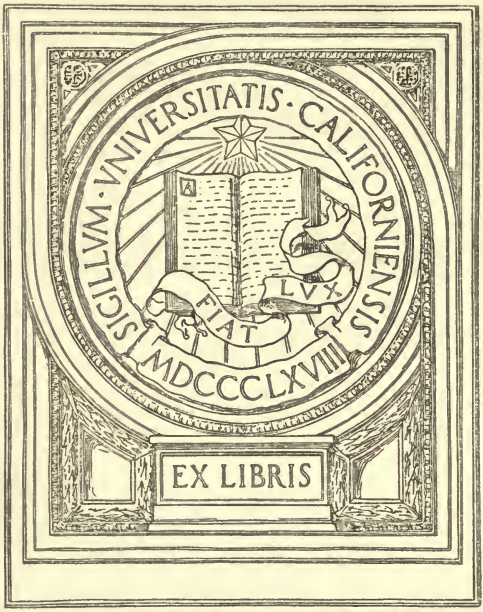
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THE INFIDEL,

OR

THE FALL OF MEXICO.

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CALAVAR."

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

BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO—*Hist. Verd. de la Conquista.*

No hay mal que por bien no venga,
Dicen adagios vulgares.

CALDERON—*La Dama Duende.*

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THE INFIDEL.

CHAPTER I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the bustle of festivity that followed the command, the revellers forgot to wonder at the torchlight around them and the presence of the armed guards. If a few still bent their eyes uneasily on the commander-in-chief, striving to catch the low

accents with which he conversed with his immediate friends, and particularly with Sandoval, their efforts were unnoticed by the others; and, in a short time, the hum of whispers waxed into murmurs of joyous hilarity, so that the conversation on the platform could only be guessed at by the expressive visages and gestures of the cavaliers.

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

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

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

As he spoke, he knelt upon one knee, and all present, even the barbaric king at his side, doing

the same thing, allegiance was pledged in the cup, —which is undoubtedly the best way to make it agreeable.

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

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

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

"Know, my truly faithful and loyal friends," he went on, speaking with an appearance of solemn indignation, "that we have had among us a TRAITOR,—a Christian man and a Spaniard, yet a traitor to the king our master! Yet, in the band of the holy apostles, there was one Judas; and it does not become us to believe that we, sinful creatures as we are, and much more numerous, should be without *our* Iscariot, who would have sold our lives for silver, and sunk into perdition the interest of his majesty in this opulent kingdom. It rejoices me to know that we have had but *one*. The pain with which I have been filled to discover there were other knaves for his accomplices, is assuaged by the knowledge that they were not Castilians, but infidel Indians; to whom perfidy is so natural, that it is wholly superfluous to lament its occurrence. Know therefore, my friends, and grieve not to know it, for the evil is past, that Xicotencal, General-in-chief of the Tlascalan forces, besides secretly treating with our foes, his own enemies,

the men of Tenochtitlan, did, last night, traitorously abandon our standard, and set out, to throw himself, as I doubt not, into the arms of the Mexicans."

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

"Think not," said the Captain-General, in continuation, "that the villain who doth seriously pursue a scheme of disloyalty, shall escape a just retribution. The toils and sufferings which we have endured in this land, in his majesty's service, are such that I can readily excuse the murmurs with which some have occasionally indulged a peevish discontent. I will never account it much against a brave soldier that he has sometimes grumbled a little; but he who meditates, or practises, a treason, shall die. I have said, that among us all there was but *one* villain. Perhaps there were two; but of that we will inquire hereafter. He of whom I speak, was one to whom I had forgiven much semblance of discontent, and whom I had raised into no little favour. Yet did he conceive a foul conspiracy, having for its object no less a thing than the destruction of this enterprise against a rich pagan kingdom, and the murder of all those who would not become the enemies of Spain. The man of whom I speak you know. It was—"

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

"It was indeed the Alguazil, Villafana," said Cortes, sternly; "and you shall know his villany. First, the Mexican ambassadors, last night committed to his charge, he permitted to escape, that they might be no hinderance to the ambushed infidels, then lying on the lake, ready to burn my brigantines. Secondly, being the captain of the prison,

he permitted the same to be approached and sacked by other infidels, whereby a prisoner, convicted of a heavy crime and condemned to die, was snatched out of our hands, and given into those of the enemy, whom he will doubtless aid and abet in all the sanguinary resistance which they are inclined to make. Thirdly, by his persuasions, Xicotencal was induced to throw off his allegiance, at the very moment when the fleet and the prison were beset, and desert from the post. And fourthly, the consummation of the whole villany was to be effected at this very hour, and on this very floor, in the blood of myself, my officers, and as I may say of yourselves also; since none were to be spared who were not his sworn colleagues; and, certainly, there are none here so base and criminal?"

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

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

"Thus perish all who plot treason against the king and the king's officers!" cried the Captain-General, with a loud voice. "The rebel Xicotencal swings upon an oak-tree, on the wayside as

you go to Chalco; the mutineer Lerma hath fled to the pagans, to become a renegade and perhaps apostate; and Villafana, the traitor, hangs as you see, upon the window of our banqueting-room, to teach all who may have meditated a like villany, the fate that shall most certainly await them.—Hide the carrion!" he exclaimed to the slaves, and in an instant the frightful spectacle was excluded, along with the cheerful light of day. The return to that of the torches was like a lapse into darkness, and for a few moments, it was scarce possible for the guests to distinguish the features of those nearest to them. In the gloom, however, the voice of the Captain-General was heard, concluding his oration:

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

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

It was felt therefore as a relief, when the signal for breaking up the feast was given by the sound of

a gun from the temple-top; and all rushed out, to forget in the bustle of parade, the sickening event which had marred their enjoyment.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II.

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

waves, though they recalled him to his wits, yet left him confounded, and, for a while, incapable of understanding and appreciating his situation. In this condition, he was deposited in a canoe of some magnitude, which instantly putting off from the shore, under the impulse of thirty paddles, he soon found himself darting over the lake at a speed which promised soon to remove from his eyes, and perhaps for ever, the scene of his late humiliation and suffering.

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

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

"Guatimozin," said he, no longer doubting the purpose for which he had been snatched from the prison, and resolved at once to express his disapprobation, "dost thou think to make me a renegade to my countrymen? I swear to thee—"

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

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

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

All this passed in the space of an instant. A loud cry, the rush of other canoes against the ship, and the frantic exertions of the combatants already on board to maintain their places, made it apparent that the voice of the prince was not unknown or unregarded. Still, the Spaniards fought well and fiercely, and their cries of "God and St. James! Honour and Spain!" kindled its natural enthusiasm in the breast of the young islander. Forgetting his late wrongs and oppressions, and the mournful truth, that, at this moment, the Christians were more his enemies than the Mexicans, he determined, if possible, to make his escape. Watching his opportunity, and perceiving that many ropes, sundered by the flames, were hanging over the sides of the vessel in the water, he chose a moment, when the canoe was within but ten or twelve fathoms of her,

and but few of those savages who had leaped overboard were swimming near, he rose to his feet, and shouting aloud, "Help for an escaping captive! and good courage to all!" he plunged boldly into the lake.

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

The cry of Juan was perhaps not heard by his fellow-Christians in the brigantine; but there was one friend aboard, and that a brute one, whose ears were far quicker to detect his call, and whose heart was much prompter to obey. This was the dog Befo, who, having been taken from the prison on the day of the trial, and afterwards been refused admission, he so annoyed the guards by his whining and howling, and indeed all in the palace, likewise, that they were glad to send him aboard a vessel, to have him out of the way, until after the time of ex-

ecution, when, it was apprehended, from his remarkable affection for the prisoner, he might give additional trouble. His services were turned to good account by the sailors, during the attack; for, being instantly loosed, he sprang upon barbarian after barbarian, tumbling them into the water, or among the Spaniards, who despatched them. His appearance, fiercer than that of the largest beasts of prey in Mexico, and his savage bark, not less frightful than the yell of the jaguar or the puma, were perhaps still more effectual than his fangs; for at the sight and sound, the Mexicans, climbing over the bulwarks, recoiled, and with screams of dismay, jumped into the water, and swam again to the nearest canoes.

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

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

CHAPTER III.

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

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

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

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

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

knocked on the head—How comes it that I am in this canoe?"

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

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

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

soon convinced, was no heavenly luminary. Faint as it was, it shone steadily, and, once seen, there was no difficulty in preserving it always in the eye. He even began to be sensible, after a little time, that it increased in magnitude as he approached it; and, by and by, he was at no loss to believe it was a beacon-light, kindled upon some eminence in the pagan city, to guide the fleet of canoes on its return from the battle.

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

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

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

"Good heavens, eating me!" said Juan. "It was he, then, that held me up, when I was strangling? I remember to have felt some one pull me by the hair, before I was utterly senseless. Faithful Befo! faithful Befo! there is no friend like him! And I leave him drowning, who saved me from the same death, and now follows me with affection? Put back, put back!—Nay, thou art sluggish,—old and sluggish:—I will paddle myself. What, Befo! Befo!"

Thus exclaiming, and using the paddle, which he had snatched from Techeechee, with no little skill,

it was soon clear that he was drawing nigh to the animal, which, hearing his voice, replied with loud whinings, that were both piteous and joyful.

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

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

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

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

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

Thus persuaded, the Ottomi timorously extended his hand, and greatly emboldened to find it was not immediately snapped off, plied his strength, which, notwithstanding his age, was yet considerable, until Befo was safely lodged in the boat. The poor dog had scarce strength left to raise his head to his

master's knee, but devoured his hand with caresses, while he sank trembling, panting, and powerless, into the bottom of the skiff.

"Thus it is with the dog, whom you call a tiger," said Juan, in a moralizing mood, as he surveyed his faithful friend: "Black or white, red or olive-hued, whom he once loves, he loves well. Happy or wretched, proud or lowly, it is all one: he asks not if his master be a villain. A tiger in courage, in strength, and vindictiveness, he is yet a lamb,—the fawn of a doe,—in the hands of his master. Feed him, he loves you—starve him, he loves you—beat him, still does he love you. Once gain his affection, and you cannot cast it off: the rich man cannot bribe his love with gold, and bread will not seduce him away;—nay, he will sometimes pine away on your grave. His name has been made a by-word for all that is base and villanous—I know not why, unless it is because, being the fondest and most confiding of living creatures, he is thefore the worst used: but the word is a satire upon our own injustice. Look at him, Techeechee, and at me: I have been ever poor and well nigh friendless—I gave him to one who is as a prince among men: yet when he—his then master,—struck at me with his sword, this dog seized the weapon with his teeth; he came to me when I lay in prison, he sprang to me when I was dying in the lake, and he perilled his life, as thou hast seen, that he might have the poor privilege to follow me. I am a beggar and an outcast, a man degraded and, it may be, soon outlawed:—yet does this poor creature love me none the less. Ay, Befo! it is all one to thee, what I am, and whither I go!"

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

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

He had already put a wide sheet of water between him and the battle, and when the Indian fleet, beaten off, or satisfied with the mischief done, began to retreat, followed by such of the brigantines as were in plight to pursue, it was easy to preserve so much of the distance gained as to be beyond the reach of danger. The flash of a falconet occasionally burst dimly behind, its heavy roar startling back the breeze ; and sometimes a cannon ball came skipping over the surges close by. But, the wind being against the Spaniards, it was soon seen that there were left no Indians upon whom to exercise their arms, unless such as had, in their consternation, lost sight of the dim beacon, and remained paddling about the lake at random.

CHAPTER IV.

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

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

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

"Mexitli Tetzauhteotl,* o-ah! o-ah!" thus sang the pagan,—"the son of the woman† of Tula. 'Mother, I will protect you.'‡ The green plume is on his head, the wing of the eagle is on his leg, his forehead is blue like the firmament; he carries a spear and buckler, and with the fir-tree of Colhuacan,§ he crushes the mountains. 'Mother, I will protect you.' Am not I the son of Mexico? and is not Mexico the daughter of Mexitli? O-ah, o-ah! Mexitli Tetzauhteotl!

* Mexitli, the Terrible God.

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

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

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

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

"Where is the end of Mexico? It begins in Huehuetapallan in the north, and who knows the place of Huehuetapallan?† In the south, it sees the lands of crocodiles and vultures,—the bog and the rock, where man cannot live. The sea washes it on the east, the sea washes it on the west, and that is the end—Who has looked to the end of the waters? It is the land of blossoms,—the land of the tiger-flower, and the cactus-bud that opens at night like a star,—of the flower-of-the-dead,‡ that ghosts come to snuff at, and of the hand-flower,§ which our gods planted among the hills. It is a land dear to Mexitli.

"Who were the enemies of Mexico? Their heads are in the walls of the House of Skulls, and the

* *Pojautecatl*, in Mexican.

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

‡ The Dahlia.

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

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

With such roundelays as these, echoed at a distance by the rowers in the fleet and by many barbarians from the buildings that projected into the lake, Techeechee urged the light canoe through a sluice in the northern dike, and approached that long neck or peninsula, once the island of Tlatelolco, but long since united to that of Tenochtitlan, which gave its name to the fifth quarter of the city, and, as it afterwards appeared, was the site of the noblest of the many palaces, built at different periods, by the kings of Mexico. A large portion of the peninsula, midway between its extremity and the ancient bank of the island of Tenochtitlan, was occupied by a garden, divided from the lake by a wall lofty enough to secure it against the assault of a foe, and yet sufficiently low to expose to the eye of a spectator on the lake, the rich luxuriance of groves, among whose waving boughs could be traced the outlines of a spacious edifice, profusely decorated with turrets and observatories, some of which were of great height and singular structure.

Against this wall, through a fleet of fishing canoes, now paddling out into the lake, Techeechee seemed to direct the little skiff, much to Juan's sur-

prise, until, having drawn nigher, he perceived that it was perforated by several gateways or sallyports, very low, and evidently designed to give entrance only to the humble vessels which composed the Mexican navy. The largest was wide enough to admit two or three of the largest piraguas abreast, and the smaller ones seemed intended only for the private gondolas of the royal family. All were defended by stout wickets, which, as Juan soon perceived, were raised and let fall from within, somewhat in the manner of a portcullis.

The tranquillity that seemed to reign within this sanctified recess, betrayed at once its royal character. In every other quarter of the city, as he passed it, Juan could hear a roaring hum, as if proceeding from a vast multitude pent within the narrow island,—as was indeed the case, the whole military strength of the empire being concentrated within the limits of the island and the shore-cities that commanded the causeways. But here all was a profound calm, broken only by the songs of birds, and, occasionally, by what seemed the cry of some tamed and domesticated beast of prey.

As Techeechee urged the canoe towards one of the smaller gateways, Juan beheld the wicket ascend from the water, but without seeing by whom or in what manner, it was raised. An instant after, he was on the very point of entering the narrow chasm, perhaps never more to repass it. He turned his eye back again to the lake, and strove to discover the dim lines and masses of shore and city, palace and pyramid, among which he had so lately dwelt in sorrow and confinement. The mists were nearly dispersed, and the sky was clear; but the fiery track of the rising sun over the lake, dazzled his eyes, and, with a veil of radiance, hid the towers of Tezcuco. He caught an indistinct view of two or three brigantines, becalmed at a distance from

the shore, which they were endeavouring to regain by the force of oars; but the city of the Acolhuacanese was no longer visible; and by and by, the whole prospect of the lake was shut out by the garden wall, under which he had passed. He had scarce turned away his eyes, when the wicket sunk, with a plunge, into the water. He looked back: but those who had loosed it, were already hidden among the shrubbery. It seemed as if the falling of that portal had shut him out for ever from the society of his countrymen. His companions were now to be found among the uncivilized and the godless.

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

"The Great Eagle is in the house of the king, his brother," said the Ottomi, "and his enemies cannot reach him,—no, not even if they were the Tlatoani of the great city. Sit down then, and be at peace; for presently the king will come from the lake, and speak to his brother. Techeechee will go to the wall and look out. The big tiger,—the dog,—Pepo."—He had already acquired the dog's name, or as near an approach to it as his organs could overmaster, and was not a little pleased, when the animal, raising his head at the sound, stalked amicably towards him, rubbing his nose against him in token of good-will. "Pepo! amigo, friend, good rascal!" he said, affectionately, but not without some nervousness—"very pretty Pepo, Techee-

chee's brother. Guatimozin is the Young Eagle's brother; Techeechee will be Pepo's!" Then, Befo having returned to Juan, he continued, "Let not Pepo roam through the garden; the watchmen on the walls would think him a tiger escaped from his cage, and shoot him with arrows. This is the Pool of the Full Moon: here the king will come to his brother."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Besides these ornaments and a thousand similar, the animal kingdom was made to add a charm, and, as it soon appeared, a horror to the royal garden ; for Juan had no sooner left the pool, than he

beheld, besides a thousand birds of every dye among the trees, some half dozen deer frisking over the glades, and heard at but a little distance, the roar of fiercer animals, such as came to his ears, while he was yet on the lake.

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

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

He soon found himself among a maze of copses, among which were scattered divers cages or baskets, of great strength, secured to the trunks of trees, and little paddocks equally strong, each containing some ferocious or untameable beast, many of them brought from the most distant provinces. Thus he beheld,—besides an abundant display of pumas or mitzlis, (the maneless lion,) jaguars, wolves, ounces, and wild dogs,—the bison of Chihuahua staggering in his pen, the antelope or prong-horn of the north, and even the great bear from the

ridges of the Oregon or Rocky Mountains. The tapir of Guatemala rolled by his fenny pool, and the peccary herded hard by. Here were apes, ant-eaters, porcupines, and a thousand other animals; and among them, imprisoned with the same jealous care, in suitable cages, were the reptiles of the country,—lizards and adders, and all the family of the Crotalus, from the common rattlesnake of America to that frightful one of Mexico and South America, which has been distinguished as especially the Horrid. Here was the phosphorescent *cencoatl*, whose path through the bushes and grass by night is said to be indicated by the gleaming light of his body; the *tlilcoa*, or great black serpent of the mountains, and the still more formidable and gigantic *canauhcoatl*, or Boa-Constrictor, which, like his neighbour, the cayman or crocodile, from the same boiling fens of the coast, made his prey upon the largest stags, and even human beings. With these were many smaller snakes, distinguished for their beauty, and sometimes their docility, some of which latter, entirely harmless, were allowed to crawl about at liberty.

It would require a book by itself, to particularize and describe all the members of this fearful convocation of monsters; of which it was afterwards written by Bernal Diaz, that when the beasts and reptiles were provoked and irritated, so as to howl and hiss together, 'the palace seemed like hell itself.' It is very certain that Befo lost much of his dignity of carriage at the mere sight of such assembled terrors, creeping along reluctantly and with draggling tail; and Juan himself was not without some sensations of alarm, as he found himself now startled by the growl of an angry mitzli, now perturbed by the sudden rustling of a boa among the dried reeds of his couch. The rattlesnakes shook their castanets at his approach, the

cayman tumbled, with a sudden plunge, into his muddy pool, the wolf showed his sharp teeth, and the ape darted towards him from the tree, with a wild, chattering, and half hostile scream. But he had remarked that the little fawn directed its course immediately through the thickest of the assemblage; and if that circumstance did not convince him of the safety of the path, he was certainly ashamed to show less courage than the young of a doe. He therefore trudged onwards, and, in a few moments, exchanged the scene for one less frightful, though not less striking.

He was now among the birds of Mexico. A grove,—it might have seemed a forest,—of lofty trees, was covered over with a curious contrivance of nets, some of which were confined to their tops, while others were made to surround the shrubbery at their roots, in all which were confined the noisy prisoners. Other nets were flung over little pools, whose banks and surface were enlivened by the presence of water-fowl. In some places cages were hung upon the trees, containing the more precious or unmanageable captives. Through this grove one might penetrate in all conceivable directions, and seem to be confined along with its feathered inhabitants, and yet be really separated from them by the nets.

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

If curiosity and a mere love of barbarous display, without other motive, had collected together in the gardens of Mexico her beasts and reptiles, utility had some little influence in the selection of her birds. Their feathers were devoted to a thousand

purposes of ornament, and among others, to the construction of those very singular Mosaic works, or pictures, which have won the admiration even of European painters and virtuosos. But while thus providing for the supply of one of the most elegant of wants, the Mexican kings secured to themselves the means of adding the loveliest and most natural feature to their gardens. It would be impossible to convey any just idea of the splendid creatures that went wandering and leaping, like sunbeams, among the leaves and over the grass. Eagles and kites sat on the trees, and storks, herons, and flamingos stalked through the pools. Here the macaw flashed, screaming, through the boughs; there the wood-pigeon sat cooing by his mate. The little *madrugador*, or early-riser, the happiest of his species, who chirps up his companions, when the morning-star peeps from the horizon, repeated his jovial note; the white-sparrow, the calandra, the cardinal, the sable-and-golden oriole, and the little spotted tiger-bird, added their charming voices; and the Centzontli, or mocking-bird, as it is trivially called, for it is worthy of a name much more poetical and dignified, whistled and sang with such a power and variety of melody, as left all other songsters in the back-ground. The little *chupa-rosas*,—rose-pickers, or humming-birds,—darted about from blossom to blossom, needing and acknowledging no bonds save those of attachment to their favourite flowers.

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

CHAPTER V.

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

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

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

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

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

She was of that age, which, in our northern climes would have constituted her a girl, but which, in a tropical region, entitled her to the name of woman. Her figure was neither mean nor low, but of such exquisite proportions as, in these days of voluntary degeneration, are seldom found except

among the children of nature. Her skin was, for her race, wonderfully fair; and yet there were, even among the men of Mexico, skins much lighter than those of some of the Spaniards, of which Guatimozin was a famous example. Her dress was similar in fashion to that of the other damsels, but consisted of many more garments, according to the mode of the very wealthy and noble maidens, who were accustomed to wear one cueitl over another, each successive one being shorter than the preceding, so that the borders of each could be distinguished. Thus, when they were of different colours, as was often the case, the whole figure, from the ankles to the waist, seemed enveloped in one voluminous garment, distinguished by broad horizontal stripes, exceedingly gay and brilliant. The colours upon the garments of this maiden were of a more modest character, and richness was given to them rather by borders singularly embroidered in gold and gems, than by any splendour of tints. A little vest or bodice of very peculiar fancy was worn over the shoulders and bosom, secured by a girdle that might have been called a chain, since it was composed of links of gold. Her arms were bare like the others', and her feet, not entirely naked, as was the case with the rest, were protected by a sort of pretty shoes, too complete to be called sandals, and yet too low to be mocasins. With this graceful figure, was a face, singularly sweet and even beautiful, with eyes so broad, so large, so dark, so lustrously mild and saintlike in expression, that they rivalled those of the young fawn she was caressing, and perhaps, more than the trivial circumstance presently to be mentioned, had contributed to obtain for her a name, by which her countrymen seemed to compare her to the lights of heaven. Among the gold ornaments and gems of emerald and ruby, with which her hair was interwoven in

braids, was a large jewel of pearls, the rarest, and therefore the most precious, of trinkets in Tenochtitlan. It was in the form of a star, to which it bore as much resemblance among the sable midnight of her hair, as does the snowy blossom of the great Magnolia amid the dusky obscurity of its evergreen boughs.

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

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

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

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

she had failed to secure around the neck of the favourite, said artlessly, and yet with both dignity and decision,

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

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

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

"Guatimozin will drive the wicked from the land," said Zelahualla, mildly. "Has my lord the Great Eagle forsaken his wicked people, and will he yet cling to their gods? After a time, Centeotl, the mother of heaven and the earth, will prevail over Mexitli, and redeem men from sorrow: then will men bleed no more on the pyramids, but flowers and fruits will be the only sacrifices demanded

by heaven. How is it with the gods of Spain? do they not call for victims for ever? The gods of our land are more just and merciful."

"Alas," said Juan, "this is a delusion brought upon you by our sinful acts, not by any defects of our holy religion. Know, Zelahualla, that there are no gods but ONE, and He is both just and merciful, —the god alike of the heathen and the Christian. But of this I will not speak to you now; though perhaps I may never have opportunity to speak again. If death should come upon you suddenly, call then, in that grievous hour, upon the name of the Christian's God, and he will not refuse to hear you, who are in ignorance, and therefore sinless. And wear upon your neck this cross, given to me by one who was a beloved friend." (It was the gift of Magdalena.) "Look upon it with reverence, and heaven may vouchsafe a miracle in your favour. Let it not be forgotten, when danger comes to you."

The spirit of the Propaganda had infected the minds of all the Spaniards in America. The ambition of conversion was inseparably linked with that of conquest; and on all occasions, except those of actual battle, the rage of making proselytes was uppermost in the minds of many. This was undoubtedly fanaticism, and, in the case of the fierce and avaricious, it developed itself with all the odious features of superstition. With a few of more gentle and kindly natures, it was a nobler and more benignant passion. While others sought proselytes for the glory of the church, these thought only of doing good to man. The best, the most enthusiastic and successful missionaries, were those whose efforts were prompted by affection. The first impulse, therefore, of Juan, who had long since felt and cherished, even among distant deserts, a strong interest in the fate of this young princess, was to

secure to her the blessings of salvation, which his religious instruction could not lead him to hope for any one dying in unbelief. It was a consequence and evidence of affection; but a still stronger proof was given, when he drew from his breast a little silver cross, which, up to this moment, he had treasured with the most jealous regard, and proffered it to Zelahualla. It was, as has been mentioned, the gift of Magdalena, presented before the evil acts of Hilario and Villafana had interrupted the affection fast ripening in Juan's heart, and accepted because it possessed little value beyond that imputed by consecration and superstition. It was, indeed, as Magdalena had told him, the gift of her deceased mother, and she had always been taught to believe it possessed some of the extraordinary virtues of a talisman. In these virtues Juan was sufficiently benighted to believe; and it was perhaps for this reason, rather than from any grateful memory of the giver, that he had from that day worn it in secret upon his bosom, so that it had even escaped the hands of his jailers in Mechoacan, and from the eyes of his Spanish companions. It was a proof of the pure and disinterested nature of his regard for the Indian princess, as well as of his reliance upon its heavenly protection, that he could rob himself of a relic so prized, in order that its presence might secure to her the benefits of a belief she neither understood nor professed.

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

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

"Is it possible," thought Juan, while flinging the chain of silver beads by which it was secured

round his neck, "that a creature so beautiful and so good—so pure, so innocent, so lovely to the eye and the thought—should be really a pagan and barbarian?"

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

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

to begin at his sandals; and his arms, otherwise naked, were ornamented up to the elbow in a similar way. On the whole, his appearance was highly formidable and impressive, and not the less so that many marks of blood, crusted about his person, as well as divers rents in his spotted hauberk, told how recently and how valiantly he had borne his part in the terrors of conflict.

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

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

The person of the Lord of Death was at first unknown to Juan; but he beheld enough in his visage to convince him it was not that of a friend. Still, he knew too much of the almost slavish reverence with which even the highest nobles regarded their king and the child of a king, to apprehend any danger from the warrior's wrath. In this belief he was justified by the act of the barbarian, who, perceiving Zelahualla look towards him with surprise, released the weapon from his grasp, and sinking into the lowest obeisance of humility, kissed the

earth at her feet. Then rising and surveying her with a melancholy, but deeply respectful look, he said,

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

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

Thus summoned, and thus dismissed, Juan withdrew his eyes from the beaming and singularly engaging countenance of the maiden, and looked to the Lord of Death, as if to signify his readiness to depart. But the Lord of Death seemed for a moment to have lost his powers of locomotion. He remained gazing upon the princess with an aspect increasing in gloom, and once or twice seemed as if he would have spoken something in anger and reprehension. Yet deterred by the divinity of royalty that hedged about her, or more probably by the divinity of her beauty, he roused up at last, and, after making another deep reverence, which was as if a lion had bowed down at the feet of a doe, he strode away without speaking, followed by Juan and Techeechee.

From Techeechee Juan learned what he had in in part gathered from the obscure expressions of the

noble: He was summoned to witness the coronation of the young king in form before the assembled Mexicans, on the consecrated hill of Chapoltepec, on which occasion he was to be honoured and his person made sacred, by the king bestowing on him the title of friend and brother.

The path led Juan as before through the royal menagerie; and while passing among the wild beasts, Techeechee signified to the Christian that the presence of Befo among the Mexicans would subject him to much difficulty, if not danger; and would certainly, the moment he was seen, produce a confusion in the assemblage, indecorous to the occasion, and highly displeasing to the king and the Mexican dignitaries. To this Juan justly assented, and not knowing in what other manner he could dispose of his faithful attendant, he agreed, at Techeechee's suggestion, to confine him in one of the several empty cages, wherein he was assured and believed, he would remain in safety. This being accomplished, and not without trouble, he endeavoured with caresses to reconcile the animal to his novel imprisonment, and then left him.

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

At a signal from Masquazateuctli, they seized their paddles and began to urge the piragua towards the water-gate of the wall, and Techeechee

leaping into the little canoe, Juan prepared to follow after him. He was arrested by the Lord of Death, who touched his arm, though not rudely, and looking into his face for awhile, with an expression in which anger seemed to struggle with melancholy, said,

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

"In heaven, if it becomes me to say so—certainly, at least, in the grave," replied Juan, in some surprise. "In this capture, or this rescue, as I may call it, the king will bear witness, I did not myself concur; for such concurrence I esteemed unbecoming to my state as a Christian and Spaniard. Yet I am not the less grateful to Guatimozin, and I acknowledge he has given me a life."

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

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

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

"What then should you look for in Mexico, but shelter and food?—a house to hide you from the angry men of Spain, and bread to eat in your hiding-place? Where are the quiver and the maca-

na? Will the king's brother fight the king's enemies?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Juan followed, not a little troubled and displeased by the complexion and tone of the menace, and stepping into the canoe, was soon impelled from the garden. He perceived the piragua floating hard by, and the Lord of Death standing erect among the rowers. As soon as the canoe drew nigh, the

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

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

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

Late in the afternoon, and when the mists were thickest, and the hues of the fields most mournful, a single individual passed from that gate at which Juan Lerma, eight or nine weeks before, had ter-

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

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

Thus muttered the distracted Camarga, for it was he who gave vent to such troubled expressions. Some of these were uttered so loudly, that they

seemed to reach the ear of the fugitive, who turned round, looked back for a moment, and then diving into a misty hollow, was for a short time concealed from his eyes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the sound of a name, so seldom pronounced in these lands, the lady rose from the rock, on which she had suffered herself to be seated, although it was observable that she showed no symptoms of surprise. She gazed fixedly at Camarga for an instant, and a dark frown gathering on her brows, she turned to depart, without reply. Camarga, however, detained her, and would have spoken; but no sooner did she feel his hand laid upon her mantle than she turned suddenly round, with a look of inexpressible fierceness, saying, with the sternest accents of a voice always strikingly expressive,

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

"Ay—I do," replied Camarga, trembling, yet less

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

"Pardon comes not without punishment," said Magdalena, sternly; "and I would not that it should: and for penitence,—the moaning regret that exists without torture and suffering,—know that it is but a mockery. Kill thy friend, and repent,—yet dream not of paradise. Scourge thyself, die on the rack or gibbet, and await thy fate in the grave. Begone; or rest where thou art, and follow me no more."

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

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

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

thee away, as would the moans of a coming pestilence. Hear me then, friar, and then begone from me."

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

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

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

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

"Know, father," she said, not once doubting that she had a true father of the church before her, "that it was my misfortune never to have known the kindness and care of a parent."

"Let that be passed," said Camarga, hurriedly. "Speak not of the sins of thy youth, a thousand times confessed, and a thousand times absolved. Speak of thy coming to the island,—of thy broken vows,—thy—" But here perceiving that Magdalena started with a sort of affright, at finding how far his knowledge had anticipated her divulgements, he continued, with better discretion, "Thus much

do I know—*how* I know, ask not; and yet thou mayst be told, too, that much of thy fate was interwoven with that of Villafana."

"*My* fate, and that of Villafana!" cried Magdalena, with a withering look of contempt. But instantly changing to a more submissive air, she exclaimed, "My *story*, indeed, father, but not my fate. If he have confessed to you, then do you know enough,—perhaps all. He told you, then, that his avarice, gratified at the expense of a horrible crime,—the destruction of the ship, and the lives of all within it, abbess, nuns, sailors, and all, —was the cause of all my calamities, since it was my hard fate not to perish with the rest. He robbed the ship of the golden and silver church-vessels, when we were near to the port, and made his escape to the shore, leaving us to sink in the midst of a storm then rising. Our pilot having no hope but in running upon the shore, then within sight, ran the vessel among certain rocks, where it was beaten to pieces. Father, it chanced to be my fate, and mine alone, to be plucked out of that roaring sea, by one to whom, when lying in a gulf ten times more hideous, I refused to stretch out my hand. Father! last night a word from my lips would have saved the life of Juan Lerma, and I did not speak it!"

"Dwell not on this," said Camarga, sternly. "Rather thank heaven that thou wert rendered unable by any exercise of criminal love, to preserve on the earth's surface a wretch, at whose footstep it shuddered."

"Hah!" cried Magdalena, starting up in a transport of indignation, and sending daggers from her eyes, "who art thou, that speakest so falsely and foully of Juan Lerma? Wert thou, instead of a pattering friar, a canonized saint in heaven, still

wert thou but a thing of dross and earth, compared with him thou malignest!"

Before Camarga could rebuke this burst of passion, she sank, as before, to the earth, weeping afresh; for she was in that pitiable state of mental feebleness, in which life seems only to continue in impulses,—a chain of convulsions and exhaustions. "Alas, father," she continued, with sobs, "you have been taught, like the rest, to misconceive and belie the best and most unfortunate of men;—for such is Juan Lerma;—and you have perhaps joined with the rest to compass his destruction. Has he wronged you? no—you have imagined a wrong. Has he wronged Cortes? no—he has wronged no one; but the ear of Cortes was open to his enemies. Hear me, father, and while you condemn me, listen to the refutation of slander. Father, when I opened mine eyes to the light, and in the presence of him who had saved me, I forgot my vows; nay, I thought that heaven had absolved them in the wreck, and ordained that I should be happy in a new existence. Never before had I looked upon the world, and the people of the world,—never before had I looked upon Juan Lerma. When had I seen one smile upon me with affection? Father, for a second such smile, I would have moaned again on the wreck, seeing my companions swept from me one by one. I grew cunning and deceitful, and when they asked me of the ship and people, I told them falsehoods, lest they should bring me the veil and the priest, and carry me from his presence. Alas! and my deceit availed not; he smiled no more; and when Hilario spoke of affection—affection for me,—Juan Lerma withdrew without a sigh, without a struggle."

"Saints of heaven!" cried Camarga, starting with horror, gasping for breath, and, in the sense

of suffocation, forgetting his assumed character so much as to fling back the cowl that had concealed his features. "Dost thou speak me the truth? On thy life,—on thy hopes of heaven's forgiveness, —on thy love even for this lost, perhaps this dead, youth,—I charge thee speak me the truth. Went there no more than this between you? And Juan Lerma loved you not? and Villafana belied ye both? And you are not—"

He paused in agitation, unable to utter another word; and Magdalena, surprised as much at his extraordinary interest in her story, as well as confounded by the absence of the tonsure, and the glittering of an iron gorget about his throat, seemed for a moment unable to answer his questions. But summoning her spirits at last, she said,

"Thou art not a priest, but a layman, a stranger, and a man of sin! But be who thou wilt, friend or foe, thou knowest now enough of my history to be entitled to know all. Never did man couple my name with shame, and think of any but him who died under the dagger of Villafana. As for Juan Lerma, not even Cortes, his bitterest enemy, would dare accuse him of a deed of dishonour. Stranger, if thou art interested in the betrayed and murdered Juan, know at least that he died innocent of any wrong to Magdalena."

"Now God be praised for this good word!" said Camarga, dropping on his knees, and speaking with what seemed a distraction of fervour and delight: "God be praised that I may not think, at my death-hour, that my sins have caused among my children the crime of incest! God be praised! God be praised!"

"Incest! *Thy* children!" exclaimed Magdalena, wildly. "What art thou? What is this thou sayst?"

"What do I say? and why need I say it?" cried Camarga, springing up and wringing his hands—"have we not slain him among us? Oh, wretched Magdalena, if, by thine influence, he was brought to this pass, know that thou hast slain thine own brother!"

At this strange and exciting revelation, Magdalena, who had, in the ecstacy of expectation, seized upon Camarga's hands with a convulsive grasp, uttered a scream, wild, loud, and thrilling, and yet how unlike to that which rose from her breaking heart in the prison! It was some such cry as might be supposed to come from a despairing Christian, who finds that the gates, which he thinks are conducting him to hell, have suddenly ushered him into the walks of paradise. It mingled fear and astonishment with joy, but joy predominant over the others; and though it sounded as if coming from a bursting heart, it was as if from one bursting in the overbound and expansion of a breast released from a mountain of oppression. It echoed over the lake, and seemed to have called up the spirits thereof; for before its last hysterical echo had vibrated on the ear, there sprang up, as if they had risen from the earth or the waters, six or seven athletic barbarians, flourishing heavy macanas, who rushed at once upon the pair.

At the sight of such unexpected and formidable antagonists, though taken entirely by surprise, Camarga snatched his concealed sword from the scabbard, leaped with great intrepidity betwixt Magdalena and the nearest savage, who seemed the leader of the party, and made a blow at him, while calling to her,

"Fly! fly! and tell Cortes that thy brother—" But his lips finished not the sentence. Whether it was that he was rendered helpless by long continued disease, was embarrassed by the friar's cas-

sock, or was really unskilful in the use of weapons, it is certain that his blade dropped harmless on the macana of the warrior. Before he could recover his guard, the battle-axe of the Mexican fell upon his head with deadly violence, and he rolled, to all appearance a dying man, on the ground.

At the same instant, another warrior clutched upon Magdalena, who, though pale as death, and agitated by a long succession of passions, yet drew the dagger she always carried at her girdle, and aimed it at the breast of the infidel. Before it could do him any harm, it was snatched out of her hand, and she herself caught up as by the grasp of a giant, in the arms of the leader, and hurried to the water. In an instant more, she was placed in a piragua, which her capturers drew from a reed-brake hard by, and secured, though not rudely, beyond the possibility of further resistance, among the infidels. They caught up their paddles, uttered a wild yell, and the next moment dashed from the shore, and were hidden among the mists of the lake.

CHAPTER VII.

Are the refinements and delicate sensibilities of the spirit confined to the highborn and polished? They are undoubtedly the offspring of nature: Education supplies their place only by the substitutes of affectation. Though poverty may crush, though wretchedness and evil habits may corrupt and extinguish them, yet they throb in the breasts of the lowly, during the days of youth, and are not always banished even by the rigours of manhood. They dwell under the painted lodge of the barbarian, and they burn even in the heart of the benighted heathen.

Let us fancy the moonlight streaming over the lake of Tezcuco. The moon is in her first quarter, and the evening-star, almost her rival in lustre and magnitude, precedes her in the blue paths of the west. The golden radiance of sunset trembles no more on the mountain peaks; but the thin vapours floating through the zenith, are yet gleaming faintly with the last expiring glories of day. The birds are at rest in the garden of Mexico,—all save the little madrugadores, that yet chirp merrily in the trees, and the centzontli, who leaves her ravishing melody, to mock them with their own music, made yet more musical. The breeze sleeps among the boughs, or it stirs only through the poplar leaves, and its rustling sound is mingled with the hum of a thousand nocturnal insects. In such a night, one

forgets that man is not an angel. We see not the frown of malevolence in the sky; we hear not the step of the betrayer on the grass; nor does the dew-drop, falling from the leaf, admonish us of the tears that are streaming, hard by, in sorrow. In such a night, the feelings of the kind are kindest, the thoughts of the pure, purest; youth gathers about it the mantle of hope, and hope whispers in the voice of affection. At such a time, it is good to look into the hearts of the youthful, and forget the excitements of years. A draught from the waters of Clitorius was fabled to extinguish the thirst for wine.* He who can creep into the bosoms of the young, and drink of the fountain of innocent affections, will turn with loathing from the impure and maddening currents, that convert the human family into a race of moral Bacchanals.

Can we think that among the worshippers of the ferocious Mexitli, and the fierce invaders of his people, there were none with natures worthy of a better belief, and a nobler cause? Destiny had thrown together two, at least, whose spirits were but little tainted with the evil of their place and their day,—in whom, perhaps, feeling rather than reason, had set a talisman that left them incorruptible. A good heart is to man what the galvanic bar of the philosopher was to the ship's copper-sheathing. It gives this protection, at least, that, through the whole voyage of life, it preserves the integrity of the vessel. The barnacle and the remora will indeed deaden its course, but the metal remains clean and bright: the billows of the world waste their corrosive powers only on the protector. Morality itself is two-fold; it is of the head, and of the heart. The first belongs to the philosopher, the

* Clitorio quicunque sitim de fonte levarit
Vina fugit. *Metam. Lib.* xv.

second to the poet. The one is an abstraction of reason; the other an exhortation of passion. The morality of the head is the only one that is just; but it is loveliest and best when the heart enforces its precepts. With good hearts, Juan Lerma and the princess of Mexico, moved among the corruptions of superstition, uncorrupted; and preserved to themselves, unabated and unsullied, the pure and gentle feelings, which nature had showered upon them at their birth.

The moon, falling aslant upon the garden, lighted the countenances of the young Spanish exile and the orphan child of Montezuma, as they rested upon the summit of a little artificial mound, ornamented with carved stone seats and rude statuary, constructed for the purpose of overlooking the walls. The visage of the Christian was illumined by pensive smiles, and his lips breathed gently and fervently the accents that were sweetest to the ears of the Indian maiden. But did he discourse of worldly affection and passion to one so ignorant and artless? A nobler spirit animated the youth. He spoke of the faith of Christians, and laboured with more than the zeal, though not perhaps with the wisdom of the missionary, to impress its divine truths upon the mind of his hearer. If his arguments were somewhat less cogent and logical than might have been spoken, it must be remembered that his religion was like that which will perhaps belong to the majority of Christians to the end of the world,—a faith of the heart, which the head has not been accustomed to canvass.

He directed her eyes to the moon, to the evening star, and to those other celestial wanderers, by which the heart of man was 'secretly enticed,' even before the days of the perfect man of Uz.

"They are the little bright heroes that hang down from the house of Ometeuctli, king of the city of

heaven," said the poor infidel,—"all save Meztli," (the moon) "who is the king of night, brother of Tonatricli," (the sun) "god of the burning day. This is what they say of the two gods: There were men on the earth, but wicked: the ancient gods, the sons of Ipalnemoani killed them. Then Ometeuctli sent forth from the city of heaven his sons, who descended to Mictlan,—the dark hell,—by the road that leads between the Fighting Mountains, and the Eight Deserts,—and stole the bones of men, that Mictlanteuctli had heaped up in his cavern. The sons of Ometeuctli sprinkled the bones with their blood; and these men lived again, and the sons of Ometeuctli were their rulers and fathers. But the earth was dark,—it was night over the world, and the only light was the fire which they kindled and kept burning in the vale of Teotihuacan. The sons of Ometeuctli pitied the men they had revived; and, to give them light, they burned themselves in the fire. Ometeuctli, their father, then placed them in the sky,—Tonatricli the first born, to be the sun, Meztli to be the moon, and the others to be stars. So they hang in heaven, turned to fire: and men built pyramids to them, on the place of burning, Micoatl, the Field of Death.* They are very good gods, for they shine upon us."

"Forget these idle fables," said Juan, with a gentleness much more judicious than any zeal could have been. "Forget, too, Mexitli, Painalton, Quetzalcoatl, Centeotl, and the thousand vain beings of imagination, with which your priests have peopled the world. Think only of the great *Teotl*, whom you have called Ipalnemoani,—the great God, the only God,—for there is no other than He,

* The vale of San Juan de Teotihuacan, where stand the great pyramids of the Sun and Moon, and the smaller mounds erected to the Stars.

and the rest are but fables. Yonder moon and stars are not divinities, but great globes like this on which we live; and to worship them is a sin—it angers Ipalnemoani, who is the only God,—the Creator,—whom all men worship, though under different names. Worship but Ipalnemoani, and in mode as I will tell thee, and thou art already almost a Christian."

"But is not Christ another god of the Spaniards?" said the maiden, doubtfully.

"The Son of God, a portion of God, and God himself," replied the Christian, lanching at once into all the theological metaphysics with which he was acquainted, and succeeding in confounding the mind of the poor barbarian, without being very sensible of the confusion of his own. But if he could not teach her how to distinguish between categories, not reducible to order and consistency by the poor aids of human language, he was able to interest her in the fate and character of the divine Redeemer, by no other means than that of relating his history. And it is this, to which men must chiefly look for instruction, belief, and renovation, without reference to dogmas and creeds; for here all find the unanimity of belief and feeling, which entitles them to the claims of fraternity.

When Juan had excited her sympathy in the character of the Messiah, he began to discourse upon the object and the ends of his mission. But unfortunately the doctrine of original sin, with which he set out, had in it something extremely repugnant to the rude ideas of the child of nature. It inferred a native wickedness in all, to be banished only by belief; and it seemed at once to place *her* in an humble and degraded light, in the eyes of the young Christian.

"What has Zelahualla done," she said, with

maidenly pride, "that the king's brother should make her out wicked?"

At this application of the doctrine, Juan was somewhat staggered in his own belief. He looked at the mild eyes of the catechumen, beaming as from a spirit without stain and without guile, and he said to himself, 'How can this be? for she has known no sin?' His imagination wandered among the moral and religious precepts stored in his memory, and settled at last with the triumph of a controversialist, as well as the satisfaction of a Christian, upon the first rules of the decalogue,—broken in ignorance, and therefore he doubted not, easily atoned. He told her that the worship of false gods was a sin, and homage shown to idols of wood and stone a deep iniquity; and these being common to all benighted people, he satisfied himself, and perhaps her, that they were unanswerable proofs of the existence of natural depravity. But a stronger light was thrown upon the maiden's mind, when he showed its effects in the scene of bloodshed, commenced long since in the days of her sire, and now about to be terminated in a war of massacre.

"He of whom I speak," he said, "came into the world, in order that these things should cease. He offers men peace and good-will; and when men acknowledge him and follow his commands, peace and good-will will reign over the whole world. Think not, because my countrymen are sometimes unjust, and often cruel, that our divine Leader is the less divine. These are the wickednesses of their nature, not yet removed by full or just belief; for the belief of some is insufficient, of others perverted, and some, though they profess it, have no belief at all. Know, then, that our religion, justly considered, and with a pure mind not selfish, has its great element in *affection*. It teaches love of

heaven, and, equally love of man. It denounces the wrong-doer, who is as a fire, burning away the cords that bind men together in happiness; and it exalts the good man, who unites his fellows in affection. It punishes vicious deeds and forbids evil thoughts; for with these, there can be no happiness and peace. This it does upon earth; and it prepares for the world beyond the grave, in which no human passion or infirmity can disturb the perfect purity and enjoyment, of which the immortal spirit is capable."

Thus he conversed, and thus, guided by the native bias of his mind, dwelt upon that feature of our heavenly faith, of which it requires no aid of enthusiasm to perceive the amiableness and beauty. "*Peace and good-will to all!*"* There is a charm in the holy sentence, at once the watchword and synopsis of religion, that thrills to the hearts even of those, who, to obtain the base immortality of renown, are willing to exchange it for the warcry of the barbarian, the *Væ victis!* of a hero.

Thus far, then, the heart of the Indian maiden was softened, and tears,—not of penitence, for it never entered her mind that she had anything to repent,—tears of gentle and pleasurable emotion stole into her eyes, as she listened to tenets explained by one so revered and beloved.

"The religion that my lord loves, is good; and Zelahualla shall know no other."

"God be praised for this then," said Juan, fer-

* According to the Vulgate, the good tidings of great joy offered peace *only* 'to men of good-will,'—*pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis*,—which, whether the translation be right or wrong, undoubtedly destroys the sublimity of the conception, by narrowing down the benevolence of the deity, and deprives of the blessing of peace that majority of men, who, *not* being men of good-will, have the greatest need of it.

vently; "for now is the desire of my heart fulfilled, mine errand accomplished; and I will die, when I am called, cheerfully; knowing that thou wilt follow me to heaven. Now do I perceive that heaven works good in our misfortunes. The miseries that I have lamented,—the hatred of Don Hernan, the malice of my foes, my downfall, my condemnation,—what were they but the steps which have led me to effect thy conversion and salvation? God be praised for all things! and God grant that the seeds of the true faith, now sown in thy heart, may grow and flourish, till transplanted into paradise!"

Thus saying, Juan fell upon his knees, and invoked blessings upon the proselyte, who knelt beside him, confirmed greatly in her new creed by the evident pleasure her conversion, if it could be so called, had given him.

"Know now, Zelahualla," he said, as he raised her from the ground, and folded her in an embrace that had more of the gentle affection of a brother, than the ardent passion of a lover, "that now thou art dearer to me than all the world beside. While thou wert a worshipper of idols, I wept for thee; now that thou art a Christian, I love thee; and through this storm of war, that is gathering around thee, I will remain to protect thee, and, if need be, to perish by thy side."

"What my lord is, that will I be," said the young princess, with such looks of confiding affection as belong to the unsophisticated child of nature—"Yes, Zelahualla will be a Christian,—Juan's Christian,"—for she had been long since instructed to pronounce the name of her young friend—"and she will think of none but him—"

She paused suddenly, and disengaged herself from the arms of the Castilian, who, looking round, beheld almost at his side, surveying him with manifest satisfaction, the young king of Mexico. The

gorgeous mantles of state were upon his shoulders, the golden sandals and *copilli*, or crown, bedecked his feet and head; and though no sceptre-bearers or other noble attendants followed at his heels, his appearance was not without dignity, and even majesty.

He stepped forward, and taking the princess by the hand, said to Juan,

"The Centzontli is the king's sister;—thus said I, when Montezuma lived no more; for the Spaniards have killed the sons of the king, and who remains to be her brother? It is enough—the Eagle of the east is the king's brother.—The king will speak with his brother."

At this signal, the maiden stooped humbly over Guatimozin's hand, kissed it with mingled love and respect, and immediately stole from the mound.

"My brother beheld me among my people," said Guatimozin, as soon as she was gone. "What thinks he of the warriors of Mexico?"

"They are numerous as the sands and leaves. But hear the words of him who knows the Spaniards as well as the Mexicans. Before a blow is struck, speak good things to Cortes. Acknowledge thyself the vassal of Spain, and rule for ever."

"Is my brother yet a Spaniard? and does he tell me this thing?"

"If I anger thee, yet must I speak! for I speak with the heart of one grateful to thyself and friendly to the race of Montezuma. As a true Spaniard, I should counsel thee to resist; for resistance would excuse rapacity. How wilt thou fight upon this island, with thine enemies round about thee? They will sit down and sleep, while the king perishes with hunger."

"The houses are garners," replied Guatimozin, proudly: "There is food provided for many days;

and how shall the big ships see the peasant's canoe, when it brings corn in the night-time?"

"The lake is broad, but thou knowest not of all the craft and skill of thy foes. Think then of *this:* Can a man drink the water of the salt lake and canals? Are the pipes of Chapoltepec under the mountains? The Spaniards will tear them up from the causeways; and the warriors will despair for drink."

"Is Guatimozin a fool?" exclaimed the royal barbarian, with a laugh. "The rains have begun to fall; and for seven* months, the sky will be my fountain. Is not Malintzin mad, that he should besiege me at this season? He is not a god!"

"Were it for thrice seven months," said Juan, "be assured that Cortes will still remain by thy city, awaiting its downfall."

"And what shall be done by the warriors of Mexico? Will they look from the island, and wring their hands, till he departs? For every grain of corn in the garners of Tenochtitlan, there is an arrow in the quivers of the warriors. Count the bones that lie in the ditches of Tacuba,—number the bearded skulls that are piled on the Huitzompan, the trophies gathered from the Spaniards in the night of their flight,—there are not so many living men in the camp of Malintzin, as perished that night when we drove them from Mexico."

"Dost thou hold, then, for nothing the two hundred thousand Tlascalans, Tezcucans, Chalquese, Totonacs, and other tribes, that follow with Cortes?"

"There are but three roads to Mexico—Can they hurt me from the shores?"

"The ships are fourteen more; and by and by, there will be no canoe that swims the lake, but will

* Mexican months, of twenty days each.

bear the soldiers of Don Hernan. Think not resistance can do aught but protract the fate of thine empire, and incense the miseries of its subjects. Its history is written. Heaven is angry with your gods and with your acts. The blood of human sacrifices, detestable in the eyes of divinity, calls for revenge. Alas, thou didst this day condemn a poor Spaniard to the altar, and thus stain thine installation with cruelty! God will punish the Mexicans for this."

The eyes of Guatimozin flashed in the moonlight with indignation.

"Is not the prisoner," he cried, "the prey of the victor? The Spaniard burns the captive in the shoulder, and makes him a slave. Which is cruel? The prisoner and the felon we give to the gods—it is good. Did the Eagle ever behold a Mexican chain men to a stake, and burn them with fire? Yet he saw Malintzin burn the Chief of Nauhtlan and the fifteen warriors, in the palace-yard, in a great fire made with Mexican bows and arrows! Which, then, is cruel?"

"This act I will not defend," said Juan, "and it was my presumption in censuring it, that made Cortes my enemy. But, prince, let us speak of these things no more, for our arguments shake not each other's minds. Let me speak of myself, for it is just thou shouldst know my resolve. I am thy friend, but I will not lift my hand against my countrymen."

The countenance of the king darkened:

"Is not the Great Eagle brave? He fears his enemies!"

"I fear *nothing*," said Juan, with conscious dignity, "else would I speak no words to lose thy favour. I will be thy prisoner, thy sacrifice, if thou wilt.—I lament the fate that is coming upon thee, but I cannot fight in thy cause."

Guatimozin eyed him earnestly, as if to read his soul; and then said, a little softly,

"The Great Eagle knows all things: he shall rest in the palace all day, and at night, speak wise things to the king."

"Neither in this can I aid thee," replied Juan, resolutely. "What I know of religion and moral duties,—nay, all that I know of civilized arts, that are not military,—this much I am free to communicate; but nothing more. I can no more help thee to fight with my knowledge, than with my arm."

This was a declaration of principles somewhat above the powers of the infidel to appreciate, and it filled him, as Juan saw, with serious displeasure. He took him by the arm, and spoke sternly and even menacingly:

"The faith of a Christian is not that of a Mexican. The Indian kills his foes and the foes of his friend: the Christian forgets his friend, when his friend is in trouble."

Juan was stung by the reproach, and replied with emphasis:

"The king took me from the prison-house of Tezcuco: the block was in waiting for me. Who talked to me of prisons and of blocks, before Olin came to the garden?"

Guatimozin grasped his hand, and spoke with impetuosity,—

"I have said the thing that was false, and my brother does *not* forget his friend. He did a good deed to Olin; why should he turn his face from Guatimozin? Was Olin in greater distress than the king, beset by enemies who cannot be counted? My brother has looked in the face of the Centzontli, my sister.—The princes of the city, and the kings of the tribes, have said, each one, 'Give me the daughter of Montezuma, and I will die for Mexico.'

But the king thought of his brother. Thus it shall be: the Great Eagle shall take the princess for his wife, and be a Mexican; and then, when Guatimozin entreats him to strike his foe, he will call upon his god of the cross,—the Mexitli of the Spaniards,—and strike with all his force. Is it not so?"

"Prince!" said Juan, sadly, "even this cannot be. According to our thoughts, there are sins of the deepest turpitude in acts which your customs cause you to esteem virtues. The Spaniard may change his country, but he cannot become the foe of his countrymen. What wouldst thou think of one of thine own people,—thy friend, thy subject—whom thou shouldst find among the Spaniards, and aiming his weapon against thee?"

"There are many thousands of them," said Guatimozin, giving way to passion. "Malintzin fights with weapons more destructive than the big thunder-pipes. He goes among the serfs that pay tribute, and he says, 'Pay no more—Is it not better to be free?' Thus he seduces them. But my brother shall think of this again. And now he shall eat and sleep."

So saying, and perhaps thinking it unwise to pursue his designs at the present moment, he drew Juan from the mound, and was leading him towards the palace, when the sound of voices and footsteps came from the bottom of the garden, accompanied by the fierce barking of Befo, who was still confined in the cage.

"Now do I remember me," said Juan, with a feeling of shame, "that I have suffered the noble animal—"

But his words were cut short by an unexpected circumstance. No sooner had his voice sounded, than a wild cry burst from a neighbouring copse, and a female figure, pursued by Mexican warriors,

rushed forwards, calling upon him by name, and by a title that had never before blessed his ears.

"Juan! Juan! my brother! oh, my brother!"

It was Magdalena,—her hair disordered and drooping in the damp air of evening, her face, as far as it could be seen in the imperfect light, pale and distracted. No sooner did her eyes behold him than she redoubled her speed, and throwing herself upon his neck, she cried, with transports of emotion, while the pursuers gathered round in no little amazement.

"Oh, Juan! my brother! pardon me and forgive me; for I am your sister,—yes, your sister, your own sister,—and I have come to die with you!"

Confounded as much by the strange declaration as by her presence, Juan endeavoured gently to disengage himself from her embrace, but all in vain. She clasped his neck with tenfold strength, weeping and exclaiming he scarce knew what; and, though much affected, he began to think that sorrow and passion had turned her brain. What therefore was his surprise, when he gathered from her incoherent exclamations, that Camarga, the masking stranger, who had, on three several occasions, betrayed such an unaccountable desire to take his life, had, even with his dying lips, pronounced them brother and sister. His heart thrilled at the thought; for his affection for the singular being whose destiny of mourning was so like his own, had ever been great, though chilled and pained by the belief of her unworthiness. He pursued the idea with a thousand questions, the answers to which provoked his curiosity, while they damped his hope. Was Camarga their father? and was he dead? What did he say? What,—no more than *this*—'He was her brother?' No more? And no one alive to confirm the story? "Alas," he said, his thoughts reverting to what he

remembered of his childhood; "this fancy has made me as distracted as thyself. Camarga was a dreamer—an evident madman. *My* father died at Isabela in the island; for was not I at his side? This cannot be, Magdalena;—deceive thyself no longer."

"Speak not to me of deceit, my brother—for my brother thou art," said Magdalena, vehemently. "Can my heart deceive me? Is it not the work of heaven, seen in our whole life? Heaven kept thee—yes, Juan, while heaven punished *me* the sin of neglected vows with the torments of unavailing affection—it kept thee from loving me as much, because thou wert my brother. Yes, this it is! The angels spoke with the lips of that man, who now lies dead on the lake-side! But what of that, Juan? We will go to Cortes—I can win thy forgiveness. Alas, alas! I could have saved thee before, but thou madest me mad. Why didst thou treat me so, Juan? I was innocent—indeed I was; and Hilario's recantation—oh believe me, I knew not of his murder, till it was accomplished! Villafana killed him from fear, for Hilario had discovered how he scuttled the ship; and thus it was that Hilario gained Villafana to corroborate the falsehoods he spoke of me. I can make all clear to thee, indeed I can.—But now, dear Juan, cast me not off again,—for you are my brother. We will go to Cortes,—he will pardon thee. We will find out the friends of Camarga, and it must needs be that we shall discover all. And then I will go to a convent again,—and then I care not what befalls me; for I shall have a brother in the world left to love me."

While Magdalena was pouring forth these wild expressions, for a time almost unconscious of her situation in the heart of the pagan city, and in the presence of so many barbarians, Guatimozin, who had looked on with an astonishment that was soon

converted into the darkest displeasure, turned to the capturers of Magdalena, who had ceased their pursuit the moment they beheld the king, and flung themselves reverently at his feet. The Lord of Death, who made the like prostration, had assumed an erect posture, in virtue of his high rank. But his looks wandered from the king to the Christian pair, whose endearments he watched with exceeding great satisfaction, and indeed with exultation.

"What is this that I see?" said the king, in a low but stern voice; "and who hath brought this woman to my garden?"

Masquazateuctli bent his head to the earth, replying with the complacency of one who has achieved a happy exploit,—

"The king made the Great Eagle of the East his brother; he took him to the hill of Chapoltepec that his people might know him, and do him honour. Shall not Masquazateuctli do a good thing to the king's brother? He was sorry because of his loneliness in the king's garden, and the Maiden of the East was afar in Tezcuco. I thought of this, and I crept to the gates of Tezcuco: and I said, 'I will take a prisoner for the king, and perhaps I shall find a maiden with white brows; which will gladden the heart of the king's brother.' Mexitli was with me. But I killed the man that came with her, for I saw she was that daughter of a god, with eyes like the full moon, of whom the king had spoken, when he came from Tezcuco alone, and my heart was very joyful. The Eagle is glad—he will not ask the king for the daughter of Montezuma!"

Guatimozin muttered a fierce interjection betwixt his teeth, but replied with dignity,

"The Lord of Death should have spoken this to the king; but if he be angry, he remembers that Masquazateuctli was Montezuma's soldier. By and

by, I will speak with him in the palace.—I have said."

The Lord of Death, thus dismissed, and not a little mortified at such insufficient thanks, beckoned to his followers and departed.

Guatimozin strode up to the Christians, and touching Juan on the shoulder, said, with a stern voice,

"What shall the king say of his brother, to the daughter of Montezuma?"

The colour rushed into Juan's cheeks; but he replied immediately, and even firmly,

"That he brings her his sister, to whom, for his own sake, he prays her to be kind and gentle."

"Does my brother tell me this?" said the king, starting. "The Great Eagle said he was alone in the world, with none of his kin remaining."

"And so I thought, until this hour," said Juan, not without embarrassment: "and now must I tell the king, that though I call this maiden my sister, and pray heaven she may prove so, yet neither she nor I have aught upon which to found our belief, but the words of one whom the Lord of Death killed, when he seized her."

Guatimozin intently eyed the maiden, who watched with painful interest the changes of his countenance and Juan's, for she understood not a word of their speech; and then said,

"Let it be so: Guatimozin will think of this. The Spanish lady is welcome—the Eagle shall speak with her a little, and then give her up to the women, that they may be good to her.—The king's house is very spacious."

He then turned gravely away, signing to the outcast pair to follow him.

They were suffered to be alone together for a brief hour, in which Magdalena, rejecting impetuously and passionately all Juan's doubts, poured out all the secrets of a life full of unhappiness, but

not of crime; and Juan himself, forgetting the weakness of all her claims of consanguinity, melted into belief, and learned to call her his sister. There were indeed certain circumstances of mystery about his birth, which might have often disturbed his thoughts, had he been of an imaginative turn. The man whom he had called and esteemed his father, had died a violent death in the islands, while Juan was yet very young. He could recollect little of him that was agreeable to remember; and all that had afterwards come to his ears, only served to chill his curiosity; all persons, who had not forgotten him, representing the elder Lerma as a most depraved and infamous man. No one knew whence he had come, or if he had any relatives left in the world; and Juan remembered well, that the planters had, on several occasions, when the unnatural parent, if parent he was, had maltreated and abandoned him, taken him away from Lerma, and comforted Juan with the assurance that the villain had undoubtedly *stolen* him from some one. It is, however, very certain that Juan never seriously thought of doubting that this man was his parent; nor would he have recalled such trivial circumstances to his mind, had he not been staggered by the impetuosity of Magdalena, and by his own feelings of affection, into a credulity almost as ample as her own. That he should desire also to find a relative in one, who, considered without reference to the weakness shown only in her love for him, was of a soul as stainless as it was noble, is not to be doubted; and such love he could be rejoiced to return. In truth, his reasons for admitting her claims were as flimsy as hers for making them, as he came to discover, when left to examine them in solitude. They made, however, a deep and lasting impression upon his mind. Perhaps the impression would have been still deeper, had the two been permit-

ted to remain longer together; but before Magdalena had yet been able to speak with composure, there came a train of maidens, bearing chaplets of flowers, and rich ornaments of feathers, giving Juan to understand, that it was the king's will his companion should now leave him.

Magdalena turned pale, when this command was announced to her by Juan, and seemed at first as if resolved never to be parted from him more. But being persuaded by Juan that she had nothing to fear—that the king was his friend—that they should certainly meet again,—she at last consented. She strode to the door—she listened to his words of farewell, and she sobbed upon his breast; and then departed with the happy but delusive hope of seeing him again on the morrow.

It was the last night of peace that ever darkened over the Mexico of the pagans.

CHAPTER VIII.

To one whose perverted imagination can dwell with pleasure on 'the pomp and circumstance of glorious war,' no better study can be recommended than the history of the siege of Mexico, which may be considered as one single battle, lasting for the space of ninety-three days, counting from the time when the different divisions of the besieging army had taken their positions in form, upon the different causeways. This does not include the period occupied in the march of these bodies from Tezcuco, and which was not devoted to inactivity. On the contrary, the Captain-General took advantage of the occasion to discipline his naval force, by sweeping over the lake from bay to bay, and town to town, destroying every piragua that made its appearance, as well as such chinampas, or floating gardens, as he could approach, and frequently by cannonading the imperial city itself. Besides this, he assaulted and took, on each occasion after a most sanguinary combat, certain fortresses upon two island rocks, one of which rose near to Iztapalapan: the other, though no longer insulated, still lies a little to the east of the republican city, and is called the Peñon, or Crag, of Montezuma.

The preparations of the Mexicans were extensive and anticipative of all the peculiar evils which they thought it in the power of their great enemy to inflict. They had cut through the causeways numberless ditches, each of which was furnished

with a light bridge, to be withdrawn, when about to fall into the power of the Spaniards; and the earth and stones thus removed, were built up before and behind the chasms, into strong ramparts, which were still further strengthened with palisades. In this manner, while opposing the greatest obstructions to the passage of the foot-soldiers, they made it impossible for horses to be brought against them,—a precaution that, for a long time, robbed the Spaniards of their greatest advantage.

The beginning of the siege of Mexico, then, lay in the struggles of the besiegers to obtain possession of the ditches, which were to be filled up, by levelling the ramparts. This was a work both of infinite danger and toil, the besieged fighting from behind the advanced barriers with unexampled resolution, and, however overpowered, never retreating beyond the ditch, until their companions had left but a single plank for their passage, which was immediately afterwards withdrawn. After this, the Spaniards were forced to overturn the first barrier into the chasm, before they could rush across the slough of mud and water, to attack the second; and all this was to be done not only against violent opposition in front, but with a most dangerous and audacious species of annoyance practised on one flank or the other, and sometimes on both. Wherever the shallows admitted, the Mexicans drove into the bottom of the lake, and at but a short distance from the dike, strong piles, to which they secured their canoes, furnished with high and thick bulwarks of planks, almost musket-proof; and from these they drove arrows, darts, and stones against the soldiers with destructive effect. Nay, with such wisdom had the young king of Mexico devised means to embarrass his adversary, that he had even secured his little flotillas from the possibility of approach, by sinking rows

of piles in the lake, parallel with the causeways, through which the brigantines could not pass, to disperse them. It was to but little purpose that Cortes battered them from a distance with his falconets; the following morning saw replaced every loss of men and canoes. The soldiers were excited to fury by an annoyance so irritating, and some were found at times frantic enough to leap into the lake, where the waters happened to be sufficiently shallow, and endeavour to carry the flotillas, sword in hand.

The narrowness and obstructed condition of the dikes making it impossible that all the forces could act upon them together, the vast multitudes of native allies were left in reserve, with the cavalry, on the shore,—where they were not idle, the numbers, as well as the boldness of the Mexicans being so great, that they frequently sent armies to the shore by night, who, at the dawn, fell upon the reserved troops with all the rancour of opponents in a civil war.

This was the condition of the war at its commencement. The grand desiderata,—the removal of the flotillas, and the profitable employment of the confederates, were not effected until Cortes had seized all the piraguas of the shore-towns, and sent them, manned with Tlascalans, against the palisaded posts, where, besides doing what execution they could upon the enemy, the allies tore away the piles, and thus admitted some of the lighter brigantines among the canoes.

Aided in this manner, the soldiers were able to advance along the several dikes, until they got possession of certain military stations, on each, which might have been called the gates of Mexico.

It has been already said, that the causeways of Iztapalapan and Cojohuacan, coming respectively from the south and southwest, united together at the

distance of less than a league from Mexico. At the point of junction, the causeway expanded into a mole or quay, where was a strong and lofty stone wall, the passage through which was contrived by the overlapping of the walls, in the manner described at Tezcuco. This rampart was defended by very strong towers and by a parapet with embrasures, from which the defenders could easily repel any enemy, inferior in strength and determination to the Spaniards. The point was called Xoloc, and when wrested from the hands of the Mexicans, became the head-quarters of Cortes.

A similar expansion of the dike of Tacuba, fortified in the same way, and at the distance of two miles from the city, and one from the shore, afforded a resting-place and garrison for the forces under Alvarado, whose first act, after reaching Tacuba, was to destroy the aqueduct of Chapoltepec, which consisted of a double line of baked earthenware pipes, carried across the lake on a dike constructed only for that purpose, and therefore so narrow and inconsiderable, that it does not appear that the Spaniards derived any advantage from the possession of it.

The division of De Olid united with that of Sandoval at the point Xoloc; the latter of whom was afterwards directed to take possession of the northern dike of Tepejacac, the remains of which may yet be traced between the city and the hill of Our Lady of Guadalupe, on which was a fortification resembling the others.

These positions being thus assumed, the Captain-General divided the fleet of brigantines among the three captains, to whom they were of vast service, by protecting the flanks of their divisions.

From this period, the siege may be considered to have been begun in form; and it was continued

with a fury of attack and resistance almost without parallel in the history of conquest. Foot by foot, and inch by inch, the invaders advanced, staining the causeways with their blood, and choking the lake with the bodies of their foes. Ditch after ditch was won and filled, and almost as often lost and re-opened. The day was devoted to battle, the night to alarms. The only periods of rest were when the daily tempests, for it was now the heart of the rainy season, burst over the heads of the combatants, as if heaven had sent its floods to efface the horrible dyes of carnage, and its thunders to drown the roar of man's more destructive artillery. Then, the exhausted soldier and the fainting barbarian flung themselves to rest upon the trodden mud of their ramparts, within sight of each other, regardless of the wrath of the elements, so much less enduring than their own.

At first, the Spaniards after winning a ditch and filling it, were content to return for the night to the fortified stations, to shelter themselves in the towers, and in miserable huts of reeds which they had constructed, from the rains, that, usually, continued until midnight. But finding that the infidels, more manly or more desperate, devoted the night to repair the losses of the day, by again opening the chasms, they denied themselves even this poor solace, and threw themselves to sleep on the spots where they fought, ready to resume the conflict at the first glimmer of dawn.

Thus, day by day, the approaches were effected, and by the end of the second month, the besiegers had advanced almost to the suburbs, which jutted out into the lake along the three causeways, supported upon foundations of piles, and sometimes piers of stone. The houses stood apart from each other, but were connected, in seasons of peace, by light wooden drawbridges, running from terrace to

terrace; so that the *streets* of these quarters may be said to have been on the tops of the houses,—and the same thing was true of the gardens. The communication below was effected always by means of canoes. Among these edifices, the water was often of sufficient depth to float the brigantines of lighter draught, which sometimes entered them, to fire the buildings, that were so many fortresses, from which the soldiers on the causeways could be annoyed.

The labours and sufferings of the besiegers were constant, and almost intolerable; yet they endured them with a patience derived from the assurance of a certain though tardy success. The toils and distresses of the Mexicans were greater, and endured with heroism still more noble, because almost without hope; and it may be said with justice of these poor barbarians, whose memory has almost vanished from the earth, that never yet did a people fight for their altars and firesides with greater courage and devotion. They saw themselves each day confined to narrow limits,—they fought the more resolutely; they beheld all the marine forces of the neighbouring towns, late their feudatories, led against them,—they sent navies of their own to chastise the insurgents, and still kept their ground against the Spaniards.

It was certain that Cortes had found in the young king an antagonist far more formidable than he had expected. The resistance at the ramparts, the sallies by night that were often made with fatal effect, the secret expeditions against the shores, and the stratagems put in execution to cripple the brigantines, all indicated, in the infidel prince, a capacity of mind worthy of his unconquerable courage. A single exploit will prove his daring and his craft. He decoyed two of the largest brigantines into a certain bay, where many

of his strongest piraguas lay in ambush among the reeds. With these, he attacked, boarded, and carried the two vessels, and had he possessed any knowledge of the management of sails, would have conducted them in safety to his palace walls. As it was, they were maintained against an overpowering force, sent to retake them, and not yielded until the captors had destroyed every Christian on board, fifty in number, as well as the sails and cordage, and cast the falconets into the lake.

Another stratagem of a still more daring character, and infinitely more fatal to the Spaniards, was conceived and executed, almost at the moment when they thought the young monarch reduced to despair. But of that we shall have occasion to speak more at length hereafter. The thousand conflicts on land and water, that marked the progress of a siege so extraordinary, have but little connexion with the adventures of the two outcasts; and we are glad of the privilege to pass them by.

CHAPTER IX.

When Magdalena was led from the presence of Juan, she was conducted through many chambers and passages, which gave her an idea of the immense extent of the palace, to the quarter especially appropriated to the women, and which was as carefully guarded from the approach of the other sex as the harem of an oriental monarch. It consisted of a series of dormitories and other small apartments, as well as a vast hall, covered with pictured tapestry and knots of flowers, in which the daily labour of the loom and spindle was shared by all, the princess and the slave alike, mingled with the more elegant occupations of embroidery and feather-painting.

But the toil of the day had been long since over, and when she entered, the maidens were amusing themselves, some talking and laughing, and others dancing to the sound of flutes, and all unconscious or heedless of the perils that were about to hem them in.

The appearance of a vision so strange, so often imagined, yet never before seen—a woman of the race of the invaders, and one at once so majestic and lovely as Magdalena—produced an immediate sensation throughout the merry crew. The dancing ceased, the music of the pipe was exchanged for a murmur of admiration, and all eyes were turned upon the novel apparition. But it was observable, that the maidens indulged in no rude demonstrations

of curiosity or surprise. They neither thronged about her, nor uttered any loud exclamations; and however ardently they gazed, when unperceived, each cast her looks modestly to the floor, the moment she found the eyes of the stranger directed upon her.

Troubled as were Magdalena's thoughts by the strangeness of her situation, and conscious of her inability to exchange a word with these new companions, she yet felt a sort of relief, and even pleasure, to find herself once more surrounded by individuals of her own sex, who, as was evident from their appearance, were neither rude in manners nor degraded in mind.

In this happier frame of feeling, she suffered herself to be conducted to a chamber, where two young female slaves attended her with refreshments of meats, fruits, and confections, and pointing to a couch of robes, upon a little platform under a canopy, left her to her meditations.

She rose from a troubled and dreamy slumber at the dawn, and waited impatiently for the moment when she should be led to Juan. The slaves again made their appearance, bearing, besides food, which they set before her, rich garments of the most splendid hues, which they desired her by signs to substitute for her monastic attire. To this she acceded, after some hesitation, thinking it needful to humour the wishes of those upon whose friendship her existence, as well as that of Juan, so obviously depended. She exchanged, at least, the gray veil for a broad mantle embroidered with feathers and gold, and placed over her other dress three several tunics, each of a different hue, and each gorgeously ornamented. Her toilet was completed when the slaves had encircled her arms and neck with jewels, and wreathed her hair with chains of gold; to all which she passively, yet impatiently, submitted.

Thus dressed and decorated, she was conducted again to the great hall, and seated upon a throne cushioned over with feathers of every hue, when, to her great surprise, she found herself the object upon whom was to be showered marks of the most extraordinary honour. The crowd of maidens was huddled in the farther end of the apartment, where they stood with downcast eyes, giving place to a female, evidently of exalted rank, who came from among them, followed by five or six girls, much more splendidly dressed than the others, one of whom bore in her arms a sleeping infant.

The Indian lady was distinguished from her attendants by apparel similar in hues and splendour to that worn by Magdalena, and she had on her head a little cap or caul of emeralds, mingled with pearls. Her face was prepossessing, her figure well proportioned, and her bearing not without dignity. Yet there was in her aspect something of trouble and hesitation, and she went through the business of salutation, or rather homage, for so it appeared, with visible reluctance. She approached the throne, and kneeling before it, took Magdalena's hand, and laid it upon her head, speaking a few words which the Christian did not comprehend. Then taking the infant from the girl who bore it, she laid Magdalena's hand upon its innocent brows, in the same manner; after which she stepped aside, and the young attendants went each separately through the same ceremony. This accomplished, she stole from the apartment, and in a few moments, the spindle rolled, the shuttle of the simple loom rattled, and the fingers of the embroiderers and feather-painters moved over their tasks.

The morning passed away, and Magdalena still expected a summons to the presence of Juan. The evening darkened, the fragrant torches were lighted, the pipe and dance were again summoned to close

the labours of the day, and Magdalena was, a second time, conducted to her chamber, to muse with fear and distrust over her singular situation.

The second day beheld the same ceremonies, succeeded by the same labours and diversions, and still not a movement indicated the approach of a messenger. She looked upon the maidens around, —their faces were grave and placid. They gazed upon her no more, except when her eyes were averted. She imagined a thousand reasons to account for her seclusion. Was her brother, notwithstanding his assurances to the contrary, in a state of as much restraint as herself? Or—was it possible?—did it not depend upon himself?—was it possible, he did not desire to see her? She thought of his slowness to admit her claim of consanguinity; she thought of the words of Camarga,—of their wildness—Had not Juan said he was insane?—of their insufficiency. Nay, she remembered that Juan spoke of *his* father, whom he well remembered; and among the tears she shed of doubt and disappointment, she blushed at the boldness and warmth with which she had advocated her claims.

Another day came,—another, and still another; and her heart sickened and her cheek grew pale with suspense and humiliation. Then impatience waxed into anger, and she stalked among the maidens with looks of determination, as if she would have commanded them to lead her from what she justly conceived to be imprisonment. But *how* command them? Her language was as the language of the gods to them, and their words were to her as unmeaning as the songs of the birds at the windows. Eyes can speak many things, but not all; and signs are of too arbitrary a nature to serve as the medium of communication betwixt two hemispheres. If she strove to depart from the chamber, she was followed by the two slaves, who seemed to

be specially devoted to her service, and who, attending her from room to room, yet arrested her with humble and supplicating gestures, when she seemed to be overstepping the limits of the harem. If she persisted, she found herself in the power of certain antique beldames, who prowled around the sacred chambers, bearing wands to indicate their authority, and who opposed themselves, though without rudeness, to further egress. If she still made her way through these, she found herself stopped by passages, in which were armed barbarians, who did not hesitate to block up the avenues with their shields and spears. In other words, she found that she was a prisoner, confined to a society as recluse, as peaceful, and perhaps as happy as that from which it had been her misfortune to be released. The pride and energy of her nature were here lost; for there was nothing with which to contend, except her feelings, and nothing to excite, save a sense of wrong, inflicted she knew not by whom, nor why.

This was precisely the state of things to tame her spirit into submission and inaction; and, almost insensibly to herself, she began to accommodate her deportment to her condition, substituting anxiety for anger, and despondence for decision. She began to think that Juan was, like herself, a prisoner; and the apprehension of his distresses weighed on her heart more heavily than the sense of her own; and, as with all her strength of mind and passion, there was a tinge of superstition running through all her thoughts, she beheld, in the singular train of calamities that had brought her so often to his side, a revelation and proof that she was ordained, finally, to rescue him from this, as well as the other ills, which oppressed him. Another thought brooded also in her bosom. Hitherto, whatsoever efforts she had made for his

good, had ministered only to his griefs; and what had they brought to *her?* From the moment in which she had first attempted deceit, by concealing the sanctity of her profession, her life had been but a history of agony and shame. Had she avowed herself, immediately after the shipwreck, the bride of the cross, Hilario had not died under the knife of the assassin, Juan Lerma had not forfeited the favour of his general, and she herself had, perhaps, closed her life in the peace with which it had begun. She began to picture to herself the sinfulness of her evasions of vows, and to consider these the causes of her sufferings. Such thoughts as these, and a thousand others, divided and harassed her mind by turns, and confounded while they tormented. But one idea never left her—and that was, the uncertainty of the fate of Juan Lerma, and the hope that it might be reserved for her to free him from the bondage of infidels. But how was this to be effected? She knew not.

Her first vague desire was to gain a friend among the grave and passionless creatures, by whom she was surrounded. She examined all their countenances, and soon fixed upon several in which she thought she could trace kindly feelings and simplicity of character. She strove also to acquire a little of their language,—an effort which she soon gave up, not so much from the difficulty of acquisition, as from the remoteness of any benefit to be derived in that way.

She perceived that the Mexican lady who, each morning, for the first fortnight of her captivity, (after which time she was seen no more,) commenced the ceremonies of salutation, so humble, and indeed to her so irksome, must be of the highest rank, —perhaps the queen of Guatimozin himself; though it seemed improbable that one so exalted would condescend to homage so servile. She was con-

scious also, that the six maidens who attended upon this princess were of no mean rank; for though they frequently remained in the hall, engaged in labour, like the rest, it was clear that the others looked upon them with the greatest deference. Of these she had long singled out one who was superior to the others in beauty and mildness of countenance; and it seemed to her that this one, in going through the morning ceremony, endeavoured to make her sensible that she did so with sincerity and feeling. Thus, besides placing Magdalena's hand on her head, she carried it also to her lips, expressing as much desire as her countenance could convey, to be esteemed the Christian's friend.

These things almost escaped Magdalena's notice at first; but she afterwards remembered them, and strove to respond with manifestations of similar inclination. She observed, however, that the maiden gradually changed from tranquillity to melancholy, as if something preyed upon her spirits. She repeated, indeed, her salutation each morning, but it was no longer with smiles, and with a disposition to linger about Magdalena's person. On the contrary, she retired without delay to a little nook under a window, where she continued her task among feathers and flowers, seldom stirring from the spot. It was evident to the penetrating eye of Magdalena, that the Indian maiden was wasting away under some grief as poignant and enduring as her own; and though she attributed it only to some of the evils of war, the commencement of which had long since been indicated by the distant explosions of artillery, she was the more favourably impressed by the damsel's emotion, since none of the others seemed to share it, nor to betray either fear or anxiety.

She attempted then to come to some understanding with this maiden. She sat down by her in her

little nook, and watched, with what, had she been in a better frame of mind, would have been admiration, the progress of her toils, as well as the effects of previous labours. She beheld, with surprise, garlands and bouquets of flowers, constructed of feathers, and imitated with such wonderful precision, that when they were mingled with a few natural ones, and impregnated with their odours, it seemed almost impossible that they could be artificial. The same art has existed in other parts of the continent, and is practised to this day, in some of the nunneries of Brazil. There were also pictures, worked with the same beautiful materials, upon a groundwork of prepared cloth, which were chiefly confined to the representation of flowers and birds. When Magdalena first visited the maiden, she found her engaged upon what seemed a wood-pigeon, surrounded by a little wilderness of flowers and leaves. The design, though simple, was pretty and spirited; yet the maiden seemed dissatisfied with her work, and altered it daily, as if each day still more displeased; until, at last, she seemed to have hit upon a plan more to her taste, when she pursued her task with what seemed a morbid ardour. When Magdalena looked at it last, she found the whole design and character of the work changed. The flowers had been displaced by stones and brambles; an arrow was represented sticking through the neck of the bird; and the story of a wounded heart was told in the metaphor of the poor flutterer, harmed by some wanton bolt, and left dying in a desert place.

When Magdalena beheld this painted sentiment, she took the hand of the artist, and pressing it as if with sympathy, pointed to her bosom. A faint tinge of blood passed over her embrowned visage, but she looked confidingly into Magdalena's face, as if not ashamed to confess her grief. When

Magdalena was persuaded she was understood, she directed the painter's eyes to the bird, and then pointed expressively to her own bosom, as if to signify that she also was unhappy. The maiden bowed her head upon her breast, and Magdalena saw that tears were stealing from her eyes. She thought they were the tears of sympathy; and when the damsel looked up, she cast off all reserve, and indicated as plainly as she could, by gestures, that she desired to make her way into the garden.

The maiden shook her head, and would have departed, but that Magdalena, rendered indiscreet by her impatience, arrested her, to make trial of a new appeal. She took the jewels from her hair, and without reflecting that the rank of the maiden, indicated by gems quite as valuable as her own, might render her inaccessible to such temptation, she made as if she would have thrown them upon her head and neck. She was sorry for the act; for as soon as the maiden understood what she designed, she drew back with a look of offended dignity, and with cheeks burning at once with mortification and anger. Then, gathering up her little picture, her bodkins, and basket of coloured feathers, she left the apartment, and returned to it no more that day.

Amid all her grief at the disappointment of her hopes, Magdalena had yet generosity enough to appreciate the spirit of the young pagan, and to lament having outraged her feelings.

That night, when the female slaves had departed from her chamber, and she was musing disconsolately in the light of a little night-lantern, consisting of a taper of resinous wood, surrounded by thin plates of gold, perforated with holes in many fantastic figures, which transmitted the light, she was roused by a sigh; and looking up, she beheld, to her great surprise, the young artist standing before

her, in an attitude of sad and patient humility. As soon as the visitor perceived that she was seen, she approached, and knelt at Magdalena's feet, who now saw, with a touch of shame, and, at first, even of resentment, that, as if in requital of the insult of the morning, she held in her hands all the jewels that had decorated her hair and person, and offered them for her acceptance. But Magdalena's displeasure soon passed away; for the jewels were proffered with the deepest humility, and the damsel's eyes were suffused with tears. She murmured out some words, too, and the tone was expressive of grief.

All this was mysterious to Magdalena, who puzzled herself in vain to account for the act and the donation. She restored the jewels, and the maiden being wholly submissive, she replaced them about her person with her own hands; and then, taking advantage of the opportunity, made another effort to come to a better understanding with her. She remembered that her companion was a painter, and being herself a little skilled in the art, she drew with a bodkin from her hair, upon the soft wood of the table that supported her lamp, the figure of a man in Spanish costume, bound in a cell. The representation was awkward, yet it appeared that the damsel understood it; for she took the bodkin, and immediately, though with a trembling hand, completed the picture by the addition of another figure, representing a Mexican, with a crown like that Magdalena had seen on the head of Guatimozin, who, with one hand, extended to him the handle of a macana, while threatening him with another, brandished above his head.

This was expressive enough, and Magdalena's alarm for the safety of the young man was only removed when the maiden drew what was plainly

designed for a buckler, interposed between the weapon and his head.

Magdalena then, without further hesitation, leaped to the grand object of her desires, by drawing the figure of a man paddling in a canoe. This also her companion understood, and replied to it significantly enough, by surrounding the little vessel with many others, filled with Indians, or other human beings, who attacked it with showers of arrows and darts.

"Alas! is there no hope for us then? no hope for my poor brother?" exclaimed Magdalena, wringing her hands. "Maiden! maiden! carry me but to him!—Alas, I speak as to a stone statue!"

She then resumed the bodkin, and returning to the first sketch, she drew the figure of two women, entering the cell. The response to this ended her hopes immediately. The Indian girl sketched the outlines of men, armed with spears, circling around the whole cell.

Magdalena sank upon the couch in despair, and almost in a frenzy. The maiden, frighted by the vehemence of her grief, endeavoured to soothe her, by pressing her hand to her bosom and forehead, and covering it with kisses and tears; after which she stole quietly from the chamber.

It was many weeks before Magdalena beheld her again. She vanished from the hall, she came no more to kneel on her footstool in the morning, and display her melancholy visage to the stranger. Magdalena's heart died within her. She was in a solitude among living creatures,—the most oppressive of all solitudes. Her suspense was intolerable, and preyed upon her health, until she was wasted to a shadow, and the pagan damsels eyed her, when she appeared among them, with looks of pity. She succumbed at last to her fate; the fever of her mind extended to her body; and she was missed

from the hall, as well as the young artist. She became ill, and she threw herself upon her couch, to waste away with passion and delirium. But there was still a gleam of happiness to break upon her.

One night, when the dancing,—now no longer pursued with spirit, for the cannon of the Spaniards sounded each day louder and nearer,—had ceased, and the flutes were breathed upon no more, she felt her hand pressed with a gentle grasp. She looked up, and beheld the Indian girl at her side, eyeing her with compassion. She sprang to her feet, in an ecstacy of delight, and embraced her; for she hailed her appearance as the herald of joy.

"Oh, maiden! maiden!" she cried, "what news of my brother?"

The damsel replied with the only words in her power, but the best she could have used, had she been acquainted with the whole speech of Castile. She looked sadly but firmly into Magdalena's face, and murmured softly,

"Juan Lelma"—

The accent was imperfect and false, but the sounds were music to Magdalena. She clasped the young barbarian again in her arms, but her caresses were only responded to by tears and sobs, which seemed to increase in proportion to her own raptures. But Magdalena was too wild with hope to think of the sorrows of her friend. She saw that the Indian held in her hand, two long and capacious mantles of a plain stuff, which, she knew, were to veil them from evil eyes, while they crept to the cell of her brother. But the maiden checked her impetuosity. She removed the trinkets from her head and person, and again offered them to the Christian; and persisted to do so, though still most gently and humbly, until Magdalena, thinking this might be some important ceremony, a proof perhaps of friendship offered and received, and per-

ceiving, what was more influential still, that it was necessary to hasten the proceedings of her visitor, consented to receive them. She yielded to her importunities, and the Indian girl clasped around her ankles, arms, and neck, and twisted in her hair, all the jewels that had decorated her own person, besides hanging round her neck the silver cross and rosary,—Magdalena's own gift to Juan,—which she received with rapture, not doubting that he had sent it to her as a token and a full warrant to submit herself to the guidance of the young infidel. This accomplished, she assisted Magdalena to secure the larger mantle about her figure, and wrapped herself in the other. Then beckoning the Christian to follow, and signing to her to preserve silence, she led the way from the chamber.

CHAPTER X.

A short passage through which they stole, darkly, for it was not lighted, conducted them to a chamber, where the guide paused a moment, as if in doubt and fear. A strong light beamed through the curtained door. They listened for a time, until hearing no one stir within, the Indian maiden pulled the curtain timidly aside, and then beckoned Magdalena to follow her. It was a spacious apartment, richly tapestried, and lighted by many such masked torches as Magdalena had seen in her own chamber. The hangings were even continued over the ceiling, so that it resembled a pavilion rather than the sleeping apartment of a king,—for such it was. In the centre was suspended a magnificent canopy, wrought with feathers, overhanging a couch blazing with gold, and bedecked with the richest spoils of the parrot and flamingo, with little pedestals both at the head and foot, on which incense was burning before golden idols. Upon this lay sleeping the Indian lady, whom Magdalena had so often seen during the two first weeks of her durance; and the infant slept clasping her neck. Magdalena doubted no longer that she beheld the queen of the young monarch. But she crept softly after her guide, and was soon buried again in darkness. After many turnings and windings, which made her fancy the palace was a great labyrinth, she suddenly found herself conducted into the open air, by

a door exceedingly narrow, and concealed by a mass of trailing vines. But secret as this entrance appeared, it was not unguarded. A tall savage with a spear, started up from the bushes, as if to dispute their right of egress. But a word from his companion, low as the whisper of a breeze, removed his opposition. He flung himself upon the earth, as if to his divinity, and thus remained, until the maidens had passed.

It was by this time midsummer—for so long a period had elapsed since the departure from Tezcuco; but it was the season of the rains, and the chill winds from the lake penetrated Magdalena to the heart. The sky was overcast, the grass loaded with moisture, and every gust shook down a shower from the trees.

It was very dark, and she knew not well to what quarter she was bending her steps. But she could see a line of fires running as it seemed across the lake, from a point in the city to the right hand, and lost in the distance or obscurity of the left. This was, in fact, the northern causeway, or dike of Tepejacac, the nearest point of which was scarce a mile distant from the garden. It was occupied by the troops of Sandoval, who had extended his approach already within the limits of the water suburb. Two or three of his brigantines were also perceived anchored near to the calzada,—at least, their lanterns were seen shining from their prows.

While Magdalena was yet stealing along after her guide, her eyes fixed upon this line of fires, she heard suddenly a great tumult begin among them, in which the yells of men were faintly distinguished amid the crash of fire-arms and artillery. Shocked and frighted as she was, at being thus made a witness, though afar, of the terrors of human wrath, she soon began to look upon the conflict as of good omen for herself. It would certainly

be a more attractive spectacle to any wandering infidels in the garden than might be furnished by the obscure figures of herself and companion.

Apparently the Indian maiden thought so too; for she increased her pace, and instead of skulking as before, among green-arched and shadowy alleys, she walked boldly along in a broad exposed path, that led directly to a corner of the palace. But from this very corner they saw rushing a tumultuous throng of barbarians, some of whom ran directly towards them, though the course of others was in another direction.

The young guide drew Magdalena into a sheltered walk, and crept timorously along until she reached the palace wall, when she sank down, from fatigue or fear, signing to Magdalena to do the same thing, and thus remained, until the last of the barbarians had vanished. The path now seemed clear, but still the Indian maiden remained cowering on the earth; and Magdalena, whose impatience distracted her mind and almost hardened her heart, perceived that she was sobbing bitterly. She touched her arm. The guide shrank away, but seemed to collect her spirits and courage at the sign. She rose up, and led the way to a broad door, where an armed Indian stood, holding a flambeau. He seemed alarmed, though not surprised at the sight of the pair, and spoke earnestly to the guide, as if to dissuade her from entering. She passed him, however, with a word, and the next moment stopped, in great agitation, before the curtain of a door. Magdalena looked eagerly to her to confirm her hopes; but before the maiden could lift her finger, signing to her to enter, she heard, from within the apartment, the well known growl of Befo.

"Juan! dear Juan!" she exclaimed, and darted through the curtain.

The young man was pacing to and fro, not bound hand and foot, as her fears had anticipated, but evidently excited in the most painful degree by the distant firing. He turned at the sound of her voice, and threw himself into her arms.

"Sister! for I believe thou *art* my sister," he cried,—"else how could I love thee with a love so unlike that of man for woman? God be praised that I have seen thee once again: for it is time thou wert wrested out of this place. But what is this? Thou art wasted and thin! very thin: thy hands burn, thy cheek is hot—Sister, dear sister, thou art ill!"

"Think of it not," said Magdalena, with the delight of a maiden, listening for the first time to the voice of affection, and caressing him without reserve: "Oh, Juan, I could die twice over, to hear you speak so; and I care not if I do die, so you are but saved; for you have made me very happy.—You are a prisoner, Juan,—we are both prisoners. An Indian girl brought me here—she will help you to escape, for you can speak her language. You can go to Cortes, and tell him you are the brother of Magdalena. He will not wrong you then,—no, he will not dare—Or perhaps we can fly together—we can fly in a canoe. The maiden will help us, the good maiden: She is at the door—I will call her in."

At this moment, the Indian girl, driven in, immediately after Magdalena, by some sudden alarm, stood at a distance, near the door, muffled in her cloak, and shrinking almost within herself. A single dim and half expiring torch twinkled in the apartment; and its light scarcely reaching her, she remained unobserved, a spectator of every thing, but of course unable to understand a word of the conversation.

"Go not, dear Magdalena," said Juan, folding her

in his arms; "for it may be that we have but a moment more to share together. Tarry, and hear what I have to say. I am, as I may say, a prisoner; yet it seems, if I can believe the young king, more because I have incurred the wrath of the Mexicans than his own. Thus it is: the king rescued me from prison in Tezcuco, first, because I had not long before given him liberty, to my own great misfortune, and secondly, because he doubted not, that the wrongs I have suffered would incense me to take part with him, and fight against my countrymen; whereby, as he thinks, he would gain an invaluable auxiliary. On the day of his coronation, he presented me to his people, and called me his brother; nevertheless, they gave me but sour looks, for bitterly do they hate the sight of a Spaniard. If I will fight with them and for them, I win their love,—so he assures me, and so I can well believe; but this is clearly impossible. I have not fought, and I will not; and they say, therefore, that the king should give me up to be sacrificed; and twice already, after having suffered some severe losses, they have come turbulently to the palace, to demand me. For this reason, I dare not appear among them, unless to be torn to pieces.—Tremble not, fear not," he continued, as Magdalena clasped him, as if to shield him from approaching weapons: "I have seen thee bold and resolute among roaring breakers,—else how could I have saved thee, dear sister?—Heaven pardon Hilario! and heaven pardon me, my sister, that I imputed his death to thy warrant!—I have seen thee bold and intrepid. Now summon back what courage thou hast; and, if heaven will, I will save thee yet again from destruction. I can myself escape, but not with thee—"

"Think not of me, Juan, think not of me," said Magdalena, earnestly and fondly. "Thou canst

do nothing to make me so happy, as to tell me how I can die for thee. Fly, then; pause not a moment, but fly; and know, that, if I meet thee not again but in heaven, yet thou wilt leave me in heaven, even upon earth, knowing that thou art saved, and that I have ministered somewhat to thy liberation."

"Be of this heart, Magdalena," said Juan, "and rest assured that I will soon return, if I have life, with such a force as will rescue thee likewise from thraldom. My plan of escape involves duplicity, nay, even perfidy; yet are mine ends all pure, honourable, and humane. I perceive that Guatimozin is incapable of resisting much longer. His people are slain by thousands each day, and thousands must soon perish from want. Cortes has already his foot upon the island; and house by house, the city is tumbled into ruins. The poor king is distracted, and resolved to die, burying himself and his whole people under the ruins of his capital. This may be excused in a soldier, and in men; but the town is thronged with poor women and children; there are thousands of them—tens of thousands; and they must perish, if the siege be longer continued. To save them—to save the king himself (for thus only can he be saved,) I will break faith with him; and thus also will I save thee. My only fear is, that his anger may fall upon thee, when he finds I have deceived him; yet this he may not discover. There is one here, with whom, could I but find speech, I could secure thee a protector. Magdalena, I have one friend here, who will be thine. An unfortunate attempt to escape has perhaps robbed me of her assistance. Yet I spoke of thee to her, and—But, dear Magdalena, thou art sick and feeble!—I talk to thee too much. If thou art alarmed, I will not leave thee: we will await our fate together."

"I *am* sick, Juan, and I know not what is the

matter with me," said Magdalena, faintly, suffering the young man to place her upon a seat. "But who is this of whom you speak? Your friend, Juan—surely I shall love *your* friends."

At this moment, Juan, as he bent over her, caught sight of the jewels which the Indian maiden had placed upon her head and neck, and among others, beheld the star of pearls which had gained for the daughter of Montezuma the name of Zelahualla, or the Lady of the Star, and the silver crucifix.

"Good heaven!" he cried, "do you wear her jewels, and yet ask me who she is?"

Magdalena started to her feet, and both turning together, they beheld the Indian princess, shrinking in the shadow of the room, behind Befo, who seemed to consider her an old friend, her arms crossed upon her breast, her head drooping, and her whole attitude and appearance indicative of a spirit entirely crushed and broken.

"Zelahualla!" cried Juan, with a voice of delight; and rushing towards her, he folded her in his arms, and strove to draw her towards his sister. "Why didst thou not speak to me, Zelahualla? Why dost thou turn from me, Zelahualla?"

The maiden sobbed, and strove to disengage herself from his embrace, saying,

"There is no Zelahualla now—The bright lady of the east is Zelahualla. Juan and the bright lady shall go. Why should Juan think there are *two?*"

In these broken expressions, Magdalena, had they not been in an unknown tongue, would have traced the workings of jealous and wounded affection. They filled Juan with surprise.

"What is this you say to me, Zelahualla?" he cried, "and what do you mean? Did not Zelahualla promise she would love my sister?"

"She did," replied the princess, without abating

her grief: "she will love Juan's sister, and any one that Juan loves; and she has brought the bright lady to Juan, and she has given her her jewels, that Juan may love her more, and forget Zelahualla,—and the cross of his God, too, that he may not be sorry."

"Alas, Zelahualla, what evil-eye has struck thee? Dost thou think I deceive thee? Wilt thou not believe this is my sister?"

The princess looked at him doubtfully and sadly:

"It is all as Juan says: but the king has asked questions, and the nobles have spoken to him with the words of captives; and they say, he has spoken falsely of the bright lady."

"Wilt thou believe *them*, and not *me?*" said Juan, not without emotion, for he was touched by the deep and unreproachful sorrow of the young princess, though greatly surprised to find how her ear had been abused. "I swear to thee, and may heaven judge me according to my truth, that, in this matter, I deceive thee not. There is but one Zelahualla, and she is the daughter of Montezuma."

The maiden sank upon his breast, sobbing, but now with rapture. Then running to Magdalena, who had surveyed the scene with varying and extraordinary emotion, she threw herself at her feet, and embraced her knees.

Magdalena stood like one entranced, until Juan, raising up the princess, placed her in her arms, saying,

"Dear sister, give her thy friendship; for there is no one more pure or noble of spirit, though artless, than this poor ignorant maiden; and let the cross again hang on her bosom, for she has confessed her Redeemer. She will watch thee and guard thee

while I am gone;—nay, she will nurse thee too, for thou art very ill, and needest kind nurture."

Magdalena returned the embraces of the Indian maiden, but it was with a wildness of manner, that greatly disturbed her brother, and even frighted the princess. He took her hand,—it was hot and trembling. He kissed her, and found her lips burning with fever; and he perceived that excitement had wrought her indisposition into a degree of illness that might prove serious.

"Compose thyself, dear Magdalena," he said. "All now depends upon thy coolness and courage. If thou becomest ill, my scheme must needs miscarry—Nay, I cannot attempt it, until thou art better; for it seems to me now thou art almost delirious."

"Delirious, Juan? No, I am not delirious. Yet I am ill,—very ill, I think. Thou goest alone, dost thou not? Tarry not a moment.—We will leave thee,—we will not stay longer, lest the guards should return and find us."

"Listen to me, Magdalena," said Juan, earnestly, as if he feared lest her senses should wander. "If I fall into the Spaniards' hands alive, I will come to this garden in canoes, with a proper force, and enter it by surprise. If it be possible, I will seize the person of the king, having previously secured him such terms from Cortes as shall protect him in person and in his government, as the vassal of Spain. This will end the war at once. But in this I may not succeed, yet be able to liberate both thee and the princess. Through her address, thou wilt be enabled to walk often in the garden. Walk therein, as near to the lake as possible, especially late in the day, and in the first hours of the evening. The dog Befo I will leave in a cage: when you are in fear, give him liberty.—The princess hath often fed him, and he will guard you well; and his voice, if I come in the night-time, will show me where to

seek you.—Do you understand me, dear sister? Struggle but a little against this fever, and perhaps it may leave you. At all events, the thought of your suffering will arm me with double strength, when I return, bringing you relief. Alas, Magdalena, I am sorry to see you thus!"

"It shall be as you say, Juan," said Magdalena, a little incoherently. "I will be governed by this maiden, and for your sake, I will love her well. We will walk in the garden, too. Yet think not of us. If you are safe, we will be content."

"Farewell, Magdalena, dear Magdalena," said Juan. "Walk, if thou art able, even to-morrow; for in the morning I will essay to depart. At any rate, be thou sick or well, if thou hearest a bugle winded in the garden, at any hour, be it morn or midnight, then be sure that you sally out, and Zelahualla with you.—Farewell, sister, farewell!—and farewell, thou, dear princess. When thou thinkest of me, let the cross be in thy hands and on thy lips!"

With these words, and having tenderly embraced them both, Juan led them to the door, and putting their hands together, he had soon the satisfaction to hear them step from the passage into the open air.

CHAPTER XI.

What Juan had said in relation to the cause of his confinement, was true, although he was not aware of the whole extent of the truth. In releasing him from impending death at Tezcuco, the young infidel did not doubt, in the simplicity of his heart, that he was adding a powerful engine of defence to his preparations, as well as requiting the obligation, which, he believed, had been the principal cause of Juan's downfall. He reckoned confidently upon Juan's desire for vengeance, the absence of which feeling, after wrongs so stirring and manifold, his nature did not allow him to anticipate; and he dwelt also, with the security of pride, upon the incentive offered in the love of the daughter of Montezuma. In this spirit of confidence, without much regarding Juan's previous averments, he introduced him to his assembled forces, upon the day of coronation, that all might know him, and respect him thenceforth as one honoured with the highest of titles—the king's brother. So far, all was well: the name of the Young Eagle was not wholly unknown to the Mexican warriors; and the sight of his manly figure, arrayed in a native cloak, his head crowned with a lofty penacho, put on by the king's hand, and the glittering axe of obsidian received from the same quarter, and grasped a moment with a military air, made an impression in his favour, that could only be obliterated by his own

act of rejection. The spectacle was hailed with acclamations, and

> Far and wide, the thundering shout,
> Rolling among reduplicating rocks,
> Peal'd o'er the hills and up the mountain vales.*

Unfortunately, Juan, unwilling that any act should be interpreted as expressing his assent to take arms against his countrymen, immediately threw down the macana, and would even have taken the plumes from his head, had he not been arrested by Techee-chee, and made sensible that such a proceeding would be followed by the most fatal consequences. The movement, however, had been observed by many of the nobles; and from that moment, Juan saw that he was watched by jealous and hostile eyes. His explicit and absolute refusal to take part in the conflicts, had convinced the young king of his error; yet, though greatly exasperated, he took such measures, from motives of honour or humanity, as protected the obdurate Christian from the daily increasing anger of his people. He confined him in the palace, and forbade even the ardent Zelahualla to go near him. In this he was actuated by suspicions, constantly inflamed by the Lord of Death, and not unnatural in themselves, that the young man had abused his credulity in the case of Magdalena. The love of the Indian maid, however, penetrated through guards and prison-doors; and Juan, almost as impatient of confinement and suspense as Magdalena herself, resolved to effect his escape, and by throwing himself upon the mercy of the Captain-General, make one effort to liberate his unhappy sister. The attempt was discovered

* Southey's Roderic.

and thwarted; and from that moment his confinement had been very rigid.

Still, however, the young infidel was wont frequently to visit him, after the combat of the day, in the hope of overcoming his scruples, or of gathering from his accidental expressions some hints that might be turned to advantage against the besiegers. On all such occasions, he refused to satisfy the prisoner's questions concerning his sister and the princess; giving him plainly to understand that nothing but the assumption of the pagan battle-axe, or positive counsels in his straits, which he did not attempt to conceal, could purchase a sight of either. In all these things, if the infidel acted with more crafty selfishness than generosity, he only proved that he belonged to his race. The whole conduct of Juan was, according to *his* scale of morals and honour, both unfriendly and unaccountable. He designed, this very night, to visit the prisoner, of which intention Juan was apprized; and hence his eagerness to dismiss the maidens from the chamber, before the conclusion of the attack upon the neighbouring dike, with the nature and objects of which he was well acquainted.

Before the maidens had departed, it was evident that the firing and other noises on the causeway were subsiding. Before they had been gone the full space of an hour, a heavy step rang in the passage, and the next moment the Indian monarch stood before the captive. He was singularly and sumptuously armed. From head to foot, his body was covered with a garment, perhaps of escaupil, fitting so tightly as to display his limbs to advantage; and over all was a coat of mail, consisting of copper spangles or scales, richly gilded, and stitched upon a shirt of dressed leather. His head was defended by a morion of the same metal, shaped not unlike to those of the Spaniards, and equally strong;

and its ability to resist a violent blow was increased by the folds of a stout serpent, painted green, wreathing over its whole surface. A shield of tapir-skin, studded with copper nails, hung from his neck; and he bore a macana, which was stained with blood. He wore none of the emblems of royalty, and his appearance was only that of some highly distinguished noble. His eye was bright and fiery, his step firm and proud, but his aspect was thin and haggard.

"Has my brother heard the shouts of men near him, and does he yet say, 'Let me sleep?'" were the words with which he saluted the captive.

"Prince," said Juan, eyeing him anxiously and interrogatively, though speaking with positive emphasis, "as I told you before, so has it happened. The cannon were ready on the dike, the falconets were charged in the ships, and the men of Sandoval slept with swords and matches in their hands, and with their eyes open. Guatimozin does not come back a victor!"

"He comes back with a prisoner," said the prince, proudly; "and, to-morrow, the lord with red hair (Sandoval) will count the dead and weep, and Malintzin shall see the flames of sacrifice rising from the pyramid."

"Alas!" exclaimed Juan, "in condemning captives to this horrible death, against your will, for I know your heart is not cruel, you harden the soul of Cortes against you; and he will remember each sacrifice, when the day of surrender comes at last."

"Let it be harder than it is, what cares the Mexican who dies?" replied the king. "Does my brother think that I am weary, or that Malintzin can fight longer than I?"

"Think not to deceive me, prince—I know that already your altars and palaces are within reach of the cannon-shot—nay, of the musket-bullet—You

are hemmed in, like a wild-cat on a tree—Your enemies are all round you, and they look into your eyes. Are not the water-suburbs already taken?"

"Why should I lie?" replied Guatimozin. "If you go to Tacuba, you will see the banks of the island—the city of the water is not there. If you look from Iztapalapan, the surges go rushing up towards the great temple—the houses are under the lake—If you look from the door of my dwelling, you will see the quarter of Tepejacac falling also into the lake. When Malintzin calls aloud in the morning, the lord of the red hair answers him, and Malintzin hears. Thus it is with Mexico; yet my brother sleeps, while I die, saying to his soul, 'It is all very just, for I sleep and see not.'"

"If I see not and help not, yet is my heart torn by your distresses," replied Juan, earnestly. "But why should I help? It would be a great sin upon my soul, and could do you no good. Listen to my counsel, Guatimozin: It is not yet too late. Cease to protract an unavailing resistance; send to Cortes with offers of submission, and be assured of reigning still, a king, though a vassal."

"Does Guatimozin fight to be a king?" said the infidel, with dignity. "He struck the Spaniard before he thought of a crown. He thinks not of palaces and fine garments, but says, 'Why should the people of Mexico be made slaves?' The king fights for Mexico."

"He will fight best for Mexico with peace. The kings of Tezcuco and Iztapalapan pay tribute to Mexico—are their people slaves? Thus shall it be with Mexico: the king shall give gold, as the tributary of Spain, and Mexicans shall remain in freedom."

"Will my brother prattle like Malintzin?" demanded the monarch, sternly. "Where is the freedom of Zempoala, of Tlascala, of Cholula?

The people talk of it, while a Spaniard strikes them with a lash. Where is the freedom of Tezcuco? The young king, who is a boy, sits on the throne; but the Spaniard, whom my brother struck in the face with a sword, when he chased Olin-pilli, is there with him, and he robs and abuses the people, so that they have sent their tears to Malintzin. What was the fate of Montezuma? He sat in the Spaniards' house in chains, and the soldiers murdered his nobles, who danced in peace in the courtyard. What was the fate of Montezuma? The Spaniard, who is lord of the king of Tezcuco, would have done violence to the captive maiden—Does my brother remember?"

"Ay!" replied Juan, with the gleam of passion that visited his eyes, only when he spoke of Guzman: "I remember, and I hope yet to avenge—Sinner that I am, I cannot think it a crime, to covet the blood of this man!—But, prince, let me know—My captivity is very hard—Why should I not be allowed to speak with the princess? Why should my sister be hidden from me?"

The countenance of Guatimozin darkened.

"When my brother will fight for them, he shall be at liberty. My brother thinks again of the canoe at the bottom of the garden?"

Juan coloured, and said,

"You keep me a prisoner—I strove to escape. The king mocks me, to call me his brother."

"The warriors are very angry, yet the Great Eagle is alive. He cannot go among them in safety, unless as their friend."

"And who," said Juan, "shall warrant me of safety, if I go even as a friend?"

He deemed it now the period to commence acting upon his scheme of escape, yet hesitated, stung with shame at the thought of the duplicity to which

he was descending.—"It is better to die on the dikes than to pine in the dungeon."

Guatimozin's eye gleamed with a sudden fire:

"Does my brother jest with me?" he said. "If my brother think it wrong to strike a Spaniard, he shall not be called upon to fight. He can teach me the things it is needful to know; and be in no fear."

"When did Guatimozin see me afraid?" cried Juan, stifling as well as he could the sense of humiliation and disgust, with which he began the office of a deceiver. "To give you counsel how to resist or attack, will make me as much a renegade as to draw sword at once. If I do become apostate, it shall be boldly, and with the sword. Prince, I have thought over this thing: my heart is grieved with your distress; and for my sister, and for Zelahualla, I will do what my conscience condemns. Does the king know what shall be my fate, if I am found fighting by the Spaniards?"

"Twenty chosen warriors shall circle my brother round about, and he shall keep aloof from the van of battle."

"If I fight, it shall be in the van," said Juan, his self-condemnation giving a character of sullenness to his tones. "But what, if I fall,—what shall become of my sister?"

"She shall be the sister of Guatimozin and of Zelahualla," said Guatimozin, with energy, yet with doubt; for he could hardly believe that Juan was speaking seriously.

"Let the king say *this*, and I will go out with him to battle:—If I die, he will cause my sister and the princess to be delivered into the hands of Cortes."

"The Spanish lady shall be sent to Malintzin; but the Centzontli shall remain with her brother the king. It is better she should die with him than

dwell with the Spaniards. Why shouldst thou think it? Are there not more Guzmans than one?"

Juan muttered painfully to himself,

"Perhaps it *is* better. Heaven will protect her, for she has acknowledged her Redeemer.—Will the king swear, then, if his brother falls, that Magdalena shall be sent to the Spaniards?"

"He will swear," said Guatimozin, ardently. "It is better for the Spanish lady; for she knows not our speech, and she pines away with grief. And if the king prevails over his enemies, the king will remember what Juan says of her."

"Now, then, let the king tell me the truth, and mislead me not. How much longer can he maintain the city?"

"Till he is dead!—But he may soon die," he added, confidingly, for now he doubted no longer that he had gained his purpose. "My brother shall first teach me how to get food. The ships move about at night, and no canoe can reach the shore. The king sits down to eat with the warriors, and he eats no more—but the warriors cry all night for food."

"Good heaven!" said Juan, surveying the wasted cheeks of the monarch; "are you already so straitened? your garners already exhausted?"

"Who can reckon for so many mouths?" cried Guatimozin.

"I dreamed not of this—Sure, *I* have never been denied abundance!"

"My brother is a prisoner; and the women and children are feeble. Why should *they* want, when the warriors can endure hunger better?"

The communication of this painful intelligence nerved Juan more strongly in his purpose. He perceived the necessity of acting without delay, if he wished to protect the young infidel from the

consequence of his own despairing fury, and the maiden of his love, and his sister, from a fate too dreadful to be imagined. His eagerness the more fully deluded the young monarch, not prone to suspicion where he loved, and he was soon made acquainted with the whole condition of the beleaguered city, and the situation of the Spaniards. He was also instructed in the particulars of a design of Guatimozin, to be practised upon the ensuing day, the boldness of which, as well as its strong probabilities of success, both astonished and dismayed him. He perceived that perhaps the fate of the entire Spanish army depended upon the course he might pursue, and his honour and feelings seemed all to call upon him for some exertion to arrest the impending destruction.

When he had been made acquainted with all that Guatimozin thought fit to divulge, and had again and again repeated his resolution to take arms and accompany the Mexicans against his countrymen, the king embraced him with great warmth, promising to provide him with a good Spanish sword and helmet from among the spoils; but recommending that, in all other respects, he should assume the guise of a Mexican.

When these arrangements were completed, he turned to depart, and yet seemed loath to go. Finally, he took Juan by the arm, and said,

"To-night the king will sleep by the side of his brother: we will wake in the morning and go out together."

"Why will not the king speak kind things to the queen? It will rejoice her to look upon the king."

"Has she not a little sick babe by her side? and are they not very wretched?" said Guatimozin, exposing, without reserve, the miseries preying upon his own bosom, and abandoning himself to a grief that seemed to mock the greatness of his

station. "When I look upon them," he said, "I am no longer the king who thinks of Mexico and the people, but a man with a base heart, who cries, 'Why am not I a prisoner and a slave, that my little child may be saved, and his mother protected from the famine that is coming?' The king should not think these things,—he should not look upon his household, but his country."

"Go, notwithstanding," said Juan, touched still further by the distresses of the infidel. "Comfort them with your presence, and let their sufferings admonish you of the only way to end them. It is not too late to submit."

"Is this the way my brother begins the duties of a Mexican?" said Guatimozin. "The gods tell me to die, not yield. I fight for Mexico,—not for the wife and child of Guatimozin."

With these words, and having banished all traces of weakness and repining, he left Juan to slumber, or to weigh, in painful anticipation, the risks and uncertainties of his projected enterprise.

CHAPTER XII.

As Guatimozin had confessed to Juan Lerma, the three suburbs of the causeways were already demolished, and their ruined walls, battered by cannon and blackened by smoke, peered over the lake, along the causeways, in melancholy ruins. The hand of desolation had extended still further; at least, in the quarter that was pierced by the dike of Iztapalapan. Here Cortes commanding in person, and fighting every day at the head of his army, he had infected the whole division with a share of his own energy. While Alvarado and Sandoval were contending for a foothold on the very borders of the city, he had already penetrated it to the distance of half a mile, destroying many houses, though without being able to effect a secure and permanent lodgment upon any portion of the island.

It must not be supposed, that, having reached the island, the Spaniards could exchange the narrow and ditched causeways for firm and spacious streets. On the contrary, the causeways, so to speak, were continued up to within half a mile of the principal square which was in the very centre of the city, and contained the great pyramid, as well as the chief temples of Mexico. On either side was a canal both broad and deep, dividing the road from the houses; and others, running from intersecting streets, perforated the causeways with chasms, the number of which the Mexicans had

long since greatly increased. The island, which was circular, did not exceed three miles in diameter, of which the central third only was dry and solid. Hence the advanced posts of the three divisions were at no considerable distance from each other; and if the call of Cortes in the morning was not absolutely heard and answered by his two lieutenants, the bugles of each could be easily distinguished, cheering one another as they advanced to the daily assault.

The labour of Cortes in destroying the suburb in his quarter, was less than that of the others; for here, the lake being deeper, the houses extended but a short distance from the island. His advanced post was almost within the limits of the suburb, and separated from the island by only one ditch, which he had twice or thrice taken and filled up, but was as often obliged to yield again to the foe, subduing his impatience, until his lieutenants had advanced equally far in their quarters.

The outposts were always guarded with the most jealous vigilance, particularly in the later hours of the night, after the rains, which, in this climate, commonly prevail with the greatest violence between the hours of noon and midnight. A guard of forty men, with two pieces of artillery, kept watch until midnight; when, yielding their places to forty more, but not retiring, they threw themselves to sleep upon the damp stones and clay. Two hours before dawn, the post was strengthened by another company of forty, who watched until morning, the others flinging themselves in their cloaks among the first watchmen. Thus, there were ready, before day, one hundred and twenty men, the strongest and boldest of their divisions, who, in case of sudden attack, could preserve the station, until reinforced by the whole strength of the division, from the towers of the

gates, which were still the head-quarters of the several divisions. The causeway between the gates and the pickets, was occupied by patrols of horsemen, who watched lest the enemy, coming in canoes, should make a descent behind the advanced post, and thus cut it off.

Two hours after midnight, upon the night in which Juan revealed his purpose of escaping, the second guard on the causeway of Iztapalapan was relieved from watch by the coming of the third; and the soldiers flung themselves, as usual, upon the earth, to prepare for a morning, which, it was known to all, was to witness a general assault, made simultaneously by all the divisions, from their three several quarters.

The watchfires were replenished, and two subalterns, the leaders of the party, advanced a little beyond them, to reconnoitre the condition of the enemy. Three hundred paces in front, the causeway was intersected by the ditch; held by the Mexicans; and beyond it, on a strong rampart, blazed a great fire, in the light of which the pagan sentinels could be seen, squatting upon the mound, or stalking idly about. The gap was bridgeless, as was well known; but this the Spaniards could not observe with their own eyes, not thinking it prudent to advance within the range of a Mexican arrow.

As they returned, they conversed together in low voices; and it was worthy of remark, as indicating how little their spirits were occupied by the dangers around them, that they bestowed more words upon the ordinary scandal of the camp than upon the horrible conflicts through which they had passed, or in which they were yet to mingle.

"They lay this thing of Camarga entirely to the door of Guzman," said one; "and, in my mind, the imputation were reasonable, could we discover any

cause for enmity between them. They say, that Guzman smothered him with pillows of cottontree-down. Wherefore—"

"Pho, Najara," said the other, bluffly; "blame not a man upon these vain fancies; for Camarga was killed by a hard weapon, and by no pillows of cotton-down or feathers. I found him myself."

"Ay," said Najara, for it was the hunchback, whose companion was no other than the worthy historian, Bernal Diaz del Castillo,—"Ay, señor amigo, but he was not dead; and we are speaking of two very different events: to make which palpable to thy historical wits, we must e'en go back to the starting point. It is with a man of ill mind as with a cannonier; who, if he look for the mark of his ball in a forest, must go back to the place whence he shot it, and take the range over again."

"I do not understand thy trope," said Bernal, "nor what thou meanest by an 'ill mind,' not having one myself, but one that harbours animosities against none but Indians. As for Camarga, I found him myself. It was when we marched out of Tezcuco, by the northern road; for I was then with Alvarado, going to Tacuba. I say it, and it is to my honour, not shame, that Cortes, when he left the brigantines, demanded me of Alvarado; 'for,' said he, 'Bernal Diaz is one of my best friends, and a soldier second to none:' which is true, though I say it myself. De Olid was with us, with his men. The story is this: When we passed by the cypress-tree on the hill, I bethought me of a chapter of my book, which I had lost, I knew not where nor when. 'Now,' said I, 'perhaps I left it under this tree;' for what with the sudden coming of Juan Lerma, poor fellow, and the quarrel I had with Gaspar on his account, I departed from that place, without much thought of what might be left behind me. But pondering on this, as we passed, I dropped from

the ranks, and hunting about, I saw Camarga lying mangled at the bottom of the hill; and when we came to examine him, it was plain he had been struggling there for many hours,—perhaps, all night. We thought he was dead; but Juan Catalan, the cannonier, who is so good at a fresh wound, said, his heart was yet beating, and he might live. So we sent him back to Tezcuco, then in charge of Guzman, that the Indian doctors might see what could be done for him. And there he died."

"Ay, if we can believe Guzman," said Najara; "and no doubt, he did: but *how?* Know now, Bernal, for thou art too innocent to look further than thy nose, that this man's death has made a great noise at head-quarters; for, somehow, they have come to associate it with the marvellous disappearance of La Monjonaza; for which there are but two ways of accounting."

"As how?" said Bernal, gravely. 'Gil Ortaga told me, he saw her ghost, six nights after, in Iztapalapan, dragging the spirit of Villafana by the hair; which frightened him very much."

"The first thought," said Najara, "is, that she drowned herself for the love of Juan Lerma, of which—that is, of her love, at least—there is some proof that might be mentioned, were there any wisdom in speaking it; and the second, that Guzman hid her in some den about Tezcuco, trusting to the departure of Cortes on the morrow. It is well known that Guzman will play rival with the devil himself, if he have taken a fancy to a woman."

"Fu," said Bernal, "that is a foolish thought."

"Dost thou not know," demanded the hunchback, "that he is in disgrace, for acts still darker than these? He abused the Indians in the palace, robbing them of their gold and women, at his will, and greatly incensed the young king Ixtlilxochitl,

who complained to Cortes. Cortes sailed to Tezcuco in person, and removed him from his government; and now he is in such disgrace, that were it not for some old friendship between him and the Captain-General, it is thought, Cortes would utterly renounce him. The Indians say, that he murdered Camarga, when the poor man was recovering. But this is improbable. Camarga was a stranger, and without foes. Yet his fate has greatly troubled the general. As for the lady Infeliz, Don Francisco persists in averring that he knows nothing about her. He brought a Tlascalan, who swore he saw both her and Camarga walk out from the northern gate together, during the review; whereby he would have us believe they fell into the hands of the Mexicans; but Indians will swear anything, if you tell them how. It is said, that Guzman has got permission to serve in the fleet with Garci Holguin, his old friend. They are two daredevils together, and neither in very good odour; so they will doubtless do some desperate act to regain favour.—Hark, Bernal! dost thou hear nothing?"

"Nothing but the whistling of the Indians at the fire;—for that is the way they make their signals. We shall have hot work to-morrow, Najara."—

"Hark!—Ah, 'tis the sound of oars! One of the night-ships is approaching the dike. What's i' the wind now?—Hah, sirrah! what brings thee out of limits?"

These words were directed to a tall man, cloaked to the eyes, whom they had not before noticed, who stood hard by, peering into the lake, as if he sought to discover the approaching vessel. Najara hobbled up to him, in no little dudgeon, and repeated the question, before the stranger deigned to answer him. He then turned, and replied, with great coolness,

"Curiosity, crookback, curiosity,—some little itching to know how thou and thy brother ass, Bernal Diaz, discourse of thy betters. Well, rogues, have you done? have you despatched mine honour twice over again? I am not in good odour, hah? I have murdered Camarga, and suborned Indians to invent fables of La Monjonaza? Out upon ye, fools! I thought thou wert not so soddenbrained, Najara!"

As if his voice were not enough to make him known, the cavalier removed the cloak from his visage, and exhibited the iron features of Don Francisco de Guzman, illuminated by the watchfire hard by. There was something about his countenance unusually dark and fierce; yet he did not speak angrily, although Najara perceived he must have overheard some of his concluding expressions. But Najara was not a man to be daunted even by a stronger arm and a sterner eye. He replied therefore, with composure,

"What we have said, señor Don Francisco, we have said, and may take the same liberty again. But under your favour, señor, I am, just now, the captain of the guard; and as I cannot number you among my company, I must e'en make bold to ask your will, as well as your business, here, in advance of the post?"

"Thou shalt ask, and be answered," said Guzman, clapping his fingers to his lips, and whistling with a strength that might have done honour to the neighbouring infidels, though in a manner differing entirely from any of their signals. "One, two,—three,—and *too-whit! too-whit!* like a hungry kite in the morning! Dost thou understand *that*, mi Corcobado? If thou dost not, then *poco á poco, y paciencia*, as we say after dinner; for presently thou shalt be made wiser. After which, get thee to thy dogs there, in the mud, and snore with

them.—Ah, *amigo y hermano!* Garci, *mi corazoncito!* I will know thy pipe among a thousand, for it whistles out of the nose, like the hiss of a serpent!—Fare ye well, patches; and heaven send ye a rough rouse in the morning."

While the cavalier was yet speaking, a little boat from the brigantine, the heavy oars of which they had long since heard, though they could scarce trace it in the gloom, shot against the causeway; and an officer of a powerful frame and forbidding aspect, just rendered visible by the fire, rising up, extended his hand to Guzman, who immediately jumped aboard, and took a seat at his side. It was then pushed off, and soon vanished on the lake.

"There they go," said Najara, not without admiration, "two imps after the devil's own liking, strong-handed, tough-headed, hard-hearted! Wo betide ye, brown lambkins of Mexico! for these wolves have scented a hole in your pinfold. I tell thee, Bernal, man, we shall have rare work to-morrow, and these men will make it rarer. When the gall comes from Guzman's lips, the devil is waked up in his liver. 'A rough rouse in the morning!' For thy good wish, mayst thou have as rugged a couch in the evening—Amen! for I love thee not."

CHAPTER XIII.

The two subalterns now rejoined their companions, and passing them, as they stood patiently to their arms, waiting for the dawn and the battle, they crept through the sleepers towards the cannon, which were placed in the rear, the cannoniers sleeping around them. Here, they found a solitary individual of the watch they had relieved, leaning moodily against one of the pieces, instead of sharing the slumber of his comrades.

Bernal Diaz surveyed him for a moment, and then touched him on the shoulder:

"Townsman," said he, "it is but a foolish thing of thee to stand upon thy legs, watching, when thy guard duty is over. Sleep a little, Gaspar—We shall have toilsome work to-morrow."

"Sleep thyself, Bernal," replied Gaspar Olea. "What care I for sleep? Come, get thee into the mud, and I will take thy place. Thou shalt have my cloak, too, if thou wilt, to keep the rain out—I can warm me by walking."

"I will do no such thing," said Bernal, grasping the hand of his friend, though Gaspar turned from him, and seemed desirous to continue the conversation no longer; "if thou wilt wake, why well. I will talk thee out of thy melancholy. Thou art very much changed, Gaspar. I know not why thou shouldst grieve after this boy. Thou must now confess, he is unworthy thy friendship."

Gaspar returned no answer, and Bernal continued to give consolation by inflicting pain,—which is the common way.

"It is allowed by all, that he is a renegade; and doubtless, also, he has become a worshipper of false gods; for he who will turn his sword against his countrymen, is a rogue and a blasphemer—That is my opinion. Gil Ortaga said—"

"The fiend seize Ortaga, and thee into the bargain!" said Gaspar, angrily. "If a deer be wounded, and hide himself in a by-way, his fellows will not hunt after him, to gore him!—Why shouldst thou have less humanity than a deer?"

"Come, Gaspar, if I have offended thee, I ask thy pardon," said Bernal Diaz; "for thou art my townsman and friend, though we have quarrelled sometimes; and what I say, I say with a good meaning."

Gaspar looked over his shoulder, and finding that Najara had returned to the front, he grasped Bernal's hand, and said earnestly,

"Let there be ill will and ill words between us no more; for who knows what may come to us tomorrow? I know what is said of Juan Lerma. He is with the infidels—but what drove him among them? He is a renegade, too,—yet what made him so? He teaches the enemy to cut ditches and throw up ramparts, to lay ambushes and attack ships, and a thousand other feats and stratagems, not to be looked for among barbarians. This they say,—all say; and some swear they have seen him, in a Mexican cloak, fighting at the head of the pagans, and knew him by his stature and voice. Let us believe all this—What then? Bernal, it is a thought that preys upon me, remembering his honour, his goodness, and truth,—and this it is,—that a damnable malice has driven him, against his own will, into the den of perdition. Hark thee, here, in

thine ear—Thou rememberest the expedition to the South Sea? Before that, thou knowest, I was in great favour with Cortes, whom I loved well, for he had done me many good deeds in Cuba. About that time, Juan Lerma lost favour, and no one knew why; for as to censuring the indignities offered to Montezuma, that was a crime committed by some hundreds besides, who were never punished. The cause, Bernal, the true cause,—I would I might tell thee the true cause: but I swore an oath never to breathe it to mortal man. But *this* I may speak, (and thou must afterwards forget it.) I see things more clearly than I did before; and methinks, this night, mine eyes are further opened. I see very well, that we are all deluded and abused, and Juan Lerma an innocent man. Hearken then to what I say. One night, Cortes came to me, looking more like a demon than a man, and he said to me, 'Gaspar Olea, thou must kill me a snake, that has stung me upon the breast.' And with that he told me a thing, which I cannot speak; but this followed—I agreed that I would kill Juan Lerma."

"Thou art beside thyself, Gaspar!" said Bernal, with the utmost astonishment.

"I had good reason given to me," continued Olea; "and at that time I had but little acquaintance with the young man, and no love; and I was bound very strongly to Cortes. Understand me, Bernal: I did not consent to play the part of an assassin, for that was no part for Gaspar Olea. But being convinced the thing was just, and that the young man was a knave deserving death, I agreed to exasperate him into a quarrel; wherein I appeased my conscience, by thinking of the risk I ran, he being reckoned very good at all weapons. But what dost thou think? The very next night comes me Cortes again, with quite another story. 'Gas-

par,' said he, 'the thing I told thee was false, and I have done the young man a wrong. Wherefore, quarrel with him not, and forget what I have told thee;" adding many things which satisfied my mind, that the youth was an innocent man, very basely slandered. This caused me to think well of him; and I consented to go with him to the South Sea. There, Bernal, I learned to love him, for he was brave, and noble, and good;—ay, by my faith, I loved him better than ever I had loved the general. But 'What then?' you will say; 'Whereto tends this?' To this—and it is damnable to think upon: The General deceived me,—he repented having made me his confidant; but he still longed for the blood of Juan Lerma. Hence the South Sea scheme, devised for our destruction—(At this moment, I see it plainly,)—for Juan's, because of the General's hate, and for *mine*, Bernal, because he had confided to me a secret of which he was ashamed. Ay, by my faith! he repented him that passion had made him so indiscreet; and therefore designed to put me out of the way. The soldiers have a story that he was angry with me for some freedom of speech. This is false. He smiled on me to the last, and thus lulled my fears. Neither Juan nor myself had any suspicion of evil intentions. He made it appear, that the expedition was given to us, because of his regard for our courage; and he deigned to tell me in secret, that his chief reason for sending Lerma, was that he might be angered no longer by his censures,—Juan being then very melancholy and peevish, in consequence of the death of some old companion he had killed in Española. But, Bernal, he deceived us both, as I can now see clearly. He made it appear to the soldiers, that he was sorry to punish Juan—Nay some said he shed tears, among the Indians, when he signed the death-warrant. But this was hypo-

crisy. I know that he was rejoiced; for he remembered the old cause, and abhorred him."

"Marry," said Bernal Diaz, "it cannot be doubted he did. But the cause, Gaspar? I do not ask thee, what it was: but was it enough to excuse such rancour?"

"If true, *yes*," replied Gaspar, with deep emphasis: "But it was not true. Juan was innocent. I have probed his heart a thousand times, while we were in the desert together, and when he knew not what I was doing. He has not wronged Cortes—no, nor any other living creature. This I told the General, when we returned to Tezcuco, after the campaign round the lake. But what wouldst thou think? He averred that he had forgot the thing;—that it was very foolish;—a groundless slander brought against Juan by an enemy;—that he loved him as well as ever, and proceeded against him only on account of broken laws and decrees;—that he durst not pardon him, since his affection was well known, (his *affection*, Bernal!) and the men would cry out against his favouritism. I knew he spoke falsely, and so I told him. He hardened my heart; and then I ran to Villafana, who had the power to save him, and promised to make him our chief captain."

"Now that you speak of Villafana," said Bernal, "it reminds me of this: Why, had Juan Lerma been a man of honour and a Christian, should he have joined in the murderous plots of that detestable traitor?"

"Thou shouldst ask that of *me*," said Gaspar, fiercely. "But it matters not. Who says that Juan Lerma joined him? Najara avers that he kept them from speech together; and Luis Rafaga, who died of the wounds he got among the piraguas, a week since, declared to his comrades as well as the priest, (and being of the prison-guard, he knew all,)

that Juan fought in the prison with Villafana, about the list, the very night that Villafana was hanged, and would have been killed, but for the coming of La Monjonaza. I saw the traitor, myself, when he came among the cavaliers; and he was hurt in the shoulder. Does this look like joining him? Trust me, Bernal, we have done a great wrong to my young captain; and I cannot die, without thinking that I leave behind me one man, at least, to do him justice. This is what I say:—Not his crime, but the general's secret malice, has driven him among the infidels. He is a prisoner with them, or perhaps he has already died the death of sacrifice. They lie, who say they have seen, or will see him in arms against us. On this I will gage my life; and I pray heaven to take it, the moment the pledge is forfeited! I swear it—Amen."

The worst point in the character of a dog, is that, in all the quarrels betwixt others of his species, he always takes part against the feebler. In this particular, he is sometimes aped by his master,—not, indeed, in an absolute conflict between man and man; for ninety in a hundred will, in such case, befriend the weaker party,—but in those combats which an individual wages with an evil destiny. Ill thoughts naturally follow upon ill luck; and it is the curse of misfortune to be followed by ungenerous suspicion and still more odious crimination. As the whole army were acquainted with the manner of Juan's flight, or rather captivity, they did not hesitate to believe him up in arms against them; and every repulse which they endured from the barbarians, they traced to the malignance and activity of the exile's treason. Fear and invention together clothed him with the vestments of a fallen angel; and if some savage, more gigantic and ferocious than the rest, distinguished himself in the front of battle, straightway

a dozen voices invoked curses upon the head of the unhappy Lerma. There were few who did not forget his sorrows and wrongs, and speak of him only with execrations; and many had already begun to anticipate, as the chief triumph of victory, and the most delightful of all their hopes, the privilege of burning him alive on the temple-top, or even sacrificing him to their vengeance, after the equally horrific manner of the Mexicans.

While Bernal Diaz was thus conversing with the outcast's only friend, there came from the distant gates of Xoloc, a suppressed hum, as of an army arising from its slumbers. This was soon followed by the sound of heavy bodies of men, approaching over the causeway; and it soon became evident, that the morn was to be ushered in with the usual horrors of contention.

"Up, knaves!" cried the voice of the hunchback, "ye grumbling, growling, wallowing, swine, that call yourselves lions and tigers! up, and shake the clay from your cloaks, before it is trodden off by the hoofs of the horsemen!"

As he spoke, a cavalier galloped up to the party, and drawing in his steed, while the men rose to their feet, he exclaimed,

"*Halon*, Najara, man! where art thou? Dost thou talk thus in thy sleep?"

"Ay, may it please your excellency," said the hunchback, recognizing the voice of Cortes; "for it is well, on such a post, that a soldier should have the faculty of issuing commands asleep, as well as waking."

"Dost thou hear, Diaz?" muttered Gaspar in his companion's ear. "Wouldst thou think now to what the devil has tempted me, ever since I have seen clearly that of which I have spoken? I tell thee, man, I have sometimes thought it were but a

turn of good friendship, to kill the man who has brought these things upon Juan Lerma!"

"Thou art mad!" said the historian in alarm. But his further remonstrance was cut short by Cortes riding by, and even urging his charger, though at a cautious pace, beyond the watch-fire, as if to reconnoitre with his own eyes, the situation of the foe.

"Fear me not," said Gaspar, bitterly. "You shall see me do what I have done before at Xochimilco,—pluck him out of the jaws of the devourers, if need be. I think I was then enchanted; for, when I saw the Indians have him off his horse, I said to myself, 'If I let him die now, no harm happens to Juan Lerma.' But come—let us follow after him. And bid some of your dull sluggards along with us, lest the pagans should make a sally from the rampart. Hark! he has ridden up, till their fire shines on his armour, and they see him! He will have the villains upon us, before the reinforcements arrive!"

The Captain-General did, indeed, advance so far that he was seen by the pagan sentinels, who whistled out a shrill note of alarm, and then bent their bows against him, till his corslet and the iron buckler which he carried before his face, rattled under the crashing arrowheads. Thus admonished, he rode a little back, and was joined by three or four other cavaliers, who came galloping up from the causeway.

"What say ye, cavaliers?" he cried. "Methinks there is not even a duck lying near the causey-side, much less a brace or two of my brigantines."

"If your excellency be looking for the ships," said Najara, "I can satisfy your mind. There were some five or six here an hour since: I heard the plunging of their anchors on both sides of the dike."

"Ah! I will set thine ears against mine eyes any dark morn, Corcobado.—Fetch up the Indians, Quinones; and bid the horsemen follow at their heels. And hark ye, Najara,—let your drowsy knaves take post on the causey-sides, lest they be trampled to death under the feet of my red pioneers. Wheel up the pieces some ninety or an hundred paces in advance; and see that your matchsticks be dry and combustible. Where didst thou hear the sound of the anchors?"

"But a little distance on the lake; and methinks I can see two of the vessels on the left, betwixt us and the Indians.—His valour, Don Garci Holguin, did but now take up the señor Guzman—"

"A pest upon Guzman!" said the general, sharply. "Get thee to thy men, and move me the ordnance without delay."

"'A pest upon Guzman?'" muttered Gaspar. "I have a thought of him also; but I know not that he has done Juan a wrong. At all events, methinks, his case is like mine.—The general's secrets are unlucky."

With that, he retired, and took post among the soldiers.

In a few moments, a numerous body of Indian auxiliaries made their appearance, bearing, besides their ordinary weapons, which were slung on their backs, certain hoes and mattocks, called *coas*, some of stone, others of copper, but most of them of some hard wood. It was the business of these men to fill up the ditches, after the defenders had been driven away by a fierce cannonade from the ships, and by incessant discharges of stones and arrows from fleets of piraguas, manned by other Indian confederates, which lay near the brigantines. And here it may be observed, that the labour of filling a ditch was much inferior to that of re-opening it; and the causeways being constructed of stones as well

as clay, it was not possible to remove the former to any great extent. Hence, the gaps that had been once or twice filled, remained, notwithstanding the toil of the besieged, so shallow, that they might, at almost any period, be forded; though this, usually, was not done, until they were filled above the level of the water.

Immediately after these pioneers, came a small body of horsemen, behind whom were ranged the lancers and swordsmen; the musketeers and cross-bowmen being chiefly distributed among the ships.

These arrangements having been made, and the Tlascalans halting within the distance of two hundred paces from the ditch, and throwing themselves flat upon their faces on the causeway, to guard against the first volleys of the foe, all were directed to remain in repose, until the coming daylight should give the signal for battle.

Nothing now broke the silence of the hour, save the dropping sound of paddles from two numerous squadrons of canoes, filled with allies, which were stationed on the flanks of the rear.

CHAPTER XIV.

Slowly the morning dawned; and the foremost Tlascalan, raising his head from the earth, could behold, dimly relieved against an atmosphere of mist, the outlines of the foe, yet loitering upon the rampart behind the ditch, and warming his naked body, for the last time, over his smouldering fire. And now, also, were seen the brigantines, four in number, which had taken post, long before day, on either flank of the ditch, while a line of well-manned piraguas extended some distance beyond them.

The savages gathered up their arms, and leaping upon the ramparts, shook them with defiance at the besiegers, taunting them with such words of opprobrium as marked both their hatred and resolution.

"Ho-ah! ho-ah! What says the king of Castile? what says the king of Castile?" they cried,—for all the offers of peace and composition, (sent occasionally by the hands of liberated captives,) being made by Cortes in the name of his master, the barbarians prefaced every defiance by expressing their contempt for his authority,—"what says the king of Castile? He is a woman,—he shows not his face,—he is a woman. What says Malintzin? what says Malintzin? He calls for peace,—he is a coward: he fights in the house, when his foe is a prisoner, but he calls for peace, when Mexico comes out upon the causeways. What say the Teuctlis,—the Spaniards,—the sons of the gods?

They bring the Tlascalans, to fight their battles,—the Tlascalans, the Tezcucans, the Chalquese, and the other little dogs of Mexico. Their flesh is very bitter, and their hearts sour: the mitzlis and ocelotls, the wolves and the vultures, in the king's garden, say, 'Give us better food, for this is the flesh of crocodiles.' What say the men of Tlascala? They are slaves,—they say they are slaves, and what matters it where they fight? If Malintzin prevail, wo for Tlascala! for he will scourge her with whips, and burn her with brands, even from the old man with gray hairs down to the little infant that screams: If Mexico be victorious, wo for Tlascala! for we will strike her down with our swords, as we strike the maize-stalks in the harvest-field. Ho-ah! ho-ah! Come on, then, ye women, cowards, and slaves! for we are Mexicans, and our gods are hungry!"

With such ferocious exclamations, the bold barbarians provoked the besiegers; and with such they were used, each morning, to incite them to the work of slaughter.

The Spaniards still stood fast, and the Tlascalans lay upon the earth, receiving the arrows that were for awhile shot at them; until the Mexicans, exhausting their voices with outcries, at last ceased to continue them, and assumed an attitude as quiescent as that of their foes.

While they thus remained, each party staring the other in the face, and the rapidly increasing light made it evident that a very considerable multitude of infidels were gathered upon the dike, a trumpet was winded behind the Tlascalans, in one single, prolonged, and powerful note, that woke up the echoes of mountains, even at the distance of leagues. It was answered, first from the west, from the dike of Tacuba, in a blast both strong and cheery, and

immediately after, though much more faintly, from the northern causeway, where Sandoval was marshalling his forces.

As soon as these signals, for such they were, had been exchanged between the leaders, the trumpet of Cortes sounded again, with a succession of short, sharp, and fierce notes, such as blast fury into men's hearts, through their ears. Instantly, and as if by enchantment, the four falconets in the brigantines were discharged, and swept hundreds of the barbarians from the causeway, Then followed the rattle of musketry, mingled with the clang of crossbows; which din was continued, until the gunners, loading again, discharged their pieces a second time upon the enemy. And now the Tlascalan pioneers, springing up, rushed, with wild yells to the ditch, which they began to fill with frantic speed.

Notwithstanding the boldness of their defiance, the Mexicans made a much less manly resistance than was expected. But they stood as long as any human beings could do, exposed between two deadly batteries, both plied with unexampled activity, and both strengthened by the addition of the native archers in the piraguas. They handled their bows and slings as they could, and they cheered one another with shouts; but it was evident that they must soon give way, and take post behind some ditch unapproachable by the brigantines.

As soon as this became known, the Spanish footsoldiers began to encourage one another, in anticipation of the charge which they were soon to be called on to make; and Bernal Diaz, losing his grave equanimity, in the prospect of adding another leaf to his chaplet of immortality, ran briskly to and fro, in virtue of his official rank, which could scarce be defined in any one title of modern military nomenclature, and cheered every soldier with whom

he happened to be well acquainted. In the course of his rounds, he fell upon Gaspar, from whom he had been before separated, and whom he now seized by the hand, crying,

"Now, Gaspar, my dear brother of Medina del Campo, we shall have such a rouse among the red infidels as will make posterity stare."

He was then about to extend his exhortations to others, when Gaspar arrested him, turning upon him, to his great surprise, a countenance extremely pale and agitated.

"Art thou sick, man?" cried the historian, "or art thou worn out with watching? A few knocks, Gaspar, will soon warm thy blood."

"Bernal," said his friend, with an unnatural laugh, "wert thou ever in fear?"

"In fear?" echoed Bernal Diaz. "Never, before an infidel;—never, at least, but *once*, when they had me in their hands, and I thought they were carrying me to the temple."

"What were thy feelings then?" demanded Gaspar, with singular eagerness: "Was there ice in thy bosom, and lead in thy brain? Were thy lips cold and thy tongue hot? Did thy hand shake, thy teeth chatter, thy leg fail?—Faugh! what should make *me* fear to go into battle?"

"Fear! *thou* fear?" said Bernal, anxiously. "Thou art beside thyself, never believe me else,—frenzied with over-watching."

"I tell thee," said Gaspar, with a grin that was indeed expressive of terror, "that, if thou hunt this whole army through, thou wilt not find a white-livered loon of them all, who is, at this moment, more a coward than myself. Why should I be so? Is there an axe at my ear, and a foot on my breast? There are an hundred stout Spaniards, and thirty score Tlascalans betwixt me and the foe; and yet

I am in great terror of mind. I have heard that such things are forewarnings!"

"If thou art of this temper, indeed," said honest Bernal, with more disgust than he cared to conceal, "get thee to the rear, in God's name, and thou mayst light somewhere upon a flask of maguey-liquor. Shame upon thee, man! canst thou be so faint-hearted?"

"Ay!" replied Gaspar; "yet I go not to the rear, notwithstanding. I thought thou shouldst have counselled me.—Fare thee well, then, Bernal—Thou dost not know, that one can be in terror of death, and yet meet death without flinching. Fare thee well, brother; and what angry things I have said to thee, forget, even for the sake of our early days. Fare thee well, Bernal, fare thee well."

The Barba-Roxa locked his friend in a warm embrace, kissed him on both cheeks, and then starting away, rushed towards the front, with an alacrity that seemed utterly to disprove his humbling confession. Whether or not fear had, indeed, for the first time in his life, beset him, it is certain that Gaspar Olea did, that day, achieve exploits which eclipsed those of the most distinguished cavaliers, and consecrated his memory for ever in the hearts of his comrades.

The Tlascalans, working with furious zeal, had now so choked up the ditch, that stones and earth already appeared above the water. The Mexicans wavered, and seemed incapable of maintaining their post for a moment longer.

The fiery spirit of the Captain-General became incensed with impatience and hope. He rose upon his stirrups, and exalting his voice, always of vast and thrilling power, exclaimed,

"This time, brothers! we will seize the bridges before the pagans have leisure to destroy them. Footmen! see that ye follow after the horse, with

all your speed. Cavaliers! put your lances in rest, and be ready. What, trumpeter! speak thy signal to the pioneers; and, brave hearts! fear not the gap, for it is strong enough to support you.—Sound, trumpeter, sound!"

The trumpeter winded a peculiar blast, and the Tlascalans, dividing asunder, flung themselves, from either side of the causeway, into the lake,—a feat often before practised,—and thus left the whole space up to the ditch vacant for the horsemen. At a second blast of the instrument, the cavaliers spurred up to the chasm, and crossing it as they could, and clambering over the rampart, dashed down at once upon the disordered infidels. The footmen followed, running with all their strength, and returning the cheers, with which those in the ships beheld the exploit of the cavalry.

Meanwhile, the Mexicans, seized with unusual consternation, fled with great haste towards the city, pursued so closely by the cavaliers, that they made no attempt at a stand, even at the second ditch; nor did they pause a moment, according to their usual tactics, to destroy the bridge that spanned it. It was indeed a narrow chasm, with an unfinished breastwork, and could not have been maintained for an hour. Another, equally narrow and indefensible, occurred at a distance of less than two hundred paces; and at such intervals, it appeared that the dike was perforated, as far as it extended, even within the limits of the island.

The ardour of the cavaliers, aided by that incentive to valour, the back of the foe, carried them over three several bridges, before they bethought them of the propriety of drawing up their horses a little, and waiting for the footmen.

"*Halon*! halt! and God give us better heads to our helmets, or better helms to our heads!" cried Juan of Salamanca, a valiant young hidalgo, who

had won immortal renown upon the field of Otumba: "Does your excellency intend that we twenty Paladins of Spain shall sack this city with our lances and bucklers? In my mind, we should divide a moiety of the honour with those who will share a full half of the profit."

"Ay," said another, an ancient hidalgo, as all checked their steeds at the sudden call of the young man: "We should be wise, lest we fall into an ambush. Let us wait here for the footmen."

"And have the bridges torn up before our eyes!" cried Cortes; with ungovernable fire. "Heaven fights for us to-day; the infidels are seized with a panic, and they are but few in number."

"Say not so, señor," exclaimed Salamanca, pointing in front, where they could see the fugitives checked by what seemed a flood of armed men, pouring out from the city. "They are in no panic; but we took them too early. Their drum has not yet been beaten upon the temple-top; but we shall hear it now, soon enough.—What ho! ye lame ducks with swords and lances! ye lagging footmen! come on like men, and be fleeter."

"Let us pass on, at least, slowly," said Cortes. "The footmen are nigh, and we may yet gain two or three bridges. Do you not see, we are almost upon the island?—Hark! I hear the trumpet of Alvarado!—He will win the race to the pyramid!—Press on, gallant cavaliers, press on!"

They were indeed within but a short distance from the island, surrounded by the ruins of the water suburb; and it seemed yet easy to secure, at least, two more bridges, over which the fugitives had fled without pausing, and which could be gained before the causeway should be obstructed by the advance of the dense column from the city. Calling out therefore to the infantry to hasten, and find-

ing themselves already joined by two or three of the fleetest of foot, of whom the Barba-Roxa was one, they again dashed onwards, and secured the desired passes.

They now found themselves so near to the island, as to be within reach of annoyance from the adjoining housetops; and this circumstance, together with the unexpected conduct of the Mexicans, produced such alarm in the bosom of the cavalier who had seconded Salamanca's caution before, that he exclaimed,

"Señor mio, and good brothers, let us think a little what we do, before proceeding further. Let us beware of an ambuscado. The knaves yielded us the rampart, almost without a blow; and they leave the ditches bridged behind them. This is not the way Mexicans fight, when they fight honestly. Lo you, now, yonder is a herd of twenty thousand men, with flags and banners, and they stop at sight of us, as if in dismay! What does this mean, if not some decoy for a stratagem?"

"It means," said Cortes, "that they are in a perplexity, because their priests have not yet given them the signal to fall on: and of this perplexity it should be our wisdom to take advantage. See, now, the dogs are in confusion!—Nay, by my conscience! 'tis the confusion of attack, and they come against us! Couch your lances, and at them! for it is better they should feel the weight of our horses, than we the shock of their stormy bodies. On, footmen, on! spur, cavaliers, spur! Santiago and Spain! and down with the paynim scum!"

At these words of exhortation, the horsemen closed their ranks, shouted their war-cries, and dashed with fearless audacity upon the advancing warriors. They swept the causeway, like a moving wall, and however insignificant their numbers, it did not seem possible for the enemy to withstand

the violence of their onset; indeed, before a drop of blood was shed, they manifested such symptoms of hesitation and wavering, as greatly exalted the courage of the assailants. They plied their slings and arrows, indeed, they darted their javelins, brandished their spears, and added their discordant shrieks and wild whistling to the shouts of the Spaniards; but still it was in a kind of confusion and disorder, that showed them to be, from some cause or other, not yet prepared for combat. Nay, some were seen, as the galloping squadron approached, to cast themselves into the lake, as if in fear, and swim to the nearest ruins for protection.

This degree of disrelish for battle was a phenomenon, so unusual in the character of barbarians brave not only to folly, but to madness, that a wary commander would have laid it to heart, and pondered over it with suspicion. But not so the Captain-General. He remembered, with Salamanca, that the sound of the enormous drum on the temple of Mexitli, with which, each morning, the Mexican emperor gave the signal for battle, had not yet been heard; and as there seemed to be as close, and almost as fanatical, a connexion between the thunder of this instrument and the courage of the pagans, as he had found, in former days, in the case of the sacred horn, he did not doubt that their present timidity was caused entirely by the failure of the signal. Perhaps he thought it increased also by their sense of weakness; for, now that he was nigh, it became obvious that their numbers were much less considerable than they had appeared at a distance. At all events, they were in fear, and they wavered; which was enough to give his valour the upperhand of his prudence.—It is with martial ardour as with a pestilence;—it ravens most furiously among the ranks of fear.

Fierce, therefore, was the zeal of his cavaliers,

and their hearts flamed at the thought of blood. They raised their voices in a cry of victory, and bounded like thunderbolts among their opponents. The shock was decisive; in a moment, the whole mass of pagans was put to rout. They flung down their arms, and betook themselves to flight. Those who could, fled down along the dike into the city; others flung themselves into the water, and swam to the island, or to the neighbouring ruins. The only ones who made resistance, were those whose hearts were transfixed by Spanish lances, before they could turn to retreat. Such men uttered the yell of battle, and, in their dying agonies, thrust with their own hands, the spears further through their vitals, that they might be nearer to the foe, and strike the macana once more for Tenochtitlan.

"On, ye men of the foot!" cried the Captain-General. "Let the Tlascalans fire the houses behind me; for now we are again upon the island. Charge, cavaliers, charge! The saints open a path for us. Charge, my brothers, charge! and *viva* for Spain and our honour!"

CHAPTER XV.

The horsemen pursued along the dike, spearing, or tumbling into the water, the few who had the heart to resist; and so great was, or seemed, the terror of the barbarians, that the victors penetrated even within the limits of the island, until the turrets of houses, from which they were separated only by the lateral canals, darkened them with their shadows. Upon these were clustered many pagans, who shot at them both arrows and darts, but with so little energy, that it seemed as if despondence or fatuity had robbed them of their usual vigour. Hence, the excited cavaliers gave them but little attention, not doubting that they would be soon dislodged by the infantry. They were even regardless of circumstances still more menacing; and if a lethargy beset the infidel that day, it is equally certain that a species of distraction overwhelmed the brains of the Spaniards. It seemed as if the great object of their ambition depended more upon their following the fugitives to the temple-square than upon any other feat; and to this they encouraged one another with vivas and invocations to the saints. They could already behold the huge bulk of the pyramid, rising up at the distance of a mile, as if it shut up the street; and its terraced sides, thronged with multitudes of men, seemed to prove to them, that the frighted Mexicans were running

to their gods for protection. It is true, they perceived vast bodies of infidels blocking up the avenue afar, as if to dispute their passage beyond the canalled portion of the island; but they regarded them with scorn.

They rushed onwards, occasionally arrested by some flying group, but only for a moment.

There was a place, not far within the limits of the island, where they found the causeway, for the space of at least sixty paces, so delved and pared away on either side, that it scarce afforded a passage for two horsemen abreast. The device was of recent execution, for they beheld the mattocks of labourers still sticking in the earth, as if that moment abandoned. This circumstance, so strange, so novel, and so ominous, it might be supposed, would have aroused them to suspicion. The passage, as it was, so contracted, broken, and rugged, looked prodigiously like the Al-Sirat, or bridge to paradise of the Mussulmans,—that arch, narrow as the thread of a famished spider, over which it is so much easier to be precipitated than to pass with safety. Yet grim and threatening as it was, there was but one among the cavaliers who raised a voice of warning. As the Captain-General, without a moment's hesitation, pushed his horse forward, to lead the way, and without a single expression of surprise, the ancient hidalgo, who had twice before sounded a note of alarm, now exclaimed,—

"For the love of heaven, pause, señor! This is a trap that will destroy us."

"Art thou afraid, Alderete?" cried Cortes, looking back to him, grimly. "This is no place for a King's Treasurer," (such was Alderete, the royal Contador.)—"Get thee back, then, to the first ditch, and fill it up to thy liking. *This* will be charge enough for a volunteer."

"I will fight where thou wilt, when thou wilt, and as boldly as thou wilt," said the indignant cavalier; "but here play the madman no longer."

"I will take thy counsel,—rest where I am,—and, in an hour's time, see myself shut out from the city by a ditch, sixty yards wide! God's benison upon thy long beard! and mayst thou be wiser. Forward, friends! Do you not see? the knaves are running amain to check us, and recover their unfinished gap! On! courage, and on! Santiago and at them!"

It was indeed as Cortes said. The infidels, who blocked up the streets afar, were now seen running towards them, with the most terrific yells, as if to seize, before it was too late, a pass so easily maintained. The cavaliers, animated by the words of their leader, were quite as resolute to disappoint them, and therefore rode across as rapidly as they could. The pass was not only narrow, but tortuous and irregular; which increased the difficulties of surmounting it; so that the Mexicans, running with the most frantic speed, were within a bowshot, before Cortes had spurred his steed upon the broader portion of the dike. But, as if there were something dreadful to the infidels, in the spectacle of the great Teuctli of the East, thus again in their stronghold, they came to a sudden halt, and testified their valour only by yelling, and waving their spears and banners.

"Courage, friends, and quick!" cried Cortes. "The dogs are beset with fear, and will not face us. Ye shall hear other yells in a moment. Haste, valiant cavaliers! haste, men of Spain! and make room for the footmen, who are behind you."

The screams of the barbarians were loud and incessant; but in the midst of the din, as he turned to cheer his cavaliers over the broken passage, Don Hernan's ears were struck by the sound of a

Christian voice, calling from the midst of the pagans, with thrilling vehemence,

"Beware! beware! Back to the causey! Beware!"

"Hark!" cried Alderete, who had already passed; "Our Saint calls to us! Let us return!"

"It is a trick of the fiend!" exclaimed Cortes, in evident perturbation of mind. "Come on, good friends, and let us seize vantage-ground; or the dogs will drive us, singly, into the ditches."

"Back! back!" shouted the cavaliers behind—"We are ambushed! We are surrounded!"

Their further exclamations were lost in a tempest of discordant shrieks, coming from the front and the rear, from the heavens above, and, as they almost fancied, from the earth beneath. They looked northward, towards the pyramid,—the whole broad street was filled with barbarians, rushing towards them with screams of anticipated triumph; they looked back to the lake,—the causeway was swarming with armed men, who seemed to have sprung from the waters; to either side, and beheld the canals of the intersecting streets lashed into foam by myriads of paddles; while, at the same moment, the few pagans, who had annoyed them from the housetops, appeared transformed, by the same spell of enchantment, into hosts innumerable, with spirits all of fury and flame.

"What says the king of Castile? What says the king of Castile *now?*" roared the exulting infidels.

"Santiago! and God be with us!" exclaimed Cortes, waving his hand, with a signal for retreat, that came too late: "Cross but this devil-trap again, and—"

Before he could conclude the vain and useless order, the drum of the emperor sounded upon the pyramid. It was an instrument of gigantic size

and horrible note, and was held in no little fear, especially after the events of this day, by the Spaniards, who fabled that it was covered with the skins of serpents. It was a fit companion for the horn of Mexitli; which latter, however, being a sacred instrument, was sounded only on the most urgent and solemn occasions.

The first tap,—or rather peal, for the sound came from the temple more like the roll of thunder than of a drum,—was succeeded by yells still more stunning; and while the cavaliers, retreating, struggled, one by one, to recross the narrow pass, they were set upon with such fury as left them but little hope of escape.

If the rashness of Cortes had brought his friends into this fatal difficulty, he now seemed resolved to atone his fault, by securing their retreat, even although at the expense of his life. It was in vain that those few cavaliers who had succeeded in reaching him, before the onslaught began, besought him to take his chance among them, and recross, leaving them to cover his rear.

"Get ye over yourselves," he cried, with grim smiles, smiting away the headmost of the assailants from the street: "If I have brought ye among coals of fire, heaven forbid I should not broil a little in mine own person. Quick, fools! over and hasten! over and quick! and by and by I will follow you."

For a moment, it seemed as if the terror of his single arm would have kept the barbarians at bay. But, waxing bolder, as they saw his attendants dropping one by one away, they began to close upon him, and his situation became exceedingly critical. He looked over his shoulder, and perceived that his followers threaded their way along the broken dike with less difficulty than he at first feared. The very narrowness of the passage left

but little foothold for the enemy; and their attacks, being made principally from canoes, were not such as wholly to dishearten a cavalier, whose steed was as strongly defended by mail as his own body. Encouraged by this assurance, the Captain-General still maintained his post, rushing ever and anon upon the closing herds, and mowing right and left with his trusty blade, while his gallant charger pawed down opposition with his hoofs. Thus he fought, with the mad valour that made his enemies so often deem him almost a demigod, until satisfied that his own attempt to cross the pass could no longer embarrass the efforts of his followers. Then, charging once more upon the pagans, and even with greater fury than before, he wheeled round with unexpected rapidity, and uttering his famous cry, "Santiago and at them!" dashed boldly at the passage.

Seven pagans sprang upon the path. They were armed like princes, and the red fillets of the House of Darts waved among their sable locks.

"The Teuctli shall have the tribute of Mexico!" shouted one, flourishing a battle-axe that seemed of weight sufficient, in his brawny arm, to dash out the charger's brains at a blow. The words were not understood by Cortes; but he recognized at once the visage of the Lord of Death.

"I have thee, pagan!" he cried, striking at the bold barbarian. The blow failed; for one of the others, springing at the charger's head with unexampled audacity, seized him by the bridle, so that he reared backwards, and thus foiled the aim of his rider. The next moment, the Spanish steel fell upon the neck of the daring infidel, killing him on the spot; yet not so instantaneously as to avert a disaster, which it seemed the object of his fury to produce. His convulsive struggles, as he clung, dying, to the rein, drove the steed off the narrow ledge; and

thus losing his foothold, the noble animal rolled over into the deep canal, burying the Captain-General in the flood.

"The general! save the general!" shrieked the only Christian, who, in this horrible melée, (for the battle was now universal,) beheld the condition of Cortes, and who, although on foot, and bristling with arrows that had stuck fast in his cotton-armour, and resisted by other weapons at every step, had yet the courage to run to the rescue. It was Gaspar Olea. His visage was yet wan, and expressive of the unusual horror preying upon his mind; yet he rushed forward, as if he had never known a fear. He exalted his voice, while crying for assistance, until it was heard far back upon the causeway; yet he reached the place of Don Hernan's mischance alone. The scene was dreadful: the nobles had flung themselves into the flood, and were dragging the stunned and strangling hero from the steed, which lay upon its side on the rugged and shelving edge of the dike, unable to rise, and perishing with the most fearful struggles; while, all the time, the elated infidels expressed their triumph with shouts of frantic joy.

"Courage, captain! be of good heart, señor!" exclaimed the Barba-Roxa, striking down one of the captors at a single blow: "Courage! for we have good help nigh," he continued, attacking a second with the same success: "Courage, señor, courage!"

No Mexican helm of dried skins, and no breastplate of copper, could resist the machete of a man like Gaspar. Yet his first success was caused rather by the Mexicans being so intently occupied with their captive, that they thought of nothing else, than by any miraculous exertion of skill and prowess. He slew two, before they dreamed of attack, and he mortally wounded a third, ere the others

could turn to drive him back. A fourth rushed upon him, before he could again lift up his weapon, and grasping him in his arms, with the embrace of a mountain bear, leaped with him into the canal.

There were now but two left in possession of Cortes; yet his resistance even against these was ineffectual. His sword had dropped from his hand; a violent blow had burst his helmet, and confounded his brain; and he had been lifted from the water, already half suffocated. Yet he struggled as he could, and catching one of his foes by the throat, he succeeded in overturning him into the water, and there grappled with him among the shallows. The remaining barbarian, yelling for assistance, flung himself upon the pair; and though twenty Spaniards, headed by Bernal Diaz and the hunchback, were now within half as many paces, Cortes would have perished where he lay, had not assistance arose from an unexpected quarter.

Among the vast numbers who came crowding from the city over the broken passage, were several who knew, by the cry of the seventh noble, that Malintzin was in his hands; and they rushed forward, to insure his capture. The foremost and fleetest of these was distinguished from the rest by a frame of towering height; and, had there been a Spaniard by to notice him, would have been still more remarkable from the fact, that he uttered all his cries in good, expressive Castilian. He bore a Spanish weapon, too, and his first act, as he flung himself into the ditch where Cortes was drowning, was to strike it through the neck of the uppermost noble. His next was to spurn the other from the breast of the general, whom he raised to his feet, murmuring in his ear,

"Be of good heart, señor! for you are saved."

What more he would have said and done can

only be imagined; for, at that moment, the Barba-Roxa rushed out of the ditch, followed close at hand by the hunchback, Bernal Diaz, and others, and seeing his commander, as he thought, in the hands of a foeman, he lifted his good sword once again, and smote him over the head, crying,

"Down, infidel dog! and *viva* for Spain and our general!"

At this moment, there rushed up a crew of fresh combatants, Spaniards from the rear and infidels from the front. But before they closed upon him entirely, the Barba-Roxa caught sight of the man he had struck down, and beheld, in his pale and quivering aspect, the features of Juan Lerma.

The unhappy wretch, thus beholding the beloved youth, with his own eyes, a leaguer and helpmate of the infidel, and punished to death, as it seemed, by his hand, set up a scream wildly vehement, and broke from the group of Spaniards, who now surrounded Cortes, endeavouring to drag him in safety over the pass. The exile had been seen by others as well as Gaspar, and many a ferocious cry of exultation burst from their lips, as they saw him fall.

Meanwhile, Gaspar, distracted in mind, and dripping with blood, for he had not escaped from the ditch and the fierce embrace of his fourth antagonist, without many severe wounds, endeavoured to retrace his steps to the spot where Juan had fallen. It was occupied by infidels, who drove him into the ditch, where his legs were grasped by a drowning Mexican, who raised himself a little from the water, and displayed, between his neck and shoulder, a yawning chasm, rather than a wound, from which the blood, at every panting expiration of breath, rolled out hideously in froth and foam. It was the Lord of Death, thus struck by Juan Lerma, as he lay upon the breast of Cortes, and now perishing,

but still like a warrior of the race of America. He clambered up the body of Gaspar, for it could hardly be said, that he rose upon his feet; and seeing that he grasped a Christian soldier, he strove to utter once more a cry of battle. The blood foamed from his lips, as from his wound; and his voice was lost in a suffocating murmur. Yet, with his last expiring strength, he locked his arms round the neck of the Spaniard, now almost as much spent as himself, and falling backwards, and writhing together as they fell, they rolled off into the deep water, where the salt and troubled flood wrapped them in a winding-sheet, already spread over the bosoms of thousands.

CHAPTER XVI.

If it be indeed permitted to disembodied spirits to look back to the world they have left, and to read the hearts they have, in life, mistaken, then should that of Gaspar Olea have seen, that his unlucky blow fell not upon the head of an apostate, and that it had not slain his friend and companion of the wilderness. Even Gaspar's strength failed to pierce entirely through a morion composed of tiger-skins and thickly-padded escaupil; and though the violence of the blow forced Juan to the earth, and left him for a time almost insensible, it had done him no serious injury. It robbed him, to be sure, of the dearly coveted opportunity of escape, which the lucky service he had done the Captain-General would have rendered of still more inestimable value; but it yet served the good purpose, since he did *not* escape, of removing from the minds of the Mexicans many fierce doubts and suspicions, with which they beheld him rush into the melée.

He was dragged back upon the causeway, and soon found himself in the arms of the king.

"My brother is brave and true," said the young monarch, tearing from his own hair the symbols of military renown, and fastening them to Juan's. "The people have seen his bravery, and now they know him well. Did he not lay his hands upon

Malintzin? and was not Malintzin his prisoner, until the red lion with the white and bloody face, struck my brother with his sword? Is this a good deed, men of Mexico?"

"The king's brother is valiant!" exclaimed many nobles, who surrounded the monarch with a guard of honour, eyeing the outcast with reverence.

Their words stung Juan to the soul; for he abhorred his deception, though still urged by his desire of escaping, to carry it on.

"Why do we stand here idle?" he cried, with affected zeal: "Is not Malintzin yet upon the causeway? My heart is very strong; I will look him in the face again."

At this proof of courage and apparent devotion to their cause, the infidels shouted with approbation. But the king took him by the arm, and withdrawing him a little, said,

"My brother will go now to the palace.—What is this that Azcamatzin says of my brother? He says that my brother pierced the Lord of Death with a sword, and pulled Malintzin out of his hands! This foolish thing of Azcamatzin has made many angry, and they say, 'Let us know; for perhaps the Great Eagle is for Malintzin.' Therefore my brother shall not go from the king, till Azcamatzin thinks better things; for many hurts have made him mad."

"Think not of this," said Juan, eagerly, for every moment the shouts of the Christians were at a greater distance, and he feared that every step of their retreat was one more link taken from his chain of hope.

"My brother," said Guatimozin, interrupting him, "may yet fight the battles of the king, and be the king's friend. It is said to me, by a messenger, that the ships have broken the wall of my

garden, and that Spaniards are slaying the women."

"Ha!" cried Juan, his own agitation at this information, contrasting strongly with the frigid placidity of the king.

"Why should the king think of his women—of his wife and his little boy,—when he is taking the Spaniards, like birds in a net? Let my brother think for the king, for the king thinks for his people. My brother's arm is yet strong—he will fight for Zelahualla, and for her sister, the queen."

A thousand contrary emotions tore the breast of Juan, yet his thoughts were fixed upon the garden. He remembered what counsel he had given to the maidens, to sally forth, at any moment, when a trumpet should be heard among the trees; and he conceived the danger in which they would be involved, among a troop of enraged and merciless soldiers. He needed no second exhortation to run to their assistance; and following Techeechee, who remained at his side, he made his way through the multitudes that thronged all the great streets, with a rapidity that, at any other period, would have even surprised himself. He passed the great square of the pyramid, the Wall of Serpents, and the House of Skulls, from which, had he been so minded, he might have looked, at the same moment, upon the three battles raging upon the three several causeways, (for it was here the dikes terminated;) he passed the house of Axajacatl, in which the Spaniards, a year since, had endured those assaults which terminated only in their expulsion from Tenochtitlan; and he trod again upon the vast market square of Tlatelolco, the northern side of which was bounded by the walls of Guatimozin's palace and garden. Upon this square he beheld many infidels, shouting at once with wrath and triumph, a party

of whom bore in their arms a Christian prisoner, bound hand and foot, over whom the others seemed to exult, piercing the very heavens with their clamorous cries.

Heart-sick, for well he knew the fate in store for the captive, and struck with foreboding fear, he rushed over the fosse that laved the garden wall, and was now choked up by the falling of a portion of its extent, washed and undermined by the heavy rains, and passed into the pleasant wilderness within. It was a theatre of wild disorder and affright: men were seen rushing to and fro in great numbers, and their cries were re-echoed by the yells of a thousand beasts of prey, famished with hunger, or alarmed by the tumult.

He perceived that the water-wall was rent at one of the chief sally-ports, as if battered by cannon; and he had no doubt, if it were not yet over, that some terrific combat had but lately taken place in the garden.

He came too late to share in it, but as he ran down to the water-side, he beheld four brigantines making their way with oars, for the atmosphere was breathless, towards the dike of Tepejacac, which was itself a scene of furious conflict. The vessels were surrounded by countless canoes and piraguas, some of which seemed to be manned by Tlascalans; for while the brigantines were seen contending with this aquatic army, it was equally manifest that a battle was raging also among the canoes themselves.

He gave but little heed to this spectacle, nor did he scarcely note that among the many human corses which strewed the lower part of the garden, there were several with the visages of Spaniards.

His attention was arrested by a yelping cry; and looking round, he beheld the dog Befo lying

upon the ground, with an iron sword-blade, broken off near the hilt, sticking quite through his body. But this painful sight was forgotten, when, having approached, he beheld three or four barbarians raising from the earth what seemed the dead body of Magdalena. There were indeed blood-drops upon her hollow and ghastly cheeks; and when he rushed up among the Indians, they exclaimed,

"The Teuctlis killed her, the men of Malintzin with beards,—they killed the bright-eyed lady, and they killed the daughter of Montezuma!" And then they added their wild lamentations to the mourning cries of Juan.

Distracted himself, as indeed were all the infidels, he could learn nothing but that the Teuctlis, or Spaniards, had suddenly burst into the garden, and besides slaughtering all that opposed them, in their attempt to reach the palace, had killed, or carried off, as seemed much more probable, the princess Zelahualla.

The misery that took possession of his heart at these evil tidings, he smothered within its secret recesses, or strove to forget it in the contemplation of his sister—for so his heart acknowledged her. He bore her to the palace, and gave her in charge to the maidens, who, whatever was their fright, were not unmindful of the duties of humanity. He then, in much of that sullen despair that had oppressed him in the prison of Tezcuco, returned to the garden and to Befo, whom he had left in suffering, and drawing the sword-blade from his body, he examined it with stern curiosity, as if hoping to penetrate the mystery of the whole unhappy transaction, from such records as it might furnish. His scrutiny was vain: it was a blade without any name, by which he might be enabled to guess at its owner. He snapped it under his foot, and muttered a malediction upon the unknown foe:

"Cursed be he that did this deed," he cried; "for he slew the only protector of a feeble and wretched woman."

He then carried Befo, almost with as much tenderness as he had bestowed upon Magdalena, into the palace, and stanching his wounds as he could, deposited him upon his own couch.

CHAPTER XVII.

The effects of this battle upon the Spaniards were disastrous in the extreme. The assault, as has been mentioned, and as was anticipated, was made upon all the causeways at once; and, on all, successfully repelled, though an ambuscade was only attempted upon the dike of Iztapalapan. It seemed as if the Mexicans, thinned as their numbers had been, by so many conflicts, and now the remainder absolutely perishing under want and pestilence, had collected all their energies for one final blow. It was first successful in the quarter attacked by the Captain-General, in consequence of his surprising infatuation; and victory soon after followed in the others. The Spaniards fled, so completely broken and so utterly defeated, that the priests, in the wild hope of completing their destruction at once, even drew the sacred horn from the tabernacle of Mexitli, and added its dreadful uproar to the thunder of the great tymbal. This was always regarded by the Mexicans as the voice of the god himself, and was never sounded without filling them with a delirium of fury, utterly inconceivable. It was not more maddening to the infidels than frightful to the Spaniards; who remembered the horrors of the Noche Triste, augmented, if not altogether caused by its unearthly roar. The Spaniards were driven back to their strong and defensible stations at the gates; the dikes were lost; and

had not famine now fought for them, they must have given up the siege in despair. Nearly an hundred Spaniards, and many thousand Indian allies, were killed; the fleets of canoes and piraguas were destroyed, and several brigantines wholly ruined.

But the miseries of the besiegers were not confined to the events of the day. Night opened to them a scene of grief and horror. The whole mass of the pyramid, always a striking object, was suddenly illuminated by a myriad of flambeaux, so that it blazed like a mountain of solid fire. The night was clear, and the peculiarly rarified and transparent atmosphere of Mexico rendering objects distinct at a much greater distance than in other lands, the Spaniards, looking from the towers at the gates, could plainly perceive some of their late fellow-soldiers, stripped naked and their hands bound behind them, driven up the stairs from platform to platform, by the blows and other indignities of their cruel captors. On the summit of the pyramid, they were unbound, their heads adorned with plumes, and great waving penachos placed in their hands, with which they were forced to dance round the ever-burning censers of the gods, in the midst of shouting pagans, until dragged away by the priests and immolated, at a signal blasted from the sacred horn, upon the stone of sacrifice. The station of Alvarado on the dike of Tacuba, was nearer than either of the others; and his men, while they wept and prayed over a spectacle so appalling, even fancied they could distinguish the figures and faces of particular individuals, and hear their cries to heaven. Many were the wretches who had yielded themselves alive into the hands of the foe; and for ten nights in succession, the blazing temple echoed to their groans, and their garrisoned friends were compelled to be the witnesses of their torments.

But this triumph was the last of the pagans. All supplies of corn from the lake-sides were cut off, and they were known to be famishing; and besides, as if heaven were willing to assist even the arms of rapacity, to subdue a race, all whose institutions were more or less infected by the spirit of blood that brutalized their religion, the rainy season was brought to a close preternaturally early, and they were left without water. The Spaniards recovered their spirits, and collecting again vast bands of confederates, recommenced the siege, advancing with prudence, and destroying every thing as they advanced, and not only regaining all they had lost, but even effecting, despite all resistance, a secure lodgment upon the island, from their several points of attack. The Mexicans still fought; but it was with bodies emaciated and enfeebled, and with hearts subdued by despair. The three divisions of besiegers met upon the great square, blew up the Huitzompan, and all the temples within the circuit of the Wall of Serpents, which they fortified and preserved; and then, still demolishing houses as they advanced, they pushed on until they reached the great market-place of Tlatelolco; and thus hemmed in upon the narrow peninsula the unfortunate king of Mexico, and the few shattered remnants of his army.

Before this crisis had yet arrived, there occurred another incident, in which, as in all others since his return from the South Sea, the virtues of Juan Lerma were made the instruments of still further misfortune. He beheld Magdalena but once, after the adventure of the garden; and she was then raving with delirium, in which she did not know even him. The fate of Zelahualla was still wrapt in obscurity; for such had been the suddenness of the attack in the garden, that none knew of her fate, and Magda-

lena was incapable of uttering any rational word, to remove the mountain of anxiety from his breast. His scheme to effect the deliverance of the princess had doubtless thrown her into the power of the Spaniards; and the thought of such a captive in such hands, preyed upon him with a bitterness that exceeded death. He fought no more, and indeed he was urged no longer by the king, who was himself reduced to such desperation, that he thought no further of stratagems, but merely of blind and sullen resistance.

On the third day after the battle, he was summoned by Techeechee to attend the king in public; and without questioning for what purpose, he gloomily obeyed, taking with him the Spanish sword with which he had been provided, on the day of his attempted escape.

It was midday: no sound of contention came to his ears, for the besiegers were yet lying in their quarters on the dikes, healing their wounds and lamenting their friends; but the quiet of the garden was broken by the howling of the beasts, and the shrill screams of birds of prey,—of such at least as had not already been slaughtered, to appease the hunger of the wretches, who yet fought for their expiring empire. One circumstance, had Juan noticed it, might have convinced him of the dreadful extent and intensity of the suffering, of which he had been before apprized. The trees of the garden had begun to be robbed of their leaves, but not by summer heat or autumnal drought;—the tender shrubs were stripped of their bark;—the smaller plants had been rooted up, and even the grass, in some places, torn from the earth, and even the earth itself upturned, in the search after edible roots.—All that could be gnawed by the teeth of man had vanished, or did soon after vanish, from the garden.

When the Spaniards walked afterwards through their conquest, not a green leaf, as they have recorded, was found in all the city.

He passed through the broken wall, now only defended by rude palisades, strengthened by an abatis of withered shrubs and brambles, and passing the moat, over the ruins of the prostrate wall, found himself on the market-square of Tlatelolco, of which the Spaniards gave such surprising accounts, when they beheld it filled with the merchants and riches of the empire, before the death of Montezuma. It was of very great extent, and contained, at the eastern boundary, a pyramid, on which was the temple of one of the lesser divinities. On the west was a platform, or rather stage, faced and flagged with stone, and devoted to theatrical exhibitions, which, however primitive and barbarous, were yet a chief feature among the amusements of a Mexican festival.

Almost in the centre of the square, and yet so nigh to the garden wall that it could be overlooked by the nearest turrets of the palace, was another platform, perhaps four feet in height, and circular, upon which lay the famous stone *Temalacatl*, devoted to the purpose of the gladiatorial sacrifice. It now lies in the Plaza Mayor of the modern city, near the walls, and within the enclosure, of the great Cathedral, and is one of the few monuments which the conquerors have left of the savage institutions of the Aztec empire. It is a circular block of porphyry, nine or ten feet in diameter, and is sculptured over with the effigies of warriors. The privilege of dying upon this stone was awarded only to captives of the most extraordinary prowess; and as such were never taken alive, unless when conquered by accident, the exhibition of such a sacrifice was as rare as it was agreeable to the fierce

tastes of the Mexicans. It was essentially gladiatorial, and it offered a prospect even of life and liberty to the valiant prisoner. A sword and buckler were put into his hands, and he was tied by one leg to the stone; yet, if he succeeded in slaying or defeating six chosen Mexican warriors, he was released and sent back in safety to his own country. The last victim of the Temalacatl was the famous Tlascalan chief, Tlahuicotl, the Orlando of Anahuac, captured by Montezuma not many years before the advent of the Spaniards, who, fighting only to die, (for he refused to accept life, even as the meed of his own heroism,) and fighting till he *did* die, slew no less than eight different opponents, and disabled twenty others, before his great spirit sank under his exertions. If the gladiator fell, before he had accomplished his task, he was dragged to the neighbouring temple, and there sacrificed, while yet living. The last victim, destined to close the list of those to whom Mexico did honour, was a Spaniard.

A vast multitude of pagans surrounded the platform, except on that side which looked to the temple. Here stood the priests, few in number, yet prepared, at the moment of the victim's fall, to clutch upon him, and bear him to the altar, a space being left for them, as much out of reverence for their sacred character, as to preserve their pathway entirely unobstructed. The side that looked to the palace was also but little encumbered; for here the king of Mexico sat upon a scaffold, attended by his chief nobles.

The grim looks of expectation, with which the assembled multitude surveyed the platform, were heightened in ferocity by the privations that had pinched and hollowed their visages. They looked like winter wolves, gaunt with famine; and one

would have thought their appetites were whetting for a repast on the flesh of the victim. There was indeed something horrid in their appearance, as well as in the cause which had assembled them together. It was plain that they waited impatiently for the coming of the prisoner. As they rolled their eyes over the square, they caught sight of Juan, conspicuous by his lofty stature, though he now drooped his head with gloom, and hailed his appearance with such shouts as proved what a change had been made in their feelings, by his presence, in the battle of the ambuscade. The imputations of Azcamatzin were ended, for Ascamatzin perished an hour after uttering them, under a shot from the crossbow of the hunchback: they remembered nothing now, but that the Christian had touched the body of Malintzin, and was struck down while he had him in his hands, and that he was the brother of the king.

It was these acclamations which roused him out of his sullen mood, so that he could exert his mind and imagine the object for which he had been summoned. But no sooner did he perceive the priests near the Temalacatl, than he was seized with horror, and disregarding the command of Guatimozin, who beckoned to him to ascend the platform to his side, he turned to fly.

"Is not my brother a Mexican, and among the sons of the king?" said the infidel; and then added with a look of bitter meaning, "My brother shall see the revenge of the daughter of Montezuma!"

Struck by these words, yet incapable of fathoming their signification, Juan looked up to the young monarch, and would even have ascended the scaffold, had not the sudden appearance of the captive engaged his whole attention. A wild and frantic cry burst from the mob, and looking round, he beheld a body of ten or twelve priests, with their

black robes, and long plaited, rope-like hair, leading the prisoner towards the platform. His arms were bound behind him, and his only garment was a coarse cloth wrapped round the loins.

Juan's heart sickened; he would have sunk to the earth, or buried his head in his tilmaltli, to avoid looking upon the spectacle of a Christian and countryman, thus brought forth to be slaughtered. But the fiery spirit displayed by the victim, as soon as he was lifted upon the mound and set upon his feet, drew another shout from the admiring infidels, which caused him to steal one look at the scene; and that look left him without the power of withdrawing his eyes. The captive, as soon as he was on the mound, leaped, of his own accord, upon the stone, as if to testify not only his knowledge of the purpose for which he was brought there, but his willingness to engage in the combat. He then turned his face towards the king, and, at that moment, Juan Lerma lifting his eyes, beheld the only man he had ever learned to hate—It was Don Francisco de Guzman.

Noble, compassionate, and truly unvindictive, as was Lerma's spirit, he did not make this discovery without a thrill of fierce exultation. There is a touch of the wild beast in the hearts of us all; and so long as man is capable of anger, he will, at some moment, and for some brief space of time, yield to thoughts and wishes, that he himself must, a moment after, esteem diabolic. Religion and moral culture make us the masters of our malign propensities; but man is naturally a vengeful animal.

It was but the weakness of a moment with Juan Lerma; perhaps, too, it was caused by the thrill of joy at the proof thus rendered, that Guzman, at least, exercised no control over the fate of the princess of Mexico; and if he did not instantly commiserate the condition of an enemy justly abhorred, but now so

fallen, so wretched, and about to expiate his evil deeds by a punishment so fearfully retributive, he was able to banish all unworthy elation from his mind, and look on with feelings more becoming a man and Christian.

He could not indeed but admire the fearless intrepidity, or rather audacity, with which Guzman (more oppressed by a sense of humiliation, at being made a spectacle among a crew so despised and abhorred, than by any other feeling,) looked around him upon the pagans, and extended his foot to the ligature, with which it was to be secured to the stone. Whatever were his faults, it could not be denied, that Don Francisco was a man of unflinching courage, which was indeed a constitutional trait. His presence on the stone of battle indicated that he had been captured after a heroic resistance. His resolution was, in this case, kept up by a knowledge of the nature of the ordeal through which he was to pass, and by full confidence in his ability to win all the privileges it conferred upon him. He had some little acquaintance with the Mexican tongue, and was by no means ignorant of the more remarkable institutions of the country. A victory over six awkward and half-starved barbarians, was an exploit not to be despaired of by a well-trained cavalier, even when denied any advantage of weapons, and defensive armour. Yet it was a curious circumstance, that he, who had not often kept faith himself, when his interest called upon him to break it, should rest with such perfect reliance upon the willingness of the Mexicans to liberate him, in the event of his prevailing over their champions. But he knew, that never but *once* had a tribe of all the broad regions of Anahuac broken its pledged faith to a successful gladiator; and that tribe was, for that reason, ever after held infamous. It was the tribe of Huexotzinco;

and Cortes himself placed the circumstance on record.

As soon as his foot was properly secured, his arms were unbound, and a noble, who stood upon the scaffold in the character of a herald, addressed him in the following official terms:

"This is the law of Mexico, and let the people hear: 'The prisoner who is brave, the gods honour. If he kill six strong men upon the stone Temalacatl, he shall be set free.' This is the law."

"This is the law, then," repeated Guzman, in imperfect Mexican, turning his eyes upon Guatimozin, as if he disdained to hold converse with any meaner infidel: "Is it a law that will be remembered, when the prisoner is a Spaniard?"

"He who is a prisoner, has no name and no country," replied the prince. "He is neither Tlascalan nor Castilian, but a man who kills or dies."

"And if I prevail over six of thy soldiers," again cried Guzman, as the attendants strapped upon one arm a light buckler of basket-work, and gave him also a short macana, "dost thou warrant me by thy gods, that I shall be sent back to Don Hernan?"

"Let the prisoner fight," said the king sternly: "Are the warriors of Mexico blades of grass, that they should be blown down by a man's breath, before the sword has struck them?"

"Thou shalt see," replied Guzman, with a grim smile. "What are six warriors to a man fighting for liberty? Give me a Spanish sword,—a weapon of iron,—and let my adversaries be doubled in number."

The boldness of this demand greatly excited the admiration of the warlike spectators, who rewarded it with cheers. But they checked their tumult to hear the words of the king.

"The white man talks with the lips of a boaster,"

he said. "Had he not a Spanish sword in the king's garden, among the women? How is this? He is a prisoner!"

"Ask thy warriors,—it was not broken off in my hand! How else should they have taken me?" replied Guzman, to the words of scorn; and then added, in Spanish, as if to himself, "So much for striking the accursed hound! I would he and his master were broiling in purgatory; for they have ever brought me bad luck."

Juan Lerma heard not these words, but he remembered the broken blade in Befo's body, and again his heart hardened against his foemen. But matters were now approaching to a crisis. The monarch, disdaining to hold further discourse with the prisoner, waved his hand, and a warrior, darting from the ground at the foot of the scaffold, leaped with a single bound upon the platform, and uttered the yell of battle, which was instantly re-echoed by the shouts of the multitude. He was a tall and powerful savage, though meager of frame, of great activity, as was proved by his ready leap, and of a spirit fully corresponding. His equipments were but little superior to those of the captive; his battle-axe was somewhat longer, his buckler a little broader, and he had some slight defence for his head, in a cap of alligator-skin, that crowned his matted hair.

No sound of trump and tymbal gave the signal for beginning the fight, as in a Christian tourney. The yell of the infidel, as he sprang upon the mound, and brandished his battle-axe, was all that was allowed or required, to put the prisoner on his guard; and Don Francisco seemed to understand enough of the nature of the ceremony, to look for no further warning.

The great superiority of the infidel consisted in his being entirely at liberty, able to begin the attack

by leaping upon the stone at any point he chose, and to continue it thereon, by changing his position as often as he thought fit; while the prisoner, secured by a thong not above eighteen inches in length, to the centre of it, enjoyed no such facilities of motion. He might turn, indeed, and as rapidly as he pleased, but always with the danger, if he forgot himself for a moment, of tripping himself, and falling; in which case, his death was certain, for no forbearance was practised in the event of such an accident.

The infidel began the combat with the same agility he had displayed in leaping up to the platform. He uttered his yell, brandished his axe, and making a half circuit round the stone, suddenly darted upon it, and aimed a blow at Guzman. He was met by the Spaniard with an address and effect, that showed he had not overrated his skill. Rather meeting than avoiding the blow, he struck up, with his bucklered hand, not the macana, but the arm of the assailant, seemingly calculating that the shock of the rebuff would tumble him from the stone. It did more: it caused the Mexican to fling up his arms, in the instinctive effort to preserve his equilibrium. The next instant, Guzman drove his glassy axe deep into his uncovered side, and spurning him violently with the foot which was at liberty, the Mexican fell backwards upon the platform, writhing in the agonies of death. The whole combat was scarce the work of a minute. Those who drew in their breath as the Mexican sprang to the assault, had not taken a second inspiration, before their countryman was discomfited and dying.

The infidels set up a scream, as much of approbation as surprise. The spirit of the Roman amphitheatre was felt around the Temalacatl of Mexi-

co; and plaudits were bestowed upon a victor, when pity was denied to the slain.

The vanquished and writhing combatant was dragged from the mound, and his place immediately occupied by a second, who leaped up with the same alacrity, and attacked with similar violence.

"Fool that thou art!" muttered Guzman, with scorn and lofty self-reliance, "were there twenty such grasshoppers at thy back, yet should it be but boy's play to despatch thee."

He caught the blow of the savage on his buckler, but greatly to his injury; for the sharp blades of the iztli severed it nearly in twain, and besides diminishing its already insufficient defence, inflicted a severe wound upon his arm. But it was the only blow struck by the barbarian. Infuriated by the wound, Guzman smote him over the head with his weapon, and with such rapidly continued blows as entirely confounded the Mexican, so that he made scarce any use of his shield. The first stroke tore the cayman-scales from his hair, and the next clove through his skull.

Guzman's victory was as complete as before, but he found that several of the separate blades, or teeth of obsidian, that edged his weapon, were broken off by the blows. He beheld this with alarm, for having held up the axe, to show its dilapidated condition, and demand another, he found himself answered only by the appearance of a third antagonist.

"Dogs and jugglers that ye are!" he cried, indignantly: "ye would cheat me then to death, by leaving me weaponless! St. Dominic, knaves! but I will sort your wit with a better wisdom.—Now, what a spectacle might I not make for my brother Christians on the dikes! Thou art playing quits with me, Cortes!—Hah, dog! art thou so ready?"

It was Guzman's determination, after killing the

third assailant, which event he still looked forward to with unabated confidence, to possess himself of his weapon, which, though secured in the usual manner by a thong, he doubted not he could easily rend from his arm.

But his antagonist was by no means so easily mastered as the others. Taking caution from the fate of his predecessors, he changed the mode of attack; and though he rushed upon the block with as much resolution as either, he betrayed no such ambition to come to close quarters. On the contrary, taking advantage of the breadth of the Temalacatl, he confined himself to the very edge, now facing the Spaniard, as if about to make his spring, now darting behind him, as if to assault him in the rear, and, all the time, vexing Guzman's ears with the most terrific screams. Then, perceiving the Spaniard's wariness, he began to run around the stone with all his speed, flourishing his axe, as if to take advantage of the least opening offered by the weariness or dizziness of his foe. Guzman at once perceived the danger to which he was reduced by a system of attack so difficult to be guarded against. It was almost impossible, tied as he was, to preserve his face always against the pagan; twice or thrice he stumbled over the rope, and already his brain began to reel with the rapidity of his gyrations. At each stumble, the Mexican struck at him with his axe, and one blow had taken effect, though not dangerously, upon his shoulder. This incensed the Spaniard almost to madness, and he voluntarily exposed himself to another wound, in order to bring his opponent within his reach. Thus, as the infidel was still continuing to run round the stone, he flung himself round the other way very suddenly, yet not so quickly as wholly to escape the rapid attacks of his assailant. The macana inflicted another and deeper wound in his back, while his

own broken weapon struck the savage on the hip. At the same moment he seized him by the throat, and employing a strength greatly superior to the Indian's, threw him under his feet, and crushed him with hand and knee, while despatching him with blows over the face and head. He then grasped at the macana; but before he could wrest it from the grasp of his dying foe, the Indian was plucked from under him by the attendant priests.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The feelings of Juan Lerma were throughout, strange, bewildering and overwhelming; and he gazed upon the three combats, each fought and finished in an inconceivably short space of time, in a species of trance or stupefaction. Great, and doubtless just, as was his detestation of Guzman, there was something both noble and afflicting in the courage with which the unfortunate man bore himself in the midst of savage foes, who, if they awarded him a shout of approbation for every valiant blow, yet screamed with a more cordial delight, at every wound inflicted by an antagonist. Even while Juan doubted not that Guzman's skill and fortitude would insure him a full triumph, and final liberation, he could not but be struck with horror, at beholding a Christian man bound to a stone, and baited like a muzzled bear. How much more overpowering, then, were his feelings, when he perceived, from the complexion given to events by the last contest, that it must end, and perhaps soon, in the destruction of the prisoner.

His emotions became indeed irresistible, when he looked up at the third shout of the multitude,—for he had closed his eyes with dread, while Guzman despatched his third foe,—and saw him, bleeding at three different wounds, and staggering with dizziness, extend his macana, now almost reduced by the fracture of the blades, to a mere bludgeon,

towards the king, and exclaim, bitterly and despairingly,

"King of Mexico, if thou knowest either honour or God, give me a fresh sword!"

His words ran through Juan's spirit like sharp knives, and he was seized with a faintiness, so that he could scarce maintain himself on his feet. But while his brain whirled and his eyes swam, he beheld a fourth warrior spring upon the mound, and, yelling as he rose, dart, without a moment's pause, against the captive.

It was now apparent to all, and to none more than the miserable victim himself, that his situation was become wholly desperate. His skill could avail him nothing, while he was so insufficiently armed; his strength was wasting away with his blood; his courage could not long maintain itself against all hope; and even the pride that uplifted him so far above his barbarous antagonists, only exasperated him into frenzy, when he perceived, that, despised as they were, he was in their power, and must soon expire under their blows. His rage was like that of the gallant puma, knotted in the *lazo* of a hunter, and torn to pieces by dogs, which, were he at liberty, would be but as grass and dust under the might of his talons.

Hopeless of any relief from the king, and maddened by the exulting shouts with which the infidels hailed every symptom of his defeat, he turned furiously upon his new opponent; but not until the Mexican, more skilful or more lucky than his predecessors, had struck him a violent blow upon the side, which he followed up, at intervals, with others, while running round the stone, in imitation of his less fortunate countryman. His success was rewarded by the spectators with screams of delight, which he re-echoed with his own wild outcries.

Yet Guzman was not altogether subdued.

Wretched as was his weapon, he handled it with some effect, and struck his assailant two or three such blows as would have ended the combat, had they been inflicted by a better. With one, he staggered the pagan; with a second, he struck him down to his knee; and with a third, he snapped off the last blade of obsidian, upon the scales of the Indian helmet, and now brandished a harmless wooden wand.

At that moment, a Spanish sword, thrown by an unseen hand, fell at his feet,—but fell in vain. Badly aimed, it struck short upon the stone, and rolled back to the mound; and the infidel, recovering his feet, though still staggering, uttered his war-cry, and raised his macana, to strike down the defenceless Christian.

Human nature could withstand the scene of butchery no longer. Juan Lerma forgot that the captive was his foe and destroyer, and the unprincipled oppressor of all he held dear. He saw a man of his own country and faith cruelly assassinated before his eyes, among thousands of pitiless and rejoicing barbarians. He thought not of the impossibility of affording him any real relief, nor of the fate to himself that must follow an attempt so full of folly. His brain burned, his eyes flamed as if in sockets of fire; and obeying an impulse that converted him for a moment into a madman, he rushed through the few nobles who separated him from the mound, and in an instant was at the side of the victim.

To snatch up the weapon he had so vainly cast, to spurn the exhausted warrior from his prey, and to cut the thong that bound Guzman to the stone, were all the work of a second. Almost before the idea had entered the mind of the Mexicans, that the combat was interrupted, so lightning-like were his motions, he had leaped with Guzman

from the platform, and, grasping his hand, made his way over the narrow and unoccupied portion of the square, which led to the garden. Even then, the Mexicans stood for awhile dumb with surprise and consternation; for the act was so unexpected, so entirely inexplicable upon any of their principles of action, that they scarce knew if it might not be their Mexitli himself, who thus snatched a victim from the stone of battle.

It has been already mentioned, that the garden wall had, in this quarter, fallen down, and that its place was supplied only by a fence of shrubs and brambles. Its ruins choked the ditch, and gave a passage, which had been formerly effected by a wooden bridge, now buried under the heavy fragments. A single plank spanned over the only gap that was too wide to be passed, except by a bold leap. It was a knowledge of these circumstances, that, in the very tempest of his impulses, determined the course of Juan Lerma, and decided every step he now took to secure life to his wretched companion. He had breathed but a word into Guzman's ear, but it was enough to communicate strength to his heart, and agility to his limbs; and wonderfully adapting his resolutions and movements to those of his guide, he ran with him over the square and across the canal, with such speed, that he rather aided than retarded the steps of his preserver.—They had crossed the plank before the yells of pursuit burst from the astounded assembly, and Juan, striking it now into the ditch with his foot, dragged Guzman through the brambles, exclaiming,

"Quick! quick! If we can but reach the palace, we are saved."

"Is it *thou*, indeed, Juan Lerma?" cried Guzman, with a voice singularly wild and piteous, but strug-

gling onward.—"Now then thou canst kill me thyself, since thou wouldst not be avenged by infidels."

"Quick! quick! they are following us! they are crossing the ditch!—But fifty paces more!"

"Ten will serve me—and ten words will make up my reckoning—that is, *here:* the rest hereafter. Stop, fool,—I am dying."

"Courage! courage!" exclaimed Juan, endeavouring, but in vain, to drag further the wretch, for whom his rash humanity seemed to have purchased *only* the right of expiring in a Christian's arms. "Courage, and move on,—we are close followed."

"Hark,—listen, and speak not," said Guzman, sinking to the earth, for his wounds were mortal, and the exertions of flight caused them to throw out blood with tenfold violence—He was indeed upon the verge of dissolution: "Listen, listen!" he cried, gasping for breath, yet struggling to speak with such extraordinary eagerness, that it seemed as if he held life and salvation to depend upon his giving utterance to what was in his mind. "Listen, Juan Lerma, for I am a snake and a devil. I hated thee for—But, brief, brief, brief! First, Cortes—Hah! they come!—Drag me into a bush, that I may speak and die. No—here—There is no time—Listen. Saints, give me powers of speech! or devils—either! A little reparation—Why not? I belied thee to Cortes—Hark! hark!" he almost screamed, in the fear that he might not be understood, for he was conscious of the incoherency of his expressions; "hark! hark!—Bleeding to death—Concerning—Cortes—his wife—Doña Catalina—jealousy, *jealousy!*—Poisoned his ear. Understand me! understand me!"

Wild as were his words and confused as was the mind of Juan, yet with these broken expressions, the dying cavalier threw a sudden and terrific light upon the understanding of the outcast.

"Good heaven!" he cried, "my benefactress! my noble lady! Oh villain, how couldst thou?—"

"More—more!" murmured Guzman, with impatient, yet vain ardour. "I know all—Thy father—thy sister—Camarga—killed—Aha! Magdalena—the princess—"

"Ay! the princess?" echoed Juan, imploringly: "the princess? the princess?"

But all he could hear, in reply to his frantic demand, was "Garci, Garci—" and this name was immediately lost in the roaring shouts of the infidels, who now surrounded the pair.

Had Guzman been able to continue the flight at half the speed with which he had begun it, it is certain they would have reached the palace, considerably in advance of the pursuers; though it is not certain, that would have proved a city of refuge. But his strength failed almost immediately after entering the garden, of which as soon as he became sensible, he began to make his disclosures; and perhaps the haste into which he was driven by the almost instant appearance of the Mexicans, thronging over the broken wall, served as much as the distractions and agonies of death, to make them confused and insufficient. The first word—the name of the lady Catalina,—revealing at once the dreadful delusion, which had converted his best friend into his deadliest enemy, so excited and unsettled Juan's mind, that, in his eagerness to learn still more of the fatal secret, he almost forgot the presence of so many Mexicans, rushing upon him with yells of fury. It was in vain, when they had reached him, that he brandished his sword, and assumed an attitude of defence, calling loudly upon the king. He was thrown down and overpowered,—nay, he was severely wounded, and handled altogether so roughly, that it seemed as if the enraged Mexicans were resolved to drag him

to the sacrifice, from which he had rescued Guzman, if not to murder him on the spot; some calling out to kill him, and others roaring, 'The Temalacatl! the Temalacatl!' Their cries were not even stilled when the nobles who waited about the person of the king, drove them away with rods, and Guatimozin himself stalked up to the prisoner. The frown which Juan's rash, and, as he esteemed it, impious act, had brought upon his visage, darkened into one still sterner, when having laid his hand upon the Christian's shoulder, to signify that his person was sacred, the expression of protection was answered only by cries of the most mutinous character.

"We will have the blood of the Spaniard," they screamed. "What said Azcamatzin? It is true—this is a bear we have, that embraces us, and tears open our hearts. He struck the Lord of Death—he takes the victim from Mexitli: he shall be a victim himself—he shall die on the stone!"

It was in vain that Guatimozin employed threats, menaces, and entreaties to allay their passions. Sufferings of a nature and extent so horrible that we have scarce dared to hint at them, had already made them sullen and refractory; and misery and wrath are no observers of allegiance or decorum. The unhappy monarch, now such less in power than in name, feigned to yield to their clamour, for he perceived he could no longer openly save. He commanded Juan to be bound with cords, and carried into a remote corner of the palace, promising, that, when he had recovered a little of his strength and spirits, he should be given up to them, to die on the Temalacatl.

It was perhaps fortunate for Juan, that he was dragged away too suddenly to behold the fate of his rival, who was now in the hands of the priests, apparently reviving—a circumstance hailed with such

shouts of joy, that Juan was himself almost forgotten. The infidels carried Don Francisco again from the garden, and hurried him towards the little temple. But before they had passed the square, he expired in their arms—happy only in this, that he fell not by the knives of the priests.

Before the day was over, the citizens were called upon again to resist the Spaniards who had now resumed the offensive, and who continued their approaches with such fierce, determined, and incessant efforts, that they employed the whole time, as well as the whole thoughts, of the besieged.

CHAPTER XIX.

The fate of Mexico approached to its consummation. The great streets leading from the causeways, were in the power of the Spaniards. It might be said, indeed, that they had gained possession of the whole island, except the extreme point of the neck of Tlatelolco; for though they did not extend their ravages any great distance from the streets, into the three quarters to the east and south, it was because these were occupied only by women and children—the wounded, the sick, and the dying, —and could be, at any moment, taken possession of. The warriors who yet remained, were concentrated upon the little peninsula, around their monarch, who, obstinate to the last, still resisted, even when resistance was hopeless, refusing the offers of peace and friendship, which Cortes, rendered magnanimous by success, and softened by compassion, now daily sent him. His obstinacy was indeed surprising; for the point was surrounded by brigantines and piraguas, prepared to intercept his flight; and escape, unless by death, seemed evidently impossible. The work of carnage therefore went on, though with mitigated severity; for there were but few left to suffer. The market-place of Tlatelolco was secured and occupied, and upon the day of St. Hippolytus, (the 13th of August,) the Spaniards concluded the labours of the long and bloody siege, by storming, with all their forces, the palace of Guatimozin—the last stronghold of the

Mexicans. The garden walls were beaten down by the artillery, and soon after midday, the Spaniards rushed, with tremendous vivas, upon the palace, to which fire had been previously communicated by flaming arrows, shot into the windows by the confederates.

The preparations for the assault, and long before it began, were surveyed by the Captain-General from the terrace of the palace of Axajacatl, the famous scene of his sufferings, when besieged therein by the Mexicans, a year before. It was in the quarter of Tlatelolco, midway between the great pyramid and the market-place, and commanded, from its turrets, not only a view of the palace of Guatimozin, but of the whole surrounding city and lake.

Deeply as his mind was engaged with the approaching climax of his mighty enterprise,—for now he could almost count the minutes that intervened betwixt his hopes and his success,—he was not without thoughts and feelings of another character. The singular disappearance of Magdalena, of which nothing more was known, or even conjectured, than was disclosed in the midnight conversation of the hunchback and Bernal Diaz; the fate of Camarga, over which events not yet narrated, had cast a peculiarly exciting mystery; and the situation of Juan Lerma, upon whose character and unhappy history certain events had shed a new light, as well as what had now become a painful interest; all, by turns, occupied his mind, and sometimes even withdrew it from the contemplation of the scene before him. The few cavaliers in attendance, who enjoyed their immunity from combat only because they were disabled by severe wounds, referred his unusual gloom to the same cause; for he had not yet recovered from the many injuries, the penalty of his rashness on the causeway.

"Thou knowest, Quinones," said one, in a whisper to the captain of his body guard, (for the conspiracy of Villafana had been made, as is usual in such catastrophes of ambition, an excuse for investing his dignity with another engine of power;)—"Thou knowest, the renegade struck him upon the head; and it is a marvel of providence he was not slain; for Lerma strikes with an arm like the wing of a windmill. These blows on the skull, though one may seem to recover from them, have a perilous after-effect on the brain."

"Fy!" muttered Quinones, with a shake of the head; "there is a new word about Lerma, especially since Garci Holguin brought in the princess. Didst thou not hear that Alvarado, who heads the assault, called this morning upon all soldiers who had seen Juan Lerma in the melée, and asked them a thousand questions? I tell thee, there is a new thing in the wind. I did myself last night overhear Cortes charge Sandoval to watch well for every piragua and canoe, that might leave Tlatelolco, and see that no one taken be harmed.—But this we will see. Talking of canoes, methought I beheld one some half hour since paddling from Tezcuco?"

"Ay," said another; "it landed in the north-eastern quarter.—No more complaints of Guzman now? He will never harry infidels more. Garci's sailors say, he was taken alive!"

"Hist!" whispered Quinones, with a warning gesture. "This thing troubles Cortes. It was his anger, and Guzman's desire to recover favour, which drove him upon the mad feat, that brought him to the block of sacrifice. It weighs upon the general's mind.—And besides, as it is now apparent that Camarga is alive, there is deeper cause for remorse: It was perhaps his wrongful belief in the charge of murder, rather than any

other cause, that made him proceed with such rigour against Guzman."

"But is this rumour true?" demanded the other.

"Ay, certain; and I wage ye my life, the very canoe we were looking after, brings the dead-alive to Mexico. Methought I could trace the cut of his sacerdotal maskings, even afar off. They say, after all, the man is a true brother of St. Dominic, under some dispensation.—Ay, faith! you may see now—Alive and shorn into the bargain! They are bringing him up the stairway.—By Santiago, it makes the general's eye flash fire!"

The eye of Cortes, up to this moment peculiarly gloomy and troubled, did indeed flash with lustre, as soon as it fell upon the figure of Camarga; for it was he, who now made his appearance on the terrace, led forward by Indians. He was greatly altered, and seemed indeed like the ghost of his former self, so wan and emaciated was his countenance, and so broken and feeble his step; he looked as if in almost the last stage of atrophy. He was otherwise changed; the hair was shorn from his crown, on which was a ghastly scar, left by the macana of the Lord of Death; his feet were bare; and from the cord that girded on his friar's frock, was suspended a knotted scourge, crusted over with blood. His whole appearance was that of some suicidal ascetic, who mourns with the severest maceration of the body, a sin not to be expiated by mere penitence of spirit.

"Heaven be thanked for thy resurrection!" cried Cortes, grasping him by the hand, and leading him to the seat he had himself occupied. "There is a wolf in my bosom, and now I know that thou canst remove it!"

"Have I come too late?" cried Camarga, eagerly, though with a voice no longer sonorous. "*Agnus Dei, dona nobis pacem!* The victim of our madness, driven among the infidels,—the poor wretch

whom misery cast into the same hands—What of them, señor? what of them?"

"Nothing," replied Cortes, "unless thou canst speak it: Nothing, at least, except that both are still in captivity. Yet know, if it will relieve thee, that what I could do by embassies and goodly offers, that I have done to recover them; and I have given such orders, that, if they be not murdered by the Indians, we may see them living this day."

"God be thanked!" cried Camarga, dropping on his knees, and praying with such fervour, though in inaudible accents, as to excite no little curiosity among the attendant cavaliers, whom Cortes had already waved away. He turned upon them again, and sternly bade them descend from the terrace, which they did, followed by the Indians.

As soon as they were alone, Cortes, scarce pausing until Camarga had ceased his devotions, exclaimed,

"Speak, and delay not, either to mourn or to pray: Thou canst do these things hereafter. Enough evil has already come of thy silence. Speak me in a word—What art thou? and what is thy interest in these wretches? What is thine? and what—yes, what is *mine?*"

The last word was uttered with vehement emphasis, that seemed to recall Camarga to his self-possession. He rolled his eyes upon Cortes with a ghastly smile, and replied,

"Thou shalt know; for thou hast a sin to answer as well as I; and answer it thou must, both to God and thy conscience. Moderate thy impatience: what I have to say, cannot be spoken in a word, but yet it shall be spoken briefly. In thy boyish days, thou hast heard of the Counts of Castillejo—"

The Captain-General bent upon the speaker a look that seemed designed to slay, it was so frowningly fixed and penetrating. He then smote his

hands together upon his breast, as if to beat down some dreadful thought, and immediately exclaimed,

"What thou hast to say, speak in God's name, and without further preface. Were I but a dog of the house of Cortes, instead of its son and sole representative, the name of a Castillejo of Merida would be hateful to my ear. Ay, by heaven! be thou layman or monk, my friend or the friend of my enemy, yet know that my rage burns with undiminished fire, though the proud scutcheons of the Castillejos have been turned into funeral hatchments, and the mosses of twenty years have gathered on their graves.—But it is enough. The first word of thy story harmonizes with mine own conceit. A strange accident opened my eyes upon a remembrance of dishonour; which let us rake up no further.—I have heard enough. Keep thine own secret, too," he continued, with a gleaming eye; "for I would not take the life of one, upon whom heaven has itself set the seal of vengeance."

"Yet must thou listen, and I speak," said Camarga, disregarding the menacing words and glance; "for there is a story to be told, of which thou and thy kindred have not dreamed—nay, nor have others, except one—except one! My secret will not throw thee into the frenzy thou fearest; he of whom you think, is beyond the reach of human vengeance. Listen to me, Hernan Cortes, and forbear your rage, until I have done.—Of the Count Sebastian's three brothers; the next in age, Julian, was a slave in Barbary, yet supposed to be dead; the youngest Gregorio, was a monk of St. Dominic; and the third, Juan, was a wild and unhappy profligate."

"Ay, by heaven," said Cortes, with angry emotion; "may he remember his deeds in torment—Amen! Had not Gregorio been an inquisitor as well as a monk, I should have seen him burn at a stake, as was his due."

"Reserve your curses for the true criminal," said Camarga, drawing the cowl over his visage, as if no longer able to endure the fierce looks of Don Hernan: "Among others who had inflamed his wild and fiery affections, was one whom heaven had seemingly placed beyond his reach,—one whose name I need not pronounce to Hernan Cortes."

"I will tell thee who she was," said the general, laying his hand upon Camarga's shoulder, and speaking with a passionate energy;—"the daughter of a family, ancient and noble as his own, though without its wealth,—a novice about to take the vows, (for to this had the poverty of her house and her own religious fervour destined her;) and thus uplifted both by rank and profession above the aims of a seducer. But what thought the young cub of Castillejo of these impediments, when he feared not God, and saw no one left to punish his villany, save an impoverished old man and a rambling schoolboy? Dwell not on this—Speak not her name neither: let it be forgotten. May her soul rest in peace! for her own act of distraction avenged the dishonour of her fall."

He paused in strong emotion, and Camarga, drawing the mantle closer round his head, continued:

"Know, (and I speak thee a truth never before divulged to mortal man,) that the sin of this act,—the abduction of a devotee, whose novitiate was already accomplished,—belongs not to Juan, the debauchee, but to Gregorio, the Dominican."

"These are the words of a madman," said Cortes, sternly; but he was interrupted by Camarga hastily exclaiming,

"Misunderstand me not. The lover and the convent-robber was indeed Juan; but it was Gregorio who provoked him to the outrage, and gave him the means of success. The sacrilege had not been

otherwise attempted, and the fickle-minded Juan would have soon forgotten the object of a passion both criminal and dangerous."

"If you speak the truth," said Cortes, "you have exposed an atrocity, of which, as you said, truly no man ever dreamed. On what improbable ground do you make Gregorio a villain so monstrous?"

"On that of *knowledge*," replied Camarga, with a voice firmer than he had yet displayed. "Dost thou think ambition lies not as often under a cowl as a corslet? or that guilt can only be meditated by a soldier? When the young monk Gregorio beheld the two sons of his brother, the Count Sebastian, taken up dead from the river, into which an evil accident had plunged them, and knew that the Count was dying—surely dying—of a broken heart, the fiend of darkness put a thought into his brain, which had never before dishonoured it. Yet it slumbered again, until his evil fate showed him his brother Juan, meditating a crime, which, if attempted, must bring him under the ban of the church, and into the dungeons of the Inquisition. Then he said, in his heart, 'If Sebastian die of grief, childless, and if Juan destroy himself by an act of impiety, where shall men look for the Count of Castillejo, except in the cell of Gregorio?' It was this thought of darkness that brought the thunderbolt upon his house, and upon thine."

"Ay! thou sayst it now," said Cortes with a smothered voice. "But this monk, this devil, this Gregorio! Let me know more of the wretch, whose flagitious ambition, not satisfied with destroying his father's house and his brother's soul, must end by bringing to a dishonourable grave a daughter—I speak it *now*—a daughter of Martin Cortes of Medellin!"

"It is spoken in a word; but let the iniquitous details be forgotten. The power of Gregorio, un-

known even to Juan, (for the connivance was concealed and unsuspected,) opened the doors of the convent, and the lovers fled, were united in marriage, and then parted for ever."

"United? married? Now by heavens, thou mockest me! Even this had been some mitigation of our shame. But it is not true. Why dost thou say it?"

"Thou wert deceived—all were deceived," said Camarga; "nay, even the scheming Gregorio was deceived; for before he had dreamed that such a fatal blow could be given to his ambition, the knot was tied, and the children of Juan became the heirs of Sebastian. Behold how treachery overshoots its mark! Gregorio opened a path, that the lovers might meet, not that they might escape. This was reserved until the time when the vows should be taken; after which the crime of abduction and flight could not be pardoned. They fled a day too early, and it was within the power of Sebastian to obtain both a pardon and dispensation; for Juan was now his heir, in the place of his children."

"Good heavens!" cried Cortes, "was this indeed possible? But no; thou deceivest me. Had the offence been so venial, Juan Castillejo had not perished among the vaults of the Inquisition."

"Canst thou compass thine own vindictive purposes, and attribute no similar power to others?" cried Camarga, with a laugh, that sounded hollow and unnatural under the mantle. "Did a venial offence, or a malignant and perfidious stratagem, drive Juan Lerma among the pagans of Mexico?—Listen:—Juan Castillejo was dragged from his hiding-place, and that perhaps the earlier, that Gregorio knew of their marriage. The crime of carrying off a novice was not indeed inexpiable, but it demanded a deep cell in the office of the Brotherhood; and such Juan obtained. Now, Cortes, ask

not for reasons to explain the acts of Gregorio. The dying Sebastian exerted his powers to save his brother, and would have succeeded, had not Gregorio, visiting the dungeons, in virtue of his office, subtly attacked the prisoner's mind with the fear of torture and final condemnation; until, in a fit of distraction, he laid violent hands upon himself, and so ended a tragedy, for which Gregorio designed another catastrophe. Ay, believe me! Think not that even Gregorio planned out a climax so cruel. He desired only to work upon Juan's terrors, in order to banish him from the land for ever; for it was his purpose to provide him with the means of escape, when this was accomplished. He foresaw not the consequences of the desperation he had produced. Upon the morrow, Sebastian came with an indulgence—almost a pardon. The shock of the spectacle of Juan's dead body, broke away the last feeble cords that bound him to life; and Gregorio, absolved from his vows by the papal dispensation, easily obtained, was now the Count of Castillejo."

"And never sat in the castle-hall a fiend more truculent and diabolic!" cried Cortes, with terrific emphasis. "Hark thee, man, demon, or whatsoever thou art—I did think thee, at first, the very wretched Juan of whom thou hast spoken, escaped by some miracle, and finding the fiercest retribution for his villany, in the misery of his children. I remembered thy words at Tezcuco, and was thus deluded. But I know thee at last, and words cannot express how much I abhor thee."

"We are alike worthy of detestation," said Camarga, rising and flinging back his cowl, "for we are alike villains,—with but this difference between us, that I have preceded thee in the path of remorse, and must perhaps tread it more bitterly, because in all things, self-deluded and baffled. I am what thou thinkest,—the wretched Gregorio—and yet less

wretched than when I first discovered the twin children of my brother in thy house at Tezcuco.—Hearken yet a moment, and I have done. All supposed that the unhappy Olivia had cast herself into the river, and so perished. It was not so. Pity, remorse, or some other feeling—perhaps, policy—induced me to preserve her from her distraction. She lived in concealment, until she had given birth to twin children—these very wretches whom we have persecuted. Let me speak their fate in a word. The boy I sent by a creature whose name he bears, to Colon's settlement in Española; the girl I devoted from her infancy to the altar; and in both cases, dreamed that I had provided for their welfare, as well as against the possibility of discovery. When I had thus arranged everything for my own security, heaven sent me the first sting of retribution in the person of my brother Julian, returned in safety from the dungeons of Fez, and, in right of seniority, the heir of the honours I had so vainly usurped. It was a fitting reward, but it was not all. Dishonour, other crimes, and awakened suspicions, followed my downfall; and I became an exile and outcast. What life I have lived, it needs not I should speak. A strange accident acquainted me with the stranger truth, that Magdalena had followed her unknown brother to the islands. I had amassed wealth; and an impulse, combining both pity and foreboding terror, drove me to pursue them. It was easy to trace out their respective fates. The wreck of the ship which carried Magdalena, with the supposed loss of all on board, satisfied me that she was with her mother, in heaven. An unexpected event had invested Juan with new interest. This was the death of Julian, without heirs. It was in my power to repair, at least, the wrongs I had done him, by restoring him to his inheritance; the knowledge and proofs of his legitimacy were in my hands, and I resolved to employ them. This I

could not do in mine own person, but I discovered —and know, señor, it filled me with joy,—that *thou* hadst befriended him. I came then to Mexico, to seek the young man, and to enable thee to do justice to the memory, and to the child of thy sister."

Gregorio, for so we must now call him, paused a moment, while Cortes strode to and fro, in great agitation. He then resumed:

"The first thing I heard was the supposed death of Juan,—his expedition, and the cause of it—thine own bitter and unrelenting hatred."

"It is true," said Cortes, with a vain effort at composed utterance. "I confessed my folly to thee before. I have persecuted the son of my sister almost to death, and for an imaginary crime. There were villains about me—I will tell thee, by and by, my delusion."

"Señor," continued Gregorio, "I found in thy camp a villain, whose subtle and malicious nature was in harmony with my own. This was Villafana, whose representations of thy cruelty in the matter of Juan, stirred up my evil passions; and until the day when Juan returned, I was very eager to avenge his wrongs. Upon that day, I discovered that Magdalena was living. Now," he exclaimed, with vehemence, "thou mayst understand the cause of my seeming madness: now thou mayst know that the vengeance of heaven was punishing my old sin with lashes of horror. Thou knowest the evil slanders cast by the ribald soldiers upon thee, in relation to Magdalena. That dreadful suspicion was soon at an end; but there remained the other, the persuasion, supported by strong circumstances and by the malign averments of Villafana,—the dreadful, damning belief, that a horrible and unnatural sin, the direct consequence of my own, had plunged the brother and sister into a never-ending wretchedness. Ask not my feelings, when I made this supposed discovery. They caused me to seek the life

of the unhappy brother, to attempt it with my own hands, and finally through thine; and all in a distraction, that mingled a thirst of vengeance with the precautions of pity. Thou knowest the rest: he was snatched out of our hands; and from Magdalena I discovered the blessed—the blissful truth, that heaven had not punished them for *my* sin! A course of extraordinary calamities, while it covered them with misery, yet kept them asunder.—But why should I trifle thus? The girl also was taken from me, and by the pagans, who left me on the lake-side weltering in blood. When I recovered speech and sense, I besought Guzman to send for you; nay, in my distracted impatience, being myself incapable of any effort beyond mere speech, I confided to him the secret of their birth—"

"Villain that he was, a double-dyed villain!" exclaimed Cortes, "this then accounts for his attempt upon your life, of which I had something more than mere suspicion to bring against him. I see it all now: exposure of a long series of malignant deceptions, must have followed the revealment, if it found the young Lerma—the young Castillejo, shall I say?—yet living. Is it not true? did he do you violence?"

"Not with his own hands," replied Gregorio; "nor can I say he really designed my death, not being able to communicate with the Indians, who dragged me by night from Tezcuco, carried me to the mountains, and finally took me back again, when Guzman was no longer the governor. But I doubt not, his intentions were evil."

"He has suffered for his crimes," said Cortes.—He strode to and fro for an instant, with hands clasped together, and a working visage. Then returning, and casting around a glance of suspicion, he said,

"Hark thee, Gregorio—If we save these unhappy creatures from death, thou shalt be forgiven,—

ay, man, and honoured, too. I understand the motives that made thee mine ally in wickedness: now understand mine,—the persuasions of belief that converted me into a persecutor—the base and devilish persecutor, for such I was—of my sister's son—of my own flesh and blood. By heaven! I loved him dearly; nature spoke in my heart,—the instinct of consanguinity was alive within me; and even the lies of Guzman could not wholly destroy it. Velasquez the governor," he went on, "has fought me with all weapons, and with all in vain. Yet did he at last fall upon one, that was made to wound me to the quick, though it could not make me falter in this emprise of conquest. My lady, Gregorio, my lady!" he continued, struggling in vain against the feelings of humiliation, with which he confessed a weakness so unworthy;—"my lady Catalina is fair and merry, and, God wot, somewhat over fond of the gingling galliards that ruffle it at Santiago; and I,—by my conscience, I will be as honest as thou,—I have had the devil of suspicion sometimes enter my mind; but, I swear to thee, to mine own dishonour only. Upon this ground, Velasquez has thrust at me with hints, innuendos, sarcasms, jests, rumours, accusations, time without end. There has never a ship arrived, that it has not brought some petard to be shot off on my bosom; and sometimes, I think, I have been half mad with my dreams. Know, then, that one of these damnable devices was made to play in the person of my adopted son,—for such he was,—and my lady's favourite, Juan Lerma. My lady won him out of prison, and she harboured him during the sickness that followed. Out of this was constructed a story that tormented me. Yet it was naught, until Guzman penetrated the weakness, and wrought it, by I know not what means, into a fierce and fiendish jealousy. The young man was melancholy, too—he had killed his friend Hilario: but (heaven

save me such madness again!) I deemed it the workings of his conscience, his sense of ingratitude, operating upon a temper, which, I knew, was naturally noble and virtuous. Thou canst not think how many little events were turned, by Guzman's malignant address, into proof and confirmation of my detestable suspicion. There came for him certain horses and arms, sent, as I quickly believed, by my wife, now bold in infidelity—"

"Alas!" said Gregorio; "I learned from Villafana, that these were the gifts of Magdalena, who, poor wretch, would have sent him her life, could that have been made an acceptable present."

"Thou makest my heart still lighter," said Cortes, "for this was the only matter I could not myself explain away, so soon as certain passages with Guzman had opened my eyes to his baseness. His oppressions forced me to withdraw him from Tezcuco; and, quarrelling with him upon that subject, as well as in regard to thine own fate, he let fall, in the heat of contention, certain unguarded expressions, which convinced me that he had made me his tool,—by heaven, Gregorio, his instrument! Suspicion once awake, my judgment once informed how much he had to gain, both of favour and revenge, by destroying my poor cornet, it needed but mine own reflections, to show me how ruthlessly I had been cajoled. And to crown all, a new light was shot into my soul, by the recovery, from an Indian princess, now a captive in my hands, of this trinket; which thou mayest know, if thou hast indeed ever looked upon the face of my sister."

He drew from his bosom the cross and rosary which Juan had flung round the neck of the Indian princess.

"I placed it," said Gregorio, "with mine own own hands upon the bosom of the infant Magda-

lena—But, good heaven, how came it on the neck of a savage, unless they have murdered her?"

"Fear not," said Cortes: "It was given to the princess by Juan Lerma—by Juan of Castillejo; and was doubtless presented to him by Magdalena, in the island. From this princess, I learned the first news of Magdalena, who was kindly treated by the young king, in his palace, for Juan's sake. Thou must know how this cross wrought upon my heart and brain; for I did myself give it to my sister, when they took me, but a boy, to see her in the convent. And as for this princess, Gregorio," continued Cortes, with an air of pride, "know that she is a daughter of Montezuma, the descendant of a thousand kings; and the Count of Castillejo will carry with him to his castle, a bride more noble than ever entered it before."

"These things are vanities," said Gregorio, gloomily. "Let my brother's children be first plucked from the nest of infidels, if it be not too late."

"Heaven will not *now* forsake them, after protecting them through so many and greater perils," said Cortes, kissing the little cross and restoring it to his bosom. "The best men in the army, cavaliers and all, have sworn they will fetch them from the palace, in which they are now surrounded. And hark thee, Gregorio: The only daughter of the Count of Castillejo is too noble a prize for a nunnery.—We will have another dispensation."

The further disclosures of these two men, both villains, and both penitents, after their ways, were arrested by the commencement of the attack upon the palace; and Cortes calling some of his attendants to support his companion's steps, they descended from the terrace.

CHAPTER XX.

Juan Lerma, or Castillejo—for such we must now call him—yet lay in confinement. His cell was in a quarter of the palace remote from the royal apartments; and without being altogether exposed to the cannon-shots, with which the attack was begun, was yet so nigh the garden-wall as to make its luckless inhabitant an auditor of all the fearful yells and outcries, with which the besieged and assailants contended for possession of the breaches. He was still bound, and some dozen or more dark-browed pagans kept watch at his doors, one of which led into a broad passage, and the other he knew not whither. They were designed rather to protect him from the fury of the warriors, now concentrated in the garden and palace, than to guard against escape, which the wounds he had received in the defence of Guzman, had but ill fitted him to attempt. All that Guatimozin could do to prolong an existence, now almost insufferably wretched, he did; and at the very moment of the assault, while taking measures to effect his own retreat from an empire now utterly demolished, and a post no longer tenable, he gave hasty instructions to the Ottomi, Techeechee, to secure the escape of his friend. It will be presently seen in what manner fortune defeated this plan, as well as all others now devised by the fallen monarch.

It was with a listlessness amounting almost to apathy, that Juan listened to the first discharges of the cannon and the roar of hostile voices. Such sounds had been awakened for several days in succession, and each day they were nearer and louder. If they promised him deliverance, they promised little else; for, having reflected upon the eventful enterprise of the causeway, and digested at leisure and in gloom, many of those details which had almost escaped his notice, in the heat and hurry of contention, he saw but little reason to anticipate from his countrymen, any other reception than such as might be vouchsafed to a condemned criminal and avowed renegade. He remembered, that he had been struck down by a Spaniard, while in the very act of giving life to the Captain-General; and he had a vague suspicion, that the blow was struck by the Barba-Roxa. If Gaspar (of whose death he was entirely ignorant), had met him with such vindictive ferocity, what else could be expected from men who had never looked upon him with friendship? Yet fear for himself made the lightest weight in his load of suffering: his thoughts dwelt upon the captive princess, and not less often, though with perhaps less gnawing anxiety, upon his equally captive sister.

Such were the reflections that darkened his mind during the first hours of conflict, and made him almost indifferent to his fate. Yet, notwithstanding his gloom, there arose a circumstance at last, which gave such an appalling character to his confinement, as prevented his remaining any longer indifferent to his situation. He became suddenly aware that volleys of smoke were beginning to roll into the apartment, and perceived, at the same time, that his guards, driven away by fear, or by an uncontrollable desire to mingle in the conflict, as was more probable, had fled from the doors,

after satisfying themselves that he was secured in such a manner as to prevent his flying in their absence. He was indeed bound, or rather swathed, hand and foot, with robes of cotton, so as to be incapable of rising from the couch on which he lay: and it was his consciousness of the miserable helplessness of his condition, left to perish, as it seemed, in a burning palace, without the power of raising a finger in self-preservation, that stung him out of his lethargy.

The smoke was now rolling into the room, in denser masses than before, accompanied by the stifling odour of burning feathers, which entered so largely into the decorations of the palace; and he began to apprehend lest he should be suffocated outright, even before the flames had extended to his prison. He called aloud for relief; but his voice was unheeded in the din that shook the palace walls; he struggled to release his limbs, or to rise to his feet, but in vain; and even the poor expedient of rolling over the floor, availed him but little, so much were his muscles cramped by the barbarous bonds. To crown the horror of the scene, a gush of heated air shook the curtains of the door opposite to that which communicated with the passage, and was almost instantly followed by another, whirling smoke and flames.

But even in this extremity, hope was brought to his ears, in the sound of a voice not heard for many days, but not yet forgotten. From among the very flames that came flashing into the chamber, consuming the door-curtains, and darting upon the little canopy that surmounted his couch, he could distinguish the eager and clamorous howlings of Befo; as if this faithful friend were seeking him in his imprisonment. He answered with a shout, which was responded to not only by the joyful bark of the dog, but by the wild cry of a woman; and in the

next instant, Magdalena, preceded by Befo, rushed through the flames into his dungeon.

"I have come to save you, my brother!" she cried, with accents wildly vehement and incoherent. "We will fly where never man shall see us more. Kiss me, Juan; and then look upon me no more, for I have made a vow to my soul.—Oh, my brother! my brother!" And she flung herself upon his body, and strove, but in vain, to raise him from the floor.

Had the agitation of his mind permitted, Juan must have noticed, and been shocked by, the alteration in her appearance. Her whole figure was miserably wasted, and she grasped him with a strength feebler than a child's. Her countenance was hollow, ghastly pale, and mottled only by such touches of colour as indicate a spirit consuming equally with the body. Add to this, that her garments were scorched, and even in parts burned, by the flames through which she had made her way; and we may understand how much she differed from the beautiful and majestic creature, that had been deemed at Tezcuco, almost a being of another world.

"Cut my bonds, Magdalena," said Juan, eagerly, "or I must die in thine arms."

"Let it be so, Juan—We will die together," cried Magdalena, with a voice of transport, as if the prospect of such a climax to an unhappy fate filled her mind with actual delight. "Oh yes, Juan, so we will die, so we will die!" And she flung her arms about his neck, with tremulous fervour, smothering his voice of remonstrance and entreaty, until recalled to her wits by a loud howl from Befo. This faithful animal, limping yet with pain, but acting as if he understood the inability of Magdalena to give his master relief, now lifted up his voice, whining for further assistance; and in a few seconds the

cry of another human being was heard, approaching with answering shouts, through the passage. But before they were yet heard, Magdalena sprang to her feet, and wrung her hands wildly, staring upon Juan as if upon a basilisk.

"Sister! sister! will you see me perish?" cried Juan. "Slip me but these knotted robes from my hands and feet, and I will save thy life. Befo! what Befo! canst thou not rive them to tatters with thy fangs?"

"I will free you, Juan,—yes, I will free you," said Magdalena, flinging herself upon her knees, and essaying with better zeal than wisdom to loose the knotted folds; "Yes, Juan, I will free you, and then bid you farewell—Yes, farewell, farewell—a lasting farewell."

But while she was muttering thus, and striving confusedly with the knots, a better assistance arrived in the person of the old Ottomi, who rushed in, yelling, "Fly! fly! The king waits for his brother," and cut the garments asunder with his macana.

Juan rose to his feet; but so long had he endured this benumbing bondage, that he was scarce able either to stand or move. There was no time, however, for hesitation. The flames were already devouring his couch, and darting over the cedar rafters of the ceiling. Befo whined and ran to the door, as if inviting his master to follow; and Techeechee did not cease to exhort him to hasten. Besides all this, there were now heard the cries of men and clashing of arms, as if the battle were raging even in the palace, and approaching the place of imprisonment.

"Magdalena, dear Magdalena—"

She flung herself into his arms, and embracing him, as if never to part from him more, she yet uttered, with wild sobbings,

"Farewell, Juan, farewell; farewell, my brother—we will never see each other more!"

"What meanest thou, my sister? Hold me by the arm—Tarry not, or we shall perish."

"I cannot go, Juan—I will remain, Juan—I must die, Juan, I must die. Weep for me, pray for me, remember me—Now go, now go! Go, Juan, go!"

It is impossible to express the mingled tenderness and vehemence with which she uttered these words. Poignant grief darkened in her eyes, in which glimmered the light of the most passionate love; and all the while she shed floods of tears. Unable to comprehend an agitation so extraordinary, and valedictions which he thought little short of insanity, he grasped her by the hand, and endeavoured to draw her after him. She resisted even with screams, until, utterly confounded, and somewhat incensed by opposition so unreasonable and inopportune, he turned again to remonstrate, and perhaps rebuke. But the reproach was banished from his lips, before they had given it utterance. She again flung her arms around his neck, and muttered with tones that went to his heart,

"I cannot go with you, Juan—Oh my brother! pardon me, my brother, and do not curse me. Bid me farewell, Juan, bid me farewell for ever—I love you Juan, I love you too much!—Now I can live no more, Juan, I can live no more—Farewell! farewell! farewell!" And flinging from his arms, as if from a serpent that had suddenly stung her to the heart, she uttered another shriek, and fled through the burning door by which she had entered.

Juan remained fixed to the spot, as if struck by a thunderbolt; and before he could banish the words of the thrice-unhappy victim of passion from his ears, there rushed into the chamber, with furious shouts, a rabble of Spanish soldiers, blood-stained,

and begrimed with smoke and cinders, the leader of whom struck the Ottomi dead with a single thrust of his spear, while the others rushed upon Juan, some crying out to kill, and others to spare him.

"Hands off!" cried Najara, throwing himself betwixt them and Juan. "Remember orders,—the general's orders!—The king, señor Juan? Where is the king?"

"Unhand me, villains!" cried Juan, endeavouring to shake off the soldiers who held him fast, while Befo attempted vainly to give him assistance:—"Kill me, if you will, but save my sister, my poor sister—Quick! for the love of heaven, quick!" he cried, observing some dart towards the door through which she had vanished: "Cortes will reward you—save her! save her!"

"Follow them, Bernal, man," cried Najara to the historian, who had just plucked his spear from the body of Techeechee—"What dost thou with slaying gray-headed Indians? Follow La Monjonaza,—five-hundred crowns,—ay, by my troth, and call them five thousand—to him that recovers her alive! Ah, señor Juan! your dog has more brains than yourself. But for his howling, you must e'en have roasted, man. Come along, come along—Be of good heart; there is no fear now of either axe or rope."

With such words as these, he drew Juan from the chamber, and supporting his tottering steps betwen himself and another, and bidding the rest of the party to surround them, so as to guard against any outbursting of rage from their excited companions, he bore him from the scene of bloodshed and conflagration.

CHAPTER XXI.

The assault upon the garden and palace of Guatimozin, though the last blow given to his power, it has not been thought needful to describe in any of its details. It is well known, that the occasion was used by the few nobles of the empire who yet survived, to withdraw their monarch with his family from the island, in the vain hope of reaching the main land, through a line of brigantines and armed piraguas. It is also well known, that, notwithstanding the stratagem with which these faithful barbarians essayed to protect the last of their native lords, by exposing their own defenceless gondolas to destruction, he was captured, in consequence of his magnanimous self-devotion, and transferred with his trembling family, from his royal piragua to the galley of Garci Holguin.

Drums, trumpets, falconets, fire-arms, and human voices at once proclaimed the importance of the capture, and the triumph of the victors; and with all the speed of sails and oars, the fortunate cavalier bore his prize towards the nearest landing in possession of the Spaniards, deriding and even defying the claim set up by Sandoval, as the superior officer, to the honour of presenting the prisoner to the Captain-General. Long before he had reached the palace of Axajacatl, it was known throughout the whole city that Guatimozin was in the hands of the besiegers. The warriors who still fought in the

garden, beheld the surrender on the lake, instantly threw down their arms, and submitted with sullen indifference to the fate they had long anticipated. With the interview betwixt the king and the conqueror all readers are familiar. The Captain-General, sumptuously dressed, and in the midst of such state as could be prepared for an occasion so imposing, received the prisoner, (in whose wasted figure and dejected countenance it was not possible to recognize the half-forgotten Olin,) in the hall of the palace of Axajacatl, where his ancestors had been kings and princes, but into which he now entered a captive and vassal. The Captain-General received him not only with respect, but with an appearance of sympathy and kindness. In truth, he could not but admire the fortitude of his youthful foe; and he reflected, not without exultation, that if his desperate resistance had increased the pains and perils of conquest, and frequently dashed all hopes of success, it had made his own triumph a thousand times more glorious. He descended from his chair of state, and raising the dejected captive from the floor, upon which he had flung himself in token of submission, he embraced him with many expressions of respect and encouragement.

"Fear not—neither for thy life nor crown," he said. "Thou perceivest, the king of Spain, my master, is invincible. Reign still in Mexico; but reign as his vassal."

He would have replaced on the captive's head the copilli of gold, which had been brought from the gondola and put into his hand; but Guatimozin rejected it with a melancholy gesture, saying,

"It is the Teuctli's—I am no more the king. Malintzin! be merciful to the people of Mexico: they are now slaves. Have pity also on the women and children, that come from the palace; for they are of the household of Montezuma. As for myself,

Malintzin, hearken to what I say. The kings of Mexico have all died; when they gave their breath to heaven, the crown was on their front, and the sceptres on their bosom. Why then should I live, who am no longer a king? Malintzin, I have fought for Mexico, I have shed blood for my country, and now I shed tears; I can do no more for my people —It is fitting, therefore, that I should die—But I should die like a king."—He extended his hand, and touched the jewelled dagger that glittered in the baldric of his foe. The action was without any sign of hostility, and his countenance, now uplifted upon Cortes, was bathed with tears. "Let Malintzin do the work—Plunge this dagger into my bosom, and let me depart."

There was something affecting even to the iron-hearted conqueror in the situation and demeanour of the poor infidel, thus beseeching, and evidently with as much sincerity as simplicity, a death of honour after a life of patriotism; and Cortes would have renewed his caresses and assurances of friendship, had not his ears been that moment struck by voices without, pronouncing the name of Juan Lerma, with brutal execrations. He signed to those cavaliers who had conducted the monarch to his presence, to lead him away; and a moment after, Juan Lerma was conducted up to his footstool. Dejected, spiritless, overcome perhaps by the ferocious calls for vengeance which had heralded his steps to the palace, as well as by the exhaustion of long bodily suffering, he did not raise his eyes from the floor, until he heard the voice of Cortes pronounce the faltering words,—

"Juan of Castillejo, I have done you a great wrong.—Yes," he continued, with a louder voice, when Juan looked up, surprised not more by his altered tones than by a name so unexpected and unknown, "Yes, and let all bear witness to my

confession;—I have done thee, not one wrong only, but many; for which I heartily repent me, and, before all this assemblage, do beseech thy forgiveness."

"My forgiveness, señor!" stammered Juan, while all the rest looked on in amazement.

"Thy forgiveness," repeated the conqueror, with double emphasis. "Thou hast been belied to me, bitterly maligned; but heaven has punished the slanderer, who slew mine own peace of mind, that he might compass thy death."

"Alas, señor," said Juan; "in his death-gasp, Guzman confessed to me—"

"Speak not of Guzman—forget him.—Have ye heard, my masters! and well taken note of what is spoken? Now begone, all, and leave me alone with my recovered prodigal.—Juan—Juan Lerma, —Juan of Castillejo," he cried, as soon as the wondering audience had vanished; "if Guzman have confessed to you, you must know why I have been maddened into wrath and injustice.—But thy sister, Juan, where is thy sister? my poor Magdalena? Ah, Juan! it was but a fiendish aberration, that set me against the child of my sister!"

With these words, he threw himself upon Juan's neck, and embraced him with a fervour that indicated the return of all his old affections, uttering a thousand exclamations, in which he mingled recurrences to the past with many a reference to the present and future. "This will be a glad day to Catalina, for she ever loved thee—Dolt that I was, to think that her love could be aught but a mother's! My father, Juan, my father, too! his gray hairs will yet be laid in a grave of joy; for he shall behold the son of his daughter seated in the inheritance of a noble father. And thy sister—she shall shine with the proudest and noblest.—I knew thee upon the causeway, too, though I was left in a

coma, and half expiring. We have full proof of thy claims.—And thy princess, too—dost thou remember the silver cross?" taking it from his bosom—"Were there a duke's son demanded her, she should be thine.—What ho! some one bring me—But, nay—Thy sister, Juan! does she not live?"

Juan was stunned, stupified, bewildered, by a transformation in his own character and in the feelings of the general, so sudden and so marvellous. Yet he strove to reply to the last question, and was in the act of uttering a broken and hasty explanation, when a loud cry came from the passage, and rushing out, they beheld a party of soldiers bearing, in a litter of robes torn from the burning palace, the body, or the living frame, they knew not which, of the unhappy nun, over whom the penitent Gregorio was bitterly lamenting.

It was indeed Magdalena, her garments scorched, her face like the face of the dying. Yet she did not seem to have suffered from the flames. The soldiers had found her in a part of the palace not touched by the fire, and scarce invaded by the smoke; and perhaps a subtle physician would have traced her dreadful condition rather to some overpowering convulsion of spirit than to any physical injury. She was indeed dying, the victim of contending passions, with which the education of a cloister had so ill fitted her to contend.

We will not speak of the meeting of Juan and his dark-eyed proselyte. It took place beside the couch of the dying girl, who, for love of him, had given up the vows of religion and the fame of woman, and perished with frenzy, when she discovered that that love was more than the love of a sister.

At nightfall, and while she still lay insensible, save that a faint moan occasionally trembled from her lips, there arose a tempest of lightning, thunder, and rain, far exceeding in violence any that had before burst over the heads of the Spaniards, and which

Bernal Diaz has recorded in his history, as having been the most dreadful that ever confounded his mind and senses. It seemed as if the warlike divinities of Mexico were now taking leave of their broken altars and subjugated people, with a display of strength and fury, never more to be exercised. It ceased not until midnight, and then only when it had discharged a bolt that shook the island to its foundation, and tumbled many a ruined cabin and dilapidated palace, upon the heads of their unhappy inmates.

It was in the midst of this conflict of the elements, that the broken spirit passed from its weary prison; and what had been beauty and affection, genius and passion, became a clod, to claim kindred with its fellow of the valley. It was better indeed that she should thus perish; for her nature was above that of earth, and even the passion that destroyed her, pure, enthusiastic, and devoted as it was, was unworthy the spirit it had subdued. It was such as is the molewarp to the rose-bush, or the myrtle-tree, which he can destroy by burrowing at their roots, even when the winter's blast can scarce rive away a branch.

The remains of this ill-fated being were interred upon a sequestered hill, west of Mexico, where Gregorio Castillejo built a hermitage, and mourned over her for the few years he survived her. He left the odour of sanctity behind him, and the hermitage is now forgotten in the chapel built upon its site, and dedicated to Our Lady de los Remedios. To this place Cortes withdrew, with his whole army, in order that the ruined city might be purified of corses and rubbish, that rendered it horrible even to a soldier, no longer inflamed by the fire of battle. He soon, however, removed to Xochimilco, the Field of Flowers, where the time of the purification was devoted to solemn rejoicings and profane festivities.

To all those who may yet be disposed to consider our account of the strength and splendour of the empire of Montezuma as fabulous, we recommend no better study than the honest, worthy, and single-minded historian, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, who lived to complete his *Historia Verdadera*, fifty years afterwards, in the loyal city of Guatimala, in which he held the honourable post of Regidor, the venerable, and, at that period, almost the sole survivor of the followers of Cortes. He has recorded one striking proof of the vast multitudes of pagans that had been concentrated within the island of Mexico. After averring, with a solemn oath, that, after the fall of the city, the streets, houses, squares, courts, and canals, were so covered with dead bodies, that it was impossible to move without treading upon them, he relates, that, Cortes having ordered all who survived, principally women and children, and the wounded, to evacuate the city, preparatory to its purification, 'for *three days and three nights*, all the causeways were full of the wretched fugitives, who were so weak and sickly, so squalid and pestilential, that it was misery to behold them.' Three broad highways, covered, for the space of three days and nights, by a moving mass of widows and orphans, the trophies of a gallant achievement! the first fruits of the ambition of a single individual!

As Bernal Diaz retained, to the last, a jealous regard for the honour of his leader, this friendly weakness, taken into consideration along with the infirmities of memory incident to his advanced age, may perhaps account for his failure to complete the story of Juan Lerma. He may have recollected, as is often the case with an old man, the earliest facts of the story, while the later ones slipped entirely from his mind.

Of Cortes himself, it is scarce necessary to apprize the reader, that he lived to subdue other empires, and experience the ingratitude of a monarch,

whose favour he had so amply merited. He fought for renown, for his king, and for heaven. Heaven alone can judge the merit of his acts, for men are yet unwilling to sit in judgment upon the brave; his king requited him with insults and positive oppression; and fame has placed him among those who have trodden out the wine-press of human desolation, and live in marble.

As for the young Count of Castillejo, his claims to the inheritance of his father were too well substantiated to be resisted; and the crimes of Gregorio had left none to oppose. As a subordinate in the work of conquest, there was nothing in him to be feared; and when he bore from a land he could only remember with sorrow, a bride whose father had borne the witching name of king, he was received with as much favour, and distinguished by as many honours, as any other *Conquistador*, who transplanted among the dames of Castile, a wife wooed within the palaces of Montezuma.

The fate of Guatimozin is well known. The crown he was still enforced to wear, did not protect him from the torture of fire; nor could his noble character and unhappy fall secure him from a death of degradation. Four years after the fall of his empire, and at a distance of several hundred leagues from his native valley, he expiated upon a gibbet, a crime that existed only in the gloomy and remorseful imagination of the Conqueror. And thus, with two royal kinsmen, kings and feudatories of Anahuac, he was left to swing in the winds, and feed the vultures, of a distant and desert land. He merited a higher distinction, a loftier respect, and a profounder compassion, than men will willingly accord to a barbarian and INFIDEL.

THE END.