible, more active in the bosom of Pedrarias than that of any man in Darien. He hath, as thou well knowest, been suddenly jealous of thee ere this, when there was, perchance, as little occasion for jealousy as now. Beware! Put thyself in safety—there is yet time for thee to escape. We look down upon Acla, but they see us not. Fly while there is yet season, and make thyself sure in safety. It were a pity that so brave a man should fall into evil snares."

The suggestion was at once seconded by Micer Codro, who had all along warned his companion against it. But the other was no less rigid in his resolve than before.

"Enough, enough, my friends; but truly though ye mean well, ye afflict me. I am weary of this sort of struggle—this struggle against faith and confidence—assurances made with strong words of solemn import, and truth pledged in heaven's sight. If I may no longer confide in man, let me perish,—there is nothing left worth living for."

"Alas! my son—it is in woman that you confide—not in man!" exclaimed the astrologer—"but who are these—what may this mean?"

The words of the astrologer were echoed by the whole party, not excepting Vasco Nunez himself. They were surrounded by the armed soldiers of Pedrarias; and ere they could again speak, Francisco Pizarro, who commanded for Pedrarias, stood in the presence of his victim, and advanced resolutely, though with downcast eyes, to arrest him.

"How is this, Francisco?" demanded the adelantado, while he gazed with no less surprise than indignation upon the man from whose gratitude he might well have expected other treatment. "Is this the way, Francisco, you have been accustomed to receive Vasco Nunez?"

The brutal soldier muttered something, the words "duty," "loyalty," and "Don Pedrarias," alone, being clearly intelligible to the ears of the prisoner.

"Enough! Enough, Señor! Do your duty, since it must be thus. Micer Codro, the poor Careta is already avenged."

"Lost! lost! lost!" was all the reply which the astrologer made, as he followed his friend and favourite, now in the custody of his own lieutenant, to meet with the enemy who sat, glowering like a hungry tiger, in waiting at Acla for his prey.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HATE AND JEALOUSY PRESIDE IN JUDGMENT—THE DOOM RECORDED.

WITH a degree of hypocrisy which was surely unnecessary, and uncalled-for by any of the circumstances of the transaction, Don Pedrarias concealed the exultation which he felt at finding his enemy within his power. He sought him in prison, affected deep concern at being obliged to treat him with such rigour, and uttered the most earnest wishes that he might establish his innocence. This conduct denoted a consciousness of injustice on his own part, which leaves it doubtful whether he ever contemplated a sincere union of interests with one against whom, from the first, he seemed to have adopted all the hostility of a rival.

"Be not afflicted, my son," he said with an air of the tenderest concern; "an investigation of these charges will, I doubt not, serve to acquit you—nay, if it be as I imagine, they will do you great service, by rendering your loyalty and zeal towards your sovereign more than ever conspicuous."

"But who are my accusers, Don Pedrarias, and what are the crimes which they allege against me?" was the demand of the prisoner.

"Alonzo de la Puente, the royal treasurer, is one of them; Pedro, late your secretary, another—"

"Ha! that youth! There is a mystery about that matter! Don Pedrarias, this youth sought my life, when I slept in my own tent on the shores of Isla Rica. Evidence from him cannot be regarded under such circumstances;

and he, indeed, for such a crime should be held to answer for his own life."

"Make that which you relate appear, and he will be, my son," replied the governor; he continued, "there is yet another witness named Lope Sanchez, a sentinel, who—"

"But what is it that they charge against me, Don Pedrarias—of what crime am I supposed to be guilty, which can justify the incarceration of a man high in favour with our sovereign, and in command of his armament?"

"None other than treason to him, my son. It is charged that you have designed a treasonable conspiracy to throw off your allegiance, and assume an independent sway on the borders of the Southern Sea."

"This is sheer folly, Don Pedrarias—you cannot surely believe it. Let me be confronted with these accusers—with that miserable boy, who hath so strangely sought my life, and seeks it now with such vindictiveness—he whom I have ever favoured—whom I have taken into my counsels, into my confidence, and now to play thus falsely with my honour and safety! I pray thee, my lord, let this examination proceed instantly, that I may fling off the sooner this cruel aspersion."

"I trust me, my son, that thou canst do so," replied the hypocritical governor.

"Doubt it not, Don Pedrarias, I pray thee—I have neither doubts nor fears on this subject. My conscience acquits me of thought or deed which should make me liable to the anger of my sovereign, and this thou shalt thyself see when I put mine eyes on these base accusers. But let me not forget other feelings in mine anger. The Señora Teresa—is she not in Acla, my lord?"

"She is, my son, but it were not well that she should see thee while this accusation hangs above thee. Nor should I seek thee here myself, since it would seem to denote my too great partiality to one accused of such heinous offence, but that I have no fears that you will not easily establish your innocence. This shown, my son, Teresa Davila is yours."

"Once more, my lord—a question, a single question would I ask of you," said the prisoner, with a trembling eye and quivering lip, as if he dreaded the answer which he yet demanded—"this letter,"—showing, as he spoke,

that of the maiden, which he that moment drew from his bosom, "this letter, written by Teresa to summon me to Acla—knew she when she wrote, my lord, of these charges against me?"

"Not a word, my son,—to the last, I was bound in duty to my sovereign, no less than to you and to herself, to keep this from her knowledge."

The prisoner seemed relieved as from a heavy weight upon his breast. His breathing became freer, and a voluntary exclamation of thanks to the Virgin, attested the pleasure which he felt in escaping from that crushing doubt which assailed him, that she, upon whom his every hope in life was now set, and for whom he had made such a painful sacrifice, should have become the willing agent of that treachery which had beguiled him to a prison. There was little more than this, that passed between the governor and his still unconscious victim. The latter simply urged that his examination might soon be had, and the former, with the same hypocrisy which had distinguished his conduct throughout, left him with loud encouragements, and the utterance of the most fervent hopes that he might soon succeed in establishing that innocence of which he professed to have not the smallest suspicion.

The trial was accordingly urged forward with a degree of haste at once equally satisfactory to the prisoner and grateful to his enemy. The charges were principally sustained by the evidence of the secretary—the fragments of papers and notes which he produced of Vasco Nunez; and by that of a soldier, who stood sentinel one night near the tent of the adelantado at Isla Rica, and overheard a conversation between him and certain of his officers, wherein he declared his resolution to put to sea, in the event of certain circumstances, on his own account, and to set the governor at defiance. This testimony, according to Las Casas, arose from a misconstruction on the part of the sentinel, who heard but a part of the conversation, which related to his intention of sailing without orders, in case a new governor should arrive to supersede Pedrarias—an event which had been reported to Vasco Nunez as really about to occur. Upon these charges, vague in some respects, and scarcely conclusive in any, the prosecution rested. The defence of Vasco Nunez was that of indignant innocence. He met his accusers with an eye at

once fearless and frank, and in turn became the accuser, when the secretary stood before him with his part of the accusation.

"This unhappy youth should not be heard in this presence," he exclaimed, as the other was about to give his evidence. "He is governed by malicious motives, so bitterly felt and meditated that he hath even gone so far as to assail me with his dagger while I slept. Can it be that you will listen to the accusation of an assassin?"

"Where is the proof of this, Señor Vasco?" demanded the alcalde mayor, Espinosa.

"Alas! this is another part of my sorrow—the deepest, keenest sorrow of all. I could bear the ingratitude of this boy, who hath been taken to my bosom, and who hath proved a festering serpent even while I warmed him—I could defy the malice of all this accusation—and scorn the accusers who denounce me as disloyal to a sovereign who hath favoured me with his smiles, and crowned my deeds with his honours—but the consciousness that I have been disloyal to another, and that my disloyalty hath been her destruction, is beyond my strength to bear. The witness for whose favouring voice you ask, is, alas! no more. The poor Indian woman who baffled his dagger when it hung above my breast—she who could have confounded him with her look and word—she whom I should have lived for and died for—who loved me, and has been ever a Christian when Christians have shown me the teeth of the savage—to her alone have I been disloyal—to her alone have I broken my plighted faith. She who alone could justly accuse me of treachery, and who, alone, could shield me against the treachery of that miserable boy, she sleeps in death, beneath the broad bosom of the southern sea."

"She lives! She lives! She is here, my lord, my dear lord! She is here to speak for my lord, and to tell the blessed truth in his behalf! Oh, my lord, my dear lord! I thank thee for those sweet, kind words, thou hast spoken for the poor Careta. She is glad now that she lives, since she can speak for my good lord."

The intruder at this moment was, indeed, the poor Indian girl. Her beauty, her humble yet fervent devotedness, as, rushing forward into the court, and heedless at first of the presence of the surrounding men, she flung herself at

the feet of the prisoner and caught his hands in her own—drew tears to more eyes than those of the one man whom she sought, and for whom her words were spoken;—but the cheeks of the secretary grew suddenly white, and those of the governor exhibited the deep flush of anger, at an interruption to the progress of those proceedings which were destined to destroy their victim. Her presence, she accounted for, after the first ebullition of her emotion had subsided, in a very simple and characteristic manner. She had thrown herself into the sea, at first meditating suicide, but the instinct of life had prompted her to use that art which all her people possessed in perfection, and, swimming to the shore, new thoughts suggested themselves to her mind as she lay in concealment among the thick mangroves along the banks. She resolved to follow the man whom she so adored, to Darien; and to behold with her own eyes those charms of her rival which had been so cruelly preferred to her own. In this plan she had found little difficulty. She had never been far behind the party which she followed, and practised, like all her people, in the woods and among the hills, she had neither faltered nor fainted by the way. Wild roots and berries had been her only food, and unseen and unsuspected by the Spaniards, she had beheld all their movements, nor at any time suffered them to advance so far beyond her, as to make it a difficult task to overtake them. In the neighbourhood of Acla, among some of the ruined cottages of a former tribe of natives, had she concealed herself, and by occasional communion with the Indian slaves of the town, she had gained that knowledge of events which had enabled her to time her visit to the place of trial, so as to witness the whole proceedings. This she had done in silence and trembling, crouching in a recess of the court-room, until that moment when Vasco Nunez spoke of her as sleeping in death beneath the waters of the sea. She could then contain herself no longer. The tender eulogy which he had uttered upon her virtues—the fond tones of his voice, so like those which he was wont to use in the first days of their communion—warmed her heart and made her blood, like a fountain escaping from the earth, well up in a sudden gush of impulse, that defied the restraints of fear and prudence; and her lips poured forth the abundant feeling of her bosom, in an

utterance which prevailed, for the moment, over all voices and every will in that presence.

"Can it be, Careta—dost thou indeed live—art thou here to speak for me, and to confound that false and perjured villain, from whose dagger thy fond love preserved me, and from whose sharp perjury thy truth will no less suffice? Jesu be praised, thy blood is not upon my soul."

Such were the words of Vasco Nunez when he recovered himself sufficiently from his surprise at her unlooked-for presence to speak to her. He would have raised her from the floor, and placed her on a seat beside him, but she clung to his knees, and would not be removed. Her long raven tresses, loose and flowing, covered her shoulders and swept the floor, while her eyes, turning now from his face to those of the judges, gradually began to assume their wonted timidity of expression, which the enthusiasm of her first impulse, on rushing forward from her place of concealment, had for the moment banished.

"Oh, yes, I am here to speak for my dear lord. I will tell Don Pedrarias the truth. I am so glad I did not let the waters go over me, but tried to gain the shore, though it did not seem to me as if I cared any thing for life. I did not think of life. I thought only of my lord, and I felt that I could not leave him, though he was willing to leave me. My dear lord will not leave the poor Careta any more."

"What woman is this, Señor Vasco?" demanded Pedrarias sternly.

"The daughter of the Cassique of Coyba," was the reply, "whom I look upon with no less joy than shame. It is my joy, señor, that she lives, when it was my fear that my injustice had destroyed her—my shame, that she lives a memorial of my disloyalty and broken faith to her, though she can well establish my truth to my sovereign and to thee. She can prove this youth, Pedro, to have aimed his dagger at my life."

"Her words avail nothing here," replied the alcalde, "her testimony may only be received against her own people—not against that of a Spaniard. Hast thou no other witness, Señor Vasco?"

The cloud was increasing—the transient gleam of hope which was produced upon his mind by the unexpected appearance of Careta, was as suddenly swallowed up in the

decree of the judge by whom her testimony was rejected; and the indifference of despair was in his voice, as he replied to the question—

"None! none!"

"Then," said the governor, throwing aside the mask of hypocrisy which he had so unnecessarily and ostentatiously worn—"then, Vasco Nunez, do I discard you from my affection. Hitherto, I have looked upon you as loyal to your sovereign, and to me, as his representative—I have accordingly treated you as my son, and it was at one time my wish that you should become so. Now, guilty, as you clearly are, of meditated rebellion to the crown of Castile, I cast you from my care, and shall henceforth hold you as my enemy, no less than the enemy of our king."

Vasco Nunez rose to his full height as he listened to this language. Hitherto he had been cowed and oppressed by circumstances. The consciousness of his guilt to Careta—his belief in her death—the degradation of the arrest to which he had been subjected—all wrought together to produce in his mind a downward tendency of thought and feeling, which took the fire from his eye, and the life from his movement, and that proud, commanding energy from his voice, which, in his days of greatness and glory, had been among his most distinguishing exterior attributes. At this instant he seemed to resume them all—the presence of Careta, restored to life, had given a new strength to his heart; and his conscience had somewhat relieved itself, most probably, in the return to his bosom of some of those more generous—just, we should say—emotions, which his wild and maddening passion for Teresa had for a time banished. He now met the insolent gaze of Pedrarias with a glance of defiance. His words were fearless, and denoted the innocence which they were not permitted to prove.

"Your sentence makes me not guilty, Don Pedrarias, nor does your readiness to believe me so, altogether fail to convince me that it is not your desire that I should appear so. To other minds and times, I fear not to leave this charge, for judgment; satisfied, as I am, that, on the bare face of the circumstances, no honest judgment will condemn me. Had I been conscious of any guilt, would I have been simple enough to come here at your bare summons, and surrender myself into your hands? Had I meditated

the rebellion which you place to my charge, what could have prevented me from lifting the banner, and pressing on, with full canvass, over the broad ocean spread out before me? Not all your force, led, though it might have been, by those whom I have lifted into confidence, and regarded with a favour for which they have made such foul return, could have stayed my progress, and baffled my insurgent arms. I had four gallant ships at anchor, three hundred brave men, to whom my word had been law, and the very waving of my sword, a summons to victory. They had followed my bidding through life, and into the very jaws of death. What had I to do but to press forward? Rich lands, vast empires, inviting rivers, that run over golden beds, wooed me to this course, and furnished arguments for independence, stronger than any that could have fallen from the lips of counsellors, or ever found an echo in my own heart. Homes on every hand implored my presence, —the savage, wherever I went, became my friend, and proffered me his homage—I had found a land, with little toil, sufficient for me and mine, and far beyond any control of yours, had such been the desire of my heart. But such was not my desire. You had proffered me a gift, which I too readily accepted—one which promises to be as fatal to my life, as it was fatal to my independence. In my confident innocence, I came at your summons—the summons of the friend and the father, rather than the ruler and the chief—and lo! these are my rewards!—these chains, that dishonour you no less than me, have met me at my coming. Instead of love and friendship, I have found nothing but slander, indignity, and bonds."

This speech, fearless and ingenuous, whatever might have been its effect upon the disinterested portion of the audience, had no power upon the vindictive Pedrarias, and as little upon the pliant Espinosa. A verdict of guilty was rendered against the prisoner, coupled with a recommendation to mercy, in consideration of past services;—but this recommendation was rejected, as soon as made, by the merciless governor."

"No!" he exclaimed. "If he merits death, he cannot merit mercy. Let him suffer the doom to which you have consigned him—the keen axe and the solid block. Let him die."

Nowise moved, but stern and collected to the last, the voice of Vasco Nunez was heard immediately after—

"From this bloody and unjust judgment, Don Pedrarias, I appeal to the king. The sovereign of Spain shall hear of this."

"Ay! he shall hear of it, but when he does so, it shall avail you nothing. So resolute a traitor shall not be suffered long to hatch new treasons, or complete the old. Let it be known in Acla that the rebel Vasco Nunez dies tomorrow on the block."

One shriek—one long, piercing shriek, and the hitherto breathless Careta fell prostrate on the floor—her hands uplifted to the cruel judge, but her lips incapable of giving utterance to the agonizing prayer which their action was intended to prefer. Vasco Nunez raised her, with unshaken nerves, from the floor, and bitter was the pang of that self-reproach in his heart, which reminded him that he had thrown away, not merely life, but the richest jewel among heaven's gifts of mercy, by his improvident return, under the seductions of that fatal letter, to chains and death at Acla. His eyes met those of Micer Codro, whose efforts, it may be said here, however ineffectual, had been made without ceasing in his behalf. His evidence could disprove nothing, and his misery throughout the trial had been far greater than that of him whom it most endangered.

"Take her, Micer Codro—take her—remove her from me now, while she knows nothing. Preserve, protect, provide for her, my father. I have now no power to make her other reparation; but I pay too dear a penalty for the one error which did her so much wrong, not to be secure of her last forgiveness. Quickly, quickly—she awakes."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LAST WILLING SACRIFICE OF LOVE.

The spirit of Vasco Nunez, like that of all truly great men, rose more proudly under the pressure of injustice. He was more surprised than sorrowful at the precipitate and wanton judgment which had been passed upon him. From Pedrarias, indeed, he had no favour to expect. He had long known his violent, vindictive, and arbitrary character; but there was a painful mystery, which vexed and troubled him, in the conduct of the woman, his fatal love for whom, as the astrologer had long before assured him would be the case, had been his undoing. "Surely," he thought, "she cannot believe me this traitor. Surely she cannot, without a word, a prayer, an effort, have given me up to this wanton malice of her sire. Her prayers, her tears, even if they availed nothing in my behalf with that cold-hearted and inflexible old man, must at least have been poured forth in supplication at his feet. This faith must be my consolation to the last. And yet, wherefore is she not here? Why seeks she not the prison of one to whom she hath written such burning words as these? Nay, let me not question her affection. How should he suffer her to seek the presence of one whom he hath declared his enemy, and hath thus relentlessly delivered over to a bitter death. Even now she sorrows with a pang keener than my own; and it may be that her prison is no less close. Alas! that I should pray for this, Teresa. If I thought otherwise, the pang of my own bondage would be far less supportable, and the death which awaits me would most surely be the only relief."

His musings were interrupted by the entrance of the astrologer, whose tidings brought him no consolation. The

old man had vainly striven to interest the most influential persons in Acla in behalf of the condemned. They were all too much in awe of the wanton disposition of the governor, to take any active part in opposition to his will; and the soldiers at Acla were chiefly the new recruits brought with him from Spain, most of whom regarded Vasco Nunez with hostility rather than with favour. His own warriors, the "old soldiers of Darien," upon whom he could have relied to wrest him from the tyrant, or revenge his death, were all improvidently left behind him at Isla Rica. Bitterly, indeed, as his mind reverted to the counsels of the astrologer, did he denounce his own folly and blindness, in thus, as it were, depriving himself of all strength and succour, and rushing, with headlong haste, into the snares of his enemy.

"But of what avail now," he exclaimed, "of what avail to look back on what might have been done. It is the fool's philosophy that rejects the wholesome medicine which would save if taken in season, yet seeks to swallow it greedily while death is closing up the channel of his throat. I were doubly a fool now to brood over the old follies which no after wisdom may repair. Micer Codro, my friend, my father, thou art old; it will not be many years ere we meet again; and then it is my trust we shall not be separated. There will then be no tyranny to crush our hearts, to baffle our hopes, to deny us our conquests, and subject us to the unmerited pangs of a bloody death. The hope which rises from the grave, Micer Codro, is the most secure of all the hopes of humanity."

The sorrows of the old man were inexpressible—they impeded and even choked his utterance.

"Would I could die for thee, my son. Would I could, in the last pang and agony, for thy sake undergone, bid thee fly to thy unfinished conquests. Yet thy fame is secure; that blessing have the stars which favoured thee yielded to our hope. No tyranny can touch thy greatness, written on the eternal rocks of Darien, and murmured aloud in every billow that breaks upon its shores. The world, to which thou hast given a world no less vast and wondrous than that of Colon, will preserve thy memory."

"It is my hope."

"It is thy only hope—the life immortal when the other life is denied. My son, thy doom is unchangeably written.

Thy tyrant is inflexible, and the stars are no less so. The hour hurries on—the day and night are now at meeting. Prepare thyself for the stroke and the parting."

"Jesu be my strength in the trying hour. I do not fear to die. The pang, Micer Codro,—the only pang is in the parting—the loss of sunlight and the day—the loss of the bright green wood and the glittering, flowing waters—the song of birds and the sweet tones of those who love us;—these are the pangs which come with death, and make it terrible. Besides, Micer Codro, there is still so much left to be done. Others will follow me, and achieve those triumphs on which my heart was set, and to which my sword has pointed out the way. How many glorious labours do I leave unfinished; and——thou wilt smile when I mingle these together—Teresa."

"Would thine eyes had never beheld her! Knowest thou not what is said in Acla?"

"What is said in Acla?—What of Teresa?"

"It is said that Vasco Nunez is not doomed because of his treason to his sovereign, but because of his treachery to Teresa Davila. One of the crimes of which thou hast been accused to Pedrarias and to his daughter, is thy fondness for the poor Careta. Thy secretary, Pedro, hath assured them that thou wouldst never wed with Teresa; but wast bent to fly with Careta to new lands beyond the dominion of Pedrarias, and in utter scorn of thy engagements with his daughter. This, though no part of the charge against thee, is that charge which has made Pedrarias most wrathful, since, if it were true, and he most certainly believes it, then did thy resolution sever the only sure hold which he had upon thy obedience."

"Now may the fiends light upon the base villain that spoke this falsehood."

"Call it not a falsehood, my dear lord," cried the voice of Careta, as she rushed forward from the entrance of the prison, and threw herself at the feet of the prisoner,—"call it not a falsehood; let the poor Indian believe it for the truth. It is so sweet the thought, even though it be now hopeless, that thou wouldst have left the Spanish lady to have gone with Careta into the forests—not the forests of Coyba, but forests afar off, behind the blue hills where the sun hides himself day after day. It was true, my lord. I know it was true. It could not be that thou wouldst cast

the poor Indian from thy arms—she that loved thee so dearly as Careta."

He clasped her to his bosom in a sudden agony of self-reproach and sorrow, and for a time was speechless.—His words, when he spoke at last, were the fruits of spasmodic effort; and his breast heaved as if he were in the midst of a mortal strife, at the utterance of every syllable.

"My poor Careta, I have done thee cruel wrong."

"No, no! How couldst thou do wrong to the Indian woman, when thou hast taken her to thy bosom, and taught her thy language and thy faith, and hast protected her people, and given them wealth, and made them happy. And thou hast made Careta happy too. Thou hast been kind to her always; and thou hast brought her to see thy God, and to love him, and made her pray to go to thy heaven when she dies."

"Yes, yes, I reproach myself not for these, Careta; but there are other matters of which I have great need to reproach myself, no less because of their wickedness and folly, than because of their great injustice to thee. It is true, Careta, that, in an evil hour, under the guidance of a mad passion for another, whom I had beheld and loved with a blind admiration long before I had looked upon thee—nay, long before I came to Darien—I resolved to give thee up, to cast away thy love, which had been so sweet to me and so dear, and to sacrifice thy poor heart to the prouder dominion of another. I do not seek to excuse myself now by telling thee that the counsel of friends and the desperate condition of my own life, compelled me to this resolve; for, of a truth, if my own heart had not desired this maiden, who is lovely beyond compare, I had not fallen away from my faith to thee. Of this crime, then, am I guilty without excuse or allay. I came from Isla Rica for this purpose; and I am but rightly rewarded for my treachery to thee, by this doom, which punishes for a treachery of which my soul is guiltless. Thou hast heard nothing now, Careta, but the truth, and——canst thou love me any longer?"

"Oh, yes! Yes, my lord! Wert thou to slay Careta with thy knife, she would love thee the same as ever. But this lady, is she then so beautiful, my lord? Is she so beautiful now, and will she not beg her father to forgive my

lord, and let him go free out of prison without these chains?"

"She is even beautiful as I have said, Careta."

"Then she should be good; and if she loves my lord, it is like she was angry when she heard that thou wert fond of a poor Indian woman of Darien. Let her take my lord to her arms, and wed him, and——and——Oh! my lord, if she will do this, let her father send Careta back to Coyba, but let him spare the life of my lord. Careta will be sorry, but not angry, when my lord loves her no longer."

"I will always love thee, Careta; nay, I have always loved thee, even when I sent thee from my side, and set forth on this sad expedition to wed another. But my heart was wretched while I went, and my thoughts were strange and wild. Thy purpose to save me will do me little help. It is not now in the power of Teresa to save me, else do I think I were safe. Her father hates me, Careta, and will not sleep until he hath shed my blood upon the block."

"Alas! alas!" cried the woman, lifting up the heavy double chains which encompassed and wearied the arms of the prisoner. Her tears fell fast upon them, and her words, subsiding into occasional moans, left the astrologer and Vasco Nunez free to resume the conversation which her presence had interrupted. While this conversation proceeded, her attention was fixed by a renewal of the last topic upon which they had been engaged—namely, the evil but undeclared influence which the connexion of Vasco Nunez with the Indian woman had maintained over the conduct of Pedrarias, prompting that vindictive pursuit of his victim, which he had shown throughout the trial, and which had evidently overawed the alcalde, and compelled his unwilling sentence of death. While she listened, she started abruptly to her feet, and prepared to depart. Vasco Nunez would have detained her.

"Wherefore would you leave me, Careta? Heed not the speech of Micer Codro and myself. My time in life is so short, that I would not lose you from my side while we are permitted to be together. Nay, you have not yet told me how you obtained entrance. Could it be that Pedrarias suffered this? He hath been barely willing to let Micer Codro approach me;—and thou!"

"I saw him not, my lord," she replied hastily, and still

seeking to extricate herself from his grasp, "but I showed the gold which the Spaniard worships to the soldier at the door, and he took his god and suffered me to enter. Let me now leave thee, my lord—it is needful—I will return to thee again soon."

Vasco Nunez would still have detained her, but a sign and word from the astrologer, to whom a sudden thought had suggested itself, moved him to compliance with her demand. She had scarcely disappeared when the old man spoke.

"There is yet hope for thee, my son. If she hath bribed the soldier with gold to obtain entrance, wherefore should we not bribe him with more gold to obtain thy release. I have in my possession a sum which would buy most soldiers of Pedrarias, and Jesu forbid that we should leave any effort untried to win thy freedom. I will seek him now; there is little time to lose. Do thou pray that thy sentinel hath a soul sufficiently sworn to avarice that we may buy him to the performance of a virtue to which he would not otherwise incline."

With these words he left his companion, to try the efficacy of gold upon the gaoler. That hope which dies not even in death, during the brief interval which followed his absence, sprang up anew in the bosom of the prisoner. His soul seemed to rise on strong wings to the eminence of life; and the fervour of fresh blood seemed to be vouchsafed to the heart but a moment before prostrate, if not torpid, and looking only on the backward paths of life, dreading every glance upon the future. His hope was of short duration. The gaoler was one of the chosen creatures of Pizarro, and, it appeared, rendered hostile to Vasco Nunez in consequence of a punishment to which the latter had subjected him months before, as the reward of some petty offence, against order, of which he had been guilty. He had not refused the gold of the Indian woman, since her presence in the prison could have availed the victim nothing in his desire for escape. But the greater object he at once denied.

"Take back your gold, old man," he answered, "and no more words, lest I report you to the Señor Francisco. As for the Señor Vasco, when you have reminded him that I am that Gil Sandanha, whom he scourged at Coyba for little reason, he will see reason enough why I should not

let him forth. He hath had his turn,—it is but right that I should have mine. Besides, a word in your ear: when he dies, as with God's grace he does to-morrow at noon, then the Señor Francisco will succeed to his command upon the South Sea; and under him, and there, I trow I should win more gold than any in thy pouch to offer. I were a pretty fool to set the Señor Vasco free to spoil all this goodly prospect."

The astrologer made another trial.

"Your fortune shall not be spoiled by this measure. I promise you, on behalf of the Señor Vasco, a command under him on the South Sea, and better chances than any which Pizarro would secure thee."

"In, in! In or out, old man. It will not answer thee to argue thus. You cannot move me. Were I to set my prisoner free, there were a thousand chances to one that he could not escape pursuit. I will not endanger my small certainty for any uncertainty, however large, which it may please you or him in his desperation to offer. Men in the noose are apt to be liberal of promise much beyond their means. Ye blind me not in this fashion. That I have, that will I secure. In, and no more of this."

The keen ears of the prisoner had taken in the tenor of this brief dialogue, which, in an instant, overturned the pleasant hopes which had sprung up into sudden life about his heart; and the walls of his prison grew darker in the deeper gloom which followed the sudden privation of that momentary light which had illumed them. The aged man returned with weary steps, and a heart doubly wo-worn,—and long was the silence that succeeded, in that dreary dungeon, the fruitless effort which he had made in behalf of his companion.

Far different from theirs was the new feeling in the bosom of the Indian damsel. A noble, generous resolve, the natural growth of a nature no less lofty than it was sweet, pure, and unpretending, led her forward, with impatient footsteps that heeded neither fatigue nor danger, to the rude palace which Pedrarias occupied. A hope had arisen in her heart, that by her own sacrifice she might yet save the man she loved. Fond and faithful, in her childish simplicity of soul, she fancied that by declaring to the Spanish lady her own resignation of all claims upon Vasco Nunez, she should move the latter in his favour;

nothing doubting, that if, as she fully believed, the report of his connexion with her, had led, more than any thing beside, to his bitter sentence, her release, and the solemn pledge which she meant to offer, of her flight from his presence, would serve to restore him to the favour which he had lost, and to security from the penal doom which threatened him. She never once doubted the love of Teresa for the chief; and her meditated course partook of a still more romantic air of generosity, when she reflected all the while upon the happiness which she was about to bestow upon a vexed and jealous rival. Alas! she little knew how much of cold and selfish littleness might dwell in the palace of civilization—in the heart of woman,—and under the guise of innocence and beauty. Could she but have dreamed, that, among the thousand phases of feeling common to her sex, there could be one so utterly and perversely at variance with the first fresh impulses of humanity, as that which held predominant sway in the bosom of the vain, capricious woman whom she sought, it might have checked her own forward impulse—it might have brought to her mind a precautionary doubt of the success of that effort which she proposed to make, and which she fancied, in the exuberance of her own true feelings, could not be other than successful.

The lady Teresa sat in her chamber, or rather reclined, in a loose undress suited to the season, upon a low couch, the rich magnificence of which was strangely at variance with the rude exterior of every thing around her. She was unemployed, and her countenance was expressive of thought, or at least, contemplation. Her face was grave rather than sad, and the influence which at that moment formed her mood, seemed to derive its character rather from her mind than from her feelings. These seemed to be little touched by the circumstances going on around her, and in which, her recent relation with the mighty victim destined for the sacrifice, considered, she might be naturally supposed to have a leading and painful interest, even if she recognised the perfect justice of his doom. The Searcher of hearts, alone, could say, with certainty, what were her thoughts and feelings; the student of human character could only conjecture them. With him it would be conclusive against her, that her attitude was studiously graceful, her robes disposed with propriety and a flowing neat-

ness, her long hair adjusted in wandering ringlets, and her features, grave however they might be, indicative rather of disquieting annoyances than of any serious and absorbing subject of sorrow at work within her bosom. Her gravity and solitude would, to him, seem more like the tribute which the slave of social decorum would be expected to pay to the expectations of society, than because of the influence of any innate and intrinsic feelings toiling for the same effect. It was proper that the Lady Teresa should be sad at this season in Acla, and the Lady Teresa was sad accordingly.

Her solitude, and the silence of her chamber, were disturbed on a sudden by the sound of lightly-falling footsteps. She looked up without any emotion, and the Indian woman stood before her. Careta had hurried into the presence of the lofty lady with a precipitation that was natural to such emotions as filled her heart. But a sudden thrill went through her veins, and her feet were fastened to the floor in the instant that their eyes encountered. The poor Indian needed no second glance to conceive the reason of her own desertion by her noble lover. The beauty of Teresa Davila—the haughty and majestic character of her charms, even heightened by the gravity which her features wore—seemed overpowering in her sight; and the pulsation ceased for an instant at her heart, and her eyes were riveted on the gorgeous presence, while her hands were slightly lifted, and extended towards her, as if in the act of supplication. If the glorious beauty which she beheld did not excuse the faithlessness of her lover, the thought was prompt in the mind of Careta, which told her it sufficiently accounted for it.

"Whence come you? Who are you?" demanded Teresa, as her unlooked-for visiter still stood gazing with worshipping or wondering eyes in perfect silence upon her. The words of the lady freed the fettered limbs, if not the tongue of the intruder; and rushing forward, without a word, she threw herself at her feet, and grasping her hand, carried it to her lips; then, suddenly releasing it, she drew backwards, still kneeling the while, and with her eyes and face nearly to the floor, she groaned aloud, and the thick-coming sobs, which rose from the bottom of her heart, precluded all reply. Teresa, now startled and surprised, raised herself from her reclining to an upright posture, and

with rapid accents repeated her inquiry. Receiving no other answer than the continued sobs of the stranger, she would have risen from the couch and summoned her attendants; but suspecting her resolution, Careta grasped her hand at this moment, and, with an obvious effort, controlled her emotions in part, and rose at the same instant to her feet.

"I am she, my lady—I am the poor woman of Coyba, of whom you have heard! I am she who dared to love my lord, when he was sworn to love none other than your ladyship. Forgive me, sweet lady, that I have been so foolish as to lift my eyes where yours have been placed. I am but a poor Indian—I am not wise like the Spaniard—I knew not what I did."

The eyes of Teresa put on a vague inquiring expression as she replied.

"What may this mean? Of whom,—of what speak you? There is surely some mistake in this."

"Thou art the Lady Teresa, the daughter of the governor, Don Pedrarias?" said Careta.

The reply was affirmative.

"Ah! I knew it could be none other. Thou art beautiful, my lady,—most beautiful. It were a wonder, indeed, if there should be a man to behold and not to love thee."

It was not in the power of Teresa to suppress the pleasurable expression which mantled her hitherto grave features, even as a soft glimpse of the dawn warms the cold, gray foliage of the autumn forests. The tones of her voice became kind and soothing, as, doubtful of the person who stood before her, she sought to obtain the desired knowledge.

"Thou hast guessed shrewdly, my pretty damsel; I am she whom they call Teresa,—I am the daughter of Don Pedrarias. But thou speakest of my beauty as if it were worthy to be seen, when thine own is very great. Thou hast charms which should win the eyes of men among thy people more certainly than could I among mine."

"Alas! my lady, do not mock me. When thou speakest of the beauty of Careta, thou speakest to me of a thing which is no longer of value in my eyes, even though it should be deemed worthy in the sight of others. There was a time—it was not many moons ago—when I loved but too much to look down into the glassy waters that run

from the mountains of Darien, and behold the features which thou hast praised too highly, but not more highly than my own foolish and vain heart, in those days, had esteemed them. Then, it was a hope in my mind, that they should seem to the eyes of others as they did in my own; and when my lord looked upon them——"

"Who is thy lord? What is he of whom thou hast thrice spoken?" demanded Teresa, with more curiosity, as she hearkened to a form of speech so much more elevated than any she had been accustomed to hear from the lips of the Indian, and surveyed, with increasing interest, the beauties of a countenance in which resignation to a loss of all that was dear to her in life, seemed a prevailing sentiment struggling at the same time with a painful solicitude.

"Ah! have I not said to thee?" was her reply. "Alas! my lady, this should have been first spoken—the adelantado, the Señor Vasco Nunez, is my lord."

"Ha!" was the sudden exclamation of Teresa, her form rising as she spoke, and a glow passing over her cheek, which indicated her growing consciousness as to the character of the person who now stood before her. The Indian woman, who remarked these passing changes, and to whom every change seemed full of danger to the one object in her mind, hastened to conclude the speech which the exclamation of Teresa had slightly interrupted.

"But he loves not the poor Careta, my lady—he cares not if she lives or dies. He but took her from Coyba that he might teach her in the religion of the Christians,—and now that he hath taught her, she will go back to Coyba, and live among her own people. Oh! believe me, lady, they that have told thee that he loved thee not, spoke what they knew not, and have done my lord a grievous wrong. I know, my lady, that he loves none but thee; and when he left Isla Rica, it was only that he might behold and love thee. This he told me, my lady. He told me by the lips of the venerable man who reads the stars—he whom they call Micer Codro. I knew not of thy beauty then, my lady, and my heart was given to my lord. I maddened when I heard this tale. I maddened, and flung myself into the waters of the ocean sea. But the Blessed Mother saved me from death—saved me, dear lady, that I might tell thee all the truth, that thou might'st save my lord. Thou wilt save him—I know thou wilt—thou wilt

go to thy father—thou wilt show him how my lord has been belied, and he shall then be thine, and thine only. Careta will bless thee and pray for thee in Coyba, and will never again look upon my lord. Turn not away from me, my lady; by the Blessed Mother, I tell thee nothing but the truth."

The proud spirit of the Spanish beauty was roused within her, and her eyes flashed fire upon the Indian woman as her speech proceeded. More than once she would have stopped the flowing accents of her visiter, but that Careta, as if fearing to leave something unspoken, the want of which might prejudice her cause, uttered her words with a rapidity that the more dignified damsel whom she addressed would have scorned to emulate under circumstances even more trying to her feelings than those which prompted the application of the Indian damsel.

"And think you," she answered, when the other had fairly ceased—"think you that Teresa Davila will accept the base leavings of a savage! Look on me woman;—do I seem like one so desperate in hope and fortune, that I am to grasp at the refuse of an Indian's intrigue, and take a doomed traitor to my arms? They have told thee falsehood, woman; the man of whom thou speakest is as nothing to the daughter of Don Pedrarias Davila!"

The Indian woman sank back affrighted,—her lips parted with an expression almost of horror,—certainly of consternation,—and her hands were uplifted, as if in deprecation of that haughty anger which she had so unwittingly provoked. When she recovered breath, however, to continue her appeal, she did so. There was too much at stake, to suffer her to be discouraged by what she heard.

"Forgive me, noble lady—I have said what has vexed my lady—I know not the good speech of the Spaniards—I am a poor Indian woman of Coyba. But was it not true that my lord was to wed with the Lady Teresa?"

"There was some such treaty with my father," was the reply, "but that was when the Senor Vasco was an honourable gentleman—not when he became a traitor to his sovereign."

"But my lady loved him then?"

"Ay—perhaps," was the hesitating answer.

"Alas! can she not love him yet? Oh! my lady, if he were a traitor to the king, believe me he was ever true to

thee. Do not thou leave him to his enemies. They seek his life. He is doomed to die to-morrow ere the sun goes down. One word from thee to thy father, and he lives."

"Ay, to become once more a traitor—to take once more his Indian beauty to his arms."

"The blessed mother of God forbid, my lady. No, no! From that hour which makes him free, my lady, Careta looks not upon him. He loves not the poor Indian. He loves thee—only thee, my lady. Jesu be merciful and incline thy heart to him. Go to thy father, noble lady, and let thy tears beg for his life."

"My tears! No, no! It cannot be—I can do nothing in his behalf, even if I would."

"But thou wouldst—thou wilt!"

The Spanish lady was silent; but her silence denoted any thing but compliance. Her lips were closed with an air of inflexible determination. The Indian was not satisfied.

"Hear the poor woman of Coyba, my lady—hear her—have pity on her speech, and forgive when she offends thee. She means not to offend; but her heart is full of fear and sorrow, and she cannot stop to speak. She hath loved my lord—she loves him even now—oh! how truly, how fondly, she feels deep in her heart, though she cannot show it with her tongue, which is a poor Indian's. Yet she gives him up to thee, because he loves thee. She will say to him, 'be happy, my lord, with the Spanish lady;'—I will pray in Coyba for his happiness and yours. He shall be all thine, my lady, if thou wilt but save his life. Nay, if thou fearest the poor Indian, let her die. Let thy father doom her to death in place of my lord."

The simple Indian could not persuade herself—indeed, she had no thought—that the coldness and reluctance of Teresa arose from any indifference to the object of her own attachment. Her only impression was, that Teresa was moved by jealousy to assume an attitude, which she felt assured was no less unjust to her own feelings than unnatural in her sex. Not to love Vasco Nunez seemed as utterly unlikely, as to suffer a brave man to die by a cruel death, when it was in the power of a woman's voice to interpose and save him. Unhappily, the words which she employed were some of them the most ungracious which could have been chosen for the haughty ears of Teresa.

"Fear thee!" exclaimed the latter, as with, to her, a natural transition of mind, she turned to a polished steel mirror that hung upon the walls, and beheld with feminine complacency the proud beauty which it presented to her eyes—"Fear thee! Go, my poor woman, go; thy passion for this traitor hath turned thy brain. It is pity enough; for thou art comely to the eye. Thou hast erred in setting thine eyes upon one of another race, and still more in choosing one so unworthy of thy love. Go—leave me—I can do nothing for thee—trouble me not again."

The composed, contemptuous demeanour of the proud beauty—her ironical tones—the complacent survey of her person, which, during her speech, she had taken in the mirror opposite, conveyed to the mind of her observer, much more than her words, an idea of her true character. In that instant, the conviction flashed for the first time upon the Indian woman, of the utter callousness and heartlessness of the person whom she implored; and she now felt aware, however difficult it had been to arrive at such a conclusion, that Teresa Davila had actually suffered herself to be betrothed to one, and such an one as Vasco Nunez, without loving him. The poor Indian clasped her hands together, as these thoughts filled her mind, and her own tearless eyes were for a moment lifted to heaven. In another instant she turned them upon the haughty lady, and a perceptible shiver shook her frame. No exclamation escaped her lips; but, giving a single look—a look of horror—at the beauty who stood waving her off with a smiling scorn playing upon her lips the while,—she darted from the hateful presence, and, hopeless now of all the world, fled once more to the prison, which, however cheerless, contained all that was dear to her heart. The scorn of Teresa Davila for the object whom she loved, seemed to have had one effect which was no less strange than pleasing to her soul. It made him dearer than ever to her, as it seemed to confirm her own title to his love. "He shall find," she murmured to herself as she went—"he shall find the poor Careta still loves, though she may not save him."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

The efforts to save Vasco Nunez from the cruel and unjust doom which threatened him, were not confined to the Indian woman, in whose heart he had so dear an interest. There were many good citizens at Acla, who heard with sorrow the judgment passed upon him, who, at the instigation of Micer Codro, joined in a petition to Pedrarias to pardon the supposed criminal, or, at least, to commute his sentence to banishment and fine. They presumed, though trembling at their own audacity, to suggest doubts of his criminality, and to question the honesty of those upon whose testimony he had been condemned. They dwelt upon the wondrous discoveries he had made, and their great importance to the crown of Spain and to the fortunes of the Spanish people; and though they especially avoided hinting such a conviction, in their application for mercy to a tyrant who had ever before shown a temper the most merciless, their petition was warmed into enthusiasm as they felt that, though Vasco Nunez might be guilty of the alleged crime, there was even in that a noble daring which amply sustained all their previous impressions of his eagle character, and made his so sudden doom a matter not merely of severity but cruelty. Micer Codro himself appeared before the arbiter of his friend's fate, and on bended knee, implored for a remission of his doom as a gift of mercy rather than a due of justice—a concession, however, which the proud spirit of Vasco Nunez had especially commanded him not to make. But the bloody-minded Pedrarias was inflexible. He had no reason now to keep any terms with his rival. The power was in his

own hands, and his fear of the man he had so frequently wronged, and had now so completely dishonoured, left him no alternative of safety, but in the consummation of the long list of his wrongs by the last penal act of murder. He dared not suffer him to live; and his passion of jealousy had now reached that stage of excitation which excluded every consideration of policy, no less than humanity, from his mind.

"No!" he exclaimed, as he dismissed the petitioners from his presence—"I would sooner perish on the block myself than spare him."

It was a day of gloom and consternation in Acla which had been assigned for the sacrifice of this noble victim. Lamentations were heard in all the streets. The populace, though, under the dominion of so jealous a tyrant as Pedrarias, and surrounded by his soldiers, they did not dare to complain, were yet every where in tears. Few or none among them regarded him as guilty, but all esteemed him as a brave and noble gentleman, sacrificed to the base enmity of a cruel and vindictive rival. In the dungeon of the prisoner there was, perhaps, more sunshine. The soul of Vasco Nunez grew more and more calm and fearless as the hour of his fate approached; and his heart, if more tender and subdued than ever by some of the circumstances of his situation, was, at the same time, more free than before from many harassing doubts and bitter self-chidings. He had sought to banish from his mind the remembrance of Teresa Davila, and the hope being for ever banished which made him think of her as his wife, he was the better able to do justice to the claims of the devoted woman of Coyba, who was a silent mourner at his side. When the astrologer returned from the presence of Pedrarias, and declared to him the rejection of all the prayers which had been made in his behalf, a smile of the most perfect resignation passed over the features of the condemned.

"I looked not for other answer, Micer Codro—I warned you of the hopelessness of your mission. You have bent your knee in vain—dishonoured yourself without serving me. I trust he denies me not the presence of the holy man?"

"No. The Jeronimite is in waiting."

"Let him attend," said Vasco Nunez, "I will the

sooner be prepared to die when I have done the last act of justice."

The friar was summoned, and shortly made his appearance.

"Father," said Vasco Nunez, "ere I make my last confession, and receive from your hands the holy sacrament, there is another no less solemn sacrament which I would have you perform. It is needful as an act of expiation, to heaven no less than earth. I would have you unite me in the bands of wedlock with this woman of Coyba. Arise, Careta, and give me thy hand."

She rose passively, and they, whom the sharp stroke of death was so soon to separate, were united for ever.

"Careta!"

"My lord!"

"Leave me now with this holy man. Go with Micer Codro, he will take care of thee, and be thy friend and father, when I shall be sleeping."

"Alas! my lord, wherefore wilt thou send me from thy side? Let me not go. What need that we should separate? Has not the holy man made us one by the Christian law—and should I leave thee now to lose thee for ever? Send me not hence—let me be with thee until—"

She could not speak the rest; but burying her face in his bosom, her sobs completed the sentence. Long and fondly did he clasp her within his manacled arms, and the sorrow was no less sweet than sacred with which he contemplated so much love. He put her away at length.

"For awhile, Careta, until the holy father and myself have spoken of matters most needful to my soul's peace. Go thou with Micer Codro. We shall meet again."

The astrologer was about to lead her away, when the prisoner summoned him to his side. In a whisper he said—

"Keep her close—let her not see me again till all is over; then—remember!"

The unfinished sentence contemplated some previous instructions which he had given the astrologer, about the removal of Careta to the dominions of the Cassique of Coyba, her father. Another fond look, another embrace, and Careta was borne from the dreary cell of her lord.

An hour after, and the prisoner was joined by the astrologer.

"Hast thou secured her?" was the question of the former. "I trust thou hast deceived her as to the time of execution."

"All, all, my son—it is done according to thy wish," was the reply.

"That pang, at least, is spared me. I could wish, Micer Codro, my friend and my father, that thou too wert far from the sight of this bloody act. Were it not well that thou too shouldst be away?"

"I will be with thee to the last, my son. For long years of pride and pleasure, we have dwelt, and moved, and toiled, and suffered, together. I will not leave thee now—when we are to be torn asunder by these cruel hands. I will stand by thy side when the sword falls, that I may feel a pang in my heart no less sharp than that which thy body must undergo."

"Ah! Micer Codro, it will add to my pang to behold thee at that instant. I would there were no other pang; but I fear, Micer Codro—it is like a fiery arrow in my brain, the fear—that Teresa Davila knew of her father's purpose, when she wrote me that letter from Darien."

"Think'st thou so, my son?"

"Careta, when she left us so suddenly last night, sought her out in her father's dwelling. She has kept from me all that took place between them, the single fact excepted, that she saw and pleaded with her, and that her prayers were without avail. I pressed to know from her the truth, but the noble creature refused to speak, and her refusal has oppressed me with this cruel fear. I know that Careta would not do her wrong—I know that in mercy to me she would forbear any speech which could give me sorrow. Had Teresa betrayed a feeling which had been grateful to her heart, the generous creature would have poured it forth into mine, with the impatience of a spirit that loves all forms of justice and humanity. A mournful look—sometimes a bitter smile—has answered all my entreaties on this subject; and when I have chided her with her reluctance, she wept bitterly, and, imploring my forgiveness, as resolutely continued silent."

"Said she nothing?"

"Yes,—her first words as she came to the prison, may, perhaps, sufficiently declare the meaning of her silence. 'I have seen her, the Spanish lady,' she exclaimed, 'I

have seen her, my lord, I have looked upon her, and my words have answered hers. Oh! wherefore did my lord suffer her words to bring him from Isla Rica?' I asked her, striving to smile as I did so, 'Dost thou not think her beautiful, Careta?'—'Beautiful!' she exclaimed, covering her face with her hands, while a shiver went through her frame at the instant, rattling the chains which my arms had partly thrown around her."

"There was meaning enough in that, my son. I have long counselled thee against this woman. She hath none of the sweet juices of humanity within her heart. It will wither, my son, long years before she herself shall perish—it will begin to wither in that moment when the axe shall fall upon thy neck."

"Nay, nay! Curse her not with a doom so cruel."

"It is her own doom. Her heart hath cursed itself."

"Alas! if it be true!" exclaimed Vasco Nunez. "Never yet was beauty to vie with hers. Ha! the bell! It tolls! It strikes my heart with a hollow, ringing sound like its own. The hour is come, my father, for our parting. Leave me, I pray thee. I will look more firmly upon the crowd and the scaffold, if I meet none of the faces that I love."

"I will leave thee never, my son—never, while you have life. Jesu forbid, that I should shorten by a single instant, the time left us for communion."

"Be thou firm, father not, Micer Codro—I should prove feeble wert thou to fail."

The guards were at the entrance in the next moment; and with a free step, erect carriage, and placid countenance, Vasco Nunez emerged into the open air, amidst the crowd of sorrowful and exulting faces which encountered him at the portals of the prison. Their various aspects produced no change in his. He walked forward with as little seeming emotion, as if he had the least interest of all in the terrible proceedings, until he reached the public square of Acla, when the whole dreadful array of death met his sight—the scaffold and the executioner, and the grim guards already surrounding it and in waiting. A slight shudder of his frame might have been visible to a close eye as he approached the scaffold, but it passed away in another moment, and he ascended the ignominious eminence with a firm martial tread, and looked with unblenching cheek and fearless aspect upon the assembly.

"Is thy weapon keen?" he asked of the masked headsman, whose slender frame seemed to promise but little of that strength which was required for such a duty as that before him. The man lifted the axe in silence, and presented the edge to the destined victim. Vasco Nunez, utterly unawed, passed his finger over the blade.

"It will do, if thou strike but firmly. It needs that it be keen in thy hands, which do not seem to justify the task thou hast chosen."

"Thou wilt have no reason to reproach me again with feebleness, Señor Vasco, nor wilt thou have the power, when I have struck but a single stroke at thy neck," was the reply of the executioner.

"Surely that voice is not strange in my ears," exclaimed Vasco Nunez as he heard it, "who art thou?"

"One who promised, long months ago, to stand beside thee in the last moments of thy life," said the other, partially lifting his mask so as to show his face only to the victim.

"Ha! Pedro! Unhappy young man, wherefore hast thou pursued me with such bitter malice? Why hast thou perjured thy soul to hell for ever, that thou mightest shed the blood of one who hath ever bestowed care and kindness upon thee?"

"Pedro no longer, Señor Vasco," replied the other, "that name was but assumed, that I might win thy confidence and secure an opportunity for vengeance. Know me for Andres Garabito—the brother of that Jorge Garabito whom you so basely murdered by night in the town of Santo Domingo."

"And for this have you pursued me to the death, and for no other cause?"

"Ay! for this—for this cause and no other."

"Then let it blast thy hope, and sicken thee for ever, unhappy youth, to know that Vasco Nuñez is utterly guiltless of thy brother's death. Weapon of mine never touched his life—this I swear in the presence of the great Judge, before whom my soul shall shortly appear."

"I believe thee not! I cannot—dare not believe thee, murderer," cried the executioner with hoarse and choking accents. "Bend thyself to thy doom, lest my arm tremble with the rage and passion of my soul."

Vasco Nunez regarded him with a countenance of min-

gled pity and aversion; but he turned away as the public crier announced the moment fixed for the fatal blow. His proclamation changed the current of the victim's thoughts, and converted all of his feelings into indignation.

"Hear, hear, ye people of Acla! This is the punishment inflicted by command of the king and his lieutenant, Don Pedrarias Davila, on this man, Vasco Nunez, as a traitor to the crown of Castile, and a usurper of its territories."

"It is false, people of Acla!" exclaimed Vasco Nunez, in reply. "It is false! I am guiltless of this crime, and here, in the equal sight of God and man, I declare to ye that I have ever served my sovereign with truth and loyalty, and sought rather to augment than take from his dominions."

These words, says the historian, of no avail in his extremity, were yet fully believed by the people of Acla, with the exception of those who were the creatures of Pedrarias. That tyrant, meanwhile, heard the proud denial of his victim, while, with gloating hate, he watched in secret, from between the reeds of a house near the scaffold, the progress of the bloody scene. At this moment, and while the deep tones and indignant words of the victim yet vibrated in the ears of the populace, a wild, piercing shriek—a woman's shriek—rang through the multitude. The keen, quick eyes of Vasco Nunez turned in the direction of the sounds, and his heart quivered with a new emotion which he vainly strove to suppress, when he beheld Careta, with flowing hair and frantic footstep, making her desperate way through the crowd.

"Micer Codro," he exclaimed, hastily, "she hath escaped. Deathsman!" he said, turning to the executioner, whose own emotions were almost perceptible—and kneeling down to the block as he spoke—"see that thou strike quickly and fairly. Let it be over ere she comes. Micer Codro—farewell!"

"Stay!" said the executioner, "burden not thy soul with a lie. Confess—say that thy hand slew my brother."

"Traitor and perjurer—strike! and damn thy soul with the concluding crime. Whatever may be the guilt of Vasco Nunez, his soul is innocent of that. His arm touched not the life of Garabito."

"Thou liest! I will not believe thee! I know thou liest!" was the hoarse cry of the deathsman, as the keen weapon descended. The bloody head rolled along the

scaffold at the moment when Careta rushed up the gory steps. One wild shriek of horror burst from her lips, and she fell—fell like a stone—upon the body of her lord;—and when Micer Codro lifted her up from the corse, life had departed from her also. The ligaments that secured her heart had cracked and given way in that awful instant; and the immortal spirit of Vasco Nunez had scarcely risen from the spot where his body suffered death, ere it was joined by the most devoted soul that had ever loved and valued it before. The mask dropped from the face of the secretary, while he gazed upon the mighty man whom he had destroyed.

"Thou!" exclaimed the astrologer, "thou hast carried out thy malice to the last."

"He slew Jorge Garabito, my brother!" cried the secretary; "had he not, Micer Codro, I had worshipped him."

"He slew him not!" replied the astrologer solemnly.

"Were the dead to arise and say so, I should be sworn against them. I have the proofs written by the Bachelor Enciso, and Ortado, the matador, the last of whom beheld the deed."

"They have sworn falsely then," said Francisco Pizarro, who came forward at this moment, with a grin of bitter satisfaction on his features—"here is one who beheld the death-bed of Ortado, the matador, and heard his last confession, by which we learn that he was employed by Jorge Garabito and Enciso to slay Vasco Nunez as he came from the bohio of Teresa Davila, whom he was known to seek nightly in San Domingo. Garabito went with the matador, and stood in waiting behind a tree, where he was slain by one unknown, at the very time when Vasco Nunez was advancing towards him, the said Ortado, in front. This he knows, for he beheld Vasco Nunez plainly. It was the purpose of Enciso to destroy Vasco Nunez, and hence the assassination was placed to his score. The Jeronimite will show all this."

Wild with fear, hoarse with agitating and conflicting emotions, the perjured secretary rushed to the friar, who laid before him the written confession of the matador, confirming all that Pizarro had said. Long did the miserable youth strive against conviction—for days did he seek every associate in Acla, from whose conjectures he might hope to find any basis for that belief which had prompted him to the crime which he had committed. But the dreaded

truth rose triumphant over the fond artifices of his hope ann thought; and when he could no longer baffle it, the conviction became fatal to his sanity—madness followed; and crying aloud to all he met, "that hell was already in his heart," he disappeared for ever from the scene of his dreadful crimes, and blind, reckless vengeance. By the paternal care and fond friendship of Micer Codro, the victims of his perjury found a humble burial place at Acla. Of the fate of Micer Codro himself, a brief notice is given by Irving, taken from the relation of the historian Oviedo, who happened to be in Darien at the period of these events. "It appears," says this writer, "that, after the death of Vasco Nunez, he continued for several years rambling about the New World, in the train of the discoverers; bent upon studying the secrets of its natural history, rather than searching after its treasures. In the course of his wanderings he was once coasting the shores of the Southern Ocean, in a ship commanded by one Geronimo de Valenzuela, from whom he received such cruel treatment as to cause his death. Finding his end approaching, he addressed Valenzuela in the most solemn manner. 'You have,' said he, 'caused my death by your cruelty; I now summon you to appear with me, within a year, before the judgment-seat of God.' The captain made a light and scoffing answer, and treated his summons with contempt. They were then off the coast of Veragua, near the verdant islands of Zebaco, which lie at the entrance of the Gulf of Paria. The poor astrologer gazed wistfully with his dying eyes upon the green and shady groves, and entreated the mate of the caraval to land him upon one of the islands that he might die in peace. 'Micer Codro,' said the mate, 'these are not islands, but points of land.' 'They are, indeed, islands,' replied the astrologer, 'good and pleasant and well-watered, and near to the coast. Land me, I pray you, upon one of these islands, that I may have comfort in my dying hour.' The pilot was touched by the prayer and conveyed him to the shore. He laid him on the herbage in the shade, where the poor wanderer soon expired. The pilot buried him at the foot of a tree, and carved a cross on the bark to mark the grave. Some time afterward, Oviedo was on the island with the same pilot, who showed him the cross on the tree, and gave his testimony to the good character and worthy conduct of Micer Codro.

Oviedo, as he regarded the nameless grave, passed the eulogium of a scholar upon the poor astrologer. 'He died,' said he, 'like Pliny, in the discharge of his duties, travelling about the world to explore the secrets of nature.' According to his account, the prediction of Micer Codro held good with respect to Valenzuela, as it had in the case of Vasco Nunez. The captain died within the term in which he had summoned him to appear before the tribunal of God."

The various fortunes and fate of Pizarro and Pedrarias are well known. The history of Teresa Davila is less so, but a few words will suffice for her. Her heart, even as the astrologer had emphatically spoken, withered within her. She lived, like her father and his brutal ally, unblessing and unblest. Let none accuse the justice of God, because death does not follow the evil deeds of the criminal. To those who have in their hearts no choice spring of humanity, life is but a weary trial and a vexing strife; and better had it been for these cruel persons, had they suffered the sharp pang of death, like their victim, a thousand times, than endure the continual sappings of hope in their hearts—the bitterness of that desolation which is the due reward of a mean and narrow selfishness—the absence of all confidence among men—the constant dread of treachery—the distrust of friendship—the doubts of love—the death, in short, of all those joys of the heart and mind which can alone make life an object of desire. They lived, indeed, to triumph above the graves of many other victims, only less great and less noble than Vasco Nunez; but they were wretched even in their conquests, and though the shame and dishonour which hang about their memories, may not depict the misery of their secret souls, during their bitter and merciless career of life, it will not be difficult to imagine what seeds of bitterness and sorrow must have sprung in such wretched soil—how they must have been haunted ever by the shadows of evil deeds, and the goadings of evil thoughts, and perished at length, looking back without satisfaction to the past, and forward, to the future, without hope. Let us leave them.

THE END.

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