# The Quadroone; or, St. Michael's Day

J. H. Ingraham

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# DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO M. M. NOAH, ESQ.
– My dear Major,

With your characteristic good−nature, you were so indulgent as to copy into your paper, and speak favourably of, certain fugitive anonymous letters on Louisiana, of which I was the author, and which originally appeared in the Natchez Courier in 1836; suggesting, at the same time, that the writer of them should imbody his information in a book. The paper containing this critique was sent to me by a friend; and I need not inform you, "who have written," with what self−gratulation I laid the unction of your words to my soul, and with what avidity I committed every good thing you had said of them to memory. But I was then a fledgling in type, and had never before trusted my wing to fly above the gins and snares that editors spread out to catch young birds withal! To find that I had alighted in safety made me fancy myself in full feather, and henceforth I boldly resolved to take my flight with eagles; in plain words—*to write a book;* a thing which, in my innocency, I had never dreamed of doing. The result of this valorous determination was shortly afterward made manifest by the appearance, in 1836, of two volumes under the title of "The Southwest."

The first book, like the first sin, is the mother to a numerous progeny. While collecting materials for "The Southwest," I chanced to light upon a brief account of Lafitte's romantic abode on the Isle of Barritaria, in the Bay of Caminada. It struck me that it would afford a fine subject for a story of Romance. I went to work; and a novel, which I first denominated the "Buccaneer of Barritaria," but afterward called "Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf," was the fruit of my labours.

I had now gone too deep in literary transgressions to turn back, and, the CACOETHES SCRIBENDI being strong upon me, I forthwith wrote a third book, on the early career of Colonel Burr, under the title of "Burton, or the Sieges." "Captain Kyd," who did so many wicked deeds "as he sailed," soon after made its appearance. And now the "Quadroone" finishes the list of my offences.

Looking upon you, in some degree, in the light of my "Peter in Literis," as having, in a few kindly−penned lines, which, when I afterward spoke of them to you, had quite escaped your memory, imboldened me to aspire to authorship, I now take pleasure in employing the instrument you have contributed to furnish for yourself in acknowledging my indebtedness, and, with your permission, do hereby cheerfully inscribe your name on the Dedicatory page thereof. With the highest consideration, Your obedient servant,

J. H. Ingraham.

# PREFACE AND NOTES.

The scenes of the following story being laid in the city of New−Orleans, in 1769, a brief account of the place at that time will facilitate the apprehension of the reader. Seventy years ago, the ancient town, which was composed mostly of Moorish−looking edifices, faced with white stucco, lay compactly, in the form of a paralellogram, on the river Mississippi, with a spacious square in its front This space was lined with shade−trees; and an *alaméda*, with seats for the convenience of the citizens, who thronged hither to enjoy the evening breeze, bordered that portion of it next to the water. It was sometimes called the *Place d'Armes* by the Creoles, and by the Spaniards the *Plaza* and "Governor's Square."

On one side of it, facing the river, from which it was distant about a furlong, stood the Cathedral, a large, gloomy Spanish edifice, looking like some old Castilian convent, with an imposing *façade* , supported by ten massive pillars, and crowned by towers.

On each side of this structure, alike in appearance, like a pair of stately wings, but separated from it by narrow streets, stood a noble building; one was occupied as the town−house and hall of justice; the other, which was on the east, was the palace of the governor. Both were grand and massive like the Cathedral, and of the same dingy white with which age had stained it; for fifty years in that moist climate gives to edifices the hoary and venerable aspect that in Europe is the work of centuries.

The east and west sides of the square were bordered with houses built after the prevailing French and Spanish styles, stuccoed with white plaster, with balconies, verandahs, and lofty, narrow casements, protected by iron *jalousies*, and ornamented with far−projecting shades, painted with brilliant dyes, various as the number of lattices they shielded from the noontide sun. From this square, which was in the centre of the town, and the scene of every stirring event, and where dwelt not only the governor, but the chief men of the province, diverged narrow, closely−built streets; those on the north and east terminating in dark and almost impenetrable cypress forests. These forests were interlaced with an inextricable network of *lagoons* and *bayous*, which communicated both with the river and Lake Pontchartrain, and even, after leagues of devious windings, with the Gulf of Mexico—labyrinths known only to the *chasseur* , the *courreur du bois*, and the lawless *ladrones* of the lagoons, who in formidable numbers infested them.

A venerable convent of the Ursulines in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral; a gloomy prison, called the Dungeons of the Calaboose, situated in the rear of the hall of justice; an old government−house, once occupied as barracks for the governor's guards, but now deserted and falling into ruins; and a low−roofed market−house near the Place *d'Armes*, supported by a heavy colonnade of brick pillars, completed the sum of its public edifices. Many of its private dwellings were imposing, with their roofs crowned with battlements and ornamented with urns; with their balconies, green lattices, and graceful verandahs; with their wide portals and lofty apartments; and being usually built around a court paved with marble, in the centre of which played a fountain, and about which were cloisters, shaded with Venetian blinds, and adorned with the choicest evergreens and plants, they had an air of Eastern luxury that produced an agreeable effect both upon the eye and senses.

The inhabitants were mostly of French descent, and, like their Gallic sires, were urbane, spectacle−loving, excitable, and patriotic; they were, besides, very devout Roman Catholics. Simplicity of manners, united to great luxury in their houses, remarkably characterized them; while enthusiastic attachment to "*la belle France*" was interwoven with their very religion. Domestic slavery obtained among them to an extensive degree; and, while their laws were singularly severe against legal amalgamation, they openly practised a system of concubinage that has been without a parallel even in Oriental countries.

Notes.—1. The term Creole will be used throughout this work in its simple Louisianian acceptation, viz., as the synonyme for NATIVE. It has no reference whatsoever to African descent, and means nothing more nor less than *native*, one or two of the English dictionaries to the contrary notwithstanding. The children of northern parents, if born in Louisiana, are "Creoles." The term, however, is more peculiarly appropriated by those who are of French descent to themselves, and with this meaning and bearing it is used throughout the present work.

2. A Quadroon, strictly, is one whose blood is four parts European and one part African. This amalgamation is

expressed in the French words *Quatre et une*, or *Quatr'une*, from which comes the Anglo corruption of Quadroon. Those, however, who retain even a tenth part of the African blood, and, to all appearance, are as fair as Europeans, and undistinguished from them save by the remarkable and undefinable expression of the eyes, which always betrays their remote Ethiopian descent, come also under the general designation of "Quadroon."

3. As Quadroons are of both sexes, and the English word is not distinctive, the author, in order to avoid confusion, has restored the feminine termination, *e*, of the French phrase, which is *quatr'une* feminine, but *quatr'un* masculine, distinguishing them throughout the volumes as Quadroon and Quadroone, according to the sex.

4. The practical critic will discover that one or two historical fictions are interwoven with the thread of the romance, and that history itself has been followed only when the story chanced to flow with its current.

# CHAPTER I. THE SPANISH EMBASSY.

Reader! If thou art one of those rigidists who look for a moral in a story, and seek after instruction in a legend; who expect a homily in a nursery−tale, and demand a moral treatise in a fiction; who deem it sinful to entertain the imagination without improving the heart, and regard as vanity whatever administers to the taste and captivates the fancy, then close these volumes with the reading of this paragraph; for they will neither humour thee in thy prejudices, nor strengthen thee in thy philosophy. Yet, if thou canst be content to admire the lily upon its stalk, and the rose on its stem, and will cease to search longer for fruits amid flowers, thou mayst then turn in a right spirit to these pages; and, should they fail to improve thy morals, to add either grace to thy mind or dignity to thy intellect, they may, perchance, have the no less pleasing power of imparting cheerfulness to thy brow, of communicating warmth to thy bosom, and of infusing new sensibilities into thy soul; and while they spiritualize thy imagination, they may not leave altogether untouched thy heart.

The "Peace of Paris," concluded in 1763 between Great Britain and Portugal, France and Spain, followed a few days afterward by that of Hubertsberg, at length put a period to the "Seven Years' War," which had converted the whole of Europe into one gladiatorial arena, where king contended with king for crown and sceptre, and emperors wrestled together for imperial diadems. By this important treaty, the government of France reluctantly surrendered to the British Lion her Canadian possessions, which he long had surveyed with a wistful eye from his island−lair, and coveted to embrace to his own royal range. The surrender of Canada compelled France to relinquish with it a favourite and stupendous design she had cherished for half a century, of drawing a cordon round the English colonies by means of a chain of military posts, extending from the castle of Quebec to the fortress of St. John in Louisiana, in order to secure her influence over the tribes of Indians that roamed the vast wilderness between, and the more firmly to unite her remote possessions along the Gulf of Mexico with those in the north. The necessity of relinquishing Canada, therefore, put an end to this vast project on the part of France, for uniting the detached wings of her American empire; and as the territory of Louisiana was of importance to her only as one of the pillars from which to suspend this chain, she had come to a determination to part with that also, if compelled to resign the former. That this would be demanded of her by England, she learned several weeks prior to the "Peace of Paris," and forthwith, by a secret compact, transferred it to Spain, with which power she was then in alliance. By this instrument, the island of Orleans, and all the possessions of France west of the Mississippi, were ceded to Spain, and the French dominions in North America extinguished. The promulgation of this secret compact did not take place, however, until two years afterward, when Spain began to look towards her new acquisitions.

Early one brilliant June morning in the year 1766, the long repose of the peaceful citizens of New−Orleans was unwontedly disturbed with a rumour, spread abroad by certain fishermen in the market−place, that a small Spanish vessel of war had been seen by them at sunset the previous evening close in with the Rijolets, and apparently standing towards the head of Lake Borgne, which penetrates within two leagues of the rear of the town. Scarcely had the alarmed burghers that chanced to be abroad in the market−place at that hour of the morning exchanged their opinions upon the probable object that could bring the hostile stranger to their remote province, when the sharp sound of galloping hoofs was borne noisily through the half−awakened streets. A moment afterward, a "*petit paysan*," mounted upon one of the wild colts that roam over the prairies of Louisiana, his leathern shirt and long black hair streaming behind him in the wind, rode furiously into the public *Plaza*.

His story, as he drew up suddenly amid a crowd of anxious listeners, ran thus: that a war−lugger, bearing the flag of Spain, had dropped anchor just at dawn at the end of the lake nighest to the city; and that a boat, bearing two horsemen, with their horses saddled and richly−caparisoned, immediately put off from her and approached the land. Whereupon, mounting his nag, he had ridden at speed to convey the news to the governor.

This startling intelligence spread like wildfire throughout the town, and "The Spaniard! the Spaniard!" was on every lip. The whole population was soon astir, thronging not only the market−place, but the *Plaza* in front of the governor's palace; and while they listened in the direction of the road leading through Faubourg Declouif to the lake, as if momentarily expecting to hear the approach of the strangers, their eyes were turned frequently towards the balcony of the governor's window, in anxious waiting for his appearance. The stirring news that had disturbed

the repose of the city had already been communicated to him by an officer of his household.

In the mean time, many and various, as the fears and hopes of those from whom they proceeded, were the conjectures, buzzed about from one citizen to another, as to the nature of this mysterious visit on the part of the Spaniard. That it was of a hostile character, the attitude in which France and Spain had for some time stood to each other left little room for doubt. Yet the small size of the vessel, and, consequently, the inadequate force she must bring, combined with the disadvantageous position for active hostilities which she had taken up, seemed to promise intentions of a more pacific character than the prudent and timid dared to believe.

The situation of the French province of Louisiana at this period, whether viewed in its civil, political, or social relations, was peculiarly interesting. For many years it had reposed under a benign and almost patriarchal government; and from its remote situation, and the simple and pastoral habits of the people, it enjoyed peace and healthy prosperity, while the green bosom of maternal France was torn with feuds, and red with the blood of conflicting warriors. At long intervals of time, as chance directed some solitary vessel to its distant port, rumours reached them of wars declared, of sanguinary battles fought, and of kingdoms that had changed masters; but, ere yet the far−travelled news came to their ears, the wars had long ceased, the grass had grown over the graves of the slain, and the revolutions of empires had become matter of history. Thus it happened that the long−existing hostilities between France and Spain had been amicably ended some months, and, as one of the conditions of the treaty of peace, Louisiana was ceded to Spain by the former power, without the knowledge of the native inhabitants of that lovely province; but they were not, however, to be suffered much longer to remain in ignorance of this transfer of their allegiance.

The inhabitants of the city of New−Orleans, although sharing the characteristics of burghers, and exhibiting, in a greater or less degree, the peculiar features that men, herded together in a community, ever present, possessed, nevertheless, in some measure, the traits of the simple and quiet character of the *paysans* of the province, who were far removed from the influence of towns, and whose life was altogether pastoral. The Marquis de la Caronde, a gray−headed warrior, had long governed them, with a mildness of sway and judicious exercise of power that, while it bound them together as one family, won for himself the reverential love of all hearts.

Besides the officers of his household, who were few in number, advanced in years, and, like their master, well worn in war, and a few substantial citizens, there lived in the town several noble French families, whom reverse fortunes and other causes had driven into exile. Easily falling into the simple habits, and readily adopting the customs of their unostentatious fellow−citizens, they soon became as plain and unassuming in their manners and mode of life as their good neighbours, while their days glided on with a calm, quiet tenour, in which they derived more real peace and contentment than they could have found amid the splendour and luxuries they had left behind them. In nearly every instance, the heads of these families had died on the scaffold for political offences, or fallen on the field of battle—two of them alone surviving.

These two old nobles, being as far advanced in life as the venerable marquis, and of a rank nearly equal to his own, regularly took an evening pipe with him in the court of his *cabildo*, and, in times of intestine trouble, volunteered to assist in his councils; when, the weighty affairs discussed, the gray−headed trio would sit over their glasses of ruby wine, and talk lovingly and long of *la belle France*, discoursing, with sparkling eyes and a tear on the cheek, of the glorious by−gone days of Louis *le Grand*.

These ancient families were seven in number. In each was a noble youth, born to titles, honours, and domains which he was never destined to share—their names and those of their fathers having been struck out ignominiously from the roll of France. Besides a fair boy to each, and a small income saved from the wreck of their confiscated estates, nothing remained to the widowed mothers and the two old nobles. These youths were nearly of the same age, of equal rank, and were bound together by ties of friendship so close, that the spirits of Damon and Pythias seemed to have animated their bosoms. They were known everywhere as "*Les Sept Frères*," or the Seven Brothers. The eldest, Alfrède Charleval, had not reached his twenty−second year, and Eugene de Thoyras, the youngest, had scarcely passed his nineteenth summer. Noble by birth, well−formed and handsome in their persons, modest in speech and carriage, and possessing bold and determined spirits, they constituted a gallant band, who might be relied on whenever duty or chivalry should call upon them to act. They were the pride of the town and boast of the whole province, maintaining an extraordinary influence over the minds of the provincial youth by their courage and gentle courtesy, and over the hearts of the maidens by their comely persons and chivalrous daring.

The governor had not yet made his appearance on the balcony, from which he was wont to show himself to the townspeople, and to address them on occasions of a public nature. The anxiety of the multitude was momentarily threatening to overstep the bounds of civic decorum, when the governor's guard, which formed the whole regular force of the province, consisting of some threescore grayheaded soldiers, issued at a quick step from beneath the arched gateway that led to the inner court of his palace. At this sight the confidence of the doubtful among the crowd was restored, and all were assured that proper steps would be taken, either to receive the expected strangers with suitable honours, or meet them at the pike's point, as their present coming should prove of a friendly or hostile character.

Presently there was a cry from some one, who had stationed himself far down the road that led towards the lake, in order to give the signal of their approach, and "They come! They come!" ran from lip to lip; and the multitude was moved like the deep sea. The governor at the same instant stepped forth upon the balcony, clad in his long−disused military costume; his snowy head covered with a well−worn gold−laced chapeau, and his good sword girded to his side. He was a fine specimen of the cavalier of the old school of Louis Quinze. He was tall, dignified, and numbering threescore years, which, from the fire in his eye and the firmness of his carriage, sat upon him with the lightness of youth. His face expressed remarkable decision; but its soldier−like firmness was subdued by the teachings of a gentle temper and benevolent spirit.

No sooner was he discovered, than a shout was raised from the *Plaza*, which he acknowledged by uncovering his head and gracefully waving his chapeau towards the multitude, while the sun shone upon his flowing white hair, giving it the hue and brightness of silver.

"Peace, *mes enfans*," he said, in a tone of dignified yet gentle command; "I am informed that certain strangers have landed in our province under the flag of Spain, and are even now approaching the town. Let them come peaceably. Let not a weapon be drawn to oppose or intimidate them. Their mission is peaceful, or they would be better supported than I am told they are. Leave them with me, with whom, doubtless, their business lies, and I will see that my children come to no harm, and that the honour of our country be sacredly maintained. Ha! they are already at hand. Fontney," he added, in a lower tone, turning to an officer who stood near him, "see that the groom leads my horse round to the palace gate! I will meet them mounted like themselves."

While he was yet speaking, there were approaching, at a slow pace, along the river road, two horsemen, who, from the distance formally preserved between them, were plainly of different rank. The foremost, who also seemed, from his bearing and age, which might be about forty one or two, to be of the highest consideration, was dressed in the cloth armour worn by Spanish cavaliers of the time, enriched with gold, and shining with polished steel; his head was covered with a light casque of glittering steel, and a short cloak of crimson velvet fell with graceful negligence from his left shoulder. The saddle and housings of his horse, which touched the earth with dainty steps, as if it spurned the ground and fain would tread the air, were equally costly with the apparel of the rider; his whole body, save alone his arched neck, being covered with a fly−net of silver threads, through which appeared the raven hue of his glossy hide, shining like floss. His attendant wore a curiously−fashioned suit of green and scarlet, with the shield of Spain emblazoned on his breast, while the crest of the same royal arms was embroidered on the cuffs of his surcoat. In his left hand he bore a spear, about which was rolled a gorgeous banner. Besides a sword suspended at his belt, there hung at his saddle−bow a silver trumpet, chased with enormous royal devices. The housings of his saddle also bore, elaborately wrought in silver, the same regal insignia. But what more especially fixed the attention of the observing townsmen, and created no slight degree of sensation in their bosoms, was a body−guard of twelve halberdiers, of gigantic stature, armed to the teeth, and carrying shining battle−axes in their hands, marching a few paces in the rear of the two horsemen.

In the mean while, the venerable marquis had mounted his horse in the entrance of the *porte coch ère*, and, sallying into the square, no sooner discovered this formidable escort of the cavaliers, than he commanded the captain of the guard to form his men into a line in front of the palace, and hold himself in readiness to give them, if necessary, a hostile reception. Then riding a little way in advance of his brave old guard, he stopped, facing the strangers; and, surrounded by his officers, the gentlemen of his household, and a thousand hearts that were beating with anxious expectancy, awaited their approach.

When the Spaniards reached the termination of the road on the verge of the square, they came to a halt. The foremost, after communicating in a few words with the horseman in his rear, then unfolded a small white flag, and

rode forward, looking about him with careless ease as he pranced along into the thronged *Plaza*. As he advanced, the crowd gave way on either hand, leaving a broad path open up to the very presence of the governor. When he had got within five yards of the marquis, he reined his blood horse in so shortly, though he scarce seemed to press the bridle, that the animal reared with his fore feet in the air, and threatened for an instant to fall backward on his rider; but, while poised with this dangerous inclination to the rearward, with a sharp blow of his spurred heel he compelled him to leap fearfully forward; then, with an almost imperceptible touch of the snaffle, and a single word, caused the spirited animal to stand as still as if he had suddenly been converted into stone. After this brief passage of horsemanship, he waved his snowy pennon above his head, and the remaining horseman, galloping across the square, took up a position in his rear. Then, at a sign from the cavalier, he disengaged his trumpet from his saddle−bow, and blew upon it three loud blasts, such as a conqueror gives when he demands the surrender of a beleaguered city.

The Spanish cavalier now rose in his stirrups, and proclaimed, in a loud voice,

"I, Garcia Ramarez, count of Osma, in the name, and by command of his Catholic majesty, Carlos the Third, king of Spain, do herewith demand of Eugene Chartres, marquis de la Caronde, late governor under France of this province of Louisiana, that he forthwith surrender the government thereof to the crown of Spain and into my hands, as the representative of the said power: the demand and surrender being in accordance with the late peace made between Spain and France, and the terms and conditions of the treaty."

As he ceased, the pursuivant—such his office showed him to be—blew three blasts still louder than the first on his trumpet, and, at a signal from the Count of Ramarez, unfolded from the spear a silken flag, on which were represented, in the richest tints, the gorgeous arms of Spain. Elevating it above his head, he flung its broad folds wide to the morning breeze, while a murmur of indignation and surprise, like the sound of an approaching tempest, rolled sullenly across the Place d'Armes. The Marquis de la Caronde pressed his sword−hilt with a firmer grasp; but age had tempered the fire of his blood, and, without betraying farther emotion, he calmly waited the issue. Without heeding these palpable manifestations of resentment, the Spaniard extended his hand towards the flag, and cried, "Behold the insignia of Spain and the emblem of possession! Hear ye, all men present! I, Garcia Ramarez, in the name of his Catholic majesty, do now take possession of this province of Louisiana for the crown of Spain. God and Don Carlos!"

No sooner had the last words passed the lips of the haughty Spaniard, than the indignant governor, his brow crimsoned with shame at the insult, and his eye flashing with the fires of stern resentment, replied in a voice that rung defiance:

"Sir Spaniard, thou hast hardly weighed the odds, that thou comest to insult France in my person. Neither of treaty nor of the ceding of provinces have I heard until now! Eugene Chartres must have higher and less questionable authority than thine, Count Osma, ere he give to Spain what he hath sworn to keep for France. Depart, sir, with this answer."

"Heed thy words, signor marquis, lest they become darts to pierce thine own bosom," retorted the Spaniard, his brow darkening. "That peace hath been ratified between Spain and France is true, on my honour as a Castilian knight and gentleman. Ha! did you speak, signor?"

"I did merely ask my friend, the Baron de Thoyras, by my side, if it were not the Count of Ramarez who slew his own brother, and kept an uncle shut up in his strong tower at Osma, until death took pity on him and gave him freedom. I did but ask this, and no more, Sir Spaniard," replied the marquis, with the cool, cutting irony of tone and manner that, it would seem, none knew better how to employ.

"Humph! And what said your friend in reply?" asked the immoveable Spaniard.

"That I was right; the name of that Castilian knight and gentleman being Garcia Ramarez."

"What bearing has this upon the present, signor marquis?" demanded Ramarez, haughtily, biting his lip to conceal the effect of the noble Frenchman's words.

"No more than this: If the honour of a `Castilian knight and gentleman,' which you have pledged to us in attestation of your veracity, be of no better metal than the honour of the only one whom I have the pleasure to know," added the governor, bowing low to the Count of Osma, "why, we had as well have your naked word; for, though it may be a good round lie, it will come coupled with no perjury."

The Count of Ramarez turned pale. The words of the marquis had poisoned his heart, and his brow grew dark with revenge. After a moment's silence, during which he succeeded in keeping down and shutting within his

bosom all signs of emotion, he drew a pacquet from his breast, and, tossing it on the ground at the feet of the governor's horse, said, in an even voice,

"There lie papers that confirm what I have said; though think not," he added, proudly, "that a Ramarez would produce written vouchers for his spoken word."

"Thy parchments hold as little weight with me as thy speech," said the governor, reining back as if he would terminate the controversy. "Until I receive from my own good king the command to surrender this province to thy Spanish king. I shall hold it until the last drop of blood in my veins sink into its sand."

"You forget, signor marquis, that the dungeons of the Moro lie between thy paltry province and the court of Versailles," said the Castilian, with a menace in the quiet tone of voice in which he uttered the warning.

"They are not so deep as those of Osma, count," retorted the governor, with a smile that awakened the revengeful spirit of his antagonist.

With eyes burning like those of a tiger in his lair, and lips compressed with concentrated rage, he levelled his sword and drove his spurs deep into the sides of his horse, to bound forward and reach the veteran marquis. The animal had scarce moved a muscle to obey his fierce will, when the bridle was caught close to the bit by a strong hand, and the horse thrust back upon his haunches with such sudden force that the rider rolled from the saddle to the earth: the next instant a foot was pressed firmly on his breast, and the point of his own sword was at his throat.

"Hold, Renault!" cried the governor to the person whose skill and address had doubtless saved his life, so unexpected to him was the Spaniard's abortive attack; "let him rise up! In Heaven's name, we want no crossing blades with them if they will go in peace."

The person addressed was a young man of extraordinary personal beauty, seemingly perfect in face and figure: as symmetrical in limb as a young Apollo, while neither Greek nor Circassian ever presented to the sculptor's chisel a finer head or a nobler profile. His eyes were black, and his hair vied with the plumage of the raven's wing in its jetty hue. His complexion was dark, very dark; yet through the brown of his manly cheek the red blood was seen as if through a shadow, and richer far for the softness it lent to it. At the command of the governor he stepped back from the humbled Spaniard; and, taking up a slender pike, such as was used by the *courreurs du bois*, or hunters of the prairies, which he had dropped on seizing the horse, disappeared amid the crowd.

The Count of Osma rose slowly from the earth, and, casting about him a glance of defiance, remounted his steed, and was preparing to turn from the spot, when his eye lighted on a flagstaff near him in front of the quarters of the governor, on the lofty summit of which floated the snow−white ensign of France. He instantly changed his intention, and, turning towards the spot where he had left his halberdiers, made a signal with his glove, when they rapidly advanced towards him, and formed immediately in his rear, presenting a formidable front to any opponents. They were men of huge stature, and formed both for strength and activity. Besides their halberds or steel battle−axes, each carried, slung across his back, a short arquebuss, and wore at his side a ponderous sword, sheathed in a massive iron scabbard. Breastplates of untanned hide covered their broad chests. On their shoulders and the upper parts of their arms they wore iron pieces; while their heads were protected by scull−caps, woven close with wire, so as to be at the same time both light in weight, and capable of resisting a heavy stroke from any formidable weapon. Their looks were as stern as their garniture was warlike; while mustaches and long heavy beards gave to their visages a still more formidable appearance. It was plain that they had been chosen for the present occasion, and were a sort of gentlemen not to be lightly roused.

The public square in which the meeting between these rival governors of France and Spain took place was near the centre of the city, on one side bounded by the river, and on the opposite one by the Cathedral and governor's palace; while the two remaining sides, facing north and south, were enclosed by Moriscolooking mansions, with deep, narrow windows defended by iron bars, vast portals opening into inner courts, light verandahs, and flat roofs, and adorned with urns and fantastic battlements, every available place upon which was thronged with interested spectators of the scene in the *Plaza* beneath. Near the centre of this square, a little to the left, was the flagstaff, on which floated, like a white cloud, the spotless banner of France.

The Spaniard waited until his men had reached him, when, with a single bound of his horse, he placed himself at the foot of the staff, and, at one stroke of his sword, severed the cord that kept the flag in its elevated position, so that, fluttering and wildly floating in the air, it descended like a stricken swan to the ground. Ere it reached the earth it was caught by the herald, and placed beneath him across his saddle. Before several young townsmen could spring forward to snatch it from its ignominious situation, by a bold leap of his horse he placed the

halberdiers between himself and their vengeance, and gained the foot of the staff beside the knight.

"Ha, Caravello! you are at hand just as you are wanted. Give me the Spanish flag! Halberds, form close around me, and cleave to the chine whoever dares attempt to break your front. Now for Don Carlos and Spain!"

With coolness and rapidity, he now began to attach the Spanish colours to the line, the halberdiers at the same time presenting with their glittering battle−axes a bristling crescent on the side towards the governor and his guards; and, before the latter could recover from their surprise at this manæuvre, or divine his intentions, he had firmly fastened the flag to the dissevered cord. The next instant they beheld it rising swiftly into the air.

"Death and St. Denis! He has done it in our faces! Charge them, my brave guards!" cried the marquis, brandishing his sword and riding against the firm phalanx of halberdiers; while his guards, with loud cries, pressed forward to the rescue of their dishonoured flag, and to avenge the insult it had received.

Their advance, however, was soon checked by a loud shout of triumph from the multitude; and, reining up within five feet of the immoveable halberdiers, the governor followed the direction of all eyes upward, and beheld the Spanish ensign, ere yet it had reached the summit of the pole, floating loose through the air, and a light *courreur's* spear still vibrating in the mast.

"Renault, the Quadroon! Bravo! *vive* Renault!" was heard from a hundred tongues, while the surprised Spaniard, into whose hands the severed cord had dropped, watched eagerly the course of the silken banner, as, flashing in the morning sun, and gorgeous as a rainbow, it floated off on the gentle winds. The stern halberdiers and the veteran guard both arresting themselves in full career, and alike forgetful of their hostile attitude, together with the whole multitude, turned their gaze upward to this interesting object.

Now whirling round and round in wild gyrations; now sailing outspread on the bosom of the wind; now rustling its folds together, as the breeze turned it in its flight, the beautiful thing floated long above the square. At one moment it would sweep low over the heads of the people; then, mocking their grasp, again rise rapidly, in its ascent flying almost within reach of the hand of some fair lady on the balconies.

The Spaniard watched its erratic motions with an earnest and anxious gaze, aware of the ignominious destiny that awaited it should it fall among the hostile crowd; and once, as it swept past near his head, he vainly attempted to secure it with his sword, but, only piercing it, it eluded him, amid the derisive laugh of the multitude. On his part, the noble old governor enjoyed, with the keenest satisfaction, the defeat of the Spaniard's object, and watched, with the eagerness of a delighted child, its sportive circles through the air.

Standing on the battlement of one of the dwellings on the south side of the square was a very young girl of exceeding beauty; but, from the deep brown of her cheek, and her flashing, dark eyes, as well as from the costume of her head, it was clear that she was a *quadroone*. Twice the winds had wafted their silken plaything almost within her reach, and now swept it a third time close above her head, and bore it past her in the direction of a square tower that rose from the midst of the roof. Every eye watched its course with breathless eagerness. It touched the tower— fluttered an instant—and then a shout, mingled with the deep execrations of the Spaniards, announced that it had become entangled on a projecting point of the stone. Instantly several young men were seen scaling the front of the dwelling, aided by the light columns of the verandah and the bars of the barricaded windows.

"*Les freres! vivant les frères!*" was heard on every tongue, and all eyes were directed towards the daring young men, who were seven in number, that appeared on all parts of the front of the edifice, in ambitious and reckless rivalry to reach the flag. While they were ascending, the quadroone girl, by an inner staircase leading from the roof, gained the top of the tower. Boldly stepping on the verge, she reached down, and with great peril extricated the ensign. The waving it once in triumph, she placed it beneath her symmetrical little feet, and indignantly trampled upon it.

"*Vive, Azèlie! vive! bravissima!*" rose tumultuously from the crowd below, and at the same instant the young men gained the battlement.

One or two of them were preparing to surmount the tower, when she cried with a lofty energy, that, either from the manner in which she spoke, or from the extreme beauty of the speaker, singularly enforced their attention,

"Stop, messieurs! The flag is mine, and shall be given only to the defenders of our fair province. Swear that you will hold Louisiana free of Spain and all other power, save God and France, and it shall be yours!"

Her voice rung with the rich clearness of a clarion, and her words were distinctly heard by those who stood on the opposite side of the *Plaza*.

There was a smile of surprise on the faces of the young nobles as she ceased, but the lovely girl was a favourite with all; and, with the native gallantry of their chivalrous land, now challenged both by patriotism and beauty, they, with one mind, felt inspired to give solemnity and importance to what they at first viewed with levity, and, in an elevated and serious tone, answered,

"We swear!"

And, laying their right hands one upon the other, they solemnly bowed their heads upon them: then placing them upon their hearts, they looked up to Heaven in attestation of their truth.

"Then receive, each of ye noble youths, these badges in remembrance of your oath."

As she spoke, she rent the flag into eight scarves, and, casting one across her own bosom, threw the rest from the tower at the feet of the young men. A loud murmur of applause filled the air at this action, and, taking up the brilliant scarves, they bound them across their breasts. At this instant the report of some fire−arm was heard from the square, and the quadroone, with a thrilling shriek, fell back upon the tower.

Every eye was turned upon the Spaniard, whom, with a look of malicious triumph, they beheld in the act of returning to a halberdier a blunderbuss which he had discharged at her, as, relieved against the sky, she presented a prominent mark to his deadly aim, and a suitable victim to his vengeance.

"Do them to the death!" cried the governor; "close in upon the demons! Cut in pieces the Spanish hounds."

"Be firm and close about me, halberds! Present them your faces, and retreat slowly," ordered the Spaniard, coolly, as if most at home when dangers thickened about him. "Meet their charge with your battle−axes, but let not a man leave his place to follow up a blow. Keep firm and steady, and we shall yet leave far behind us this pack of French wolves."

Led on by the marquis, the French guard rushed forward with fierce cries; and, while the old warrior sought to reach the Spanish chief, his men became furiously engaged hand to hand, helm to helm, with the slowly−retreating halberdiers, who kept firmly together in line, defending themselves with ponderous blows of their battle−axes.

For a few moments the *mêlée* was terrific. The roar of the heavy muskets of the guard, the sharp ring of pistols, the clashing of swords, and the dull sound of the strokes of the battle−axes, as they sunk into breast or scull, were for a few seconds unceasing. The marquis having made several ineffectual attempts to break through the halberdiers, at length, by making a *detour* by their flank, succeeded in getting near the Count of Ramarez. With his herald by his side, the latter was slowly retreating, step by step, at the head of his men, coolly giving his orders, and enjoining them to keep shoulder to shoulder, and steadily fall back upon him; while, at times, seeing them hard pressed, he would make in person a fierce charge upon the guards, and, dispersing them, resume his station, and conduct the retreat in the same regular order as before.

"Now shalt thou die the death, Count of Osma!" shouted the old warrior, as he found the path open between himself and the Spaniard.

Throwing his body far forward on the horse as he spoke, he spurred towards him and made a desperate lunge at his breast; but his sword met the resistance of a shirt of mail worn beneath his splendid apparel, and broke short to the hilt. The force of the blow, nevertheless, nearly unhorsed the Spaniard, who, speedily recovering his seat, dealt in return so well−aimed a stroke upon the head of his antagonist, that he was stunned by it, and would have fallen from his saddle but for the support of his stirrup: his terrified horse, at the same time, swerved wildly on one side, and, when he recovered from the shock, which he did in a few seconds, he found himself separated from his antagonist by the intervening bodies of the halberdiers.

At length, after defending themselves desperately against such odds, fighting and winning every inch of ground with their faces towards their enemies, the hard−pressed halberdiers, aided by the skill and coolness of their chief, succeeded, with the loss of two of their number, in extricating themselves from the square, and reaching the entrance to the Borgne road. Here the marquis, who had lost some of his best men in the fray, finding nothing would be gained by pursuit, recalled the guard, and permitted them to continue their retreat without farther molestation. Not so the Seven Brothers! After delaying to bear the wounded maiden to the rooms below, they now made their appearance in the Place d'Armes. Separating singly, they moved swiftly from group to group, whispering a few words to each young man they met, who, the next moment, silently withdrew and disappeared from the throng.

Weary, wounded, and sore with revenge, the Spaniards retreated rapidly towards the lake. At length, through a distant opening in the trees, they were gladdened with the sight of their little vessel riding at anchor upon its placid breast. They hailed the broad expanse of water with a shout of joy, and with renewed vigour marched towards the glittering beach.

They were yet a mile distant from the barge, when a sound like the trampling of numerous horses fell upon their ears from the direction of the city. Looking round with startled apprehensions, they beheld, to their dismay, a body of fifty horsemen, armed with sabres and courreur−pikes, emerging from the wood and approaching them at full speed. The Count Osma could discern that they were headed by several young men distinguished by crimson scarfs, which were streaming behind them as they rode.

"Fly for your lives, my brave halberds!" he shouted, after watching for a few moments their swift coming. "To the boats! To the boats! We are in no condition to withstand their mad charge."

With this rapid and energetic order he put spurs to his horse, and, urging and encouraging his men forward, fled towards the barge. But, finding the pursuers gained each moment on them, he bade his men do their best if it came to blows, and, leaving them to their fate, galloped onward, accompanied by his herald, at the top of his horse's speed. In vain, however, was the flight of those who were not mounted. Like a whirlwind the pursuing troop came sweeping towards the beach; and, ere the halberdiers could turn to show resistance, they were borne to the ground by the mere weight of numbers, and trampled in the earth by a hundred iron−shod hoofs. The work of death was but of an instant's duration. Their armour was no defence to them—strength and courage of no avail! They fell as if a simoon of the desert had swept over them!

Scarcely without pause, the conquering squadron galloped onward to the lake side, in hot pursuit of the two horsemen, who were flying along the sands as if borne forward on the wings of the wind. The foremost of the pursuers, a dark, handsome youth, undistinguished by a scarf, and armed only with a spear, who seemed to be one of the band that had gained the lead by the superior speed of his horse, at length came near the herald, and shouted to him to rein up. But the fugitive, conspicuous with the white ensign of France still wound about his body, continued to urge his steed forward without heeding the call or looking behind.

"I will soon stop thy flight, gay bird!" said the youth, in a half tone; and rising, as he spoke, in his stirrups, he threw himself far backward to give force and energy to the blow, and launched his light spear with such unerring aim, that, entering his body through the folds of the flag, it passed out a third of its length on the farther side.

"The honour of France is redeemed," he said, coming, with two or three tremendous bounds, alongside of the herald's steed; and, while the two horses were still flying like eagles along the sands, he seized the tottering body, and, tearing the enerimsoned banner from it, hurled it, still warm with life, to the ground.

"*Vive*, Renault!" cried one of the *frères*, getting up with him; "this day hast thou saved the honour of our *belle province*. Thy hand, Renault! The drop of Moorish blood in thy veins shall not come between thee and my love. Let us be friends, brave Renault."

"Noble Charleval, you have made this a happy moment to me!" answered the youth, grasping the hand extended to receive his with eloquent gratitude.

The young noble, then fastening the flag to his sword, elevated it above his head, and, waving it in triumph, continued his pursuit of the Spanish leader.

Intimidated by the slaughter of his men, and witnessing the fall of his attendant, the Spanish count gored his horse to madness, reached, at length, his barge, and, reckless of all save his own safety, leaped, mounted as he was, into the midst of his men; while his voice, commanding them, with oaths and menaces, to put off from the land, could be heard above the thunder of the hoofs of the pursuing horse. They needed no urging; and, while the horsemen were yet a hundred yards from the water's edge, the boat was full that distance from the land, and its occupant secure from their vengeance. After seeing him embark, and the vessel get under weigh and stand down the lake, the party of horse, which was composed of young townsmen, both creoles and quadroons, hastily raised by the seven young nobles, returned in triumph to the city.

## CHAPTER II. THE DEMAND OF SUBMISSION.

Defeated, disgraced, and burning with revenge, caused as much, doubtless, by the indignity offered to his person and authority from his new subjects as by the insult to his country, the Count of Osma retired to the Havanna, whence he shortly afterward proceeded to Spain, for the purpose of returning with a force sufficient to bring the refractory Louisianians into subjection, and avenging himself for his former reception. But other affairs of higher importance then engaging the attention of the Cortes, farther attempts for taking possession of the refractory province were, for the present, suspended.

In the mean while, the citizens of Orleans fortified their town, by erecting a low wall and digging a ditch on the north side, and on the south by barricading the outlets and spaces between the massive Spanish houses that bounded it, which, by their height and the thickness of their walls, presented formidable barriers to any hostile approach. The front on the river, including the public square before the governor's house, was defended by a battery of cannon of heavy calibre, which had been chiefly transferred from the ancient fort of St. John, on Lake Ponchartrain, while the rear was rendered inaccessible by impenetrable cypress forests and numerous lagoons. Every man, from the silver−haired grandsire to the beardless youth, became a citizen soldier, each habitually wearing the harness of warfare in the more peaceful pursuits of his daily handicraft; and, from the general aspect of things, it appeared to be the determination of the patriotic Orleannois to defend their fair province to the last.

But two years having elapsed without any farther intelligence from the Spaniards, they relaxed their vigilance; and, by degrees, laying aside its warlike aspect, the city began to wear again its more befitting civic character.

The venerable governor, overcome by the weight of years, and worn out with long service, at length dying, the citizens elected six of the most substantial burghers to constitute a council for their rule and government. This political change, however, was not effected without some opposition on the part of certain of the better−born among the townspeople and a small party of young creoles, who were clamorous for the authority to descend into the hands of the governor's only son, a bold, impetuous, and wild young man, scarcely twenty−three years of age. The elected council, nevertheless, firmly established itself, and the affairs of the city and province went on prosperously, to the great credit of the chosen rulers, while in the general thrift Spain and its imperious demand was forgotten.

Such was the condition of things, when, in the autumn of 1769, a little more than two years and a half after his defeat and departure, the Spanish governor again made his appearance with a large force before the city, and demanded its surrender. It is at this crisis in the history of Louisiana that the first scene in the second chapter of our story opens.

The Spanish fleet consisted of two brigantines, one carrying ten and the other twelve carronades, a polacca schooner of six guns, and three one−masted gunboats, each mounting a long eighteen−pounder on a pivot in the bows, with an aggregate force on board of seven hundred men, including one hundred and fifty horsemen. On its first arrival it had anchored a league below the city, whence the governor had immediately sent to demand its submission, and to receive, in token thereof, the keys of the government−house and other rooms of state, giving the terrified townsmen the six hours which intervened until sunset to make up their minds, promising them a general amnesty if they quietly submitted, with the menacing alternative of being treated as rebels taken in arms if they refused. This peremptory message was received by the council at noon, and filled the town with consternation and alarm. Throngs of anxious and excited citizens rushed to the *Plaza*, and thence, flowing towards the hall of council, which was in the governor's palace, thrust themselves into the chamber, and by their cries, some for "surrender," others for "defence," completed the disorder that already began to find its way into this body of civic rulers. Five hours of clamorous confusion passed away; the sun, at whose setting their fate was to be decided, was already low in the west, and yet no decisive steps had been taken either to comply with or resist the demand of the Spaniard. As if the apple of discord had been cast into it, the whole city was thrown into a state of the wildest anarchy, and torn by opposing factions; and, while menaced by a foe without, it seemed on the eve of being a prey to a civil war within. The members of the council, at first divided as their interests or patriotism prompted, or as their fears dictated, now magnanimously forgot themselves, and, acting in concert, patriotically determined to hold the city against all comers, save their royal master Louis Quinze. But the older and more

reflecting portion of the citizens themselves, seeing that they were deserted by France, and finding that farther opposition would be not only useless, but draw upon their heads ruinous consequences, were resolutely decided on submitting to the Spanish domain; while many of the young creoles, burning with hostility to Spain, and filled with resentment against France, opposed every measure for surrender, and fearlessly advanced the bold proposition that they should hold out the city and province against both the powers of France and Spain, and constitute themselves a republic. Thus it happened that, between the conflicting voices of three factions, each so opposite to the other, the time set by the Spaniard had nearly expired, and it was not yet determined whether the city should give in its submission, or stand stoutly on its defence. As the hour for returning an answer approached, the council−chamber presented a scene of disorder beyond the control of any authority vested in the members of the council, who, nevertheless, conspicuously seated upon their elevated cushions of crimson damask at the extremity of the hall, maintained their municipal state and civic dignity, and, like a rock against which the vexed surges idly beat, continued to remain firm and unmoved in the position they had assumed, while around them roared and heaved the human sea which the breath of the Spaniard had agitated.

In the midst of this rife confusion and civic anarchy, the report of a heavy gun shook the town. Its effect was electrical. The uproar of voices ceased, as if the angel of silence had waved his wing above the multitude, and every eye was turned in the direction of the windows that looked towards the setting sun, which, appearing like a vast globe of heated iron suspended in the sky, hung low near the horizon. They saw that in less than half an hour it would disappear in the bosom of the dark forest of cypresses which seemed to girdle the earth; and the reflection that, ere it rose again, their fair city might become the scene of massacre and conflagration, and their hearths desolate, blanched the cheeks of many a husband and father; and some of those present, who, the moment before, were for maintaining the town against all odds, now turned away from the sun to fix their eyes upon the faces of the unwavering council with an imploring eloquence of expression that plainly betrayed the change wrought in their feelings. A second report, still nearer than the first, shook the council−house to its foundations, and had the effect of breaking the silence which the other had produced, for instantly it was answered by a deep murmur from the mass of the people, that soon rose into a wild, inarticulate cry, mingled with stern and fierce words.

"There spoke loud warning, citizens," said the president of the council, rising, and waving his hand which held his baton of office, to command attention; "warning and menace to all traitors to France. If ye be true men and loyal, fly forthwith to the defences, and maintain the town!"

"To the defences, to the defences!" shouted a tall, dark young man, with a flowing crimson feather, tipped with sable, in his slouched hat, as he forced his way towards the door with the hilt, and even the sharp point of his sword, closely followed by a score of young men, who manifested as little regard for the flesh and doublets of those burghers who stood in their path as did their leader; but no one of the steadier citizens moved to second them, and the shouts of those reckless gallants were drowned in the overwhelming cry from a thousand voices of "No defence! no defence!"

"Children of France, will ye become serfs to Spain?" suddenly cried a youth, in a plain gray capote, who did not seem to be of their party, but whose words showed that he also was for holding the town, though it might be from other motives than those which governed the band of young men; "will ye tarnish yonder spotless standard, that floats in the evening sun like a silver cloud? Shall the Spaniard again make a saddlecloth of the colours of France? Shame on ye, Orleannois! Shame on ye, Frenchmen! Shame on ye, Louisianians! How will your faces redden with the blush of degradation when in the morning you behold the flaunting ensign of Spain waving where yesterday your country's banner waved! To the defences! to the defences!"

"*Vive* Spain! *vive* France! no Renault; no quadroon! *vive la republique!*" confusedly filled the apartment from the various factions at these words, while the uproar was so loud that the firing of a third gun was only made manifest by a vivid flash like lightning illuminating the hall, the extremities of which were already cast into gloom by the advancing shadows of evening. At the same instant, a loud and appalling cry of "The Spaniard! The Spaniard!" rent the air from the multitude in the *Plaza* beneath, and, reaching the ears of those within the council−chamber, the news flew from lip to lip like wildfire.

"They come! They come!" were the thrilling words that re−echoed through the vaulted chamber; and the alarmed citizens, rushing to the windows and balconies of the hall that overlooked the port, beheld with fear and apprehension a Spanish brigantine of war standing up the river under easy sail, with the gay colours of Spain

unfolded, and proudly flying above her decks. Before they could interchange glances of surprise and consternation with each other at this hostile spectacle, which, though anticipated, was not now viewed without emotion, another vessel hove in sight from behind the southern turret of the Alaméda, with the same royal ensign flashing in the sun that marked the nation of the first; then came, not twice her length behind, a light−rigged schooner, with slender masts like pencils, and with the gliding motion of a swan, slowly followed, one after the other, by three gunboats, each moving steadily onward under the pressure of a clumsy latteen sail. The level beams of the setting sun, already broken by the irregular outlines of the forest into which it was sinking, were gilding sail and streaming pennant, flashing back from a thousand points of steel on their decks, and exhibiting to the eyes of the citizens their dark sides bristling with guns and lined with armed men. After passing a little farther up the river, in full view of every foreboding eye, at a signal from the leading vessel, the whole squadron rounded to and dropped anchor opposite the governor's palace, with its broadsides bearing upon the town.

## CHAPTER III. SCENE IN THE COUNCIL−CHAMBER.

These hostile proceedings had been watched in silence from the council−chamber up to this moment; but now the excitement and alarm became terrific. There was but one cry to be heard above all others, and this was for instant *surrender!* To increase the universal consternation, a boat filled with men, and bearing the Spanish flag at the stern, was seen to put off from the larger brigantine, and rapidly to approach the shore. At this crisis, those careful citizens who believed the preservation of their goods, families, and homes, as well as their own safety, depended on submission to the Spanish dominion, became convinced of the necessity of immediate action; and, resolving to give up the town at all hazards, they were prepared even to sacrifice their rulers, should such a step become necessary to effect their objects. Pressing back into the hall, they thronged the forum, and loudly called upon them to give up the city. In vain were the voices of the firm and loyal council raised to inspire them, even at this last hour, with a spirit of resistance.

"Surrender! Surrender!" was the response that sternly and menacingly met their words.

"Never!" cried the president of the council, in a loud voice, which was responded to, not less resolutely, by his colleagues.

"What hinders us, fellow−citizens, from dragging them down from their crimson cushions, and casting them into the dungeons of the Calaboose if they refuse?" cried the young creole with the crimson plume, in a tone as threatening as his language.

"Be it so!" firmly responded the undaunted president; "but never shall the province of Louisiana, or the fair name of France, be dishonoured while it is in our power to maintain either."

"Bear down the tyrannical burghers! Down with the false councillors! They count our blood as water! We will be our own judges in this matter!" cried the infuriated townsmen, pressing forward upon the steps of the forum.

Here, each man as firm as his chief, stood the city rulers, breasting, with a moral grandeur that could have been the effect only of the purest patriotism, the rage of their fellow−citizens, and ready even to make sacrifice of life in defence of the lofty position they had conscientiously assumed; for, by an unaccountable silence on the part of France towards the provincials in relation to their transfer, they had yet received no official intimation of it, and had no other ground to believe that such a cession had been made than what was implied in the haughty demand of Spain. Therefore, they resolutely and heroically determined to maintain the province and its capital until they should be formally commanded by France to surrender it to the Spaniard. In the midst of these outcries, several men, more bold or infuriated than their fellows, leaped upon the forum, and one of them violently laid his hand upon the breast of the president.

"What would you, citizens," he demanded, in an elevated but composed tone of voice, without attempting to resist his rude violence, "that you bay us like wolves? We but do our duty as your rulers!"

"Down with such rulers! We want no one to rule over us! Hurl them from the forum!" was shouted from one extremity of the hall to the other.

"Get possession of the keys," cried a short, swarthy creole, with a lurking eye like a snake's, and a forbidding countenance, in a voice that rose above every other in the crowd; "the Spaniard will receive these signs of submission from us as well from those gray−beards. Holla, Carra!" he continued, to the man who held the president in his grasp, "if they will not yield them quietly, take them by force."

"The keys! Seize the keys!" resounded from a thousand tongues; and the man who had been addressed by name released his hold to wrest them from his girdle, where, in anticipation of the demand for them, the resolute ruler had placed them for safe−keeping but a few moments before; but they were too securely attached to it by a chain of steel to yield to his extraordinary efforts to tear them away. As he was about to make use of harsher means to gain possession of them, the low, swart individual who had given the order to seize them, having with great exertions succeeded in forcing his way through the tumultuous throng, sprung like a lynx upon the forum. Then drawing a dagger, he cut the belt that held them with so free a hand, that the blood gushed forth from the side of the president, and, dying the keys with crimson, trickled freely to the ground. Instantly the arm that dealt the blow was seized with a grasp so strong, that the reeking weapon dropped from the unnerved fingers to his feet.

"Assassin! would you slay the old man?" demanded, at the same time, a voice of mingled indignation and horror, as the other staggered backward with the force with which the speaker hurled him from him.

"Ha, Quadroon!" he cried, fixing upon him a glance of deadly hostility; "thou shalt die for this!" The individual addressed, who was distinguished by a gray capote negligently dropping from his left shoulder, steadily met for an instant his vindictive gaze; and then, without replying, save by a slightly contemptuous curl of his lip, turned to the wounded president, and asked, with sympathy as tender as his indignation at the act of the assassin had been stern,

"Thou art not much hurt, I trust, venerable sir?"

"No, Renault! no, boy! It might have been a deeper cut but for my stout leathern belt; for it was given with a good will and ready hand. As it is, 'tis a mere needle scratch."

"I will support thee, councillor!"

"Nay, good Renault, I need not thy arm. See, thou hast already incurred their wrath. Take heed to thyself, rather. Hear their cries! Will not even the blood of their president appease their ferocity?"

"Give them the keys, father," said the young man, as the cries for them grew louder and fiercer. "It is in vain to attempt to withstand this tornado of human passion. Ha, Rascas, that blow was not so steadily aimed as thy first one!" he cried, arresting an uplifted dagger in the grasp of the revengeful creole who had wounded the president; "an old man's breast is a better mark for thee than a young one's, who has an eye to make thine quail and an arm quick enough to turn aside a dagger from his heart!"

As he spoke, he cast at his feet, for the second time, the stiletto that before had been evidently aimed at the president's life under the mask of securing the keys; and the foiled assassin, maddened with rage and disappointment, with a vow of fearful vengeance upon his tongue, leaped from the forum and disappeared among the crowd.

"Thou hast, in defending me, placed thy life in peril, brave Renault," said the president; "leave me, lest your blood be on my head!"

"Heed me not, venerable sir! Hear! they still demand the keys of the Government House and treasury! Thou canst no longer defend them but with madness! Give them up, sir; save thy life and those of thy colleagues, who, not less firm than thyself, will nevertheless yield if thou dost!"

"Be it so, Renault," answered the president, with emotion; "the time has at length come for gray hairs to learn wisdom from youth, and councillors to be led by the son of a bondwoman. Nay, Renault, I would not offend thee by my words! It shall be as these madmen wish, who, if they may be suffered to hold their household goods in peace, are content to become base servitors in the halls of the Spaniards. I would rather my own wealthy bazar should be despoiled, my own dear fireside made desolate by the Castilian invader, and myself left without roof or rood, than consent voluntarily to this degrading submission. But be it as they cry out! Yet first I will return my staff and seal of office to those from whom I derived them. Behold, ye Orleannois!" he cried, stretching forth his arms to command their attention.

Then, solemnly taking from his hand his magisterial signet−ring, on which were cut the arms of France, he cast it into the midst of the people, disrobed himself of his black gown, and broke in two pieces across the railings of the forum his snow−white baton, which was sprinkled with his own blood. Casting them on the ground, he trampled them, with his robe, beneath his feet, and continued,

"Behold, *thus* do I dissolve the provincial council of which ye are no longer worthy, and solemnly extinguish my office. Those crimson stains on ring and baton do bear honourable witness that your council have well maintained the honour of their city. That council has now ceased to exist, and you are free to fasten the yoke of Spain upon each others' necks. Witness all of ye! that we pronounce ourselves clear of this act of submission, and do wash our hands of it before ye all. There lie the keys of your city at my feet! Let him who is the basest slave among ye lift them! Heaven grant, the dishonour that will have come to them this day be washed away by the honest blood with which they are stained!"

There was a moment of irresolution at these words on the part of those who crowded the forum, no man present desiring to obtain possession of the keys at the expense of the personal odium his words conveyed. But the inaction was not of long duration; for an extraordinary−looking being, accoutred in a motley garb of many colours, and wearing a fantastic, high−crowned red cap upon his head, his broad, farcical face expressing mingled cunning and idiocy, leaped like a cat from the embrasure of the window above the forum, whence he had been

hitherto delightedly surveying the exciting scene beneath, and lighted upon his feet in the midst.

"*Bon diable!*" he cried, in a singularly hoarse, grating voice, "shall we fear to touch the jinglers, gossips, now old white pow has done with 'um?"

"Lift them, Gobin! lift them!" cried those around him, as if his presence had suddenly relieved them from an unenenviable responsibility.

"Gobin's got the state−ring," he said, holding up his fore finger, and exhibiting the broad carnelion signet which the governor had cast away, and of which he had unaccountably possessed himself; "make me governor till the black Don comes to land, and I will take up the keys!"

"*Vive* Governor Gobin! bravo, motley!" shouted the multitude, between jest and earnest.

With a hoarse shriek of laughter he acknowledged their assent, and, snatching the massive keys from the floor, held them up for an instant before all eyes, and then shook them, with idiotic glee, triumphantly in the air. At this act, deafening cries of "*Vive* Gobin! *Vive* the new governor!" filled the hall, amid which the idiot or jester, for his character seemed not to be accurately defined, attached them nimbly to the longest fragment of the broken baton, arranged his grotesque person in the cast−off robe of the president, and, lifting the staff high in his hand, bounded from the forum upon the level shoulders of the crowd.

With loud hurrahs, and cries of "Bear him to the Spaniard!" the multitude carried him above their heads through the midst of the hall towards the door, that they might, without farther delay, as evening was rapidly approaching, lay the tokens of their submission at the feet of the Spanish governor. Before, however, they could reach the outlet of the councilroom, intelligence came that the boat they had seen put off from the brigantine had touched the shore, and landed two Spanish cavaliers, with a small party of soldiers, who at that moment were together advancing across the Alaméda towards the council−hall.

This announcement of the immediate presence of their new masters had the effect of sobering, in a degree, the agitated temper of the multitude; and cool reflection on the position in which they had placed themselves in relation to the Spaniards, took place of the excited feelings by which they had hitherto been governed. The power that they so fiercely had sought, now that it was in their possession, they trembled to make use of; and, as the moment for transferring their allegiance to Spain approached, many of those who, a brief while before, were the most violent for this abject step, now felt returning patriotism, and were ready, had it not been too late, to stand by the councillors, and cheerfully aid them in maintaining the town. This feeling of degradation was mingled with a certain kind of shame, when their eyes rested on the grotesque figure and grinning visage of their mockgovernor, who, they keenly felt, was now their only head until the possession of the Spaniard; and those who immediately supported him on their shoulders, beginning also to entertain some not very flattering notions of the pageant they were acting, would have let him down bodily to the ground. But, divining their purpose, the obstinate dignitary clung to their necks, with his long, pliant feet, like a monkey, and, rapping them over the head with his baton, bade them uphold their lord and governor on peril of a broken sconce.

A retreating movement of the throng about the entrance, such as subjects make when their masters walk among them—for so early did the townsmen begin to manifest the cringing spirit of subjection—now caused every anxious eye to turn in expectation and with feverish curiosity towards that quarter. Amid the momentary deep silence that at once settled over the multitude was heard a rattling of swords, spurs, and armour, and the heavy tread of soldiers approaching through the paved corridor. In an instant afterward there appeared in the doorway two Spanish cavaliers, attended by a trumpeter and a guard of halberdiers. The eldest of the two, whose locks were just touched with silver where they had escaped from beneath his helmet, was a handsome, bold−looking gentleman, richly attired and gay with diamonds, chains, and nodding plumes, with a stout sword at his side and pistols in his belt; while the younger, whose years could not have exceeded twenty−two, wore a plain undress of blue cloth and an unornamented cap of the same colour, and carried at his side only a slight small−sword in a highly−polished steel sheath. But the plainness of his attire served rather to display than obscure a form and face which seemed to have been moulded to present to every eye the perfection of manly beauty.

They paused a moment on the threshold, and surveyed with astonishment the disorganized multitude which their eyes encountered, in the place of the orderly body of submissive councilmen they had expected to meet, ready to tender them, on bended knees, the keys of the city.

For an instant they appeared to be overcome with surprise; but, as if readily appreciating the cause of so

singular a scene, they advanced boldly into the chamber, as far as the lane opened for them by the submissive and awed townsmen would permit, and then looked towards the forum as if to discover a head to the multitude. But, seeing it also occupied by the crowd, the eldest demanded, in a high and haughty tone, who were the chief men of the province. There was no response; for mingled fear and shame kept the people silent; while one or two bared daggers displayed in the hands of those near him, and the menacing looks of others, intimidated the jester, who, waving his baton aloft, was on the eve of making answer himself to the demand.

"Have ye no ears? or do your tongues refuse their office?" said the cavalier, with irony; "where hide your rulers, that they do not appear and tender their submission to Spain?" he demanded, casting a stern and inquiring glance around upon them.

Every face was involuntarily turned towards the forum, where, nearly hidden by the throng, stood, in grave silence, the president with his council; and loud cries of "Give back, citizens, let them be seen!" at once placed them in view before the retiring crowd, and enabled the glance of the Spaniard, thither also directed by theirs, to rest for the first time on this dignified body.

"Ha! well discovered, signors!" he said, on recognising their late official character by the black gowns they had not, like their chief, yet thrown aside. "By the mass! we owe you little courtesy for the grace of our reception. But let that pass! we shall have time and occasion to better your manners when we shall have settled the government. I come now to receive your submission. Methinks, the sun being down, it should be ready. So, give your attention, and hear! In the name of his Catholic majesty, Carlos III., king of Spain, I, Louis Garcilaso, do demand the surrender, presently, of this province of Louisiana, to his just rule and right; El Excmo, Señor Conde de Osma, grande de Espana de primera clase, gentilhombre de Camara de S. M. con exercicio, &c., being appointed governor thereof!"

"Sir Spaniard," answered the president, with quiet dignity of manner, but not without evincing in the tones of his voice some mortified feeling, "in us you address but the semblance of power! The provincial council is dissolved, and its authority returned to the people who gave it. They will themselves confer with you, and doubtless will do it through the agency of yonder excellent personage, whom, with more justice than they are conscious of, they have invested with our late honours and authority."

The Spaniard's eyes followed the glance of the sarcastic speaker towards a quarter of the council−chamber where, hitherto concealed from his view by a massive column that intervened, as well as by the obscurity into which the twilight had cast that part of the hall, was the jester elevated above the heads of the crowd, and holding aloft proudly, and, seemingly to himself, with great dignity, the broken baton, with the state keys dangling from its extremity. For a few seconds the astonished gaze of the Spaniard continued to be riveted on the remarkable object it had so unexpectedly encountered. Gobin no sooner saw that he was regarded, than he made some attempts to arrange the folds of the black robe about his parti−coloured person, settled his peaked cap more firmly on his head, and, making a prefatory jingling of his keys, cried out, in a loud voice,

"Gramercy, brother Spaniard! We give thee peace and welcome, thou and the rogues at thy back! albeit we have a mind not to treat with thee, inasmuch as thou hast but now discovered our august presence. Approach and kneel, cap in hand, before us, and, peradventure, it may be, we will graciously look over this offence!" Thus speaking, he flourished his keys in the air, and rapped smartly his supporters over the shoulders for endangering his equilibrium while he was in the midst of his luminous address.

The Spaniard's brow darkened, and his eyes flashed fire, while his young companion smiled with humour at this ludicrous turn of the negotiation.

"Are we mocked?" he cried, in a voice that rung through the vaulted hall.

"Gently, sweet cousin! Be not ireful, lest it hinder digestion! We will have nothing eaten in our realm that is not like to be well digested; nor will we let any man be choleric. Fair and softly, brother! Gobin the First reigneth here! Lo! I am governor! in token whereof, behold the keys of state, my silken gown and baton!"

"What means this mad mummery?" demanded the cavalier, looking first with stern inquiry at the president, and then round at the multitude.

"It being resolved, doth mean, that I am Gobin the First," said the jester, instantly answering for himself, "being governor, council, and jester of this mighty realm, which before had never governor with merit, council with wisdom, nor jester with folly. Fear and tremble."

"So, we are made a jest of, slaves!" shouted the insulted cavalier; and, drawing his sword, he laid the flat sides

of it with more good−will than gentleness on the shoulders of those who stood between him and the object of his indignation, and quickly opened a passage towards him. As he approached, the jester began to jingle the keys merrily, and, reckless of the consequences, amused himself by encouraging with his voice the fiery Spaniard in his attempts to reach him.

"Bravely laid on, brother Don! Give Jean Rascas another thwack in his ribs, for he hath put a poniard aneath the ribs of a better man than thou, and, besides, he hid a peascod in grandam's shoe last Michaelmas, and it gave her the rheumatiz. Bravo! good cavalier, prick that Pierre Lecat with the sharp end also, brother, for he stole my red cock's feather to make a weathercock for the town lamp−post. Stir 'um up, cousin! Pummel 'um well! Bravo! thou didst make gouty pére Brissot skip then quicker than he hath done for a twenty year. Gad! devil a podagratoe will be left in the church, if thou hast the stirring of 'um up, brother Spaniard! Ah, knaves, but you are letting me a−down! Courage, *mes enfans!* Let not your governor down to the common level! Ye are the pillars of my empire! my chair of state! the supporters of my throne! Bear up stoutly! for how, if you let me a−down, shall I receive with proper dignity this valiant ambassador of my cousin Don Carlos! Nay, then, brother don, and most puissant plenipotentiary, harm not the fleshy pillars of the state—the upbearers of all the honour that remaineth in the province and—"

Here, deserted by his terrified bearers, who, desirous of consulting their own safety, fled as the Spaniard, goaded to madness by the words of the clown, effected an opening through the crowd to within a few feet of the spot where they stood, Gobin the First toppled from his elevation towards the ground; but, ere he touched the earth, where his foe the next instant would have placed his foot upon his body, he arrested his fall by fastening himself with wonderful activity upon the backs of those nearest, and in an instant recovered his previous elevation. Then, skipping lightly from one man's head and shoulders to another's, he reached the forum. Here, finding himself beyond the present vengeance of his pursuer, he laughed shriekingly, and jingled his keys with exulting delight. The baffled Spaniard stood for an instant on the spot so recently deserted by the wily idiot, looking after him, as he was effecting his singular escape, with an expression of doubt and irresolution, which he, however, speedily put an end to by deliberately drawing from his belt a long, slender pistolet, cocking and levelling it as if about to fire.

"Nay, nay! He is a fool—a natural! Do the creature no harm!" came from all parts of the hall; while the idiot himself, with the vacillating and volatile temper of his kind, emitting a fearful cry of mortal terror, crouched down among the councillors, and covered his face with his hands.

The Spaniard quickly withdrew his finger from the trigger, and, with a smile, replacing the weapon, said, half aloud to himself, "By my knighthood! verily am I an ass that I did not guess as much. In absence of wiser governors, I will needs treat with this fool, who appeareth to be the only one that hath the possession of his senses. If he deliver me the keys, with the approbation of his subjects here, it will be a surrender that will satisfy Ramarez—though, by the rood! he would (if the council give them not into his hands) that they should come to him through those of a fair creole rather. "Come hither, merry fool," he added, addressing him in an encouraging tone; "I will not harm thee. Here is a trinket for thy red cap that will out−jingle thy steel keys!"

As he spoke, the good−humoured cavalier, whose wrath had become appeased as suddenly as it had been roused by what he believed to be a prepared insult to his dignity and the demand of Spain, held up to his view a silver chain, composed of numerous links of little globular bells, such as the Arragonese cavaliers were wont to suspend from their guitars when serenading their ladye−loves. As he moved it carelessly in his fingers, it gave out silvery sounds that charmed every ear with their sweetness. The terrified Gobin removed his hands from his eyes, and looked incredulously, and with a glance of suspicion, upon the Spaniard and his tempting offer. At length, encouraged by the tones of his voice, and the glitter and wondrous melody of the bawble, he gained confidence, and—but without venturing from the shelter of the protecting robes of the councillors—cried,

"Wilt give it to me, brother Spaniard?"

"It shall be thine for the keys, good fool."

"And that long pistolet, good brother, again?"

"It shall not hurt thee. Nay, henceforth we are to be friends."

"Wilt thou not let Jean Rascas buffet me hither and thither, then, at his will, valiant gossip?"

"Nay, he shall not hurt thee. Come and receive the chain for thy keys."

"Wilt be my champion when I am beset, and break heads for me, gossip steel−cap?"

"Ay, good fool, and ribs too, an' it suit thy humour."

"Good, cousin! I will come to thee."

He was about to spring from the forum into the midst of the crowd, when, as if losing confidence, he again drew back among the magistrates, saying, with a shrewd, expressive smile upon his broad features,

"In the multitude of councillors there is safety, good brother of Spain!"

"Nay, Gobin, they are no longer rulers! Behold, here, verily are the multitude of councillors," said the Spaniard, looking round upon the assembled crowd with a glance of slight contempt.

"Gramercy for thee, long sword! Thou hast spoken truth!"

"Then quit them, wise fool!"

"Thou hast well said `wise fool!' My folly would make me put my neck in reach o' thy sword for that tinkling chain, whereas my wisdom keepeth me here in safety. Wisdom causeth me to lose my chain, so that my folly cause me not to lose my head!"

"I'faith, thou art both logical and wise, fool," answered the cavalier.

"Marry, then, gossip, I'll tell thee a secret! 'Twas the weight o' logic that cracked my brain, and folly jumped in at the hole. Wisdom hath patched it up o' the outside, but, as thou see'st, has made but sorry work at it."

"By the rood! thou art a merry jackanapes! I will make thee my page; come hither."

"I will not, lest, when thou catchest me, thou beat me, anon, for old scores."

"I will not lift a finger to thee, by my troth! But it waxeth late apace, and I may not parley with thee longer, fool."

"Call me governor, and I will come to thee, gossip," said Gobin, advancing. Thus speaking, he came forward from his shelter to the verge of the forum, and, grotesquely assuming the dignity of the station with which he had been so singularly invested, said, "Nay, again — but thou shalt come to me! So! advance, brother of Spain. I am ready to treat with thee, but—" he added, with wily care for his own personal interests, "do thou not forget to give me the bells!"

"They shall be thine," said the Spaniard, amused at the diplomatic cunning evinced by his brother potentate. Then, commanding his guard of halberdiers to advance, and being joined by the handsome young Spaniard who hitherto had taken no part in the scene, he approached the forum through the dividing crowd, when, coming into the immediate presence of the jester, he adroitly chimed in with his extravagant humour, and with gravity made him a profound obeisance.

"Most high and might signor, Gobin the First, governor with merit, councillor with wisdom, and jester with folly! We, poor subjects of Spain, do pay thee homage as becometh us on bended knee!"

"Rise, brother Spain!" said Gobin, reaching forth his hand to raise him up.

"Nay, good Signor Gobin, not till thou hast given me the keys! Ha, buffoon! what royal signet hast thou on thy finger?" he instantly demanded, springing to his feet as the broad seal−ring for the first time caught his eye.

"It is the state signet, brother. Marry come up! am I not governor?"

"It cannot be!" exclaimed the Spaniard, looking inquiringly at the president of the council, who, with a countenance between sadness and indignation, stood not far from him.

The affirmative was too plainly expressed in the peculiar smile that passed over the president's features to require words.

"By mine honour! but this mummery hath had deeper meaning in the people's hearts than it shows upon the surface!" he cried, in a voice that startled every ear, and drove the blood quicker through the veins.

He gazed sternly round upon the multitude as he spoke, and then directed his glances suspiciously upon the body of councillors, while his looks implied a determination of revenge that should measure the offence. He believed now, that, in mockery and contempt of the Spaniards, the citizens, in conjunction with their councillors, seeing longer resistance would be fruitless, had chosen to express their bitter feelings at their compulsory surrender in a shape that, while it served to cover the humiliation of a formal submission, evinced their scorn for their new masters. Without betraying his suspicions in the fiery words that leaped to his lips, he suppressed his emotions for a more suitable time, and said to the jester in a dignified tone, from which all trifling had vanished,

"You have indeed power to treat with me, poor fool! Take this bawble in token of my sincerity, and of my protection if you should e'er chance to need it."

As he spoke, he cast the chain of musical bells over his head, and in turn received from the intimidated yet

delighted jester the state keys and seal. Holding them up to their view, he then demanded of the president and council if they were the same which they had resigned with their office.

"The same!" answered the president.

"Enough," said the Spaniard, sternly.

Then, turning round to the multitude before him, which was composed of nearly the whole body of the citizens, and holding them up also to their eyes, he cried, so that his voice reached the utmost extremity of the hall, and was heard even in the *Plaza* without,

"Do ye acknowledge these keys and this signet to be the signs of your government and the token of your submission?"

A thousand tongues replied, as the tongue of one man, in the affirmative.

"It is well! ye have sanctioned with your voices this act of your governor!"

"We have no governor!" cried many in the throng.

"You will have one ere the morrow's sun set," was the stern and menacing reply of the cavalier. "I ask, do ye sanction this surrender of the signs of authority which you have now witnessed, and acknowledge yourselves, henceforth, loyal and obedient subjects of Spain?"

A low, deep murmur of reluctant assent ran through the assembly; but a few young men in the corridor, ringing their swords upon the pavement, fiercely cried,

"No! Spaniard, no!"

Without regarding these words of hostile dissent, he placed the signet ring and keys upon his sword, held them up in the sight of every one, and cried, "*Viva* Spain and Don Carlos! In the name of his Catholic majesty, Carlos III., king of Spain and the Indies, I do herewith receive the submission, and take formal and solemn possession, of this city and isle of Orleans and territory of Louisiana. God and Spain."

"God and Spain!" enthusiastically repeated the youthful cavalier by his side; "God and Spain!" responded the halberdiers, clashing their battle−axes together; the trumpets sounded a loud and triumphant peal; "*Vive* Spain! *Vive* Don Carlos!" filled the air from the fickle multitude, both in the hall and without, while the thunder of answering artillery from the Spanish artillery shook the capital to its base, and sealed the subjection of the province.

## CHAPTER IV. SCENE IN THE PLACE D'ARMES.

The shadows of evening had fallen over the town, and a moonlit twilight was already mingled with the sunset, ere the Spaniard turned to leave the council−chamber, bearing away with him, upon his sword, the signs of submission, of which, in so extraordinary a manner, he had possessed himself. As he retired from the forum, the crowd gave back in silence before the advance of his stout men−at−arms, and, passing through their midst, he reached the door leading out into the corridor without molestation; though here and there a half−smothered execration from some about the entrance promised that the power alone was wanting to create a reaction in the multitude fearful to contemplate. Some such thoughts seemed to pass through the mind of the cavalier, for he hastened his steps; and, as he approached the door, gave an order or two in a low tone to his halberdiers, who immediately formed around him and his young companion, with their glittering halberds in their hands, presenting to the multitude an equal front on every side. The broad staircase that led from the corridor down to the wide portal opening into the *Plaza*, or governor's square, by which they had ascended to the council−chamber, they found so densely thronged with citizens, who showed no disposition to retire, and so obscured by the approaching night, that their progress became sensibly slower, and, as the Spaniard thought, more unnecessarily hindered by the pressing of the townsmen than it had been in the hall. This suspicion became confirmed while they were descending the staircase, and, before they had reached the foot of it, they found themselves rudely borne against with such manifestly hostile purposes by the sullen populace, that they could no longer doubt their intentions; more especially when they called to mind that the portion of the townspeople thronging the corridor had given no answering cry for Spain, and that from their quarter proceeded the murmurs of dissent and hostility that had reached their ears.

"Methinks we are beset, signor," said the elder, in an under tone, to his companion.

"We are doubtless involved in the opposite faction, that holds to the councillors," replied the other.

"Nay, it seems to me to be rather the party that cry neither France nor Spain—the adherents of yonder tall gallant in the portal with the red plume. They constitute but a fraction of the populace, and are mostly youths; but they appear, every one of them, to have gathered here to oppose us. By the good rood! I could wish thou hadst been in Spain ere thou hadst put foot on shore with me, signor!"

"Heed me not, Garcilaso. At least thou wilt not be alone in this strait. But they will not dare offer violence in the very mouths of our cannon!"

"They seem likely to do so. But if we get once on the outside, we can give them play. If these pent fires break out while we are within, our blood will have to quench them. In Heaven's name! they must not set upon us in the house!"

"Hark, Garcilaso, to those cries without!" exclaimed the younger. "Halberdiers, be firm, and press steadily through the portal!" he instantly added, in a cool, determined voice, but little raised above his natural tone.

The shouts he spoke of proceeded from a few voices beyond the threshold in the open air, and seemed to be made for the purpose of ascertaining, at this crisis, the popular feeling; but so determined were they in their tone, and so evidently aiming at violence, that the highest degree of precaution was called for on the part of the small party; and, as the danger rose, the two Spanish cavaliers showed no want of coolness and steadiness of nerve to meet it. As they proceeded towards the outer door, the cries were more decided, and the shouts of

"Death to the Spaniard!"

"No Spain!"

"*Vive la liberté!*" left them no room for mistaking the temper of the people.

"Methinks our tokens of authority avail us little," he added to the younger, smiling; and removing, at the same time, the signet ring and key from his sword, he hid the latter in his breast and placed the former upon his finger; then, grasping his weapon like a man who intends to do service with it, he cried,

"Advance your halberds and press right on, my men! If any oppose you, cut them down!"

"Hear them, citizens! They would shed your blood like water!" cried the tall leader, conspicuous by his crimson plume, as well as by his height, among a score or two of young men who surrounded him, leaning with seeming indifference, which their restless eyes contradicted, upon bright, slender swords of extraordinary length,

with which they were all armed; each having also a crimson badge attached to the low crown of his flapping chapeau. "It is not yet too late to save the city and province from the hand of Ramarez and his minions! They have not possession. Rally around me, and I will free you from this Spanish yoke ere it is yet riveted! Let us make them prisoners, and defy both Spain and France; ay, and the tyrannical council who would hold the town, not for love of the town's honour, but to hold their own petty power, which, with the new government, they know would topple to the ground. To your homes, citizens, and gird on your swords, and we will a second time expel the Spaniards from the shores of Louisiana!"

"It is the young Sieur Caronde!" cried several voices around. "He would free us from Spain, and teach us disloyalty to France, to rule us himself with his wild friends! *Vive la belle France! vive Louis Quinze!*"

"No Louis! no France!" fiercely shouted the young creoles, clashing their glittering swords together menacingly.

For a few moments tumultuous cries from contending factions rose loudly on the night air. Amid the confusion and party excitement, the Spanish cavaliers, preceded by their stanch men−at−arms, succeeded in forcing their way through the portal, and into the midst of the small band with crimson badges and long strait swords that stood around it. Hitherto the Spaniards had been pressed upon and jostled only by the crowd, few of whom bore weapons, while most of them were satisfied with this method of showing their hostility, without resorting to one of a more sanguinary character. But they had now suddenly come upon a small but resolute band, led by a man who seemed fearless as he was reckless and daring, and which appeared to have waited patiently until the crowd had worried them to the portal before they took an active part in the scene; for no sooner did they issue beneath the arch, than, lifting their swords, on which they had been all the while negligently leaning (save when they clashed them once together to give energy to their declaration against France), the band threw themselves desperately upon the halberdiers, crying,

"A Caronde! a Caronde! No Spain! no Spain! Cut down the Spanish bloodhounds!"

"Let us place our backs to this wall, Garcilaso," said the younger cavalier, with the coolness of a veteran in scenes like the present, suiting the action to the word. "Spare not the sharp edges of your battle−axes, men−at−arms!" he added, as the tried halberdiers met with terrific sweeps of their ponderous weapons this sudden onset of the young men, shivering their steels like weapons of glass. Nevertheless, short daggers and stilettoes instantly took the places of the broken swords in their hands, and, like tigers thirsting for blood, the fierce creoles leaped within the strokes, which, if they had fallen, would have cloven them to the chine, and buried their knives in the breasts of the unwieldy soldiers ere they could ward off the sudden blow.

"Sound a rescue forthwith, Manuel, or the sharp knives of these knaves will soon let your wind out through your doublet!" said the elder, parrying successfully, as he spoke, a third thrust made at him by the leader of the party over the heads of the men−at−arms, whom he disdained to attack, and whose weapons he did not regard in his anxious wish to reach his more distinguished adversary. Once, also, the younger Spaniard had crossed blades with him over the fallen body of a halberdier, but another stepping in to fill up the gap, separated them almost as soon as they had met.

"Bravely dealt, halberds! Stand firm and receive them, but let no man leave the ranks. There swung a good stroke! Ha, that told better still! Fight cheerily! They will soon tire of this rough play. See, the populace take no part with them, and they are scarce thrice our number. Bear up a little longer; we shall soon have succour!" were the cool and inspiring words of the younger cavalier to his men, receiving and turning aside, all the while he was speak ing, deadly thrusts aimed at his breast by half a dozen active assailants, who hovered around him, endeavouring, between the descending strokes of the halberdiers, to take him at 'vantage, but in which they were ever foiled by his skill and coolness.

The attack, it was now apparent, was wholly made by the small party of creoles alone that had commenced it, who, so far from being aided by the crowd which, a few moments before, were so vociferous in crying out "Death to the Spaniard!" were deserted by their presence as soon as they saw them begin the assault, for which, loudly and fiercely as they had shouted, they were not altogether prepared. Few passes, therefore, had been interchanged, before the multitude began to retire from the ground on all sides, leaving a wide space for the combatants. When the cavaliers discovered that the populace were seized with fear, and, at the sound of the trumpet loudly winding "a rescue," were hurriedly deserting the *Plaza*, and pouring through the side streets to their homes, lest, as it seemed, their giving countenance to the affair should bring upon them the indignation they had sought to avert by

their submission, they left their position by the wall and put themselves at the head of the men−at−arms, made a sudden rush upon their assailants, and broke through them with irresistible force.

"Cut them down, Orleannois!" shouted the tall young chief to his adherents, as he confronted and crossed weapons with the elder Spanish cavalier. "Ha, Don Louis Garcilaso," he cried, with exultation, "we are well met!"

"Have at thee, swart creole!" answered Don Louis, in reply.

Their swords rung together, clashed, glittered in the moon, came together again, and the steel of the Spaniard was broken to the hilt. His antagonist would have run him through the body at this advantage, had not the younger Spaniard struck up his sword and wounded him in the shoulder. But, being instantly called upon to defend his own person, the creole leader succeeded in running Don Louis through the left arm ere he could use in his defence a sword he had snatched from the grasp of one of the foe whom he had slain with his own hand in the charge.

"They press us hard, signor! The villains have twice hit me! If you are saved, I am willing to die like a bullock under their long knives! Ha! there goes an answering gun from the brig! Ramarez will soon send succour to us, and then, by the rood! these knaves shall know what it is to assault a king's messenger. Bear up stoutly, my brave halberds! By the Cross! the noble fellows are falling fast around us! This hath become a serious matter! Let us charge them once more, my men! Swing your axes broadly, and hew your way!"

"Dios é Santiago!" shouted the younger, setting the example by leaping, sword in hand, among them.

"Dios é Santiago!" responded the few halberdiers that remained alive; for, out of fourteen men composing the guard, six had already fallen desperately wounded or dead, though not without avenging themselves upon a larger number of their assailants. "Dios é Santiago!" they replied, and their heavy weapons roared in the air as they swung them high above their heads ere they let them descend among their assailants, who, with a steadiness and ferocity of purpose that would not be diverted from its course, met them with courage equal to their own; and, with their long, needle−like swords, inflicted upon them desperate wounds, while, through their extraordinary activity, they were enabled to elude the descending battle−axes.

At length, like a pair of noble stags worried by hounds, the two cavaliers, with the loss of ten of their men−at−arms, succeeded in reaching a marble fountain in the midst of the square, where, with their backs placed against it, they once more made a stand for their lives. Hitherto it seemed to have been the sole determination of their assailants to slay the whole party, while the occasional cries of their chief showed that, next to bloodshed, their purpose was to recover the tokens of their submission. He now paused in the fight, his sword entangled with that of the elder Spaniard, and suddenly cried out, in a voice that expressed admiration for his courage,

"Brave Spaniard! surrender the signet, and I will withdraw my party!"

"Ha, Sieur Caronde, as methinks I heard men call thee, art thou tired of the fight? or does the quick sound of a hundred oars cleaving the water alarm you? By the rood, thou shalt have the signet affixed to thy death−warrant ere the sun rise!"

"It shall never be by thy hand, then," returned the other, disengaging his sword, and making a back stroke at his head, which, glancing from his helmet, wounded him slightly in the neck, at the same time that he cried, "Set upon them, citizens! Let them not bear off the signs of our disgraceful submission! Strike for Orleans and liberty! Let not Louisiana give herself up to Spain without dealing one good blow for her honour!" As he spoke, he made such fierce lunges at the cavalier, whom alone he had singled out through the whole fray, that he twice wounded him in the breast, while, regardless of himself, he was defending his younger companion, who, standing in the dark shadow cast by the fountain, was thrice nearly slain ere he could see and parry the thrusts of two young creoles who had set upon him.

"The vile bourgeois press us hard, Garcilaso!" he said, having, by this diversion in his favour, recovered his ground. "Santa Maria! brave man, you reel, and in this moonlight your face is white as the marble!"

"The villains have done for me, signor! This demon with the red feather has thrice put his sword aneath my ribs."

"You have given your life for mine, brave Garcilaso! Thy blood shall not flow unavenged! It is the signet he seeks. Deliver it into my charge, and they will let you rest while they worry me."

"No, Don Henrique, no! I feel better now! The dizziness hath passed. I will yet avenge myself in person on this fighting knight of the red plume."

"Nay, Garcilaso, I will have the signet."

"It shall not be, signor, while I have life to defend it."

"I will bear witness to thy valour, if thy wounds do not!" and, thus speaking, the young man suddenly drew the massive seal from the finger of his companion, and placed it on the fore finger of his own right hand.

"Knaves, behold what ye seek!" he cried, holding it so that the broad carnelion, reflecting the moonlight, glowed like a coal of fire. "Ha, Sir Creole! unless you love an old soldier's blood better than this blushing seal of your bondage, press this way with your sword! Ha! beware that assassin, Garcilaso!" he suddenly cried out, striking upward, as he spoke, a stiletto in the hands of the creole leader as it was glancing downward into the bosom of the elder Spaniard, who, having grasped his sword anew, was about to avenge his discomfiture. By this act, the young man laid open his own breast to the same steel, which, quicker than lightning, took a direction beneath his arm into his side, the hilt at the same time closing with such force against his chest as to cast him violently backward. He placed his hand quickly over the wound; his sword fell at his feet; and, with a groan of anguish, he swooned into the arms of his friend.

"You are not slain, signor!" cried the brave Don Louis, forgetful of the imminent peril of his own situation in his intense anxiety for the fate of the youth.

The lips of the young man moved inaudibly, and then were silent; while the weight of the body on his arm told that life was either suspended or had for ever departed.

"He is dead!" he said, mournfully; and for a moment his enemies seemed to respect his sorrow, for they paused around him, resting on their swords. "The flower of Spain—the rose of chivalry—the hope of Castile is dead! Don Garcilaso, it is time for thee to die! But I will fearfully avenge thee in my death, brave and noble youth," he cried, in bitterness of spirit; and, as tenderly as if he had been an infant, he laid the head of the senseless youth upon the verge of the marble basin of the fountain. Then, with the spirit of his words, he snatched a battle−axe from the grasp of one of the fallen halberdiers, and with the strength that grief and revenge lend to desperation, made a deadly assault upon the leader of the party, who had, as he believed, slain his young friend.

"If there be virtue in steel, demon, and strength to wield it for thy punishment, thou shalt bite the dust ere we part!" he shouted, springing towards him like an enraged lion.

In an instant the creole leader, who, with his own hand, had slain five of the halberdiers, that, one after the other, had placed themselves between him and their captain, drew back, but it was only to gather nerve for the encounter; for the next moment he bounded forward, and, ere the cavalier, unused to the ponderous weight of the battle−axe, and weakened by his wounds, could bring it down upon his head, he had closed with him, and seized the suspended arm containing the weapon while yet it was in the air, and held it there with a grasp like iron. Quicker than lightning he drew a stiletto from his sleeve, and aimed it at his exposed breast. The Spaniard saw the gleam of the sharp instrument as it flashed before his eyes, and, involuntarily closing them, gave his soul to Heaven, for death seemed inevitable and irresistible. But quicker, if possible, than the movement of the creole, were those of a third individual, suddenly appearing on the scene of contest, who, seizing his rapid arm as the point of the dagger pricked through the knight's vest, and holding it not less firmly than he himself held the elevated arm of the Spaniard, cried, with an exulting laugh,

"Ho, ho, gossip Jules! Gobin will not have cousin Spain hurt! Did I not treat with him, and did he not make a knee to Gobin! Nobody shall hurt a hair of his head!"

"Release your grasp, mischievous fool!" cried the creole, fiercely.

"If gossip will release his of brother Spain's arm," said the idiot, with a peal of singularly hoarse laughter.

"Villain! idiot! devil! unhand me!"

"Let brother Spain go!"

The creole suppressed a deep curse, and, with a sudden exertion of strength, pushed the Spaniard from him with such force that he reeled several steps ere he could recover himself, and with the same hand possessed himself of the dagger, held hitherto useless in that confined by the idiot.

"Die, as a fool dieth!" he cried, fiercely, aiming a blow with it at the heart of the jester.

Overcome with sudden fear at this change in their positions towards each other, the idiot stood paralysed, without attempting to save himself from the glancing steel, which was directed by an unerring hand towards his bosom. But at this instant an individual, hitherto unseen, with a single bound, cleared the space between the fountain and the creole, and, as the dagger was descending, severed, with a battle−axe he had caught up, the hand that held it close at the wrist, so that limb and weapon dropped together to the ground. With a groan of suffering,

and uttering, with an execration, the name of "Renault," the creole fell back fainting among his friends, while the stranger retired as suddenly as he had appeared. For an instant the contest was suspended by this event, and the Spaniard, on looking about him, was for the first time conscious that, of the fourteen halberdiers who, with the trumpeter, had attended him to the council−chamber, not one remained alive, all having fallen fighting, single−handed, with the numbers that pressed them. But, without reflecting upon this, he hastily retreated to the spot by the fountain, from which the fight had drawn him, where a moment before he had left the insensible and apparently lifeless body of the young Spaniard for the purpose of bearing it off, when, to his surprise, he found it gone, a stain of blood on the white marble alone marking the place where he had laid it. At this discovery he uttered an exclamation of grief; and, overpowered by his feelings, and weak from his many wounds, tottered against a projection of the fountain, and sunk down heavily to one knee, the keys at the same time falling from his bosom to the ground. In this condition his enemies saw him; and two or three of them espying the keys, quitted their chief, and ran towards him with shouts, levelling their swords as if to transfix him on the spot. The sight aroused him from the lethargy into which he was sinking; and, raising his battle−axe, he hurled it towards them with such force and steadiness of aim, that it sunk deep into the forehead of the foremost, and checked the advance of the others. He did not witness the effect of his blow; for, as the halberd left his hand, he fell over on his face to the earth. At this instant the barges of the Spaniards touched the shore; and with trumpets sounding the onset, and loud cries of "To the rescue! To the rescue!" they rapidly approached the scene of contest. The cavalier raised his head at the noise, and attempted to answer the cry, but his voice failed him; and faintly muttering "He will be avenged!" he again fell forward insensible.

## CHAPTER V. THE NIGHT LANDING.

Without waiting to receive their charge, the creoles instantly collected their party, which had greatly diminished in the fight, and, surrounding their wounded chief, sullenly retired, bearing him in their midst up the square towards the Cathedral. In the deep shadow of its tower stood a group of horses saddled and bridled, on which they threw themselves, still bearing their leader, and, galloping through the town, were soon lost to the eye and ear; while those partisans among the populace who had lingered behind to witness the conflict precipitately fled through the narrow streets, leaving the advancing Spaniards, who numbered about one hundred men, to take undisputed possession of the *Plaza*. It was with an exclamation of surprise and horror that the Spanish leader beheld, when he reached the fountain, the bodies of the halberdiers and creoles strewn about, clinching each other in the hostile embrace of death, showing how warmly, and at what expense of life, the sanguinary contest had been maintained by both parties.

"Here hath been massacre most foul!" he cried, as the ghastly forms of the slaughtered were exhibited to his eyes by the clear moonlight of the moon, which shone almost with the brightness of day upon the square; "not one remaineth! Sancta Maria, save us! If there lieth not Don Garcilaso, with his back against the marble where he hath fallen! Lift him, and see if he lives! By the cross of St. Andrew, this night's work hath hung half Orleans by the neck ere sunset to−morrow!"

"There is life in him, signor," answered one of the soldiers, "but he hath lost much blood."

"Bear him to the brigantine, that he may presently have the benefit of the skill of the chirurgeon. There, too, glitter the keys, for which, doubtless, he hath been assailed. Hand them hither, that I may take them to Ramarez, for they betoken the city's surrender. Don Henrique is missing too! Turn over every body on the square! if he be among them, the bourgeois of Orleans had best let in the river through their dikes, and die of honest suffocation, for they are sure to die, every mother's son of them, by the gallows' rope else. Osma will roar like a lion when he heareth this!"

After a long and rigorous search and inspection of the slain, the Spanish captain was compelled to believe that the younger cavalier, in whom such extraordinary interest had been manifested, had by some means escaped the fate of his party, and would, ere long, reappear in safety.

"He hath met with some fair creole that hath lured him from the fray," he said to one of his lieutenants; "for the youth liketh the glance of beauty's eye every jot as well as the flash of the foeman's steel. He doubtless hath done service enough for Mars in this broil, and now hath listed in that of Cupid. Yet he must not be left to seek romantic adventures alone in this hostile city, lest he fall by the knife of some assassin. We must despatch parties for his safety along the different streets. I would the count had come to land; for, as matters are, it were expedient to take possession of the city at once.

He had scarcely spoken, when the roar of cannon shook the ground on which they stood, and broadside after broadside thundered over the city from the Spanish ships.

"It is the signal of debarking; Ramarez hath decided on the very step. Now the saints intercede for these bourgeois. If Ramarez do not fire their city, and cast everything into the flames of it, the priest never christened me Martin Gusman!"

Amid the thunder of artillery, the roar of which was redoubled as it rolled along the night air, a flotilla of boats, swept by a hundred sparkling oars, left the fleet, and approached the town with a swift but stately movement. As it came nearer, there were distinctly visible on the foremost barges the forms of caparisoned steeds shining with steel and silver; and standing beside each, with foot in stirrup, was a horseman in steel helmet and cuirass. On the stem of the head−most barge stood three cavaliers in glittering armour, one of whom, distinguished less by his height than his haughty carriage, wore a dazzling helm almost buried in a cloud of sable feathers, while near him, a gigantic Ethiopian was holding by the bit his charger, not less sable in colour than his plumes. Beside him, with a hand lightly laid upon the mane of a snow−white Arabian, the bridle of which she held, was a beautiful female, clad in green Turkish trousers, an azure vest broidered with gold, and a light polished cap of steel upon her head, shaded by a tuft of ostrich plumes not less snowy than her steed. A golden belt that clasped her slight waist

contained a pair of pistols, and by her side, in a sheath of fine gold, hung a rapier, the hilt of which was studded with blazing diamonds.

When the barge touched the shore, she and the cavalier sprung upon the backs of their chargers, and together leaped to the land. They were instantly followed by the other cavaliers and the Moor, who took his place on one side of the female. In a moment afterward, bounding from the other barges as they successively touched the land, fifty horsemen were at their backs.

"Forward!" cried the chief, pointing with his sword in the direction of the fountain, which glittered in the midst of the *Plaza* like a pile of snow.

Like a cloud of war rolling over the shaking earth, the horsemen followed their fiery leader, and instantly were on the scene of the late affray.

"What is this that hath been done, Gusman?" he demanded, reining up near the Spanish captain, who stood with his men among the slain.

"It seems, signor, that Don Louis obtained the keys of the city by some means, and that, in bearing them away, he hath been desperately set upon. I found them here by his body."

"Nay, he is not slain?" said the Spaniard, sternly.

"Life hath weak hold on him, signor. He hath been hard beset! As for the fourteen men−at−arms of your own body−guard, here lie all that remains of them."

"But the—"

"Don Henrique is not among the slain," said the captain, anticipating the question of the cavalier.

"Hath search been made for him?"

"Most strict. He hath not fallen, or he would be found among them. No one would bear off a dead body."

"But they might a wounded! Perchance they have taken him prisoner."

"Nay, my lord, I think he hath become prisoner to beauty!"

"By the rood, I believe thou hast guessed it, shrewd Gusman; for report hath it, that there is much room for romance and adventure in this fair city; and the gallant hath a temper that way, like the father who begat him! We must not let him come to harm, if in truth he do live, of which I have misgivings. Men who would make such thorough work as I see around me are not likely to let even one escape."

"I think, sire," said the young girl who rode at his side, and who was very beautiful, "he hath been taken prisoner, or worse hath happened to him. I know well Don Henrique would not have deserted brave Garcilaso when danger assailed him, though every bright eye in Christendom were the recompense of his treachery."

"Not to mention thine own, Lil! But hist, girl! your zeal hath put a bold word into your mouth," said the Count of Osma, reprovingly; "yet I think with thee that he hath had foul treatment. Ride and marshal the troops as they land, Montejo," he added, to the cavalier on his right; "and you, fiery De Leon, detach from them parties of thirty men each, to penetrate the town and occupy the guardhouses. Gusman, I leave you to turn the cannon of yonder battery, and plant them at the head of each outlet, so that, if the bourgeois, who seem to be quiet enough now, are disposed to resistance, we can sweep them from their streets. By the honour of a Spanish knight I will unfold in the glory of this moonlight the standard of Spain, and the morning sun shall see it waving from every tower."

The aidesdecamp lifted their richly−laced hats and spurred away to obey the order, while Don Garcia, with a careless eye, began to survey the noble edifice of the hall of council, and the Cathedral, with its massive towers, flinging their black shadows half across the *Plaza* . The maiden, whose eye followed his, suddenly cried out,

"Ha, signors! that is not a cloud in the sky!"

"It is the flag of France!" cried the cavalier, discerning, as the wind turned it broadly to the moon, the ensign of France still waving on the summit of a tall flagstaff in front of the hall of council; for no citizen, however favourable he might be to the submission from motives of personal interest, was found base enough to strike it; and as Don Garcilaso had been too busy in fighting his way through the square to do it himself, it thus continued to wave far into the night proudly upon its elevation until now, when it arrested the eye of the Spanish governor. "Let yonder white cloth be dragged to the ground!" he cried; "I will take my breakfast off it in the morning. I have not forgotten the dishonour done to the Spanish flag on this very spot, and now will I wipe out the insult then offered to myself; as for this night's fresh work, I will make a settlement at my leisure with the burgher gentlemen. Tear the vile standard from its staff!" he cried, to a portly Aragonese riding near him, who combined

in his person the offices of herald and trumpeter, "and in its place, with sound of trumpet and roar of artillery, let the proud ensign of Spain be lifted. We will remain here and see it done!"

The herald unfolded the Spanish flag which he bore, and, loosening his trumpet, spurred towards the flagstaff, the foot of which, standing in the black shadow of the southern tower of the Cathedral, was lost in the gloom. An instant afterward there was heard in that quarter a clashing of swords and quick hostile cries, in the midst of which the ensign was seen to descend to the earth, like a huge white bird lighting upon it. Still the sounds of conflict continued growing each moment louder and more determined.

"There is more mischief on foot," cried the Count of Osma, riding towards the place whence the sounds proceeded.

Ere he was half way to the spot the noise of fighting ceased; when he had reached within a few yards of the flagstaff, a horseman, with a white mantle wrapped about his form and a crimson cloth cast over his steed, passed before him like the wind, and the next instant disappeared down a dark street, as if it had been a winged spirit. His first impulse was to follow in pursuit, foreboding something wrong; but, hearing the plaintive voice of his herald Boviedo, he continued on to the foot of the flagstaff, where, to his surprise, he saw this personage unhorsed and on his knees, bareheaded, and divested of his trumpet, who no sooner beheld him than he began with clasped hands to plead.

"For the blessed Virgin's sake, and for the sake of all the apostles, and for the sake of my poor wife and six little ones, slay me not, good horseman!"

"Slay thee! Thy wife and little ones! Man, thou wert never married! What mean these mouthed lies, and this condition I find thee in?" cried the governor, his surprise and anger tempered by the ludicrous emotions excited by the scene.

"It be thyself, then, noble count," cried the corpulent and sorely discomfited Boviedo, gaining his feet; "I am glad on't; I thought it had been that blanco diable who set upon me as I was riding up—"

"Silence, sirrah! Where is the French flag I saw but now descending to the ground?"

"When I came riding up, excellentissimo, there was a man or devil, I know not which, cutting at the cords with a drawn sword. I courageously charged upon him, when he turned him about and crossed blades with me. I called stoutly for help—"

"I'll be sworn thou didst."

"Nay, but we had a mortal combat for a space, and, if thou hadst been listening, thou wouldst have heard the iron blows I laid upon him with my good sword, like a sledge−hammer upon an anvil. I had nigh made a jelly of him, excellentissimo, when down came the white flag through the air, and, flapping before my horse, so frightened him, that, what with his huge plunges, I was thrown as thou seest. When I got to my feet, I beheld mine enemy flying through the air like a ghost with great red and white wings."

"Villanous compound of garlic and hot pepper, thy wits have fooled thee, or thou art a very knave! If thou hadst as much courage as abdomen, thou wouldst have saved the honour of Spain. Lying mess of pottage that thou art, thou hast been unhorsed and beaten, and he who did it hath escaped with the flag. I would have forgiven him had he slain thee too. Where is the Spanish ensign? By the immaculate Virgin! if thou hast let him bear that away too, for methinks he had its semblance thrown across his saddle, thou hadst better never been born!"

The poor herald made no reply; but, clasping the fore legs of the count's horse, looked up deprecatingly, the great grief that swelled his breast showing itself on his round merry visage, all unused to sorrow, with a drollery of expression that disarmed the fierce wrath of the knight.

"Go to, poor braggart! If I had not heard the clashing of the swords, I would cause my horse to trample thee to death where thou grovellest! Doubtless thou hast been unfairly taken at 'vantage by one bolder than thou! By the mass, he rode boldly for it! When thou hast won with thine own hand another horse from a bourgeois, I will, perchance, receive thee again. Till then, let me not see thy face!"

Thus speaking, the count released his steed from the grasp of the disgraced herald, and galloped rapidly away, venting his wrath, so suddenly averted from the legitimate object of it, in deeply−uttered words of vengeance upon those who, from beginning to end, had so daringly resisted his authority.

"Cheer up, fat gossip!" said a strange voice, as the knight rode off; "thou hast to thank thy belly for saving thy back; for, hadst thou had less stomach, thou wouldst have have had more wit; when, Gad o' mercy! the knight would ha' beat thee unconscionably. Thank Heaven thou art a fool, brother! and then get up from thy knees."

Don Boviedo, alarmed at the suddenness, and appalled by the singular hoarseness and depth of the voice, looked around him on all sides, while these words were addressed to him, in search of the speaker; but, seeing no one, and fancying the voice to come from the air, he became terrified, and, sticking to his knees, began to pray lustily to every saint in the calendar.

"Ha, Don Spaniolo, keep at thy prayers! for thou art a sinner! art thou not?" asked Gobin, who was perched fifteen feet above him on the flagstaff, to which place he had noiselessly descended from its lofty summit when the Count of Osma rode up. "Art thou not a sinner?"

"Yea, good Diabolus."

"A very sinner?" repeated Gobin, resolutely.

"Yea am I," answered the Don, penitently.

"Art thou not a rogue, Don Spaniolo?"

"That I am, a very rogue."

"A most arrant coward?"

"Ay, good Diabolus, and a villanous coward."

"Confess thyself the biggest liar in all Spain."

"Or in all this province too."

"Nay, I will not allow thee to lie better than I. Man, I will put one more question to thee; and see thou answer it roundly. Hast thou a rib o' the woman−kind?"

"Nay, good Diabolus, I have foresworn women since I was a boy no higher than my knee."

"Hast thou six small children?"

"Not a one."

"I heard thee say so but now."

"I lied."

"Marry come up! what a thing is cowardice to clean a sinner's conscience," soliloquized the jester, looking down upon his penitent. "Hear is a greasy rogue, because he thinketh the horned Sathanas is cat, echising him, makes clean work of it, and showeth himself black as the pot. If I put a few more questions to him, I shall so clear him out that it will then be a blessing to kill him, and send him to Heaven before he gets foul again. Lest I be tempted to do him this charity, I will not ask him another question that savours of purification. Come, gossip, get to thy feet, for thou hast ne'er a horse to get to! Look up; I am a sinner like thyself. I will not harm thee. If thou wantest lodging, I will give it thee!"

The Don took courage at his words; and, removing his hands from his face, looked in the direction of his voice, when, to his horror, he descried the jester, with one leg clasped around the pole, hanging with his head and hands downward. He was far from being reassured by this equivocal attitude of his new acquaintance, and was about to give way to his superstitious terror, when the *bouffon*, sliding swiftly down the staff to the ground, turned a somerset towards him, and placed his hand familiarly upon his bare head.

"Poor gossip! Gobin pities thee, and will not mock thee," he said, with singular feeling. "Gossip has lost his horse, his colours, and his master."

The poor Don groaned and hid his face, overcome with the events he had reminded him of. "Ay de mi! ay de mi!" he sighed.

"I will help thee to get a horse, gossip," said Gobin.

"Wilt thou?" he cried, clasping him in his embrace; and then, recoiling with an exclamation of horror at the singular visage and extraordinary costume of the idiot, he cried,

"Avoid thee, Sathanas!"

"I am but a poor fool," said Gobin, encouragingly, as if he had waywardly taken a kind and friendly interest in the unwieldy herald, of whose disgrace he had been a witness, if not in part the cause of it, as he evidently had borne a share in the disappearance of the two standards. The encouraging tones of his voice reassured him, and he asked eagerly,

"Wilt thou, good fool, aid me to win another horse?"

"That will I, brother Pauncho," he replied, assuming his usual extravagant manner, "and he shall have saddle, bridle, and pistolets! Come along, gossip!"

"Verily, I will go with thee, good, speckled youth, for I have none else to go with! Ay de mi! Boviedo, hast thou come to this?"

Thus lamenting and mourning, the sorrowful Aragonese suffered himself to be led away in the direction of an obscure street by his new friend, who ludicrously held him round the neck, and, as he went, breathed into his ear such jests as in his cracked brain he deemed best calculated to afford him consolation in his great sorrow.

The count, in riding back, found the troops already landed, to the number of two hundred and fifty mounted Leonese lances, and seven hundred footmen. His orders were then rapidly given and put into execution; and in half an hour afterward every guardhouse was occupied by his soldiers, and the government−house and hall of council surrounded by a select guard. Not a citizen, save the horseman the governor had met, had been seen in the streets, nor was a light now visible in any dwelling; and, after the resounding footsteps of the various detachments, as they marched along the streets, had ceased, there was a repose upon the city as deep as that upon some peaceful hamlet.

The horse, and five hundred of the foot that were not detached for the guardhouses bivouacked in the square, lying on their arms in groups around the fountain. Near it was also pitched a snow−white tent, with a bell−shaped canopy, richly bordered with broad silver lace, upon the tall summit of which floated in the breeze a Spanish standard, gayly displaying its brilliant hues in the light of the moon, which, from her shield of pearl, shed over the whole warlike scene that strange, dreamy beauty in which romance and mystery so love to wander and lose themselves.

## CHAPTER VI. THE WOUNDED CAVALIER.

The same golden moonlight that shone upon the marble fountain, snowy pavilion, and men and steeds picturesquely grouped on the *Plaza*, entered through a casement of one of those old *casas* that give to the ancient portion of New−Orleans the massive look of a Morisco town, and fell upon the tesselated pavement of a lofty apartment decorated with Oriental magnificence. On a divan or ottoman in the deep recess of the window, and nearly hidden in the shadow cast by the ample crimson curtains, the folds of which partly concealed it like a canopy, lay a youth in a profound sleep. Save the twilight from the moonbeams that, like an atmosphere of silver dust, floated through the room, all was buried in that misty, dreamy obscurity that is so pleasing to the senses. Through a partly−opened Venetian door at the extremity of the chamber, opposite to the casement, was seen a glimpse of the moonlit court of the mansion, filled with flowers, which loaded the air with fragrance, and a white column or two, just visible through the foliage of lemon and orange trees dropping with their golden fruit; while from an invisible fountain came the sound of water, falling on stone, refreshingly to the ear.

The ottoman on which the sleeper reposed had, from its position, evidently been drawn into the recess by some watchful guardian of his slumbers, to escape the moonbeams, while the rich Damascene hangings had been carefully arranged around it so as more effectually to shade the face. But the moon had travelled on through the sky, and now fell upon his forehead like light falling upon marble. It was as alabaster, save in the blue−tinted veins that the pencil of life had painted beneath the skin. About his temples, which throbbed with regular and even pulsation, as if sleep was working a restoration in his system, clustered rich chestnut hair, of the soft texture and of the silky, wavy character of a beautiful child's. It was luxuriantly long, after the fashion of the time, and lay in rich masses over the velvet cushion that pillowed his head. His face was pale, like his brow, but not of the deadly, wasting pallor of prolonged disease, but as if caused by sudden hurt in the midst of health and manly vigour, like one who has been stricken down with ball or steel. His features were of a noble cast, and were eminently handsome. The manly mould, however, in which they were shaped, on account of their extreme beauty, scarcely redeemed them from the softness of a lovely woman's, even aided as they were by the dark brown mustache on his upper lip, and a certain expression of decision impressed on the mouth. His complexion was of a clear olive, from which suffering had drawn the tint of health, leaving it now transparent and almost colourless save a faint flush, scarcely perceptible on the cheek, that might either proceed from returning life, or be reflected upon it from the crimson hangings. He was partly covered with a large creole manteau, which left exposed his breast and one arm, together with a hand of delicate whiteness and faultless symmetry, on the least finger of which glittered an immense diamond, like a glow−worm; while on the fore finger was conspicuous a massive ring, on the blood−red stone of which was engraved the crest of France. He was dressed in a plain blue coat, which was opened for his free breathing, and displayed within the bosom the finest Persian linen, bordered with lace from the best looms of Brussels. On a low divan near him lay a blue Andalusian cap, and a sword, with a hilt in the form of a cross, and heavy with precious stones, sheathed in a scabbard of polished steel.

Like an infant he slept, so easy was his posture, and so gentle and freely his breathing. Hitherto the pleasant sound of the falling water from the inner court had soothed rather than disturbed him, while his sleep had been too deep to be moved by the occasional warlike notes of a distant trumpet after the landing of the Count of Osma, the clattering of iron hoofs as horsemen were sent on messages through the streets, or by the heavy tramp of the armed bands that marched by to occupy the guardhouses. It was now within an hour of midnight; the city was in full possession of the Spaniards, and these martial sounds had ceased to awaken the echoes of night; and, save the distant calls of sentinels, no noise penetrated the casement. Suddenly the stillness of the apartment was broken by a light footfall, and a female figure appeared in the door that led from it into the cloistered court, and with a gentle step, hesitating, half−retreating, approached the sleeper. She saw, as she came near, that his repose continued unbroken, and with a noiseless movement of her arm was about to draw the curtain farther over the couch to shut out the moon; when some sudden impulse arrested her hand; and, bending over him, with the folds of the drapery held above him, she gazed long upon his fair countenance with admiration and sympathy. As she gazed she sighed, and in a voice of music touchingly plaintive, murmured,

"Such should the youth be whom my soul would obey and my heart love. But, alas! I am outcast and degraded, and can look on this noble brow only with dishonour. There remains no bridegroom for the doomed Quadroone but death; no bridal robe but the winding mantle of the grave!"

She sank on one knee upon a gorgeous mat beside the divan as she spoke, and, with a hand hidden in the clouds of raven tresses that fell over her bosom, bowed her head upon her rounded arm, that unconsciously rested on his couch, and seemed to be buried in deep and painful thought. In a few moments her head drooped upon her shoulder, and, gently sinking to the pavement, she reclined against the divan in deep sleep.

How deep must have been the rest of the spirit of the youth, to be unconscious of the presence of the gentle sleeper at his pillow! At length the bell from the Cathedral tower tolled the first stroke of midnight, in that deep−mouthed tone which is so impressive when heard in the stillness of night, as if Time himself spoke warningly in its solemn voice. Slowly and heavily rolled the successive volumes of sound along; now swelling high on the air, now sinking fainter and far distant to the ear, as the wind rose or fell, until the last stroke, wafted thither by the breeze, rung out clear and near, as if tolled close within the casement. It startled from his repose the deep sleeper, who had been mingling the chimes with a pleasant dream of Castile, and who, quickly raising himself on his arm, listened to the dying cadence of the sound as it grew fainter and fainter in the distance; but, ere it ceased, taking up the key, was heard the deep, sonorous voice of a sentinel repeating his night−call, answered afar off by another, cry answering cry, till silence once more reigned without and within. The young man listened in the same attitude for some moments, and then, with a perplexed look, pressed his hand to his brow and seemed to meditate. But gradually he allowed it to fall again, and to rest upon the manteau which covered him, shaking his head as if at fault, puzzled, and wholly unable to make clear to his mind his own identity. All at once the carnelion signet on his finger caught his eye. He started with pleasure at this key to his embarrassment, and comprehended instantly the circumstances which had preceded his loss of consciousness: at the same instant, he was made aware, by a sharp pain in his side, caused by the suddenness of his motion, of his being wounded.

"I have been hurt," were the thoughts that passed through his mind; "and some good Christian hath found me in a senseless state, and brought me hither!"

He looked about him, and surveyed with wonder the spacious apartment in which he found himself. Its rich and luxurious decorations of ivory, marble, and ebony; its hangings of damask, and divans of blue and crimson silk; and the velvet couch on which he was himself reclined, the moonbeams giving just sufficient light to enable him to discern these, and appreciate the Oriental elegance of everything around him—the beauty of the inner court, with its snow−white columns, its foliage and flowers; the fragrance of the lemon and citron trees that loaded the air; the clear ringing of the falling fountain, and the voice of a mocking−bird that at the moment filled the court with the melodious warbling which, in that pleasant southern land, he ever hails the midnight moon, all entranced his senses, and filled his heart with joy.

"If it were not for this ugly wound, which I now well remember how I received," he said, "I should believe I had fallen in the fray, and that this was Paradise to which I had awakened!"

His glance at the instant rested on a hand and arm like moulded pearl, laid upon the head of the ottoman. His heart leaped to his mouth, and the blood darted like lightning through his veins. He held his breath, and stilled the throbbing of his bosom as he gazed. Half in the moonlight, half in the shade, supported by her arm, with her face hidden in the abundance of her jetty hair that fell over it, reposed the most graceful form his imagination could pencil.

"Surely this is Paradise; and this is an Houri!" he exclaimed, as much in the tone of seriousness as in the accents of gallantry.

The beauteous vision had brought the bright colour to his cheek and the warmth of life to his brow; and, bending over her, he saw, by the rising and falling of her vesture, as well as by the relaxed and natural position of the limbs, that she slept. How beautiful was the attitude of the sleeper! The polished and shapely arm and dimpled hand, so faultless and finished in their symmetry, with a raven tress or two thrown upon it, contrasting its whiteness! What can compare with the glossy softness of those tresses, or the blackness of their hue! They concealed all her face and bosom like a veil, having escaped in their wantonness from a band of wrought silk that had been gracefully bound above her forehead. Her vesture was of the finest lawn, with large and loose sleeves, open at the neck and breast, embroidered with gold, and ornamented with little diamond buttons. She wore drawers of the finest linen, deeply bordered with lace, and around her waist, which was bewitchingly small and

elegantly turned, was tied a broad sash of silk and gold folded together, the ends of which, entwined with precious stones, hung long from behind in an exceedingly graceful manner to the knees. The hand that was free lay negligently in her lap, and the arm, like that beneath her head, was bare nearly to the shoulder; but, unlike that, it was clasped with a broad and solid gold bracelet set with rubies, while on the fingers of the hand were several small gold rings of delicate workmanship. Sleep, in her innocence, had permitted one foot and ancle to escape from her robe, and unconsciously display so much of the beautiful limb as betrayed the matchless perfection of her charming figure. Her slipper of golden tissue, curiously embroidered, had fallen off too, and a naked little foot, all warmth and beauty, and like a child's in its minute and soft proportions, caught the moonlight and finished the picture.

He gazed enchanted! He feared to move, to breathe, lest it should be a beautiful spirit that had watched his sleep, and he should frighten it away. But the whole form was breathing with life, and he knew it must be mortal. He laid his finger, as if to test its humanity, on the hand by his pillow, as gently as if it had been a timid dove he feared to startle from its rest, and the touch thrilled to his heart.

"She is mortal, and no creature of air!" he exclaimed. "Whither has my adventurous fortune wafted me? What beauteous being hath love commissioned to attend upon me? Before I have beheld her features, I am in love with that foot of pliant ivory, and charmed with the beauty that floats around her like a transparent cloud. If she wake not, I will lift that virgin veil of raven tresses that enviously hides a face which should be a match to, and, as it were, gloriously crown a form of such perfection."

He rose from the ottoman with the indolent motion occasioned by the lingering influences of a sleeping potion that had been administered to him, and with the unsteady but graceful step of one whose natural ease of manner is superior to physical suffering, noiselessly passed round her, as she slept with her face to the moon, and knelt beside her, his person hid within the shade of the hangings. For a moment he paused to contemplate her, and admired the glossy waves of hair profusely covering her arm and descending to the pavement, with here and there, like shells of pearl gleaming through the midnight waves of Indus, glimpses of her face and forehead.

"It were sacrilege," he said, "to lift this modest veil which sleep hath cast over her beauty. Yet it were discourtesy to Nature, who hath formed a thing so beauteous, to leave it shut up in a casket. I will dare the crime, if crime it be to gaze on beauty."

With a bold hand, but with a touch that would not have waked an infant, he removèd the raven tresses from before her face, and held the shining mass so as to shade the eyelids from the moon, for he would not have waked her at that moment for an empire. Her left cheek lay upon the arm in such a position as to show only one side of the face in outline; but it was the most perfect profile he had ever seen. From the forehead to the chin, the line of beauty was drawn with such grace and truth, that the intimate union of soul with feature was presented with a fidelity that mocked the imitative power of the pencil. He gazed on the fair low forehead, just enough retreating to give feminine dignity a place, and intellect its throne; on the jetty and finely−curved eyebrows, laid in minute lines, like the delicate vanes of a feather, themselves appearing like two sable feathers, twins in beauty and size; on the veined lids of the closed eyes, fringed with an interlacing of lashes, both love's palisades and battery, that swept the cheek; on the soft hue of that cheek, just shaded by the warmth of the glowing southern sun, that loves the olive rather than the lily; on the ripe lip, like a parted rosebud in which love lay covert; upon the sweet, yet sad expression of the mouth, left by her last melancholy thoughts, and which sleep had sealed there ere it fled; on the chaste, expressive beauty of the whole reposing countenance!— he gazed, and wondered that aught of earthly workmanship could be so perfect, that moulded earth which the breath of life hath warmed could prove so beautiful. To all these charms, which, as he gazed upon them, served to turn admiration into a softer emotion, was added extreme youth, scarce seventeen springs having served to unfold so fair a flower.

"By'r lady!" he said to himself, "this divine creature would grace a throne, and these brows would add lustre to a regal diadem! Were I emperor of Ind, methinks I would become a peasant most willingly for love of her. How calmly she slumbers! 'Tis thus only innocence and childhood rest. Innocence is written on each lineament; is part and parcel in the compound of her beauty; wanting which, it would lose its better principle. 'Tis to it what lustre is to the sun, fragrance to the rose, vision to the eye—'tis the heaven of her loveliness. I will maintain, and pledge my soul's bliss on it, that her cheek hath ne'er been touched by guilty lip! Nor will I profane its virgin purity, though the temptation had wellnigh but now overcome my better feelings. Nay, I will leave the cheek as pure as the envious moonbeam that, unconscious of the loveliness it shines upon, lies coldly on it. Yet she hath watched

my pillow, till, weary with her vigil, sleep has overtaken her. Methinks it will be no desecration to touch her cheek in gratitude. Nay, I will do it like a brother who salutes a sister who hath done him kindness. Ah, Don Henrique," he added, smiling, "thy arguments have little virtue at the bottom! Cupid is a lying logician, and hath filled thy heart with reasons which are against the sober judgment of thy head, and which will ill bear the test thy honour would try them by! 'Tis plain thou art in love, or on the verge on't, for none but love would teach thee sophistry so palpable, disguise foul wrong under semblance of right, and into heaven−born gratitude convert the impulses of earthly passion! Yet mine is not passion; 'tis love for the beautiful! If I should touch her lip, it would be sinless of thoughts or intent of wrong, as the worshipper devoutly doth kiss the shrine of his devotion. Nay, I will just press my lip to her hand; but if I were gently to kiss her cheek it were not more bold. I will do it so lightly that she will not wake; nay, will dream a fairy hath lit upon it!"

Thus reasoned Don Henrique with temptation, and thus do men argue with themselves when they would yield to what they have a will to do; outreasoning conscience till she hath not an argument left in her defence, and then, because she is silent, delude themselves with the belief that she approves. As the young Castilian made up his mind to yield to the temptation, he bent over the face of the fair sleeper with his bold lip. Suddenly a hand was laid lightly upon his shoulder. He started between guilty surprise and alarm, and, looking quickly up, saw suspended above his head a glittering stiletto ready to descend into his bosom, while bending over him was a young man wearing the rich habit of a chief of the *courreurs de bois*. He was rather under the middle height, slightly but elegantly formed, with the symmetry of limb of a young Apollo. His complexion was dark as an Italian's, and his hair was black, and hung in glossy masses about his bared and shapely neck. His features were lofty, and of an enthusiastic cast, and cut with the accuracy of finished sculpture, offering to the chisel of Praxiteles the model for a youthful warrior. They wore an ingenuous expression, while the soft lashes that shaded his eyes, notwithstanding the fire in them and the quick blood in his brown cheek, betrayed a diffident and retiring nature, and showed that to the bravery of a man he united the bashfulness of a maiden.

His dress consisted of a short spencer of green cloth, embroidered with myrtle leaves, the edges turned out with gold; buff boots of deer's hide, with ample tops, that came up to the calf of the leg, and then, falling over, descended to the ancles again, with a silver fringe bordering it, and most becomingly setting off the feet. An under−dress of the softest doeskin closely fitting the limb; an inner vest of blue silk laced with silver; buckskin hunting−gloves, that covered the whole wrist; a sable hat, with the broad flap looped boldly up in front, secured with a brilliant, and a dark green plume, that drooped low to his brows, with a sprig of green myrtle stuck in the button, completed the costume. He wore a short curved sword, in shape and size between a Turkish sabre and a rapier, with a plain iron hilt, suspended by steel chainlets from a belt of black leather, in which also were stuck a pair of pistols, the handles ornamented with lions' heads carved in silver, as was also the sheath of the stiletto that he held in his hand; while a small serpentine bugle of elegant workmanship, chased with devices, representing stags and hounds in full career, hung beneath his arm.

His attitude was rather warning than threatening as he bent over the young man, and reproof tempered the flashing fire of his eyes as he fixed them upon the handsome invalid's face, from which the blood, with which the sight of beauty had mantled it, had once more retreated, leaving it pale as when he slept; but the collected and steady gaze of his eyes, and the decision of his compressed lip, showed it was the paleness of sudden surprise rather than that of fear. For an instant the young man gazed down upon him as he knelt beneath his extended arm, and then, with a voice less in anger than in reproof, said,

"Is this honourable recompense, noble Spaniard, to sully the purity of a maiden's cheek who hath watched thy pillow till sleep hath overpowered her? with wanton lip to insult the sister beneath the brother's roof? Is it thus Castilian cavaliers repay deeds of hospitality?"

"Signor! by mine honour as a Spanish gentleman," said the youth, blushing with ingenuous shame at the deserved rebuke, and, struck with his manly language and noble self−restraint, experiencing, too, an instant admiration for him, notwithstanding his hostile attitude, "I had never meant wrong to this maiden. Waking from deep sleep, I found her slumbering by my couch, and scarce believed she was not an angel. I rose, knelt down by her side, and gazed enraptured on her marvellous beauty. As I gazed, I thought that with weary keeping of midnight vigil over my slumbers she had sunk to sleep; and, while I thought this, gratitude for her gentle service rose in my breast, and, rashly tempted by her loveliness, I mingled gratitude with worship; and with something of a brother's tenderness, but without a thought that would not have borne the Holy Virgin's scrutiny, I would have

kissed her as she slumbered. By my truth, fair sir, I have given thee the measure of my offence!"

The candour and openness of his defence, though it did not altogether demonstrate the entire propriety of the fraternal mode by which he had chosen to express his grateful sense of a maiden's kindness, at once changed the attitude of the two young men towards each other, and the interest the Spaniard had felt towards the youth was instantly reciprocated by his own bosom in return. Replacing in its scabbard the shining steel which a moment later would have penetrated the heart of his seemingly false guest, he extended his hand towards him with a frank smile, saying,

"I would fain believe I did thee wrong, signor, in suspecting thee of ill−requiting my hospitality. She is a Quadroone, signor, and I thought thou hadst presumed on this to offer her thy licentious love. But Azèlie shall die by a brother's hand ere she share the fate to which her degraded race is doomed! I am her brother; she is dearer to me than liberty or life; and he who dares insult her with lawless passion hath not an hour's lease of life if Renault the Quadroon cross his path!"

The young Spanish cavalier rose from his knee as the quadroon extended his hand, and accepted it with a friendly grasp, and then listened to his impassioned words with wonder and the most lively interest. When he had ceased, he asked earnestly,

"What meanest thou by a Quadroone, brave Renault? I am but recently from Spain, and though I have heard often of the far−famed beauty of the creoles of Louisiana, and something said of a lovely race of women termed *quatr'−unes*, I knew not that they were not one and the same."

"I will first wake my sister, lest the cold marble chill her tender limbs. She slumbers profoundly. Poor child! she hath suffered much anxiety since the arrival of your ships, signor, lest I should be brought hither slain or wounded even as thou wast! I have need to hold my life dearer than I do for her sake; for if I fall, she hath only her own honour and pride of spirit to defend her against injustice, with her trust also in Heaven!"

He spoke with a deep feeling, which awakened the other's warmest sympathy. There was a brief silence on the part of both, and then the cavalier, taking his arm, said,

"Let her sleep, Renault! It were rude to break such sweet repose; nor can her head lie softer than on the ivory arm that now pillows it! Thou mayst well be proud to call so fair a creature *sister!* Is she not most lovely?"

"Signor," said the quadroon, sadly following the admiring eyes of the youthful Spaniard, and resting them for a moment with affectionate gaze upon the reclining form, while his fraternal pride acknowledged its wondrous beauty; "Signor, thou hast well said—she is most lovely! It is this brilliant and most dangerous beauty that will poison the cup of her young life! It is this that arms a devoted brother with jealous watchfulness, lest the prowling wolf come about his fold and devour his only lamb! Yes, she is lovely and gentle, and good as she is fair; Heaven avert evil from her head, and turn aside the dark curse that hangs about her race, that it may not descend upon her! Oh, thou who art merciful and just," he cried, impassionately kneeling on one knee, spreading his hands over her, and lifting his tearful eyes towards Heaven; "thou in whose eyes all are equal save in guilt; who sees not as man seeth, and judgest from the motives of the heart rather than from the actions of the hand, forgive me if, to save the honour of one whom thou hast given me to protect, I should one day set at liberty her pure spirit!"

While he was speaking the maiden lifted her head from her arm, put back the shining veil of hair from her temples, and gazed up into his eloquent face, her large, glorious eyes filled with wonder.

"Brother," she murmured as he ceased, and threw around his neck her graceful arms, and for a moment hung there like a tendril clinging to the stately trunk it hath grown up with; "Brother," she said again, "methinks thou wert praying for me! There is no danger threatens me that passeth thee by!"

"Nay, sweet sister! thou hast fallen asleep unawares," he said, avoiding a direct reply: "the cold stone will penetrate this mat of Angola floss! Thou hast not been a wakeful watcher to sleep on thy post. I had affairs abroad in the city that kept me late, or I would have relieved thee earlier. But see! thy patient hath little need of watching; nay," he added, smiling and lifting her from her reclining position, "I came and found him watching thee!"

The lovely Quadroone turned her eyes for the first time from the face of her brother, and saw, standing within the radiant moonlight, him whom she had left sleeping now gazing upon her with mingled devotion and admiration; for, if he had been charmed by her beauty as she slept, he was now bewildered by the light of her eyes and the sweet melody of her voice. She blushed, and, turning with instinctive delicacy, drew back within the shade of the curtain.

"Thou seest he needs not thy farther care, Azèlie. Thy sleeping draught was drugged with health. Go, now, and seek thine own pillow, which, but for the stirring matters that kept me abroad, thy cheek should have pressed four hours ago. In the morning the signor will thank thee for thy nursing; good−night."

He kissed her as he said this, with that delightful tenderness that so becometh a guardian brother towards a sister.

"*Buenos noches! señor!*" she said, as he released her, in those mellow tones that the cavalier thought so ravishing, and the like of which he thought he had never heard save from the throat of the nightingale.

Then, bending her head with the modest salute of parting courtesy beseeming a maiden towards a handsome young stranger, she retired slowly from the apartment, with an easy, undulating, and almost stately motion; for, with all her loveliness and feminine grace, there was a certain native stateliness in her air and carriage as she walked that was only wanting to complete her charms, and most agreeably harmonized with her height, which was of that just stature that cannot be described by words, and of which no sort of idea can be conveyed in feet and inches.

## CHAPTER VII. THE CASTILIAN AND YOUNG COURREUR CHIEF.

Azelie had some moments disappeared through the door that led into the corridor, and her faintest footfall had for several seconds ceased to break the stillness of the distant cloister along which she retreated, ere the youthful Castilian turned away his gaze from the doorway where he had last seen her form relieved against the moonlight that filled the court. He then started only at the sound of the quadroon's voice, who said, somewhat quickly,

"Thou wouldst know, signor, something of the Quadroone."

"Renault, forgive me, for my youth and for her peerless beauty! I will not offend again," said the young man, observing his sensibility, and with difficulty appreciating his quick emotions; but he had to learn, what Renault too painfully knew, that his admiration could be none other than guilty, and to herself infamy; that in the cradle the mark of degradation is placed upon the brow of the Quadroone, and that, in the richness of her womanhood, no man can look upon her with honourable love.

"Sit on the divan, signor, for the pain of thy wound hath drawn the blood from thy cheek. I will stand here beside thee."

The young cavalier had, indeed, grown suddenly pale on the departure of the fair creature, whose presence had raised him, almost supernaturally, above his physical weakness. The wound he had received had been inflicted rather with the blow of the dagger's hilt than the steel itself, which, glancing from its direction, but slightly entered his side, against which the handle struck with the full force of the creole's arm. The effect of this, nevertheless, was nearly as severe as if the blade had entered deeper into his body, and, as has been seen, had instantly deprived him of consciousness. He had awaked, after five hours' sleep, almost entirely free from pain, and the sight of his lovely watcher had caused him to forget his wound altogether; but her absence restored him to the consciousness of suffering; and he found, on placing his hand instinctively upon his side, that the exertion he had made in rising from the ottoman, with the subsequent excitement, had opened his wound afresh. He gladly availed himself, therefore, again of the downy pillows of the ottoman. Reclining at length thereon, and supporting his face in his hand, he looked up into the ingenuous countenance of the quadroon as he leaned against the casement, and said,

"Proceed, noble Renault! I am deeply interested in thee—and, pardon me, thy gentle sister also; and I fain would learn the mystery that seems to hang over you both. Pray thee, go on!"

"I have no tale to fit the ear of pleasure or amuse the idle, signor. Stern truths are told in few words. I am a quadroon, the son of a bondwoman, and the child of guilt. My father is the late Marquis de la Caronde, once governor of this province; my mother a Moorish slave, whom he freed at my birth. This is a noble parentage, and a proud, signor!" he said, his fine lip curling with an expression of mingled scorn and shame.

"Caronde! Methinks I heard that name given to the fierce youth who attacked our party."

"You did, signor. We are brothers, save that he was born under sanction of Holy Church."

"Humph!" said the other, with a comprehensive glance; "proceed, good Renault! Thou hast not spoken of thy sister yet."

"This impatience, signor, promises evil to her who is the object of it," said the quadroon, sternly; "but I need not warn thee of the danger which menaces him who dares give his thoughts to my sister. Think no more of her, and you will find me a friend. Breathe her name again, and we are foes; for she can never be thy leman, and thy wife she may not be!"

"I will not be angry, Renault; for doubtless thou hast excuse, in thy condition, for this hasty jealousy."

"Listen, and thou shalt learn. The quadroon is of the fifth generation in descent, from the European on one side and the Ethiopian slave on the other, supposing no African intermixture of blood after that of the original progenitor. Each generation growing fairer, in the fifth the African blood is nearly lost, and quite so in some instances. Nevertheless, the existing law of this province against the intermarriage of Europeans with slaves extends to the descendants of slaves, and are so wide as to embrace within its statute the most remote descent from Ethiopian lineage, forbidding, on the severest penalties, such unlawful connexions, and declaring them unlawful. This refusal to legalize marriages with the quadroones, who are especially aimed at by this law, has

loosed the hymeneal ties, and the mistress everywhere usurps the place of the wife. It has at length become a system. Quadroone mothers, who have obtained their freedom at the hand of their paramours, as naturally educate their daughters to become like themselves, as do wedded mothers theirs to become wives. The wealth that has been lavished upon themselves they draw from its hoarded coffers, to expend upon their daughters, in developing the charms of their persons, and adorning them with those light and luxurious accomplishments which will best fit them for the condition for which they are destined. For this purpose some are sent even to Europe to receive the more elegant part of their tuition; returning, in after years, rich with those charms and graces of person that fascinate and bewilder, but with minds wholly destitute of moral culture; and, if religious, superstitious; in person fitted to adorn thrones; in soul too lamentably adapted to the degrading state for which they are so carefully educated."

"Truly, that lovely angel who watched by my pillow—"

"Heaven has given her a brother!" said the quadroon, in a voice that spoke volumes to the heart of the young Spaniard.

"Renault!" he repeated, and grasped his hand impressively, as if to show his sympathy with him. Renault acknowledged it with a grateful look, and then continued:

"The number of quadroones in this city and province is large for the population: they are beautiful, attractive, and fascinating—"

"That I will asseverate, on my honour," said the Spaniard, with youthful enthusiasm, as he recalled the beauty of Azèlie.

"They are also rich, with few exceptions," continued Renault, without noticing his words, save by a frown. "Degraded virgins—unwedded wives—dishonoured mothers! But there have been exceptions to this universal licentiousness. Quadroone maidens, in whose breasts dwelt native purity of principle—for, degraded as our race is, we are of mankind, signor, and virtue may dwell with us—have risen above their state of degradation, and, with virtuous indignation, spurned the criminal proffers of licentious paramours. But these exceptions are few, and sudden and violent death has often been the reward of their virtue. What had they to do with virtue? The honour of a quadroone! Ha! ha! would it not be a rare jest for gallants to make merry with over their midnight cups!"

Renault clinched his hand, and laughed with ironical bitterness as he said this; then, leaving the casement, he made two or three rapid strides before it ere he resumed his attitude.

"You speak not of the male quadroons—of the brother—of *yourself*, Renault," said the Spaniard, after waiting until he had recovered his composure.

"The brothers are accounted useless; we can administer to no mother's vanity—to no ruler's passion. *We* remain slaves, while *our sisters* become free; and if we are free in our mothers' rights, or are made so from a father's pride, who will not let his own blood remain in bondage, we are suffered to grow up like noxious plants by the road side, without culture and without care. Signor, often does the brother present, on his bended knee, the winecup of his lord, while he is luxuriously reclining his head in the lap of his beautiful sister."

"Heavens! is this thing so, Renault?" cried the youth, half rising from the divan, and looking earnestly in his face.

"Had I the slavish spirit of bondage that becomes my birth, I should, ere this, have done what I have now named."

"Explain, Renault!"

"Hear me, Spaniard! I have told thee that I am the illegitimate son of the venerated Marquis of Caronde. I loved him, and revere his memory. He gave my mother her freedom, and with it followed mine; for, by our laws, the fate of the offspring follows that of the mother. From childhood I was his idol. He cherished me, educated me, spoiled me with indulgence. The wealth and luxury around me I owe to his munificence. He is now dead. Scarce had the marble covered him ere his legitimate son, who had ever hated me for our father's partiality, exhibited the books of franchise, and challenged the judges to point to the records of my mother's manumission.

"It was there?" asked the youth, eagerly.

"The marquis had forgotten to record it."

"And you became—"

"On the instant, with ill−concealed exultation, he proclaimed my mother, with her offspring, *slaves!*"

"His own blood! It could not be."

"You shall hear. He produced proof that his father had paid one thousand dollars in Spanish gold to a Cuban slaver for her, and that she became his property; but that he manumitted her afterward he defied proof."

"Well," interjected the deeply−interested Spaniard, on observing him to pause, as if he could proceed no farther.

"Well, signor, she was adjudged to be his slave."

"Wherefore should he wish this?"

"He cared not for the mother for her value—there was a deeper aim."

"What motive so base that could lead him to desire her return to bondage?"

"Hatred towards myself was the least."

"But he surely hated not thy sister?"

"No, Spaniard, no, no! he did not *hate* her."

"Ha! what? you do not mean to say that he—"

"Loved her."

"I did mean to speak these words, but could not."

"I have spoken them. He loved her, Spaniard. Intensely as he hated the brother, loved he the sister."

"Not with a guilty love?"

"How else?"

"And his *sister*, too?"

"The Marquis de la Caronde is not the father of Azèlie. This I have discovered by accident. Jules, by some means, knew it also. To all save ourselves it is a secret; the marquis ever acknowledged her as his child. There is a mystery about her birth and her father, known only to the marquis (if indeed to him) and my mother."

"'Tis strange he should have lived with her, believing her to be false."

"He was a weak man, and she had over him a wonderful influence. My earliest recollection of Azèlie is when she was in her third year. Up to that time my mother says she was with a foster−mother. I alone am related to the young noble."

"He loved her, then? and *she*—"

"Returned it not; nay, met his guilty love with scorn, as a maiden should do. He gave me, rather than her virtue, credit for it; and his hatred grew, till, to avenge himself on both at one blow, he devised the plan of reclaiming us to servitude, that, as the master, he might obtain what was denied to the paramour."

"Base ingrate! foul and fiendish!" cried the Spaniard, with indignation flashing his pale cheek. "When was this judgment given?"

"But yesterday morning. The arrival within the hour of your fleet only prevented him from dragging my sister to his couch of lust."

"And would you have seen him do it?" asked the youth, the fire flashing from his dark eyes.

"*Seen him do it!*" he repeated, clinching his dagger's hilt like a vice, articulating each word slowly and with terrible emphasis through his shut teeth, which glared with rage, while his eyes blazed in their sockets; "*Seen him do it!*"

He smiled, too, as he spoke, and such a *smile* has seldom gleamed on the human countenance! The young man was awed, and singularly impressed by the terrific effect of his looks and manner; he remained gazing upon him with feelings of the deepest wonder and admiration, showing, by the expression of his features, that he fully appreciated his nobleness of soul and the lofty sternness of his character. At length, after taking a few rapid turns through the apartment, Renault said, with composure,

"Now, signor, thou knowest if I have cause to guard my sister as if she were the jewel of my own honour! Thou knowest now what it is to be a quadroone! that it is another name for degradation, both moral and physical. We must have no feelings, no honour, no purity! Slaves, mere slaves, are only so in the bondage of the body; the quadroone is a slave both in body and soul! What a fate is before the delicate and sensitive maidens of our race! Their young love, if it rise, and it must and will rise, for noble youths, must be crushed in the bud in the heart, or be cherished only to ripen into sensuality. Our young men may not look, but at the peril of their lives, upon the blue−eyed maidens of their hearts' choice; and our love, too, must wither and decay within the bosom, while we

see the object that awakened it lost to us for ever in the love of another."

He spoke these words with a sadness and tenderness, that conveyed to the young Spaniard the impression that he himself was the victim of such a hopeless passion as he had described.

"Renault, upon my honour, you have my warmest sympathy," said the youth, in a tone that won confidence, and bore witness to the truth of the words he uttered. "If in my power, the evil you dread shall not come upon you; nor, so help me Heaven! upon your sister. Spain now holds the province, and her laws shall govern. This young Marquis of Caronde hath no claim on thee or thine from this hour."

"Nay, signor! to change our laws could not be done with safety. The whole city would rise as one man. The judgment has gone forth. I am his slave— I am my brother's bondman. Were I not so, I should not feel the spirit within me that I do. It is because *I am his slave* that I am free! free as Nature made me! As his slave, I have flung defiance into his teeth; and as his brother, did yesterday mock and laugh at his power in the gate of the Place d'Armes, when, aided by his minions, he would have seized and made me captive."

"Ha! did he dare this!"

"He knew that he must do this ere he could possess my sister, signor! The coward feared a brother's protecting arm! He knew me well."

"What did you?"

"I struck down the base villains, and, leaping upon a horse near by, reached my house in time to bar my doors against a party that were crossing my threshold! They then stormed the house."

"Did *she* know of this claim?"

"Not the truth. She knew not he claimed her as his *slave*. I have kept it from her."

"Bless you for it, Renault. And did you alone withstand them?"

"Ay, for full ten minutes; when their leader, my nobly−born brother, joined them, and bade them, in a savage voice, bring brands and set fire to the lintel. On hearing this, I bore my sister to the battlements, in sight of all, suspended my dagger above her bosom, and swore by Heaven, if a single spark were borne against the house, even by the winds, I would strike it to her heart. This would not have suited my brother's purpose, and he bade them hold, and, instead, batter down the *grand porte* leading from the street to the inner court. I placed myself before it, and gave Azèlie the dagger. She kissed it, and stood beside me. Suddenly, amid the thunder of their assault, we heard the Cathedral bells tolling out warlike alarm, and the cry of `The Spaniard!' flew wildly along the street."

"And this, noble Renault, created a diversion in thy favour?"

"It did; for the bars were giving way at every stroke, and in five minutes more my sister would have fallen by her own hand, a sacrifice to her honour. As their retiring footsteps ceased, the heroic girl cast herself upon my bosom and wept. It was a grateful moment to me, signor, and in my heart I thanked Heaven that the Spaniard had been sent to rule our province."

"It was this feeling of gratitude, then, that led thee to shelter me?"

"Nay; I was swiftly returning home, after the dispersion of the populace, to see if my dwelling was secure from the assaults of lawless ruffians, when a tall person, wrapped from the feet to the eyes in a long gray cloak, bade me, in a voice of irresistible command, `Fly to the succour of the Spanish cavaliers if I were a Christian man!' Ere I could speak, the figure had disappeared in the shadows of the wall of the Ursuline convent. I instantly drew my sword and hastened to the Place d'Armes, whither the clash of arms directed me. I saw you hard pressed, and, by the plume and bearing, recognised Jules and his free band. My bosom burned to meet him in fair battle, and I bounded forward. Before I could reach the scene of contest, I saw you struck down, and left for dead beside the fountain. As I was passing the spot, with my eye fixed on my brother, I saw your companion, the noble Spaniard, in great jeopardy from the dagger of Jules. I bounded forward to save him, with an uplifted battle−axe which I caught up from the ground. My brother and I met; and, at a blow, I severed his right hand at the wrist, to save the life of a poor idiot, who, before I could reach the spot, had himself arrested Jules's arm, at his own imminent peril. This event put a period to the contest; and, hastily retreating to the fountain, I raised you from the cold marble, bore you in my arms to this place, dressed your wounds, administered to you a healing draught, and left you to the careful watching of my gentle sister."

"I cannot thank thee in words that will express my feelings, dear Renault," said the youth, rising and embracing him with grateful enthusiasm. "Who can be this mysterious individual who has manifested such interest in me and

Don Garcilaso? Perhaps some partisan of the Spanish party in the town!"

"It was a woman by the voice, and I know no female of her stature in the province. I cannot account for the extraordinary power of her words over me, that I should obey them so readily. If I were superstitious, signor," he added, solemnly, "I should think the appearance was not of earth."

"It was mysterious, certainly. It hath done me a kindness, whether it be of flesh or spirit. If supernatural, it is at least a spirit of good."

"It may be so," said Renault, musingly.

The young men for a few moments seemed to be wrapped in their own reflections in reference to the subject of their conversation, when the quadroon, drawing his belt tighter, and bringing round the handle of his sword so as to be readily grasped, said quickly,

"Sir Spaniard, I must now crave your indulgence. The night wears apace, and your−pillow invites repose. I have duties that call me forth until the day break."

"Nay, Renault, let me not detain thee. My wound is something more painful than it hath been, for your discourse hath driven the indignant blood through my veins till it hath got the fever heat. I will remain quiet. But first I would ask thee if the brave Signor Garcilaso be living, and if the city hath quietly submitted to the Spanish arms?"

"The Spaniards, led by their commander, landed in force shortly after you fell, signor, and have occupied all the gates and posts with their detachments, while the main body is encamped in the Place d'Armes!"

"And have you heard nothing from them that showed anxiety at my absence?"

"Nothing, signor."

"'Tis strange! Hath Ramarez hoped that I have been slain?" he said, half audibly. "So, Renault, it is well! Let it not be known that I live or that I am here, till I shall name a time fitting for the disclosure. This jealous Condé," he added, to himself, "shall have an eye over his actions that he little suspects. I know his temper well; and he is scarce likely to change slavish laws and systems of licentiousness like these I have heard unfolded! No! no! not Ramarez! they chime too well with his free manners! Brave Renault, I honour and esteem you. Let us hereafter be friends. Count on my protection if thou shouldst ever need it, and, I pray thee, count on my honour in reference to one who is most dear to thee."

"How mean you, signor?"

"Thy sister."

"Speak not of her, signor; thou knowest thou mayst not."

"Nay, Renault, I would share with thee in thy brotherly task of protecting her."

"It were setting the hawk to guard the dovecote!" said the quadroon, with a slight smile.

"We will speak of this more anon, Renault. The knight of the red plume will have cause to cross blades with me if I e'er get the better of this wound. Now I think of it, there were many of the assailants bore the scarlet badge that distinguished him."

"He is a leader of a party of some fifty young creoles," said Renault, turning back at his remarks; "most of them are of good families, who voluntarily took up arms three years ago in defence of the city, when Spain made her first demand of surrender."

"And when Ramarez got the worst of it. He is yet sore upon it."

"Most of these being wild and free in their habits," continued the quadroon, "they soon became lawless, and grew overbearing among the townsmen, going through the streets in bands with swords drawn, browbeating and threatening, and even attacking all who murmured or opposed them; till, at length, goaded beyond endurance, the citizens rose in arms against them and drove them from the town, when they retreated to a small tower, situated on the shore of a lagoon about a league distant, where they fortified themselves, and, under the name of *chasseurs*, bade the citizens defiance. Occasionally they were permitted to enter the city in small parties, being first deprived of their arms at the gates, to visit their families or friends, on condition of departing before night. On the rumour of the approach of the Spaniards they appeared, sixty in number, on horseback, before the Pontchartrain gate, and offered to aid in defending the town under the direction of the councillors. After much hesitation, they were admitted without arms; but, instead of presenting themselves to the disposal of the rulers at the government−house, they dispersed by twos and threes throughout different streets, and met at a preconcerted rendezvous, from whence they appeared in the Place d'Armes, armed with those long, sharp, two−edged swords,

which made their attack so formidable. Their assault upon your party was wholly unexpected by the town's−people, who, as you must have seen, fled in consternation from the consequences. After the attack, they mounted their horses, which were held in waiting by some of their band, and galloped out to their stronghold."

"They fought for the keys, then, methinks, if such is their character, rather that they might obtain access to the treasury and armory, than from shame at their being in our possession!" observed Don Henrique.

"This might have been partly the cause. Their patriotism, when it first showed itself three years ago, was pure, but it is now corrupted by licentiousness. They wish to make a republic of the province. There were seven among them, called, from their friendship to each other, the Seven Brothers, who once distinguished themselves by their virtue and patriotism, one only of whom has escaped the contagion. It is to him the city has looked for a champion."

"Was he present in the council−chamber yesterday?"

"He was more surely employed in the service of the country. When a man cannot breast the tumult of the waves, he must patiently wait until they subside."

"You speak ambiguously, Renault."

"I can speak no plainer to the ear of a Spaniard, signor."

"Methinks there is something like conspiracy hidden beneath your words, Renault. Ha! that dress you wear is the studied costume of a band, and that myrtle sprig is like a badge and token of brotherhood. 'Tis worked in silk also on your breast. That bugle, too, at thy belt! Thy absence this night, Renault, on my life, hath something to do with recovering the city."

The quadroon smiled as if the other had divined the truth, and then, waving his hand, was about to leave him, when his eye rested on the signet the Spaniard still wore on his finger. He half extended his hand, and seemed as if he was about to demand it; then, suddenly drawing it back, said, beneath his voice, "'Twill do as well another time and by another hand. Signor Cavalier," he added, aloud, "I leave thee a pleasant repose and healthful waking."

"Stay, good Renault. Bid one of thy slaves leave this message with the captain of Count Osma's guard, lest he be disposed to make my absence an excuse for doing mischief to the town's−people."

As he spoke, he pencilled the following note and gave it to the quadroon:

"*Give thyself no trouble about my absence*.

"Henrique."

"Now," he continued, "as you have been so kind to me, I will, in gratitude, give you the countersign decided on, for the first night's possession of the province, by Osma himself. You may wish to go beyond the barriers, which you tell me our troops now occupy, and it will, perhaps, be of service to you." Thus saying, he placed a folded paper in his hand, and bade him good−night.

Renault accepted it with thanks, pressed his hat low over his brows, and strode, with the firm and manly step of a freeman rather than a slave, from the apartment. He had been absent about a quarter of an hour, when the ear of Don Henrique, who was once more reclining upon the divan and thinking of Azèlie, was invaded by a sweet strain of music. He started with surprise and rapture. It came from a great distance, and approached nearer and nearer till it filled the court, when it died away until almost lost in silence; then swelling, clear, strong, and near, it would rise, wave on wave, and flow onward, a flood of ravishing melody filling the whole apartment, and melting his very soul with ecstasy. It would then sink gradually away, retiring farther and farther from the ear, till distance and silence gave back no sound save the dashing of the falling fountain in its marble basin. He continued still to listen like one bewildered, and again rose the same sweet, wild strain, floating and undulating, ascending and descending, as if the sport of a fitful zephyr, that now wafted its volume of sound triumphantly along with invisible power, now soared with them on indolent wings into upper air, or now bore them swiftly into infinite distance. Insensibly, while he listened, his senses yielded to the spell of the unseen minstrel, and he fell into a deep and quiet slumber.

## CHAPTER VII. SCENE IN A PAVILION.

The midnight chimes, slowly and heavily tolling from the Cathedral Tower, which had so suddenly broken the slumbers of the young Spanish cavalier, had also penetrated the interior of the pavilion in the *Place d'Armes*, and struck upon the ears of an individual who occupied it. He was writing over a little ebony escritoire, on which were scattered letters just finished but not yet folded; despatches, unsealed, directed to the minister of state, and an open packet or two, with the royal arms of Spain impressed upon the broken wax. Near them lay a bunch of massive keys, stained with dark spots of crimson, and by the side of them a naked sword of great finish and of the finest temper, with diamonds set thickly on the hilt. On the floor of the tent, which was overlaid with a Turkish mat of great softness and brilliancy of colours, was negligently strewn the imposing apparel of a soldier: here a casque glittering through a cloud of sable plumes, there a pair of spurs lying upon a steel corslet, which seemed as pliant as the cloth of gold with which it was lined. In a corner were the magnificent trappings of a warhorse; the gorgeous Andalusian saddle covered with blue cloth, worked in with silver thread, the housings a leopard's hide, the bridle plated with silver, and ornamented with chains of exquisite workmanship in the same metal. An Egyptian ottoman, with a pillow of swan's−down, completed its furniture.

The pavilion itself was of the most elegant and tasteful description. Though its outside reflected the moonbeams from a surface of spotless white, the interior was hung with sky−blue tapestry, on which was represented, in needlework, the first interview between Fernando Cortes and the Emperor Montezuma. From the centre of the tent a purple canopy was suspended, by silken cords, above a spacious arm−chair, covered with a lion's skin and crowned with a coronet. Before it, as if a footstool for his master, whose right foot rested upon his neck, slumbered a beautiful Cuban bloodhound. All around, from the roof down to the thick carpet, hung azure tapestry, thus constituting within it a cabinet as retired and private as if it were buried in the recesses of a palace. It was, however, visibly so much less in dimensions than the broad and lofty canvass pavilion itself, that it was apparent there were other apartments within it, either appropriated as private chambers or anterooms; and certain cords at intervals of the hangings seemed to have been placed there for the purpose of drawing them aside; nay, in the rear of the apartment, they were in one place slightly raised, as if some person had passed through and neglected to drop the folds again quite over the aperture. The whole interior wore that air of luxurious ease and warlike repose which characterized the Spanish gentleman and soldier of that day, whose sumptuous pavilions were redeemed from the softer elegances of a lady's boudoir only by the presence of the knightly arms and insignia of war, that held the place of her lute and embroidery−frame. Like the voluptuous Persian princes of an earlier time, whose tents vied in splendour with the fairy palaces of their poets, and who made war a medium for the display of luxury and magnificence, the conquerors of the New World, dazzled by the wealth which the rich mines of Mexico poured out at their feet, decked themselves profusely in gold and jewels; all parts of their armour glittered with precious stones; their war−chargers scarcely moved under the costly weight of silver that loaded their trappings; while their tents were marked by a commensurate splendour and grandeur.

But, as the empire of the Americas gradually departed from the sceptre of Spain, their luxury proportionally decreased; yet at this time, and in the display of this pavilion itself, sufficient traces remained of this former state of enervating luxury to convey some idea of what it had been in the more palmy days of Spanish power, and, it may also be said, afforded the key to its rapid downfall.

The first stroke of the deep−mouthed bell caused the occupant of the tent to pause in his task. With his pen suspended above the paper, and with his head slightly turned in a listening attitude, he numbered the strokes, as slowly and solemnly they broke, one after another, upon the stillness of night. A lamp, hanging by a chain from the canopy, and diffusing around a soft and equal light, revealed his features as he lifted his head. They were those of a man about forty−two years of age, and of a noble and commanding outline. The forehead was broad and massive, and shaded by dark hair, sprinkled with gray, which also, in thick, short curls, clung about his neck. His brow was strongly marked with intellect, but ungovernable passions had mingled with it their stormy aspect. His eyes were of a hazel colour, and vivid in their glances as light, yet pleasing in their expression; while above them projected thick eyebrows, which had been arched in childhood, before passion got control, but which impatience of temper had now bent into a stern and habitual frown. His nose was well−shaped, but of that

peculiarly aquiline form which is remarked in men of resolute spirits and cruel natures. His lips were full and firm, but around the mouth there seemed to slumber, ready to awake on the least occasion, a voluptuous, if not licentious passion, that gave to the whole features a decided character, which was not a little strengthened by the round, feminine fulness of the chin and throat, and the speaking fire of the intensely brilliant eye. A short mustache, that darkened his upper lip, qualified this trait, in some degree, to the eye of a superficial observer; but to one in the habit of studying the faces of men from the instinctive expression of their features, rather than from their exterior form and accidental aspect, it was plainly the distinguishing mark of the man. This soft though guilty attribute of his nature spread over his countenance a peculiar tenderness, that seemed to derive its birth from the heart, and was replete with danger to the unsuspecting, and fatal to those who trusted in it. It gave an aspect of mildness to his countenance, and seemed to be twin−born with gentleness, yet knowing no higher origin than that libertine passion, which, on the face of man, is too often mistaken for the virtue to which it bears outward semblance. It is thus that the most evil men sometimes wear faces of the most fascinating mildness of expression; the lingering beams of the glorious beauty that Vice, ere she fell, once shared with her sister Virtue, still shining around her, and which the clouds of guilt cannot altogether obscure. A smile, whether to man or woman, from such a mouth as that of the individual described, was infinitely more dangerous than the knitting of his stern brows.

His complexion was a ruddy brown, and his face full and fleshy, yet not too much so to be handsome, which it must have been, in an eminent degree, in his youth. His stature was large, and his person manly and full, though not too heavy; for it had scarcely parted with any of the elegance and lightness of more vigorous manhood. He was attired in a black velvet surcoat or long doublet, which descended to his thighs, and had been girded at the waist by a belt of white leather (in which hung the scabbard to the sword that lay on the table); but the belt was unbuckled, and lay across an arm of the chair. This doublet was carelessly left open at the neck, and displayed within ruffles of the finest lace, which also fringed the wrists, and showed the straps of deer's hide which had fastened the corslet within it across the breast. The collar was wide, and lay back flat upon his shoulder, displaying a broad edge of gold lace running down along the front, and also ornamenting the cuffs. On the breast of the surcoat was a richly−marked *cross−gules*, surmounted with the *fleur−de−lis* , the sign of the order of the Knights of Calatrava, and around it sparkled several military stars; while, appended to a broad collar, composed of golden links or rings, curiously interwoven one with the other, hung a single ruby, of great size and marvellous brilliancy, cut in the shape of the Cross of Calvary. He wore an underdress made of buff−coloured buckskin, such as are worn at the present day by officers of rank, which relieved, while they harmonized with, the sable hue of his coat, and gave a certain air of military elegance and finish to his costume. They were open at the knee, with the points loosely hanging, and his feet were thrust into Indian slippers: the negligence and *déshabille* of his whole apparel altogether suited the hour of the night and the privacy of his apartment.

As he numbered the last stroke which proclaimed midnight, he started hastily to his feet:

"Twelve! midnight!" he said, in a tone of surprise. "Time hath flown, or these provincial clocks do note its passage with false tongues. Ho! without!"

The curtain in front of him was instantly drawn aside, a gigantic Ethiopian appeared at the entrance, and, making a salutation so low as to touch the border of his vest, waited to be addressed.

"Hath not Don Henrique yet appeared, Sulem?"

"No, cadi," he answered, in the shrill voice of a boy, that sounded most strange and unnatural, coming from one of his stature, and was singularly unpleasant to the ear.

"No intelligence of him?"

"Muley Garcilaso hath come to speech under the skill of the chirurgeon," answered the Moor, indirectly.

"What said he?" demanded the Spaniard, as if accustomed to his Oriental method of communicating his ideas.

"That the young cadi fell in the fray, and that his body was borne off the ground."

"Slain, said he?"

"He knoweth not."

"Be it so or not, these rebellious bourgeois shall answer for their last evening's work, if I stain every hearthstone with the blood of its own household. Is all quiet in the town?"

"Silence hath become your slave, and bound the city in her chains."

"This is well! Seal and direct these despatches. They convey to his majesty intelligence of our success."

The Moor approached the table, and, kneeling on one knee, began to fold and seal the packets with an adroitness and neatness that showed it was no new employment in which he was engaged.

The appearance of this extraordinary private secretary was as striking as the task he was assigned was unusual to personages of his complexion and race. His stature was truly colossal, while his movements, instead of being unwieldy, like his frame, were remarkable for a certain cat like stillness and activity, that produced the same sensation in an observer as is caused by the gliding and stealthy motion of the huge anaconda, as he suddenly uncoils his vast length and moves swiftly over the ground to gorge his unsuspecting prey. His skin was of the blackest Ethiopian dye, and his shining black hair fell in a mass, composed of innumerable crisp tresses, to his shoulders. It grew within an inch of his eyebrows, leaving a low, *simious* forehead, that was far more deficient in the lines of intelligence than the broad front−head of the hound recumbent beside him. But there was a sparkling light in his coal−black eyes, and a quickness in their motions, that gave indication of cunning and cruelty, attributes which do not often exist to a great extent in men of mean intellect. Satan, without the angelic intellect he possesses, would be Satan no longer.

The remaining features were characteristic of his race: the broad, flat nose, with its thin, transparent nostrils; the full, projecting lips, and abruptly retreating chin. His lips were singularly flexible, and, from their constant motion, he seemed to be habitually in soliloquy with himself, or unconsciously giving his thoughts the shape of words with his mouth; and so expressive was this language without a voice, that an observer could plainly read the operations of a mind which was ever thus betraying itself.

The usual character of his face was that of cautious observation; of seeing without appearing to see. Above all, there was a softness in his eye like a woman's, and he was without beard on lip or cheek. His hands, as he plied his task, appeared delicate and soft; they were well−shaped, extremely small for his size, and remarkable for long, oval nails, which looked like pearls in whiteness and beauty. The fingers glittered with massive gold rings set with topaz and carbuncles, and on each wrist was a bracelet of polished brass, with magic Arabic characters graven upon them. Upon his head was an ample Oriental turban of the whitest linen, and upon his feet he wore laced boots of red morocco leather, highly ornamented with fringes and embroidery. His legs were buried in Turkish trousers of scarlet silk, of the most voluminous fullness, confined at the waist by a belt, over which was folded a yellow sash, the ends of it descending to his knees. The sleeves of his shirt were long and wide, not gathered at the wrists, and over it was a vest of crimson cloth, elegantly embroidered; above this, and over all, was worn a *haick,* or loose gown of green cloth, something shorter than the vest. In his belt was stuck a brace of small but superb Venetian pistols, and at his side swung a ponderous cimeter, with an iron hilt and scabbard, that, unlike the rest of his costume, seemed worn more for use than personal adornment.

"This pacquet to the king would better please him if it bore another seal beneath his own," he said, without looking up, impressing, as he spoke, a letter with the royal signet of Spain. There was a meaning hidden in the under−tones in which he said this that caused the Count of Osma, who was, meanwhile, pacing the tent lost in thought, to stop and survey him fixedly.

"What mean you, Sulem?" he inquired, after a moment's survey of his face.

"The signet of the captured province, your excellency," he replied, melting, with an indifferent air, as he spoke, the wax in the flame of a taper that burned in a cruse of olive−oil before him.

"Ha! thou sayest well? Wherefore is not the seal of the city with these keys?" he asked, as if for the first time aware of its absence, pointing sternly to those signs of submission upon the escritoire.

"I put the question to Muley Garcilaso when I went on board."

"True, thou hast said thou didst commune with him when he came to himself. What said he?"

"That the Don Henrique took it in safe keeping," answered the Moor, carelessly, but with observant eyes watching the effect of his words.

"Don Henrique! By the red cross! I'll warrant as much. He hath ever a meddling with that concerns not himself. It were not a wide guess to make him the cause of this onslaught upon Garcilaso and my brave men−at−arms. He hath kissed a citizen's daughter, and a round dozen of veterans have to shed their blood to pay for it. Would he had been safe under a cardinal's red hood ere I took the tutelage of him on this madcap expedition."

"There may be deep cunning hid beneath his light folly, cadi," said the Moor, cautiously lifting his quick eyes to his face.

"Speak out."

"Canst thou not divine his hidden purpose in coming hither with us?"

"Thou meanest my daughter! No, no! she would not have tolled him out of the Moro. He careth not the finger of his glove for the girl; and, by Dian! the wench hath as little liking for him in return! They have quarrelled like very brother and sister all the passage. Had he not a brother that chanced to come into the world a little before him, I should have made my will control hers. As it is, I leave it to time and Cupid."

"It is *not* Lalla Estelle," said the Ethiopian, with deeper meaning.

"Then, in Mohammed's name, out with it, Moor!"

"As a *spy*."

"On what—on whom?"

"On thee and thy government."

"Your proofs."

"Himself."

"Hath he told thee so?"

"In his eye, when fixed on thee—in every look and motion."

"Hath he said it?"

"Not in speech, cadi."

"Thou art a fool, Sulem. Because thy own countenance is an open book for men to read thy thoughts in, thou deemest every man's to be the same. Thou art at fault this time, with all thy subtle knowledge. If I believed this of Don Henrique, he might perish ere I would draw blade to rescue or avenge him. But he hath come as no spy; it is an idle freak, and because he likes to rove the world better than to wear a monk's gown. Nay, Sulem, if I thought other motives than love of adventure brought him hither, I would hunt him out of every bower and boudoir in the province, and cast him into the deepest dungeon it contains."

"None here, methinks, is so deep as those of Osma," said the Moor, maliciously.

"To me this!" demanded the count, approaching him a step in a menacing manner.

The victim of his wrath crossed his hands on his breast, and sunk his head upon them deprecatingly.

"It is well thou art so useful to me, Sulem, or thy head were, ere this, rolling on the ground. I know that evil and hatred are the moving springs of thy soul; and that, if thou open thy mouth to speak, bitterness and biting words come forth naturally. Beware again how thou hintest at what none know save thee and me, lest I should take it into my head to become the sole possessor of the secret. Beware! Don Henrique must be looked after. Hatred alone towards him, and which thou bearest to all men, hath cast this film of suspicion over thy vision. He must be found. As a Spanish knight, I owe this to my honour. If he come to harm, it were as much as my spurs are worth. I will tomorrow demand an explanation with the weapon's point at the naked throats of these traitorous councillors, who alone have stirred the city up to this massacre. Quick with these despatches, and see that they are, by the dawn, in the hands of the captain of the brigantine, and command him that he make sail forthwith for Spain. He hath my private orders already."

The Moor busied himself with the pacquets, while the Condé paced the floor of the tent with a perplexed air, for some time uncertain what course to adopt in reference to the citizens who had committed so gross an outrage upon the mission he had despatched to the council−chamber. But a man of his stern and hostile spirit had not room for indecision at such a time. Independent of the indignation that inflamed his bosom at the slaughter of his *garde du corps*, he had a private insult to avenge, remembering the reception he had met with three years previously in the very square and on the selfsame spot on which his pavilion was now pitched. As he thought of this, and summed together the aggravation and divers causes of offence, both recent and by−gone, his soul burned, and he determined, at sunrise, to make an example of several of the chief citizens, by putting them to death in the Place d'Armes. If it should also appear that Don Henrique had been slain in the affray, he resolved, for certain reasons, which, it will be plain hereafter, had more to do with his own standing and interest with the Cortes and with his monarch, when his death should be known to them, than with any regard for the young Castilian, to convert the town into a heap of ashes in retribution thereof. Such was the revengeful and merciless determination he had formed in his own mind, when the shrill, unpleasant voice of the Ethiopian startled him

from his meditations, as, rising from his knee, he informed him that the despatches were sealed and directed.

"See to them when I have done with thee," he replied; and then, in a voice that partook of the stern and savage nature of his recent decision, he said, "Now take your pen and write as I shall dictate."

He then, in a few brief words, every letter of which breathed conflagration and blood, dictated an order, which this confidential secretary took down with extraordinary rapidity. It was addressed to the several captains of his army, and was thus worded: "*Headquarters, Place d'Armes, − 12 o'clock night, Sept. 10th, 1767.*

"*You are ordered to have your command under arms half an hour before sunrise. At sunrise you will re ceive orders to sack the town. The public buildings and dwellings on the Place d'Armes are to be spared.*

"(*Signed*) Osma, "*Lieutenant−general of the armies of Spain, Governor and Captain−general of the province of Louisiana*."

"Make sealed copies of this," he added, as it was completed, "and despatch them by safe bearers to the different officers in the square, and to those commanding at the outposts and guardhouses."

"If Don Henrique appear in the meanwhile—"

"The order will be countermanded."

"And," continued the Moor, significantly, "those chief citizens you spoke of will instead—?"

"Thou art ever awake to bloodshed! Fear me not, Sulem. I will give them to the tender mercies of thy cimeter; for the slaughter of my men−at−arms must be atoned for by their lives."

The countenance of the Moor lighted up, and his lips moved with the silent expression of his satisfaction, while, half drawing his weapon from the sheath, he addressed congratulatory words to it, as if it had been a sentient being. He speedily completed the copies of the order, and, with a low obeisance, laid them at the feet of his master.

"Give them to my pages without, and bid them say to those to whom they may bear them, to see that they break not the seal until they hear a gun fired at the dawn of day. If by any chance this purpose should get wind, the bourgeois may have time to arm themselves, and give us trouble. Depart!"

## CHAPTER IX. ESTELLE AND THE CONDE.

The Ethiopian hid the orders within his oreast, and, lifting the hangings, disappeared as he had entered. For a few moments the Count of Osma fixed his eyes vacantly upon the waving tapestry, while in his heart he was striving to justify the deed he had resolved on against the arguments of his conscience.

"They have merited it if it do fall upon them," he soliloquized, turning and pacing the tent with the measured step of one who habitually walked when in thought. "Did they not, three years since, rend in pieces the national flag of Spain? Did they not cut down my whole body−guard, and leave me the only alternative of a disgraceful flight? Have they not withstood our arms till now, and the last night repeated anew the outrage upon my guards; wounded to the death a noble Spanish gentleman, and perhaps slain one, a drop of whose blood alone hath more value in the eyes of Carlos and the Cortes than even an Osma dare answer for? If he be not heard from by sunrise, my orders shall be executed. What if there be truth in this suspicion of Sulem! By the cross, the Moor may have ground for it. If it should be true—the youth is in *my* power, not I in *his!* For my acts I am accountable to no one but those from whom I derive my rank and authority. If I do well or ill, what avails his espionage, unless, indeed, he be secretly delegated with higher powers than mine? This may be! If so, let him first produce them if he would rule in my stead, and my last act of power shall be exerted to destroy him, if he were the Infante himself."

Thus ran the thoughts of the crafty governor, his own active fears and consciousness of a criminal life now condemning, now excusing alternately both himself and the object of his thoughts, and magnifying suspicions and malignant hints, that originated in a hateful and wanton spirit, into certainties. Garcia Ramarez, the Count of Osma, was no ordinary man. Though only in the prime of life, he had risen to the highest rank a subject can hold in the armies of Spain. This elevation he owed to his extraordinary ambition, love of war, undaunted bravery, and a masterly skill in military science. He was descended from a noble Castilian line; the founder of his family, Condé Velasquez Osma, having greatly distinguished himself in the conquest of Granada, both in numerous single combats, and in capturing one of the strongest holds of Boabdil, which Isabella afterward conferred upon him as a reward for his bravery. His descendant, the present Count Garcia, was the younger of two brothers, the elder of whom, it was said, fell from the battlements of one of the towers into the sea, near which, on a high rock, the Castle of Osma was built; but suspicion gave out other rumours to account for his sudden and mysterious disappearance, for the credibility of which, the ambitious and cruel character of the young Garcia afforded sufficient foundation. But Spain was too much torn at the period by civil contests for so slight a matter to create any sensation, if the rumour ever reached the government, which was doubtful; the younger brother assumed the title and vast estate of his deceased brother, Don Louis, without question or hinderance, and the rumour was soon forgotten. Arms soon became his passion, and, favoured by one or two acts of personal valour and his family influence, at the age of twenty−three he was made a lieutenant−colonel, and sent into Africa to demand of the Moors reparation for certain acts of piracy committed on Spanish ships. A battle took place within a league of Morocco, and Osma was defeated and taken prisoner. After several months' bondage he made his escape, and suddenly appeared at the court of Madrid, where he once more offered his services to the king. He was now remarkable for being attended by a hideous Moor, who followed his footsteps like his shadow, slept at his feet, rode by his side in battle, and without whom, indeed, he never appeared abroad. It was reported that he personally educated the unsightly Moor in the language and customs of Spain, and that, as his knowledge of both increased, he made him controller of his affairs, and eventually his private secretary and confidant; some dared to say, indeed, that he was also made his instrument of vengeance when a man's life stood between him and his fierce passions or sanguinary ambition.

A few months after his return from captivity in Africa, he married the only daughter of the Marquis de la Torre, who died a few years afterward, leaving an infant daughter of great beauty and promise. When she was at the age of thirteen, the father of Estelle, or *Lil* , as he fondly pet−named her, took her away from the convent, where he had left her to be educated, and made her his companion in the field, taught her the art of fearless horsemanship, of fence and defence, to wield the cimeter, dart the spear, and fire pistol or hand−gun with accurate aim. She attended him in his battles, riding by his side, with the gigantic Ethiopian at her rein, protecting her from

danger like the fabled genii guarding a princess, who hath commanded his services by the charm of magic. Yet her warlike education, under the eye of so great a warrior, took from her but little of the softness and gentle manner of maidens of her age. She was bold, but not masculine; boldness such as hers serving only to heighten the charm of her singular beauty. Her eye was blue as heaven, and full of light and intelligence; and though it never quailed with fear, it was soft as the mountain gazelle's in its expression; and though it might flash like the eagle's as she galloped beside her father into the battle, it could droop like the turtle−dove's when thoughts of tenderness filled her soul, as if young love had rested upon the lid. She was not spoiled by her father's indulgence, for he tenderly loved her, though the severity of his nature was mingled with his affection. She returned his affection with her whole heart, and, by her irresistible love, beauty, and devotion, held an influence over him that rendered her, in some degree, a spirit of good sent from heaven to control the evil he would do. His stern spirit yielded to her gentleness, and his affection could seldom deny her requests when eloquently and tearfully urged for some victim of his displeasure or vengeance. For, although the Condé of Osma possessed the revolting traits of character that have been asserted of him, yet there was one current of gentleness flowing through his heart that had not been darkened by the foul streams of vice that ran beside it: towards his daughter it showed itself in the shape of paternal love; but towards the young and lovely of her sex it was less pure, and assumed the turbid aspect of sensuality. In his bearing towards women he was gay, gallant, and fascinating; it was only to those of his own sex that he manifested a certain haughtiness of port and sternness of speech that usually characterized his intercourse with those around him.

He now appears with his Ethiopian confidant on the scene of action after the lapse of eighteen years from his captivity by the Moorish emperor, Sidi Mohammed, and, save in increase of years and in guilt—for this period of the eventful life of the Condé de Osma had not been passed without more than one instance of dark and fearful crime—they were still the same inseparable, mysterious pair, united by some unknown, and, men thought, unholy compact. Some, indeed, hinted at a familiar spirit, while all believed the two were linked together soul with soul in secret guilt. The officers loathed the presence of the Moor, and avoided him, while the common soldiers looked upon him with fear and superstitious dread.

The commission of the Condé de Osma, which appointed him governor and captain−general of the province of Louisiana, bore date "Aranjuez, April 16th, 1767," and conveyed to him the special power to establish, in this new part of the king's dominions, with regard to the military force, police, administration of justice, and finances, such a form of government as might most effectually secure its dependance and subordination, and promote the king's service and the happiness of his subjects. To carry out these ends, he was to be supported by a military force equal to three times the number of persons capable of bearing arms in the colony, one half of which he had now brought with him. He was accompanied on board his ships by several Spanish gentlemen, of whom he was to form his council or *cabildo*, which was to be composed of six perpetual *regidors* , two ordinary *alcaldes*, an attorney−general syndic, and a secretario; over which body he was to preside in person. Besides these, he was attended by the *alferez−real*, or royal standardbearer, the provincial *alcalde*, his *alguazil mayor* , and receiver of fines. Besides these, other necessary steps had been taken for the absolute Spanish rule of the city and province. His powers over all were of an extraordinary nature, and from his decision, both in criminal as well as in civil cases, there was no appeal but to the king; and this could be made and transmitted to him only through the *cabildo*, which was to be composed of Osma's own creatures, beyond whom a complaint was scarce likely to find its way. A remote delegated power is the greatest evil a monarch can inflict upon his subjects. Injustice, oppression, and tyranny are ever its fruits. Such was the character of the man who was now thoughtfully pacing the pavilion! Such was the soldier who had long led the armies of Spain! Such was the governor who was now to rule over Louisiana!

The Moor had not been long absent from the apartment, and the Condé still gloomily paced the gorgeous carpets, his step giving back no sound from the thick, soft texture. His mind was occupied now with suspicions of the young Don Henrique; now with the contemplation of his own unforgotten wrongs at the hands of the bourgeois, and the prospect of the morrow's revenge; and with ambitious visions of his future power and grandeur. Suddenly the arras behind his chair of state moved slightly, as if stirred with the wind; and a female hand, like ivory for brightness and beauty, was thrust through an opening in the folds, grasped the tassel of the silk cord that passed across them, and, with a timid, hesitating manner, drew aside the hanging, showing another apartment within. He was too much occupied with his thoughts to observe this. There was a pause, as if the

intruder were surveying the cabinet before entering it; and then a beautiful creature, with sun−bright hair, large, glorious blue eyes, and a complexion like the lily from which the dew has just fallen, stepped forth, and, with her hands folded across her bosom, stood in his path.

"My daughter!" he exclaimed, sharply, as if displeased at the intrusion; but his angry glance was arrested as it met her lovely person, wrapped loosely in a night−robe, that was folded about her limbs like the richest drapery of sculpture, displaying the exquisite grace of her figure, as if the effect of studied statuary, and encountered the bright beauty of her face, about which the unconfined hair fell like a cloud of light. None would have recognised in her the bold, free maiden that rode beside the Condé on his landing. It seemed a radiant vision that met his eyes. The father was entranced by the daughter's charms! He could not speak the sudden anger that rose to his lips! He could only gaze with all a parent's pride upon her, while tenderness took the place of rising displeasure.

"What has disturbed thee, Lil?" he asked, smiling affectionately and kissing her, and then holding her back to gaze upon her enchanting face.

"I have not slept since the midnight bell, signor," she said, with a glance at himself and then at the escritoire, which he easily interpreted.

"You are a silly girl, Lil," he answered, tapping her on the chin; "and, were it not that you look just now so much more angelic and more like your mother than usual, I could be well angry with you. So you have been a listener to my cabinet secrets?"

"I have, father."

"And, like a child, and a woman who knows her power, have left your couch to sue for grace to these graceless bourgeois, I'll warrant thee!"

"Thou wilt not do this thing, signor!"

"Lil, my fawn, I love you more than I have loved any human being. But even love hath its bounds. Ask me not what I cannot grant, that I may not have the pain of refusing thee."

"Father, I love you also too well to have thee do wrong. How will it be told in Spain that the brave Count of Osma hath declared war against women and children?"

"How mean you, girl?" he asked, surveying her glowing countenance as it warmed with the feelings of her heart. "It is against men in arms—rebels— and assassins, as the last night's work hath shown."

"If you fire their dwellings, and let loose the soldiery with the broad license of indiscriminate slaughter," she answered, with firmness, "will not every threshold become an altar of blood for the sacrificing of mother and child? If the men of the town have done evil, father, let them be heard in fair defence, and, if proved guilty, adjudged by the king. Let not their blood be on thee and thine."

"*If* they have done evil, daughter!" he repeated, with warmth; "have they not resisted our arms, rebelled against their lawful sovereign, and slain fifteen Spanish men within the twelve hours?"

"Men have been slain, sir," she said, steadily, but with the filial respect in her voice and manner that became a daughter; "but, in truth, are these councillors, or the citizens whom you condemn, guilty of crime against the state? They were not Spanish citizens or voluntary Spanish subjects when they did this. The flag of France was still waving over the province, and the laws of that kingdom retained their empire in it. I do not think, sir, it constituted an offence against the state."

"St. James save us, girl!" he cried, more in humour than displeasure; "you are half a rebel yourself. France has no more to do with them, nor they with France, than with the Grand Seignor. They are rebels all, and as such shall be treated. Go to bed."

"They did not acknowledge the right of Spain; they were still French subjects. You cannot, sir, contend that they could bear the yokes of two sovereigns. How can you expect to command the submission and obedience of these colonists, until you make known to them your character and powers? How can his majesty count on their allegiance before he has extended to them his protection?"

"By the rood, if thou art not infected with disloyalty to the very core, girl," he said, with harshness. "I have taught thee arms, and made a gallant soldier of thee; and the devil hath finished by making thee a pleading attorney."

"Nay, be not angry with me, signor," she said, laying her hand upon his arm, and looking deprecatingly up into his face; "I would spare bloodshed and avert misery. If they had been born subjects of Spain, they were then rebels, and deserving of punishment. Send and countermand thy cruel order."

"There is a statute of Alfonzo the Eleventh, which is the first law of the seventh title of the first partida, which denounces the punishment of death and confiscation of property against those who excite any insurrection against the king or state, or take up arms under pretence of extending their liberty or rights, whether subjects born, or acquired by conquest or by treaty."

"True, sir; death and confiscation, indeed, but not conflagration and massacre. Let the chiefs of the rebellion be arraigned before thee, and stand or fall as they shall be proven guilty or innocent. This law, sir, giveth thee no such power as you would exercise."

"My power is delegated, and independent of written statute. Life and death are in my hands, until the judiciary of the cabildo be established. But, my child, I have not ordered the city to be treated like a town carried by storm for this offence of rising in arms alone."

"But from personal revenge, sir," she said, boldly.

"It is more noble to forgive, my father."

"Nay, daughter, your quick and blunt honesty of spirit hath made thee forget that I am thy father."

"Forgive me, sir," she cried, pressing his forehead with her bright lips, which had pleaded so eloquently and so well. "If I have in anything gone out of my filial duty, it is from pity for these bourgeois, who, if Don Henrique appears not, will, ere long, be houseless and wandering in the fair land God has given them."

"Thou hast it. It is for Don Henrique I have done this."

"I will answer, the city hath naught to do with his absence."

"Thou art not a good listener, or thou wouldst have learned from Sulem that Garcilaso saw him struck down. Should I not visit them with vengeance for this? How else am I to account to the king and Cortes if he be slain? Shall I let his death pass by as if he were a plebeian? Thou knowest he likes me not, and that I have small friendship for him in return; but his absence, nevertheless, must be looked to. If he return not in safety, I will do what I have commanded. The city shall be fired and sacked. The king will demand it."

"And a million of the king's property, and many lives of his subjects, will be sacrificed. Is this doing the king service, my father?"

"Out upon thy inquisition, Estelle! I have borne it full patiently. Now I look upon thee, much of thy loveliness hath departed with−the admission of this plebeian pity into thy blood. Thy complexion hath a rebel tinge, got from thy thoughts. Go to thy couch, and sleep! My orders have gone forth, and shall be obeyed. Not even thy love," he continued, with a stern and vindictive look, that caused her to shrink involuntarily, though her clear azure eye quailed not, as, full of virtuous resolution, it encountered his; "not thy love, as it hath done before, to my grievous hurt and often shame, shall turn me. Heaven itself hath not power to move me from my purpose. The town shall lie in ashes, and its councillors swing between earth and air, though the foul fiend in person should cry hold!"

"Hold!" instantly echoed a voice near him, that made his heart stand still with fear.

## CHAPTER X. OSMA AND THE SORCERESS.

He turned, and beheld standing before him a tall figure, wrapped to the mouth in a large gray mantle, like the *haick* worn by the Moors, which swept the ground, its head nearly buried in a deep cowl, through which glared upon him a pair of glittering eyes, like the burning orbs of a tigress shining in the dark.

"Sathanas! avoid thee!" he cried, lifting between himself and the object of his superstitious fear the ruby cross that hung from his neck.

There was no reply, no voice, no movement from the mysterious being, who had appeared, as if by supernatural power, in the very midst of his tent, though surrounded by a triple guard. There was no answer, but the steady, fixed, and burning glance, that seemed to scorch his soul. His own fearless eye quailed as he strove to return the look; his face became pale, and, clasping his daughter by the arm, he seemed, for a moment, as if he would sink into the ground. His fear was too great and unnatural to be caused wholly by the supposition that his challenge had been replied to by the fiend himself. It was, from his looks, evidently connected with some recognition of, or association with, the figure.

"Father, my father!" cried the noble girl—who had no dark and secret crime to answer for, and to whom innocence gave courage—on witnessing his mental terror, "be thyself. It is mortal like thyself."

"Dost thou believe it, child?" he asked, with incredulous alarm, in a low tone, covering his eyes with his hands.

"Fear it not: my father, what dreadful thing hath come over thee?"

"Hath it spoken?" he asked, with terror, without noticing her words.

"Nay, I will make it speak," she cried, resolutely. "'Tis fearful to see thee tremble so like a woman. Surely Heaven hath suddenly taken from thee thy soldierly spirit! I will relieve thee or die."

She seized, as she spoke, the naked sword that lay upon the escritoire, and, quicker than thought, levelled it at the heart of the silent and fearful intruder.

"Speak, mysterious being!" she cried, with a sudden and fearless intrepidity, her soul armed by her father's pitiable state; "speak! or this steel shall prove whether thou be flesh or spirit."

There was no movement of the silent lips; the eyes were fixed still upon the trembling Condé like a withering charm.

"Nay, then, if thou art flesh, I will make a spirit of thee," she said, and threw herself forward with the sword; but it struck ringing upon a vest of mail, and shivered in her grasp. The sound instantly roused the count from his torpor of fear. Beneath a steel corslet he knew must beat a mortal heart; and, if hitherto he had believed he had seen a spirit, all his fear now at once forsook him, and the stern man and daring soldier returned.

"Ho, treason! we are beset!" he shouted, drawing a short dagger from his bosom, and assuming the attitude of one prepared for attack or defence. "Ho, guards without there!"

"Spare thy voice, Count of Osma," said the individual, with irony; "it will scarce be heeded by those who permitted me to enter thy tent."

"Ho, Sulem! Moor! Ha, am I betrayed? Who art thou? Who hath admitted thee?"

"My own power. Who I am thou wilt know in the day when they cup of guilt shall be full!" was the stern and menacing answer.

"What would you with me?" he cried, turning pale and dropping the point of his dagger, yet looking as if he would shrink from an interview which he felt he could not avoid.

"Thou art not alone."

"Nay, 'tis but my child."

"Wilt thou, then, I should speak with thee before her?" asked the stranger, with a significant sneer, concluding the words with a low laugh that chilled his blood.

"Lil, leave me," he said, with an assumed indifference of tone, observing her look from one to the other with suspicion and alarm; "I have business with this stranger, that, it is hinted, will not be fitting for a third ear. Seek thy couch, and court the sleep that hath been so untimely chased from thy pillow."

"Nay, I will stay with thee. I will not leave thee," she said, firmly. "Thou wilt speak to the father in the

daughter's presence?" she added, addressing the extraordinary intruder.

"If the father will," answered the same cold and mocking voice.

"It may not be, child," he said, sternly. "If afterward it prove of moment or interest to thee, thou shalt hear it. Leave me."

The imperative command conveyed in the last words she felt it would be dangerous to disobey; so, embracing him, and whispering in his ear a prayer for the victims of the morrow, she cast a glance of mingled dread and curiosity upon the silent figure, and retired within the tent.

For an instant after her departure the Condé kept his gaze fixed upon the place where she had vanished, as if fearful to turn and encounter again the power of that eye which had frozen his blood.

"We are well met, Garcia of Osma," at length said the stranger, taking a stride towards him, and placing a brown, skinny finger upon his wrist.

"Who art thou?" he cried, shrinking from the touch, "that intrudest at midnight into my tent, and seekest to alarm my fears with dark words and darker hints?"

"Thou wilt not know me if I utter the name men like thee know me by. Thou wilt not know me if I let thee look upon my features."

"Who art thou, then, in Heaven's name?"

"Thou didst but now believe me to be the shade of Don Louis Ramarez, thine elder brother, whom thou last saw in such a garb!"

"Dost read my thoughts—dost know that deed?" he cried, in amazement, and with a look of guilty horror. "Fiend! thou art come from hell to mock me!"

"Nay, Don Garcia, it matters not whence I come. It is enough if thou acknowledgest my power over thee; for I have a request to make thou wilt scarce grant without first fearing me."

"What wouldst thou have? my soul, dread being?" he asked, shuddering.

"Nay, but I would control thy guilty mind, and make it the obedient slave of my will," was the cool reply.

"*Thou* do it!" he repeated, roused by the words to his former haughty pride and self−possession, and forgetting his fears in his quick indignation; "*thou* control the mind of Garcia of Osma! It should not bend to the will of Lucifer. By the rood! thou art an impostor, who hath raked up a buried rumour, and comest hither to fling it in my ears to frighten me withal!"

"And how did I come hither?" repeated the stranger, in a quiet tone.

"That is the greatest wonder, and my tent thus guarded! Ho, Sulem, slave!"

"The Moor hath done his duty, and still lieth with his huge body across thy tent door."

"How passed you him, and how that triple guard?"

"By my power."

The count trembled.

"Art thou supernatural, and is thine errand here for good or evil?"

"Both for good and evil. Wilt thou acknowledge my power, proud Spaniard?"

The Condé paced the floor with a bent brow, and hurried, uncertain step for a few seconds, and then, looking up, said with firmness,

"I know not thy purpose nor who thou art. Thou hast appeared before me mysteriously, and outmastered the sleepless watchfulness of Sulem. Thou hast shown, too, a knowledge of a secret I thought deposited in only two bosoms, and thou hast guessed the thought of my fear when first I beheld thee, enwrapped in that gray garment, which hath associations, I need not tell thee, who already knowest so much, I would not willingly recall. All this is marvellous, and may be accounted for on natural grounds, and referred to mortal causes; therefore, most mysterious being, ere thou canst subdue my spirit to thine, thou must show deeper knowledge than thou hast done. Thus far I acknowledge thy wonderful power. Yet it can be measured by the human mind, and its depths fathomed. There is one secret of my life, if thou canst tell it, I will confess thee more than mortal. If thou failest to do it, thou shalt be cut to pieces for the secret thou already hast." The Count of Osma spoke like a man whom guilt and fear had rendered desperate, and as if determined to stake all upon a final cast.

"That secret hath a key."

"Name it."

"It is the signet by which I passed your guard, and led captive the will of the submissive Moor."

Speaking these words, this extraordinary individual stretched forth a dark, shrivelled arm, from which the robe had fallen, showing, to his infinite surprise, the form and garb of a female beneath, and on the finger of the hand exhibited to his eye a private signet set in a peculiar fashion, and bearing the arms of the house of Osma, with a Moor's turban for a crest.

He gazed upon it for an instant with starting eyeballs, and then, leaping forward and grasping the finger that bore it with a convulsive hold, surveyed it closely, with an intensity of astonishment and despair that language cannot depict. Suddenly he touched a concealed spring in it, and his own miniature, taken in youth, met his eyes. He looked up then into the face of the other, and cried, gasping,

"The name—the name—if thou knowest the name—"

"Zillah!" she answered, in the deep, guttural voice that distinguished her.

"Thou hast conquered! Do with me what thou wilt," he said, and sank down into his state−chair nearly lifeless.

The singular being who had shown such wonderful power over the mind of the boldest and fiercest man of the age, save that secret guilt and the superstition of the times enslaved his soul, gazed upon him for a few moments with a look of triumph mingled with pity. Then, lifting her eyes heavenward, and crossing her hands upon her bosom, she said, fervently,

"Now Allah be praised! He hath given my greatest enemy into my hands!"

Her cowl fell back in this extraordinary act of devotion, and the lamp cast its rays upon a harsh and haggard countenance, with a broad yellow forehead impressed with innumerable minute lines of age; shaggy white hair, a high, prominent nose, and a mouth with a nervous strength and stern fierceness of expression, that gave indication of a wild, implacable spirit, that knew no master save its own will. Beneath thick, shaggy brows, which time had whitened, glared a pair of fiery, bloodshot eyes, like globes of heated iron; and so unearthly was their piercing lustre that no human eye could encounter them unblenchingly. Their expression was that of wakeful vengeance, of watchful suspicion, and of implacable hatred, which the act she was for the instant engaged in did not diminish: it seemed to have been superinduced by some circumstances of an extraordinary nature, rather than originally to have belonged to her character, as if deep wrong, and deferred but ever−sought retribution, had given to this feature the expression of the passion that filled her soul. Her hair was white as wool, and, contrasting strangely with her dark countenance, fell down over her breast and back in long shining strands, that gave a singular aspect to her features and majesty to her person.

When she had ended her brief orison of gratitude, she dropped the entire robe, and displayed a singularly thin figure, erect as an arrow, above six feet in height, and slender as a skeleton. A short tunic of blue cotton, a green petticoat, a corsage of yellow silk, and sandals bound upon naked feet, completed her costume. Her arms were bare and long, and adorned with broad bracelets of solid brass. Her haggard neck was encircled by several necklaces of coral and ebony, to which were appended divers charms and amulets, one of which, in the shape of a tortoise, was remarkable for being composed of a single amethyst of great size and beauty. In her right hand she carried a small black wand, covered with cabalistic signs and letters, done in pearl, and ornamented at one end with a miniature death's head carved from human bone. At her waist, in a broad blue girdle, on which were represented, in brilliant colours, the signs of the zodiac, she wore a long, sharp knife, and a pair of those small but highly−finished Algerine pistols so celebrated at that period. From within the folds of her vest appeared the shining surface of the polished steel corslet which had resisted the sword of the Condé's spirited daughter, and which she doubtless found it necessary to wear in the mode of life she chose to lead. It will be seen, from this description, that she was no spirit or supernatural being, and, from what had hitherto passed between her and the Count of Osma, that her power was a moral one, and had for its basis her knowledge, which he now believed to be supernatural, of certain crimes he had committed, and which he had thought were known only to Heaven and himself, and perhaps his slave and confidant Sulem. From the character of the ornaments of her person, she appeared to be a chief or priestess of that class of Morisco necromancers, or worshippers of the Prince of the Air, who once held such influence over the minds of the Orientalists, and by their deep sagacity and cunning, and through their knowledge of men's hearts and intimate acquaintance with the avenues to their passions, exerted an influence over even kings and emperors, enslaving their minds, and receiving the homage of their souls and the services of their bodies. But, whatever might be her profession, her power in the present instance was acknowledged by the object of it.

If the Count of Osma had reason to believe her to be a being of another world on account of her knowledge, he had now, in her present wild and singular dress as a sorceress, in the extraordinary height and exility of her remarkably attenuated person, in the wildness of her air and aspect, and the enthusiastic malignity of her countenance, which seemed in himself to have found its object, additional reason to look upon her with dread and evil apprehension. Like most Roman Catholics of that day, Garcia Ramarez was superstitious. He firmly believed, as an article of his faith, in the infinitude of saints and guardian angels that mingled familiarly in human affairs, as well as in troops of evil spirits that went to and fro in the earth working ill to mankind. The belief in supernatural agency was rife in the early part of the last century, and even down to this time, few men, however elevated their intellects or brave their hearts, were above its influence. Miracles increased in the Romish Church, and spirits, both of good and of evil, were made to appear to the eyes of the people at will, for the growth and quickening of their faith; menacing apparitions were said to have made nightly visits to the couches of wicked kings and cruel lords; while witches or soceresses, wizards or necromancers, as England, the south of Europe, or Africa were the scenes of their work, left mankind little room for rational judgment, and witchcraft and enchantment, spells and charms, almost subverted the moral law of nature. The world itself seemed to lie under a charm, and the enchanted days of the Persian tales to have returned. In Great Britain, her colonies, and other Protestant countries, many a supposed witch paid the forfeit of her life at the stake; but in Spain and the south of Europe, as well as in Barbary and Morocco, where their numbers were far more numerous, and their pretensions and acts more daring and marvellous, they were too much feared to be prosecuted, and habitual religious superstition soon taught men to convert fear into downright awe. The wand of these *charmers* had been broken in England and America nearly half a century before Spain and the south of Europe had thrown off their allegiance to this so wonderful and mysterious a power, which, real or feigned on the part of its agents, will remain for ever one of the most extraordinary characteristics of the century in which it appeared, and stand in all ages a witness to the darkness of the human intellect, the nothingness of human learning, and the foolishness of human wisdom.

Such being the preparation of the mind of a man of that age for supernatural events, it is not surprising that the bold yet superstitious Count of Osma should at first have looked upon his visitant, who seemed to wear the garb and height of one he believed to be in his grave, as a visitant from the unseen world; or, when she told him all that ever he did, he should so readily admit her spiritual agency, nor wonder, as a man of the present age would do, that such a thing should be. Now, sober reason and cooler judgment hold the balance of men's minds, and all things, however extraordinary the aspect in which they show themselves, however high may appear their claim to the supernatural, must be tested by the even weights of probability, and measured by the skeptic eye of cause and necessity, ere the claims be admitted and their empire fully acknowledged. Shakspeare, writing in this age, would have some other *point d'appui* on which to frame his story of Hamlet than his father's ghost.

The mind of the Count of Osma bowed to the power that he believed to be supernatural. He was awed by her knowledge, and his soul shook with the guilty apprehensions with which awakened memory filled his bosom. She continued to gaze upon him with mingled hatred and contempt for a few moments as he sat in his chair, his head sunk upon his breast, and his forehead covered by his hand, and then addressed him in a voice of triumphant scorn, as if she would use the power she saw she possessed by her secret to its utmost extent. As he gazed upon her, he thought of the fearful visit Brutus had received, and the words "I am thy evil genius, Brutus," came to his mind, as she said, in a deep, warning voice,

"Garcia Ramarez, I said we were well met. I have prayed Allah sixteen long years for this hour, and it has come. I see thee at my feet, writhing with guilt and trembling with fear. It is thus thou shouldst be before those whom thou hast wronged."

"Wronged, dread sorceress!" he said, looking up, yet scarce daring to encounter the stern gaze she fixed upon him. "I have wronged Heaven, but not thee. I know thee not, save that I believe thou hast commerce with the unseen world, and bearest in thine eyes hatred towards me."

"Thou wilt know me, and wherein thou hast wronged me, black−hearted Osma, but not to−night. I am a messenger of vengeance to thee, but thy time has not yet come. A bloody day in thy life's calendar will soon fall, and then wilt thou know me."

"St. Michael's day?"

"So, so! Ha, ha! haughty noble!" and she laughed derisively; "oh how quick is guilt in a seared conscience. Thou hast truly named the day's anniversary I mean."

"Thou art a fearful woman."

"Then obey me. I am in thy tent this night not to play with thy fears nor trifle with thy crimes; thou art a bad man, and it became needful that thou shouldst know that there is one more terrible than thou, who hath thy destiny in her hands, and will watch thy rule with a jealous scrutiny, for there is one within this city's gates dear to me as the apple of my eye. In being her guardian, I am the city's."

"How mean you?" he demanded, with quickness, yet with reverence, marking the menacing tone in which she spoke the last words, and fearing lest she had known and would step between him and his coveted vengeance.

"That not a roof shall blaze, nor a head fall on the morrow for this night's work."

"By the cross of St. James! woman, thou presumest too far," he cried, starting up, his fear of her power suddenly swallowed up in his resentment at this broad asseveration. "If thou be linked with devils, thou art flesh and blood, and good steel will tell in it. I know and fear thy power, but I will not be its slave. Speak to me again of this, and I may take mind to be the sole repository of my own secrets. Thou knowest too much for thou and I to live in the same elements. 'Fore Heaven! I know not what keepeth my hand back from slaying thee where thou standest." His eyes flashed, and his spirit got the mastery over his superstitious dread. He held his dagger in a menacing attitude, and for an instant his eye flashed back the lightning of her own.

"It is because thou darest not do it," she said, with a stern dignity, that suited well her commanding air. "In thy hand steel is powerless when it would strike at my life. I am flesh and blood, as thou sayest. My power over thee is of earth, and the secret of it thy own guilty conscience. I boast no supernatural knowledge therein, yet am I not a whit behind, in mine art, that arch−priestess who bade one of thy prophets rise from the tomb in the mouldered cerements of the dead, and stand before living men."

"Woman, hast thou power over the dead?" he asked, stepping backward from her with awe.

"Ay; I can make murdered stand a bleeding ghost before his murderer; walk before his eyes a fleshless skeleton, clanking his bones; or watch his midnight pillow with grim visage, chattering his ivory jaws; or, wrapped in a winding−sheet, cross his lonely path, with one finger ever pointing to a wound, one hand to heaven; or, if thou wilt, I can make him appear as when he lived, tall and stately, with cowl and long gray cloak, till all should think he lived again— save for the blazing eyeballs and cold death−touches of his flesh."

"Hold! terrible being, my brain is on fire. Cease, or thou wilt drive me mad! Spare thy power, in the name of the blessed angels! and I will be thy slave."

"'Tis well. Art thou prepared to do my will?" she asked, with the same unbending sternness that characterized her throughout.

"Name it, and if it be aught that endangereth not my precious soul's salvation—"

"Thy salvation! Hast thou a soul to be saved, Count of Osma?" she fiercely demanded, contempt and irony mingled in her harsh tones.

"Yea, sorceress, unless thou hast robbed me of it by thy unholy arts," he answered, with alarm visible on his features.

"Ha! ha! Thou hast no need to fear me, Garcia of Osma!" she said, laughing scornfully. "Thy precious soul is best in thine own keeping till it hath filled up its measure of wickedness. It is too late for thee to care for it now."

"Heaven hath forgiveness for the deepest crime, woman."

"On repentance, so says thy Koran."

"What is repentance? Do I not regret the past?" he said, sadly.

"That is not the repentance thy prophet hath commanded. Let thy hand refrain from evil. What wrong thou hast once done, do thou no more. This is repentance, and such as thou hast never known, and never wilt know. Evil will ever be in thy right hand. Thy soul! Ha! ha! Trouble not thyself, count—it is cared for."

"Be it as thou sayest. Holy Church hath indulgences."

"Which thy ill−gotten gold will scarce purchase. But fear not! My desire of thee will not endanger thy soul's welfare. Thou hast given orders to sack the city at dawn."

"Ha! has Sulem—"

"Be calm, knight! When I know so much, is it a strange thing I should know this? Thou hast resolved to lay the city in ashes. Light a torch, and it shall be to kindle thine own death−pyre."

"The command has gone forth, and the day dawns."

"It becomes thee to be the more speedy. Obey!"

"It shall be done, so I see thy face no more."

"We must meet once, twice—nay, *thrice* more!" she said, solemnly.

"May it not be, mysterious woman?"

"It may not."

"If I see thee not after St. Michael's day, I will do thy bidding."

"Thou shalt not."

"The city is then safe. Thou that knowest so much, canst tell me aught of a young Spanish cavalier that hath disappeared?"

"He is safe."

"Then shall it be as thou wilt."

"Write me the order—nay, thy secretary shall do it for thee! Absulem Hassan!"

The curtain was swept aside, and in an instant the Ethiopian stood submissively before her, and, without looking at his lord, fixed his eyes expectantly upon the face of the sorceress. The expression of his countenance was that of the deepest awe and reverence. The count saw this with wonder. Where had the slave been that he obeyed not his voice! How knew she a name he himself had not called him by for years! He gazed in silent surprise.

"Absulem Hassan, write as thy master shall dictate," she said, authoritatively, pointing to the escritoire, while her commanding eye was turned threateningly upon the noble.

Without a word, the count motioned with his hand for the slave to kneel at the table.

"Thy secretary waits for thee," she said to him, impatiently.

"Write a countermand of the order of twelve o'clock, in these words," he said: "*Headquarters, Place d'Armes, − 1 A.M., September 10.*

"*The order issued at midnight is countermanded*.

"(*Signed*) "Osma, "*Governor and Captain−general*."

"It is enough. Place copies of them in my hand. I will see that they are delivered to thy captains."

She received from the Moor the sealed orders, and, folding them in her mantle, once more gathered it around her tall, thin person, and drew her cowl over her eyes.

"I adjure thee, meet not my vision in that shape. Go, if thou hast done thine errand," he cried, with a ghastly countenance, in which shame and indignation at what he had been compelled to do plainly struggled to vent themselves; "leave me, and may the depths of hell receive thy horrid form."

"Thrice more I will visit thee, Knight of Osma, and my errand will then be done, vengeance appeased, and justice satisfied. Till then, remember in all thy acts of power that mine is greater than thine, and that this province, for the sake of one in it whom else thy lust and power might blight, hath a sleepless guardian."

Thus speaking, she gathered her flowing mantle about her limbs, and, with a commanding majesty of aspect and demeanour, stalked across the tent, lifted the hangings, and disappeared.

The count looked after her a moment, and then convulsively clinched his hands together, gnashed his teeth, glared around with demoniac wildness, while rage and shame filled his soul. He seized the dagger which had fallen at his feet, and, shaking it aloft, struck it madly out in the air, where the sorceress had so lately stood, as if he would vent his impotent rage on empty space. The prostrate form of Sulem, who had fallen on his face in profoundest Oriental veneration of the departing sorceress, met his eyes, and he sent the weapon towards him with such force that it sunk into the ground beside him to the hilt.

"Get thee to thy feet, Leviathan!" he cried. "Art thou become a fool also? Thou deservest death in permitting this fiend to enter my tent. I will pour my thwarted vengeance on the false sentinels; so, speak for thyself."

"She is a dark woman, cadi!" he answered, with awe.

"Dost thou fear her?"

"Sulem is her slave."

"She is thy countrywoman, too?"

"She hath the Moorish tongue, cadi, and spoke words into my ear with it, when she would enter, that made my soul tremble. She is a dark woman!"

"What meanest thou?"

"She hath her seat in the sun, and her feet resting upon the sea. She knoweth the future as if it were the past, and the past hath no secret that she knows it not. The spirits of the dead are at her command, and the living become like dead men in the scorching glance of her eye. She commanded me, and I obeyed."

"And she commanded me too, and *I* obeyed," he repeated, fiercely, while his countenance gleamed with indignant anger. "I am levelled with my slave. By the cross of my knighthood, I will not live under it! This twenty−ninth of September! This accursed St. Michael's day! Wonderful and damnable is her knowledge! Not a secret of my soul but what she knoweth it. Sulem!" he cried, suddenly turning to the Moor, who now stood before him in his usual attitude, with his arms folded across his breast.

"Cadi!"

"That sorceress must die!"

The Moor uttered a cry of supernatural terror, and fell prostrate at his feet, which he clasped imploringly.

"What means this, fool?"

"The lightnings of Allah will consume to ashes the mortal that lifts hand against one like her."

"Out upon thee, superstitious idiot!" cried the count, though not himself free from the fears that filled the breast of the trembling Ethiopian. "*She must die!*" he added, slowly and determinately.

"She hath no life!" he said, with horror.

"No life! She hath veins, and blood in them, and it must flow. Look well to thy cimeter's edge. If she live till the morning of St. Michael's day, thy head shall answer it. To thy post without my tent door. If but a shadow fall upon its threshold, I will send thee in chains to thy Moorish master. Ha, you shrink! Go: I would be alone."

Left alone, the Count of Osma gave himself up to long and calm reflection upon the events that had transpired in his interview with the extraordinary being, who, by mere moral force, had subdued his haughty will and bent it to her purpose. At length he cast himself into his chair, and, summoning the captain of the guard before him, learned from him that a mysterious individual, such as the count now described to him, had been permitted to pass both to and from the pavilion on the faith of his signet, which had been exhibited to each of the posts in succession and recognised.

"It is thus far well," he said. "Henceforward, signor, obey no signet that is not backed by the countersign also. To your duty."

The officer then left the cabinet; and, soon afterward, worn and wearied both in body and mind, the count threw himself upon his couch, and sought oblivion in sleep.

## CHAPTER XI. SCENE IN A QUADROONE'S BOUDOIR.

When the beautiful Quadroone retired from the presence of her brother and the handsome young cavalier, she traversed the latticed and vine−shaded cloister of the square court, heedless of the floods of song poured from the throat of her favourite nightingale at her approach—of the flowers that scattered their dewheavy leaves at her feet—of the moon shining on her skyey throne, turning the clouds to silver as they sailed beneath, and filling the court with its cold, chaste splendour—heedless of all save the remembrance of him whom she had just left. At the extremity of the corridor, opening outward, was a double Venetian door, dropped across the opening of which, on the inside, was visible a curtain of crimson silk, its colour receiving a richer tone from a lamp within. She placed her hand upon it, but, ere drawing it aside, lingered on the threshold in a listening attitude, as if she fain would once more distinguish the voice of the stranger, whose image filled her soul.

"Hist, Eglé! wilt thou not be quiet?" she said, angrily, to her mocking−bird, which at that instant alighted upon a vase near her, and made the whole air alive with melody.

Scarce had she spoken ere she felt she had betrayed her heart to herself, and surprised, alarmed at the knowledge of it, she bent her lovely head in confusion, and, lifting the curtain, disappeared within.

The apartment into which she entered was well fitted to receive so fair a mistress. It was a small boudoir, characterized throughout by the most exquisite taste. The floor was inlaid with mosaic in flowers and figures, as finished as a painting in fresco, and shining with the lustre of polished marble. Over its mirrorlike surface were strewn gorgeous mats of dyed Angola hair; the walls were hung with figured tapestry, and around them were ottomans and divans of the most luxurious description. In the furniture and architectural decorations, azure and purple, gold and silver, were called into service, and the softest and the most delicate colours seemed to have contributed to perfect the harmonious whole. In the midst of this elegance, which rivalled that of a cabinet of a fairy princess, were conspicuous the signs of the Christian faith. At one extremity of the toilet−chamber was a miniature altar of black marble. On it stood a small ivory crucifix, before which burned a silver lamp, the gentle rays from which emitted a soft radiance throughout the room, and diffused around a spicy aroma. Beyond the altar, in a recess, was a deep window looking towards the Place d'Armes, and towering above it, in the moonlight, appeared the white towers of the Cathedral, like gigantic guardians of the city. On the right of the altar the drapery was drawn aside, giving a glimpse within of a simple yet tasteful couch, hung around with snowy curtains—sleeping−room ante−room—and they both constituted the sacred home of the maiden. Here doubtless were passed her most retired hours and seasons of devotion. Here were her broidery frame, her harp, her lute, gilded volumes, and scrolls of music. Here, unsuspecting their real end, she pursued and perfected herself in those accomplishments, in which her guilty mother had taken pains to make her a proficient. Hither she fled from the oppression and vice of the judging and unfriendly world, in the forgetfulness of sleep no more to remember her sorrow; or, bowed down before the altar of her Redeemer, stay her heavy soul.

Within the last twenty−four hours she had found need of this consolation. The object of criminal love, she depended, in the confidence of her sisterly heart, on her brother's arm and fervent affection, and by faith on Him who could give that arm strength in the cause of virtue, and make that affection a consuming fire to her oppressor.

Azèlie entered her boudoir with a flushed cheek, and, dropping the silken curtain again across the entrance, passionately cast herself upon her knees before the crucifix, and, putting back her dark hair from her beauteous face, clasped her hands upon the altar and laid her forehead upon them. For a few seconds she seemed like a statue, so motionless was every limb and fold of her vesture. She was struggling with a supernatural effort to keep down her newly−awakened love. But in vain. Her bosom began to heave violently, her breath came quick and convulsively, and her spirit seemed as if it would burst its tenement. Suddenly tears, blessed tears, came to her relief, and dropped upon the altar like rain, thick and fast. In a few moments afterward she lifted her dewy face heavenward, with a look of calm and divine resignation, such as Raphael loved to give his Madonnas, and her lips moved. There was no sound—yet she prayed.

She prays for protection and for mortal strength to the Virgin Mary, the protectress of virgins! Gentle Azèlie! There is a beautiful propriety in thy petition— thine is the poetry of religion! But One whom thou hast forgotten,

whose dread name thy lips are forbidden to pronounce—One whom thou art taught by error to believe too high and august to regard human petitions— HE will hear thee, lovely child! He will protect thee. Yet thou knowest not the extent of thy wretchedness, nor how much protection thou needest to pray for! Thou knowest not of the unjust and wicked claim of which thou art the victim! Thou knowest not that he whom thou fearest, from whose unhallowed passion thy pure soul shrinks, hath proclaimed thee his slave, and that the judges of the city gainsay it not!

She rose from the altar, and, seating herself by the trellised casement in the recess behind it, with her hand supporting her cheek, gazed vacantly forth. A garden filled with lemon, orange, citron, and other tropical fruit−bearing trees was beneath, or, rather, before her, for the ground window opened outward into it. The heavens were deep and tranquil. Silence reigned over the city. Not a sound came from the deserted streets. The fragrant night breeze−fanned her brow and sported with her raven tresses, while the moon slept upon her pale forehead as if it had lain on marble. How exquisitely formed was the hand and arm that supported the head! How full of grace her figure! How beautiful the depth of the upturned eyes! What sweetness in the line of her mouth, just parted as if to speak! How eloquent with tender sorrow was all!

She directed her look to the skies, but her thoughts were not there. She was communing with her own heart, into which, unknown to her, love had stolen as she watched the pillow of the Spanish youth. She thought of his wondrous beauty and noble demeanour! She recalled each feature, dwelt on every varying expression, and remembered his accents when he spoke to her brother. To herself he had not spoken, save with his eyes; and they were so full of respectful tenderness— so impressive, yet so devoted—it seemed to her young heart the language of love—of honourable love, such as became a maiden to receive.

"Does he love me?" she tremblingly asked of her heart.

That she loved him she could no longer disguise from herself. Like that sweet bud that unfolds its petals to the honey−bee only when the sun shines upon it, her young heart had expanded at the first glance of his dark eye, and admitted love.

"Does he love me?" she asked of herself.

She trembled to answer. A deep sigh escaped her, and thought, busy thought, involved her in its mazes. Suddenly she started to her feet, as if some bitter reflection had stung her to the soul, and, with a wild laugh and flashing eye, cried, in the short, energetic tones of despair,

"Love me! Ha, ha, ha! Am I not a quadroone? Yes, he *may* love me!" she added, with ironical bitterness; "a quadroone is easily loved! Ay, marry! she hath lovers enough! Thou art well punished, foolish maiden, for forgetting thy condition. That burning thought! It is fire to my brain! Crushed are all my bright visions! wrecked my hopes! *Love*, Love! The very word, so dear to a virgin heart, so pleasant to her ear, becomes a name of guilt on my lip!"

Her air, the indignant, ringing tones of her voice, and the vivacity of her manner, showed a spirit and dignity that were scarce to be looked for in one so gentle and feminine. But the awakened spirit of an insulted woman hath ever the lofty character of sublimity.

She walked her room with a rapid step for a few moments, then suddenly stood still, as if a flash of thought had checked her. Her voice was now more subdued, and hope beamed in her eyes.

"Nay, he was so noble, and his presence so gentle, and his eyes were so respectful! If—yet he may not have known me to be one of the accursed race! Men are not wont to look upon *us* as he looked on me! I could have cast myself at his feet, for I felt he would have lifted me to his heart. Oh! my poor heart! Still thy throbbing; for he whom thou art so wildly beating for will ne'er care for thee if thou break! Ah me! thou wilt be soon quiet enough in the grave."

She sank upon an ottoman as she mournfully said this, and seemed lost in the bitterness of wo! Poor Azèlie! Who will not pity thee! Child of guilt, and daughter of infamy! Notwithstanding thou hast lived amid all the fascinations of vice and the allurements of luxurious temptation; notwithstanding thou hast been taught to believe beauty given to thee to ensnare, and that female purity hath its price! that virtue is only a name, and honour as the idle wind; notwithstanding thy mind has been poisoned by subtle morals, and thy soul perverted by the example and precept of an unnatural mother; notwithstanding all of thy race, and the light−hearted maidens of thy youth, embrace dishonour, and blush not at what they know no wrong in, yet thou art innocent and pure! Heaven hath given thee a spotless spirit and a virtuous heart; endowed thee with a lovely and gentle nature, yet a firmness and

pride of spirit that leadeth thee to prefer death to infamy, and the dark silence of the grave to the silken couch of illicit love!

She had remained in the drooping attitude into which she had sunk upon the divan, her soul full of gentle sadness, but a few minutes, when a door at the opposite extremity of her sleeping apartment opened, and a female, of the most majestic beauty of form, stately, but not tall, with an inconceivable grace in her step and carriage, entered, and drew back the curtains of the couch. With an exclamation of surprise at finding it unoccupied, she, with a quicker step, entered the room where sat Azèlie, too deeply busied in her own reflections to observe her presence. She was about thirty−five years of age, with an eye of the most voluptuous black, and depth of passion. Her complexion was of the richest brown of the ripe berry, warm, sunny, and glowing, and soft with all the delicacy of youth. The high, smooth forehead was a model for a queenly brow, notwithstanding the shadow of the olive, and not the bright light of the lily, rested there. Her brows were black as night, but pencilled to a hair in the most perfect arches; while the eyes beneath!— they were orbs of soul, glorious, magnificent— languid, burning, and ardent in their glances, yet melting with tenderness: eyes dark and dangerous as they were beautiful! The mouth was as dangerous as the eyes, for Love seemed there to have touched his arrows ere he shot them from the latter. Her nose was straight and finely shaped; her lips cut as if with the chisel; her chin of that faultless roundness and downy finish that will be remembered in beautiful woman, and which no pen may delineate. Her face was a fine oval, the contour of which the arrangement of her raven hair, parted on her forehead, as if for night costume, smoothly on each temple, contributed to preserve. Her form was enveloped in a *robe de chamber*, that displayed her superb bust, and small, elegant waist, without altogether hiding the shape of an arm of matchless proportions; while beneath were visible a pair of very small feet, very hollow in the instep, of that pure model and exquisite delineation characteristic of the quadroone, of which, save at the ball of the heel and near the toe, no part touched the earth. The majestic breadth, yet symmetry of her shoulders and bust were extraordinarily contrasted by the smallness of her pliant waist, though in the perfect *tournure* of her whole figure the unity and harmony were complete. Altogether, hers were the face, foot, and figure of a quadroone, a race which, in form, limb, and action of the body, are models of the human species. She paused in surprise as she beheld the maiden, and the angry light of her eyes, which the long, heavy lid, and soft, sable fringes could not subdue, betrayed that, amid all that voluptuous langour, there slumbered a mine of passion, and that Hecate, as well as Cupid, held empire there.

"Azèlie! girl, why art thou not on thy pillow? Is it that thou mayest now spoil thine eyes and cheek that I have been for years unfolding thy charms and instilling into thee the arts of loveliness? Up with thee, girl!"

At the first sound of her voice, the young Quadroone shrunk instinctively within herself; but the moment afterward she rose, and, with her hands folded upon her breast, stood submissively and patiently before her.

"What would you, *ma mère?*" she asked, seeing her mother fix her large full eye upon her, with the deliberative look of one who had not decided whether to pursue towards her a course of forbearance or sternness.

"Why art thou not in thy chamber?"

"Renault—"

"Renault! It is ever Renault! The stripling hath got to rule the household, by the Virgin!" she said, angrily. "What hath he done now?"

"He bade me watch by the wounded cavalier's couch, his duties carrying him abroad."

"And didst thou come from thence, when now I heard thy footstep and voice in the corridor, which brought me hither?" she demanded, almost fiercely pressing her arm with passionate force.

"I have, *ma mère*."

"Sleeps he yet?" she inquired, rapidly interrogating her.

"He hath awakened refreshed."

"Hast thou spoken to him?"

"Nay, *ma mere!*"

"Nor he to thee?"

"My brother came in and woke him, I believe," she answered, now remembering, with sudden surprise, that she herself had fallen asleep.

Her jealous mother saw the blush that mantled her face, and fixed her eyes upon her as if she would read her soul with a glance.

"Tell me truly," she asked again, with slow and terrific emphasis, "hath he spoken with thee?"

"No, *ma mère*."

"Nor thou to him?"

"No."

"Nor by sign nor look?" she demanded, more severely.

"Nay, mother."

She looked into the maiden's countenance an instant after she answered, and then, as if satisfied of her truth, said,

"'Tis well for him it is so. *He should have died*."

Azèlie buried her face in her hands and was silent; but the words her mother had spoken were every one of them as a strong cord of mingled pity and resentment to bind the young Spaniard closer to her heart. Opposition, as it ever will, effectually secured to him one who would be his firm protector if she menaced him with danger. After watching her daughter's countenance for a moment, she said, in a more gentle tone,

"It is well for thee and him. Thou knowest a breath upon thy reputation would defeat my hopes of thee. Thou shouldst remember that the honour of a quadroone, till she hath her protector, is sacred as a betrothed bride's. Thy brother Renault hath become too independent; he spurns my authority, and would control thee as if thou owed obedience nowhere else! Is he with the Spaniard?"

"I left him there, *ma mère*."

"See thou keep thy chamber while this stranger is here. Renault shall send him away ere the day end. Thou art too lovely a treasure, child, to be lightly guarded. One stain upon thy maiden honour, and the poorest bourgeois of the town would not accept thee. As thou art, a prince might kneel for thee."

"Mother, hear me!" said Azèlie, with spirit. "The destiny you have in store for me shall never be mine. I would not share the unblessed couch of an emperor. Thou carest for my honour. Mockery, mockery, mother! Alas! thou knowest not the meaning of honour save that it is the price of dishonour. Since yesterday, light has broken in upon me. I will die, mother, ere I become the thing you would have me!" The spirit of her eye and brow bore testimony to her words.

"What means this, child?" demanded the quadroone−mother, with surprise; and then asked scornfully, "Would you be a wife?"

"I will never be a concubine," she replied with spirit, blushing crimson with shame, that her feelings should be so rudely tried.

"Ha! this young Spaniard hath done this!"

"I have done it."

"He hath offered terms to thee?"

"Never!" she cried, with indignation.

"Art thou mad? What is this that hath possessed thee?"

"Virtue."

"Virtue! ha! Yes, I have taken care that thou art virtuous, and that thou continue so till he who would wear thee hath paid the price of thy beauty. It is worth a princess's equipage, and shall win it for thee. But calm thyself, my sweet child. I have come to tell thee thou needest think no more, not will I speak to thee more, of this Jules Caronde, whom thy obstinacy hath compelled to a course against me and thyself that he shall answer for. Does he think that by enslaving the mother, even for one hour, in order to possess the daughter, he shall succeed? No! This hand shall deprive both him of its object and thee of life at the same moment first."

"Thanks, thanks, *ma mère!*" she cried, embracing her.

"This obstinacy of thine hath turned to thy good fortune," she continued, returning with a caress the grateful expression of her feelings. "The claim he makes I have papers in my possession to defeat. But I can never forget that he has made it, and that before all men I and thou have been proclaimed slaves."

"*Slaves*, mother!"

"Caronde's slaves!"

Azèlie uttered a cry of despair, tottered, and would have fallen but for the support of her mother's arm, beside whom she sunk down almost insensible.

"Fear not, my child! The instruments of manumission, signed and sealed by his father, are in my private

cabinet, to be forthcoming if the crisis to call them forth should ever arrive. But I have learned that he has been carried to his fortress, heavily wounded, in the affray in the *Place d' Armes*, and may not live—which the saints grant! Rise, child; thou shalt never hear of him more from me, and I will forgive thy disobedience to my wishes, as he has not proved worthy of my choice or of thy gentle beauty."

She embraced her daughter as she spoke, who returned her unwonted kindness with a smile, brighter than for many days had lighted up her features. She then commanded her to retire, and kissed and bade her an affectionate good−night, saying, with a smile.

"I knew I should lighten thy heart, *enfante*, with my news. Caronde hath made himself basely unworthy of you, and thou shalt not hear, at least, *his* name again."

"Nor *any* name, I implore thee, *ma mère*. I will willingly die first."

"Nay, *ma chère*, we will not talk of that now; go to sleep, or thine eyes will be red and swollen with these late hours. The night air and burning oil are poison to beauty."

## CHAPTER XII. THE SORCERESS.

Thus speaking, the stately quadroone−mother left the apartment. The indignity offered to her by the solicitor of her daughter's person was not the only motive that influenced the change so agreeable to Azèlie in her manner, who had wondered that she had betrayed no regret at her disappointment in the loss of the young marquis, on whom, for his wealth and rank, she had fixed as her vowless lord, and whose suit she had for several weeks encouraged with the exercise of all her authority. A noble mansion, a train of slaves, gorgeous equipages, and a style of appearance above all other quadroones in the province, were temptations, both to her pride and cupidity, that were not to be thought lightly of; for they confirmed her most sanguine hopes for Azèlie, fulfilled the end of her jealous care and education, and constituted, in her opinion, the highest and happiest condition in which she could place her.

Such was the highest happiness sought or wished by the quadroone−mother for her daughter! Such was the fate to which each lovely daughter was destined— such the fruition of their maiden hopes. That she betrayed no regret, nor uttered a word of disappointment at resigning all these, but, on the contrary, was calm and more than usually gentle, surprised Azèlie as she reflected upon it after her departure. There was, indeed, a deep yet concealed cause for this, which, for the present, the quadroone−mother kept secretly hidden in her own breast, but which, if known to the lovely girl, would have redoubled the weight of heaviness upon her spirits that her kind parting words had so magically removed. The secret intelligence and duplicity that marked her smile, and the proud hopes that elevated her air and step as she retired from the boudoir, were lost upon the daughter, who, happy in the relief the words conveyed, sought beyond them for no covert meaning.

Whatever the secret motive might be that reigned so supremely in the breast of the quadroone−mother as to leave no room for natural regret at the destruction of long−cherished hopes, it was plain, from her manner, that it was sufficient to make amends for her disappointment, and must be a high and commensurate cause to induce her so readily to permit her daughter to cease to think of Jules Caronde.

That she was no longer to speak to her on the subject she so sensitively shrunk from was not to be believed. Azèlie was still a *quadroone!* Her spirited protest had not been understood by the mother, who, like the Circassian parent, looked to this disposal of her daughter as a natural and suitable one. If her feelings were understood, they produced no impression upon her. As well might the mothers of Europe cease to regard the hymeneal welfare of their daughters, as the quadroone−mother to cease to look after the happiness and interests of a beautiful child. To her custom has made concubinage as honourable as marriage. There was, therefore, still another trial in store for Azèlie.

These reflections, however, scarcely flitted across her mind, and left no more permanent impression than the wing of the swallow upon the still lake. She thought only of her present happiness, and scarcely restrained herself from flying to her brother and communicating the intelligence. Once she thought of the *power* of the fierce young marquis, and that it might be greater than her brother's, and she looked up to heaven, as if her hope was there, and became reassured.

She was now about to prepare for her late toilet, when the sonorous calls of the sentries throughout the city drew her to the lattice where she had before been seated. She listened to the answering cries, loud and prolonged, of "*All's well!*" at first with a startled ear, and then with a strange delight, as voice after voice broke the stillness and died away in the distance. She then cast a hasty glance at the quiet sky, with its heraldry of stars, and with the half−breathed wish of a child that she was there, far from the world's woes, was about to retire from the chilly night air, when a rustling in the branches of a tree before the lattice attracted her ear and eye. While in a half−flying attitude she endeavoured to penetrate the shadow into which the lower part of the tree was cast, a tall figure, wrapped from head to feet in a mantle, suddenly stepped forth from the obscurity, and, ere she could utter an exclamation either of terror or surprise, or fly from the casement, laid a hand upon her arm.

"Maiden, fear not—cry not out! I am thy friend, and am here to save and bless thee!"

The voice was gentle and kind, and was that of a woman. She repressed the cry of alarm that rose to her lips, and said with firmness,

"What would you with me?"

"I may not speak with thee here, without," she said, releasing her hold upon her arm; and, passing through the doorlike window, she entered the boudoir.

Azèlie retreated to the centre of the room, and gazed upon her with emotions more of surprise and curiosity than of fear; for the singularly gentle and kind tones of her voice had instantly and surprisingly dispelied all anxiety for her own safety, even when she found herself alone with her.

"A gorgeous abode, gentle maiden," said the extraordinary intruder, looking round the rich apartment, which was seen by the soft light diffused by the fragrant lamp. "It becomes thy birth; this is as it should be! Nay, drop not thy head! Thou thinkest I mock thee, and that there is irony in my words. Thou wilt one day learn, my Lalla, that I speak no riddles. 'Tis well," she added, surveying the sumptuous furniture and silken drapery; "'tis befitting thee! I would have it so. There is an altar! thou art a Christian, too! they have taught thee this faith! Whose is this crucifix?" she demanded, taking up the image.

"Mine, mother!"

"There is but one God, and Mohammed is his prophet," she repeated, in a deep, impressive voice.

"Surely I have heard those words before!" exclaimed Azèlie, starting with sudden recollection; "and thy form and voice are like an indistinct passage of a halfremembered dream of childhood."

"Bless thee, child'!' said the woman, with a smile of pleasure, "thou hast not forgotten all! Memory hath been faithful to her trust. Let me kiss thy hand in token of my gratitude."

Ere she could withdraw it, she enthusiastically, and with a look and air of adoration, seized and pressed her lips upon it.

"Who art thou, strange woman?" demanded Azelie, with increasing wonder.

"Thy guardian angel. One who will watch over thee for thy good; who will defeat the machinations of thine enemies, and secure thy happiness on earth. Dost thou know me?"

"No, mother!"

"Wilt thou believe and trust me?"

"I will," she said, earnestly; "for friends to the unfortunate are prized jewels not to be cast aside. The sound of thy voice wins me. I will believe thou seekest my good."

"It is enough. I knew it. I knew I should find thee of this spirit. Bless thee, child. Enemies are around thee. But I know thy virtue, and the guilty persecutions and evil machinations of the wicked and beautiful woman who left thee but now. Fear her not. I have power over her that you know not of. Power to make her spirit tremble. One word from me will be a poisoned dagger to her heart. Thy trials are not yet over. I foresee danger to thee in the future. It is even close at hand. But fear not! I, who foresee the evil, can see the remedy. Trust to me, and thou shalt be triumphant. The trial is less for thee than for the retribution of one who, ere the morrow's sun, will have sought thee out and found thee; for the fame of thy beauty hath reached him."

"Save me, I beseech thee, mother! Thy foreboding words are death!" she cried, supplicating her with clasped hands.

"Nay, in thy utmost peril, lay not a hand upon thy life! Here is a token of my truth. Take it and wear it. It will ever command my power and presence! When thou art in thy greatest extremity, use it."

She took from her neck a small hollow circlet of gold, on which were inscribed some Arabic verses, surrounding an amethyst of singular shape, in the centre of which was graven a mysterious sign, and placed it around her neck.

"Now, child of my heart, thou art under my protection, and that of the good spirits. No harm shall attend thee, though the danger that hangs over thee will be great and imminent." She then placed her hand upon her head, and, looking upon her pale but beauteous face, said, as if unconscious of speaking aloud.

"There is the brow and eye of the mother—the firm and beautiful lip of the sire. Maiden, thou art very fair. There is no wonder that thy beauty hath been, even as thy mother's was, a bane to thee! But thy mother's fate shall not be thine."

"Bless thee, bless thee for that word!" cried Azèlie, gratefully.

"Dost thou know of whom I speak? Nay, thou canst not; nor neither shall the quadroon's fate be thine, gentle Lalla."

"Why call me Lalla, good mother?"

"It is thy name."

"Nay, Azèlie."

"Be it so. Thou art Lalla to me. Adieu. I have watched thee many a night when thou knewest it not. The hawk hath now slipped its jess, and it becomes the keeper of singing birds to be present and watchful. Therefore have I come hither now to put thee on thy guard, and bid thee hope. I would have thee know me too. See that no one, not even thy brother, knoweth of our interview! Is he abroad still?"

"He is with a Spanish cavalier who has been wounded—"

"And is beneath this roof. He hath done well. How fares the stranger, maiden?"

"He hath slept," she answered, quickly.

"He will be better, then. Guard thy heart, for speech of him, I perceive, is already a talisman to call the blood to thy brow."

"Is he not worthy?" she asked, earnestly.

"If thy beauty and gentleness can win him, he is worthy to win and wear even *thee*," she said, with a smile that made even her dark countenance pleasing. "Now, good−night. I must go and make a visit of a sterner kind to a warrior, and not to a maiden;" and, once more kissing the hand of the surprised Azèlie, she hastily passed through the window, and vanished amid the foliage.

While the bewildered Azèlie, to whom this brief visit had been like a dream, still stood on the spot where the sorceress had parted from her, gazing after her dark, tall form, and wondering in her mind at the event, a light touch was laid upon her shoulder, and, looking round, she beheld standing behind her her brother, who that moment had taken his leave of the young Spaniard.

"I heard a voice besides thine, sister; and this eager attitude I find thee in, with thy gaze towards the garden! Ha! there is no wind to move yonder acacia!" he cried, darting past her.

"Stay, brother, stay!" she cried, holding him by the hand ere he could break from her.

"Thou hast not been alone, then," he said, obeying, and eying her with a look of inquiry; "I know you too well," he added, with the tone of confidence due to her truth and love, "to believe there has been anything wrong, whoever hath been with thee. It is enough for me that you wish the intruder to escape."

"Dearest Renault, I should die to labour under your suspicions. Your generosity weighs more with me than the command I received to keep her presence a secret. Moreover, thou thyself hast discovered it."

"It is but a woman, then?"

"A woman, indeed, but one whose voice and words had strange power over me," she said, in an impassioned tone.

"Was she not known to thee?" he asked, in surprise.

"No, brother; yet with early memories her tall figure is strangely mingled."

"*Tall!* Ha! this chimes! Wore she a gray mantle that descended to the ground?" he eagerly demanded of her.

"You have seen her, then, Renault!"

"I must believe that I have, and that it is the same who bade me succour the Spanish cavalier. Spoke she of this wounded stranger?"

"She did, and commended you for bringing him hither."

"It is the same. What will come of it all? It is mysterious. What interest can she have in thee? What was the matter and manner of her visit?"

In a few words she related to him all that had transpired, not omitting the interview with her mother, and then watched earnestly the expression his thoughtful face assumed after she had ended.

The maturer mind of Renault was deeply impressed by her narration. He judged and weighed together corresponding facts without the medium of passion. He took a calm and rational survey of what had been said and done at both interviews. The result was, he arrived at the just and certain conclusion that his mother had laid some deep and dangerous plot for the sacrifice of his sister, and that it was discovered by this singular woman, who had warned her against it. Who could she be, or why she should take such an interest in his sister, he was unable to divine. He did not communicate his opinions to Azèlie, but internally resolved to discover the conspiracy, if such there was, ere it should ripen, and, in the mean while, watch over her safety against enemies, within and without, with double diligence.

"What think you, brother?" she asked, seeing him so long silent and thoughtful.

"That Heaven hath given thee another protector besides thy brother. I came hither to bid thee good−night, and

pray thee to keep within till my return at noon. Walk not even in the garden, nor abroad, save at mass. Nay, this barricade must be dropped."

As he spoke he touched a bar, and a framework of iron slid from the wall, and, catching in the opposite side of the window, presented a firm barrier to egress or ingress. "Thou wert careless, child, to leave this open, knowing your danger from Caronde and his minions. This visit of the sorceress, as thou callest her, is a warning to thee! What said she of our mother? was it not that she had power over her?"

"That would make her tremble!"

"Ah! this knowledge may be of use to me. I will bear it in mind. Now good−night, dearest. Haste to thy couch, and in the morning see that our guest is well entertained, even as his need and wounded state shall require."

"Is he better?"

"Not so well. Let him be kept quiet."

Thus speaking, he affectionately took leave of his sister, and departed by the door leading to his mother's apartments. Azèlie, soon afterward retiring to her chamber, took up her mandoline, and, accompanying it with her voice, created that flood of melody which fell on the ravished ears of the cavalier, and lulled his senses into sweet and calm repose. In a few minutes afterward she herself was asleep, and dreaming that she was watching by the pillow where she had left her heart.

## CHAPTER XIII. SCENE BETWEEN THE QUADROONE−MOTHER AND HER SON.

Renault closed the door behind him, and, crossing a small paved hall, tapped lightly at a half−open door on the opposite side.

"Come in, Renault," said the richly−toned voice of his mother.

He entered a sumptuous chamber, characterized by luxury and voluptuous ease, and found his mother reclining on one of those elegant open couches so much in use in tropical countries. She half rose to receive him with an indolent, indifferent air, in which coldness rather than affection was predominant.

"What have you come for, Renault?" she asked, without looking upon him.

"My beloved sister's happiness," he said, firmly.

"You are ever a marplot, boy," she said, quickly, fixing upon him an angry glance.

"Azèlie shall never submit to the fate of her race. She is too lovely and pure. She has all the virtues of a wife, and none of the vices of a mistress. Ere she shall be one, I will kill her with my own hand."

"Thou wouldst be a fratricide to save thy sister's honour! Azèlie is a quadroone, and must fulfil her destiny. Surely there is nothing degrading to her. She has all the luxuries and privileges of a wife, without its obedience and slavish duties. I would rather be thy father's concubine than his wedded wife. This silly notion and sickly sentiment that has possessed thee, boy, and with which the girl has gone mad, will ne'er make her a bride. The law has forbidden her marriage with a cavalier and gentleman, and she shall never wed with a quadroon."

"It were more honourable to be the wife of a slave than to be the mistress of a prince."

"This is high language. Dost thou forget that thou art a quadroon, and that thy sister is one also?"

"Dishonour in a quadroone is no less dishonour."

"Has not the very law that has forbidden honourable marriage legalized its substitute, boy, and made it honourable? If we are forbidden to marry, there is no guilt in all that we have left to us—wedlock without priest."

"I cannot reason with thee, mother. Education— thy own life—all that thou seest around thee, strengthen thee in thy singular opinion. I have thought that female virtue in a daughter was dear to a mother."

"So it is; and it is therefore that we provide for our daughters, whom we cannot wed to whom we would, suitable protectors."

"Paramours, you should have said. But this, you say, is not true, mother. Quadroones may wed with quadroons; though so differently are our men educated, that I must allow with sorrow that the union would be unequal. Cease to educate your daughters as baits to criminal passion, and their conditions will be less unequal. It is your pride, your love of display and finery, your female ambition and envious desire to surpass wives and honourable mothers, ay, to rob them of the honourable love which is justly their due; to share favours which are not thine own, but belong to those whose title and claim to them is more sacred than thine! Seek not to cast the blame upon others; the fault lies in thee, and the secret of it is guilty ambition, that, to attain its end, has degraded female virtue to an article of merchandise, till our sisters are become a proverb and a by−word."

While the indignant youth was speaking, she fixed her large eyes upon his excited countenance with surprise, which, as he ceased, changed to anger.

"Slave, thou hast sealed thy fate, and that of her thou hast dared to teach rebellion."

"Ha! what mean you by this dark threat?" he cried, alarmed at the malicious energy of her voice and manner more than by the words.

"I hold in my hands the papers of my manumission, which the marquis gave me and forgot to record."

"Then hath Heaven preserved them to prevent the commission of a blacker crime than earth hath ever witnessed. But that cold, dark eye tells me thou hast not told me this for any good. Out with thy wickedness."

"Azèlie, as I have this night told her, shall never more be troubled with thy brother's suit. I have higher game than even he!"

"I knew it, and came here to find it out," he exclaimed.

"Knew it!" she repeated, with amazement; "how knew you it?"

"By knowing *thee!*" he replied, in a tone and manner that caused her to change colour, and for an instant shake

her foot, that rested on an ottoman by her couch, with a rapid and nervous motion. "I knew," he added, observing the effects of his words, "that thou wouldst never give up an end which thou hast had so near to thy heart as this sale of Azèlie to the Marquis of Caronde, unless thou hadst a full equivalent for him."

She smiled meaningly, and then said, in a slow, deliberate tone of voice, "I have done with Jules; he shall never be master nor protector to your sister; who will be, I shall not mention. But mark me, if you step between her and me in my future plans for her happiness and best interests, I will place the papers of my manumission in the hands of the Spanish governor Osma, and enslave her to him."

"And thyself—"

"I care not for myself, so that I punish her pride and have my revenge of thee."

"Thou art an incarnate fiend if thou didst give me birth—*if* thou didst—for methinks thou shouldst have been my brother Jules's mother."

"Ah! what is this thou sayest?" she cried, quickly, following him with her eyes as he strode across the room, spurred by his excited feelings. But, instantly seeing that he spoke at random, and meant no more than he said, she recovered her composure; for her face had flushed, and she had half risen to her feet at his insinuation.

"*Dare* to do this thing, woman!" he said, returning to her and almost whispering, so deep was his voice, which seemed to issue from his soul.

She quailed before his piercing eye and menacing tones, yet her spirit was not less firm than his.

"I will do it, if thou come between me and thy sister."

"Azèlie shall become the bride of Death ere she shall live in guilt," he replied, resolutely.

"If she becomes a slave, thou mayst thank thy fraternal care and *love!*"

"Thou art my mother, and I may not use violence towards thee, as I am tempted to do, to get possession of those papers. But, I repeat, beware how thou makest use of them!"

"Beware how thou thwart my plans!" she responded, in the same tone.

For a few moments Renault stood lost in thought. All at once a change came over his countenance, as if hope had been suddenly revived. With a careless air, and assuming the indolent action of his mother, he cast himself upon an ottoman beside the couch, and said, with a light laugh,

"Well, well, *ma mèré!* have it thy own way."

She gave him her soft, elegant hand, the fingers of which glittered with diamonds, and said with a smile, which came like a flash of sunlight on her face—for lightning is scarce quicker than the changes of passion in the quadroone—

"You have done well, Renault. It is for the child's happiness and thy own that she be well cared for. You are armed, I perceive, and look as if you were about to ride. Attend to thy own affairs, Renault, abroad, and leave Azèlie to me. Thou wilt not repent it!"

"Maybe not—maybe not! This is a rare jewel on thy little finger," he added, as if for the first time struck with its beauty; "doubtless a gift from my father."

"It was, Renault. Ah, the good, dear marquis! He never thought I could be happy unless loaded with diamonds! Azèlie, I wish she could do as well; she has beauty enough."

"Never mind Azèlie, mother. This turquoise— was that given thee by my father?"

"It was a gift from him the day Jules was born."

"Jules! 'tis strange!" he said, with surprise.

"No, no—thyself I meant."

The youth fixed upon her a glance of inquiry, and then resumed his careless toying with her jewelled hand.

"*Ma mère*," he said, in a natural tone, though the expression of his eye, as he rested it upon her face, betrayed a deep purpose beneath his careless manner, "do you believe in dreams?"

"I used to in childhood."

"Thou dost not now?"

"No. They are idle nothings."

"Dost thou dream now?"

"Seldom, save in fever."

"Never of the sheeted dead?"

"No, boy. What mean you?" she asked, turning pale.

"Nothing; I did but ask you. I had a dream last night."

"Dost thou believe in them?"

"Sometimes."

"What are dreams, boy?"

"Dreams, some think, are of Heaven. I have also thought so. But I can understand them now. Thou hast doubtless observed that conscience sleeps in dreaming."

"Conscience!"

"Nay, I meant nothing. 'Tis so. Conscience sleeps in dreams. The moral sense is then wanting. Then we do commit the blackest crimes, nor think it wrong."

"Crimes!"

"Nay, I meant nothing. We do bathe our hands in innocent blood in dreams, and nothing teaches us 'tis wrong. Conscience — moral sense — that divine something which, when waking, accuses or condemns our acts, is then silent. 'Tis strange, but 'tis so. I have thought we act in dreams as brute beasts act— with intelligence, but without reason. And that, waking, we should by nature be and act the same way but for that *divine light*. This light sets like the sun in sleep, and leaves the soul to its unillumined native darkness. There are, *ma mère*," he continued, in an indifferent tone, "human beings in whom this light hath not shone when awake. Such persons, awake, act as if they dreamed, so far as conscience hath its play. Crimes to them leave no compunction. Thou hast heard of such, doubtless."

The hand he held trembled in his, and the eyes of his mother furtively sought his immoveable countenance.

"Thou didst not answer. It matters not: such persons have lived as I speak of. Christ pity them, and save them from wo; for death will wake them up, and give to them back their consciences, armed with a thousand stings."

"Of whom speakest thou, Renault?" she faintly asked, pale with some inward emotion she sought to overcome and conceal.

"Nay, I have tired thee: I will relate the dream I had last night. Methought I slept within a bower in the garden, when I was awakened by a voice, which said,

"`Renault, dost thou love thy sister?'

"`Dearly as life,' I answered.

"`She is in danger,' said the voice, which was like that of a female.

"`I will defend her with my life,' I replied."

"What said the voice?" asked his mother, eagerly.

"`Thou wilt, unaided, be overcome,' said the voice; `thy power is human, and thy enemies stronger than thou. If thou wilt save her, go to thy mother, and say to her that the Fates have marked the day of her death!'

"`Is the secret with thee?' I asked of the voice.

"`It is with her. It is the day on which she does with thy sister as she has meditated.'"

"What said she farther?" asked the Quadroone, with a contemptuous smile of incredulity; "did she not bid thee turn seer for thy wisdom, and prophesy in silly women's ears? Out! Renault! This mockery is too contemptible."

"I saw her!" he said, solemnly, and meeting her eyes with a searching look.

"It was courteous in the mysterious speaker to appear, after amusing you so long unseen," she said, striving to laugh, but with ill success; for in the ghastly smile that distorted her features she betrayed herself to be a guilty woman, and was in her soul trembling at the anticipated revelation of some secret crime.

"She was tall, very tall," he said, without appearing to observe her emotion, although keenly watching every motion of the least muscle of her face; "and she wore a long gray mantle, that covered her from her eyes to the feet."

As he said this, his eyes seemed as if they would pierce her soul. Instead of betraying the feelings he had anticipated, he scarcely knew why, she seemed suddenly relieved by the description, and breathed freely; for she had ceased respiring to hang upon the words as they fell from him, as if she feared some dreaded result.

"Ha! ha! ha!" she laughed; "thou hast made a pleasant tale of it."

This did not escape him, but he was not to be defeated. He was now more confident than before that there was some secret, the discovery of which would give him the key to her will; and he was fully impressed with the

conviction that the extraordinary being who had visited his sister in her boudoir was connected with it. He therefore betrayed no disappointment, but, in the same tone of indolent indifference in which he had detailed to her his readily−invented dream, continued,

"Her accent was foreign, which I thought odd in an apparition."

"Was it Moorish?" she asked, with a rapidity that surprised him.

"Nay, I am not skilled in dialects, but methinks 'twas something so; her face was dark brown, like a Moor's; and I noticed—"

"Well—" and she caught him nervously by the arm, and, looking with wild inquiry in his face, cried, "thou wouldst add something more—"

"And, now that I remember," he added, with a coolness that ill concealed his anticipated triumph, "beneath her mantle she wore the dress of a necromanceress."

The Quadroone uttered a wild shriek, and, burying her face in the pillow, her whole frame became convulsed— with what feeling, whether of terror, of rage, or of despair, or all three united, Renault could not tell. But, alarmed at the violence of the paroxysm, and almost repenting the course he had taken to possess himself of the secret of the stranger's power over her, which he had now proved to exist, he was about to confess his stratagem, and leave what he wished developed to the future, when she rose to her feet without assistance, but with the pallor of death in her face.

"My mother, forgive me," he cried, casting himself at her feet, overcome by the wo and anguish of her looks.

"Nay, Renault, thou art not to blame; Heaven hath done this thing. Be it as thou wilt with Azèlie. I shall soon be beyond all earthly desires and human ambition. Go: leave me, I would be alone."

"Not so: I will remain with thee till thou art better," he said, tenderly, and bitterly condemning himself, while he wondered at the power of the strange being who could produce such an effect upon the human mind as he was now a witness to.

"No, Renault, I would be alone," she said, firmly.

"Wilt thou not embrace me, mother?"

She returned his filial kiss mechanically, and then waved her hand commandingly for him to depart. With his mind filled with wonder and his heart with grief at the effect his words had produced, he obeyed. Her eyes followed him until he had disappeared by a door opening upon the corridor. She then bent her ear, and listened till the last echo of his footfall ceased; till she heard the sound of the closing gate of the mansion, and until the receding hoofs of his rapid steed, as he galloped away, could no longer be heard. Then clasping together her jewelled fingers, with a face on which fear and remorse were stamped, cried fervently,

"This hath been Heaven's judgment. My doom is sealed. The terrible threat, pronounced twelve long years ago, now rings in my ears like my death−knell. Yet the sacrifice has not been made; Azèlie is yet free and spotless! So shall my punishment be lighter. My ambition and pride have endangered my soul! Ah! 'tis strange, all! Do the dead come back again? Do they, invisible to us, hold watch and ward over the innocent they loved on earth? This is terrible to think of, when I remember of what I am guilty! My soul shrinks," she said, fearfully, closing her eyes with a shudder, "lest her sudden presence from the world of spirits should confound me! 'Tis wonderful! Yet my guilt is not consummated; Heaven hath stepped between my ambition and her innocence ere it had been to late! and Renault hath been its instrument! Doth he know, doth he suspect? Nay, it cannot be; he would not have embraced me at parting!"

She continued to reflect, now calmly, now with excitement, upon the events related, and at length began to weigh in her mind, as the impressions were gradually weakened by the scale of probability, the circumstances of Renault's relation. As she remembered he said it was a dream, her fears strangely lessened; and the supernatural influence that at first so vividly affected her sensibility, lost its power, till finally she was ready to attribute the whole to one of those unaccountable contingencies of place, time, and events, which occasionally occur, as if to bewilder the human mind; or, thought she, Renault, by some intelligible means unknown to her, might have acquired a knowledge of some mysterious connexion between her and a sorceress (which it was now plain there had been), and made use of it to accomplish his own ends by the influence it would probably have over her.

Arguments are never wanting when the mind would strengthen itself against its own fears. Renault had not

been absent half an hour, before nearly every trace of the emotions he had awakened had subsided, though they were not wholly eradicated. There yet remained sufficient traces of superstitious fear to ensure, at least for the present, the fulfilment of her promise to him, that Azèlie should be subject to his control. But the event will show that even this lingering influence became too weak to restrain her when tempted by her long−cherished interests and aspiring ambition, and that in moral as well as in spiritual things, the heart back−slides when the present fear that moves it is no longer apparent to the senses.

## CHAPTER XIV. SCENE BETWEEN GOBIN AND THE TRUMPETER.

When Renault left the presence of his mother, he traversed, with a hasty step, the corridor to the broad portal which led from the street to the inner court. As he approached the passage, his horse, which stood in a recess beside the closed gates ready saddled, neighed a recognition of his approach, and pawed the paved floor with impatient hoofs. An old slave at the same time came forth from the lodge on the opposite side, and, taking the animal by the head, led him out into the arched passage, which was dimly illuminated by a small lamp placed in a niche above the door.

"Has it struck one yet, Paul?" he asked of the aged porter, as he received the rein from his hand, and lightly leaped into the high−peaked saddle.

"It will 'fore you get to 'um barrier, young Mas Renault. These is troublous times," he added, shaking his head, as if wishing to exchange opinions with his master on the recent events, "when poor old African, in his gray head, hab serbe de Spanis' king. I nebber 'spec to come to dis!"

"Keep to the lodge, good Paul," he said, smiling, "and thou wilt scarce know the change till thou be called to serve a greater king than he of France or Spain. Take thy keys from thy belt, and let me forth. Thou keepest all well and secure. 'Tis right, when citizens' houses are stormed by ruffians in broad noon."

"They made good four hours' work for the smith I sent for," said the old man, angrily; "and the iron bar of the door is bent like a Comanchee's bow. But I have had all made strong again, as you bade me, Mas' Renault," concluded Paul, as he unlocked the tall folding gates of oak. But before removing the bar, he threw open a little square window in the gate, and looked out, with the cautious scrutiny of a practised doorkeeper.

"All is still in the street, Mas' Renault," he said, closing the window, and opening one half of the gate; for this, like all other entrances in the houses of the creoles, was a *porte cochère*, constructed to admit *volantes*, the only carriage then in use, to pass from the street into the quadrangle, around which were situated the apartments of the mansion.

"Thou seest our new rulers keep a quiet town, nevertheless," said Renault, as he tightened the rein, and settled himself firmly in his saddle; "I shall return in a few hours. Let not the bolt be drawn, after thou hast turned it behind me, for *any one* during my absence, save to let thy mistress to mass, as thou valuest thy head," he added, with impressive authority; thus plainly showing that it was his intention to hold the young Spanish cavalier in another light than that of a guest—as a prisoner. For such was the crisis of affairs in the birth of a new dynasty, that it became the foiled party to cling for protection to whatever held out the prospect of being made available for personal safety in the moment of personal danger.

Drawing his sword and laying it across his saddle−bow, Renault then struck his spurs into the horse's sides, and bounded through the dark arch into the moonlit street just as the clock in the Cathedral tower tolled one.

"I am full tardy! thou must make up for it, Baptiste," he cried to his steed, patting his arched neck; then glancing an instant to the head of the street which issued into the Place d'Armes, where he could plainly descry the dark body of bivouacked troops, relieved by the glistening arms as they caught and flashed back the moonbeams, he added, in a half tone, "There slumbers, like a tiger in his lair, our new master. I will to−morrow look on this Osma, and see if he be worthy to govern us; if so, he shall have my allegiance and that of my friends. The ever−active villany of Caronde needeth some offset, and I will be a sleuth hound upon his slimy track."

Thus speaking, he gave rein to his horse, and galloped down the long, narrow street towards a barrier at its extremity. The windows of the dwellings were all barricaded and dark, and his horse's hoofs alone broke the profound stillness that reigned. He rode on, without checking his speed, until he approached the barrier, before the gate of which a sentinel was pacing to and fro. When within a hundred yards of him, and near a narrow avenue that led between a double row of dilapidated old *casas*, with the gloomy and deserted government−house at its extremity, he reined up, and seemed to be deliberating whether to continue on to the gate, or turn aside into the dark lane.

"*Quien là!*" challenged the sentinel from the barrier, in a stern tone, ringing his arquebuss on the pavement. At the same instant an officer and several soldiers issued from the guardhouse and formed in a hostile attitude, while

a tall, dark figure was seen to glide from the shadow of the barrier along the low wall, and disappear behind an angle of the buttress. It instantly occurred to him that the form and height resembled that of the mysterious being who had commanded him to fly to the aid of the Spanish cavaliers, and who afterward had been seen by Azèlie. Prompted by the impulse of the moment, he instantly turned his horse's head to purpose her.

"*Quien là!*" repeated the soldier, still more sternly; and, although Renault saw that the muzzles of a dozen muskets were ready to cover his body, he rode on in the direction the figure had taken.

"*Quien là!*" was loudly shouted a third time; and the rattling of the muskets, as they were brought to the shoulder, reached his ear. He turned back in time to anticipate the word fire, which in the next instant would have been given by the officer, and responded,

"*Amigo*."

"Advance, and give the countersign!"

He galloped up to the post, touched his bonnet, and saluted the captain of the guard in Spanish as courteously as his impatient feelings would allow him to do.

"*Buenos noches, señor!* you are vigilant."

"*Servidor, señor!*" returned the Spaniard, with dignified courtesy, but not without the tone of suspicion. "The countersign, signor, if it please you?"

"Who was the person that just left the post as I came up?"

"The countersign, signor?" repeated the officer, decidedly.

"Orleans and Spain."

"Bien! *Pasé*."

"Nay, who left the barrier but now?"

"Whether man or woman, I know not. 'Tis a singular messenger the captain−general has chosen to send with a countermand of an order he had given out an hour ago, to fire the town at dawn. A word or two caught my eyes in the folds, and I opened it against orders and learned this!"

"Surely such an order was never given out?"

"I received mine as captain of the posts on this side of the city not half an hour since, and now this tall, gray page of his excellency hath left this countermand." He handed to him, as he spoke, one of the orders written by the Moor.

"Then Osma hath a devil's nature in him!" he exclaimed, in creole French, as he perused the evidence of such a sanguinary command having been issued by the new governor, though afterward countermanded. "If this figure was *hers*," he said to himself, "she hath been the instrument of this change of mind in him! She hath saved the city, or I have no knowledge. Nay, close the gate; I will not go forth now. Adieu, signor!" he cried, and galloped onward in the direction he had seen the figure vanish from his sight.

He rode a few moments rapidly along the street that was bounded by the wall, and issued in an open space among ruins and ravines, through which there was no passage for a man on horseback, without discerning any trace of the object of his pursuit, though, from the rate at which he had ridden, he must have overtaken any not absolutely running at the top of their speed. He leaped from his horse, and, leaving him beside what appeared to be an uninhabited hovel of stones on the verge of the ruins, clambered over the broken walls and descended into the ravine, in the shadow of which he thought he described a moving object. He was not deceived; for an instant afterward he beheld the same tall, gray figure leave the outlet of the *bayou* some distance from him, and proceed across a desolate palce, bordered with a few scattered houses of the meanest description, and take her course with swift but equal strides towards the south barrier of the city.

Without hesitation he descended the ravine, rapidly following it to its source, and issued on the level space beyond; but he here again lost the figure in a clump of India−trees that shaded the guardhouse on the opposite side. He crossed the place at a rapid pace, and in a few moments came upon the barrier.

"*Quien là?*" cried the startled sentinel, bringing his arquebuss to his shoulder, and cocking it.

"Camarada," he replied, advancing.

"The countersign?"

"Orleans and Spain."

"*Pasé*."

"Who crossed your post just now?" eagerly demanded Renault of the sergeant of the guard, who came forth with a paper in his hand.

"The devil, I believe; and left this countermanding order from the general."

"You are at the barrier early, sir."

"Draw no bolt, soldier, I do not go forth," said Renault, seeing him preparing to let him out. "Which way went the governor's messenger?" he asked.

"Three fathoms at a step towards the east," answered the sergeant, with a laugh.

"*Gracias, señor!*" returned Renault, and flew forward in the direction indicated.

Twice he thought he saw the dim outline of a human form gliding beneath the grove of Pride of India trees that was before him, and he followed it like the wind. But, on reaching the spot, all was silent, and the seemingly illusive object of his pursuit as far from him as before. At length he came to the head of the Rue Ursuline, down which, from the nature of the ground, the pursued must have turned, and which, for two squares, lay exposed to the moonlight; but all was motionless. Not an object was visible in the whole range of his vision. He was about to turn back, and give up the vain pursuit in despair, when he heard close to his ear the same voice that arrested his steps as he was returning the previous evening from the council−chamber.

"What seek you?" was the stern demand.

His blood retreated to his heart with the suddenness of surprise rather than of fear, to which his bold spirit was a stranger; and, looking round, he beheld, standing within three feet of him, the tall, gray−hooded figure which, not only from motives of curiosity, but of intense personal feeling, he had been for the last ten minutes so eagerly pursuing.

"What seekest thou?" was repeated, in a voice of angry reproof.

"Thyself," he answered, firmly; though he drew back a step from the gaze of eyes that, from within the shadow of a cowl, shone as did those that rested on him.

"What wouldst thou have of me?"

"I would know who thou art, and wherefore thou takest an interest in my sister."

"Thou wilt know when the time is ripe for the knowledge, not only of this, but of what else thou desirest to learn of me."

"Thou meanest the secret of thy wonderful power over my mother?" he said, interrogatively.

"Thou shalt know all when next we meet."

"When shall this be?"

"Seek not to know, and beware that my path be not a second time chosen for thine! Thy steed awaits thy return! Go! thy companions expect thee. Haste! there is no time for thee to idle away in vain curiosity, to learn what is not yet for thee to know. To thy rendezvous; and beware how thou dost lead those under thee to give their allegiance to Spain, and beware how thou tenderest thine own. There will be employment yet for thee and a thousand spirits like thine in thy country's cause! Remember and beware!"

Thus speaking, the sorceress strode past him; and, entering a narrow defile between the convent and a street wall he had not before observed, and from which she had so suddenly appeared before him, was in a few seconds lost to his eye in the black shadow cast by the building.

He lingered a moment on the spot where she had left him, and then, with his mind full of wonder, began to retrace his devious way to the spot where he had left his horse. In the mean while, this animal became the object of the attention of two worthies who have before made their appearance on the scene, with more or less credit to themselves.

In the hovel, by the side of which Renault had hastily secured his horse, and which, if he gave it a thought, he supposed to be uninhabited, so rudely was it constructed of the fragments of the edifice over which he had climbed, were seated, when he dismounted in pursuit of the gray figure, no less personages than Gobin the First and his new friend and ally Boviedo, the disgraced and unhorsed trumpeter of the captain−general's guard. The room in which they were seated was scantily furnished with a dislocated chair having a leathern bottom, on which Gobin himself sat gravely smoking a cigarillo; a low bench with a high−back, filled by the paunchy bulk of Boviedo, and a slenderly supported table, on which stood a green bloated bottle half filled with a muddy claret, which was represented by the purple contents of a brace of tumblers that stood beside it, and which had just been placed there by these bibulous brothers. From their appearance, as well as from that of the bottle before them,

they had been passing the hours that had elapsed since their acquaintance commenced in a way that reflected credit upon the hospitality of Gobin, who, from the aspect of things, and the glimpse of an old woman asleep in a low cot in an adjoining room, was in his own castle. They had been conversing upon the new occupation of the province, in the course of which Gobin had given utterance to much of the witless wisdom peculiar to him, which must be lost to every ear but that of the edified trumpeter. Wine and wassail had made the two fast friends.

"What is thine office now, great governor that was?" asked the trumpeter, blinking and hiccoughing with the wine he had drunk, and pursuing the amicable conversation with which they had mutually entertained each other.

"Call me not governor now, gossip! for a title without power is like learning without wisdom; it is the bells that hang to a fool's cap, which without them were a cardinal's. Call me *gossip*."

"Gossip Gobin, then, what may be thine occupation and calling?"

"I am a cavalier on the town—a promiscuous gentleman," answered Gobin, emptying his cup of muddy claret with an air.

"Hast thou consideration with any honest caballero?"

"Caballero! that is Spanish! Translate me, gossip. Give us the rendering o' it."

"It meaneth partly a horse and partly a gentleman," answered Boviedo, with a learned philological look.

"An amphibulous?" asked, or, rather, assented Gobin.

"Not an amphibulous, gossip. Caballo is for horse, and caball*ero* for cavalier!"

"Is *ero* Spanish for gentleman?"

"Nay, gossip, caballero is."

"Then a Spanish cavalier is half orse. Wert thou a cavalier, gossip, thou wouldst not need to search for another war−steed."

The fat trumpeter rubbed his forefinger across his obese forehead a few times, as if endeavouring to disentangle the dilemma; but, finding it in vain with his narrow compass of brains, he shook his thick head, and again put his question as to Gobin's calling.

"As to my calling, I am called Gobin the fool; and by some, the fool Gobin," replied the jester, winking within himself. "My occupation is as folly is in demand and men's wit at discount; I daily served the old governor with my counsel when he ruled; for as diamond will only be cut by diamond, so a province of fools, thought he (and he was a wise man), can only be ruled by folly. If a priest wishes to send a message to a fair penitent, it is Gobin that is the confidential messenger thereof. If a maid would send a token to her lover, who but Gobin is its bearer? Ah! I am in demand, gossip! If mischief is on foot, Gobin is in it; prayers or plays, wedding or burying, a brawl or a mass, Gobin hath a hand in all! Gobin is the soul of the province! No Gobin, no government— no weddings, no masses—no sins, no sinners— no brawls, no fights—no mirth, no mourning—no burying, no deaths! Put folly out o' the state, and it would go lunatic. Too much wisdom maketh men mad; 'tis a proper mixture, like the baser metal in coin, that maketh the standard o' human wit. I could carry out the figure to your great profit; but I see no speculation in your eye, as the player hath it. Thou hast more o' this alloy than the true metal in thee. I marvel how I came to beget a friendship for such a winesack. Fill thy glass again; it may sharpen, for it cannot dull thee!"

"Nay, friend Gobin, I verily am in grief for the loss of my horse and my disgrace with my master," answered Boviedo, sorrowfully, and heaving a sigh that, with his words, instantly revived sympathy for his condition in the breast of the fool.

"Cheer up, gossip! I will see that thou have a horse ere the noon, if it be priest Buffo's padnag," he answered, encouragingly, pouring wine into his cup for him. "I am latterly got in the graces o' a youth who will win me with his sword a score o' steeds in an hour. I have done him service ere now! I took to him because his sister took to me, gossip. Not a maid in all the province hath not smiled on Gobin. This you will learn if you stay in it! I have done many an office for her, and ne'er would take a penny. She always smiled showers o' gold, and that was enough for Gobin. She bade me do her brother all the service I could ever, and I swore it; for she sent comforts and medics to the old mother when she got the rheumatiz."

"Who is this master o' thine? Is that myrtle sprig i' thy cap his badge?"

"It is a gentleman's badge, gossip. There's a secret in it."

"Who dost serve?"

"Nay, dull trumpet−blower, I serve no master! I conjoin with him as a friend—a sworn friend. By the holy marrow! he will give thee a horse an' I say it, if he have to get it from the new governor himself, by pitching him

to the ground."

"Give me thy hand, good fool," exclaimed the joyful Boviedo. "Let us give a cup to this brave cavalier, thy friend. What name and calling hath he?"

"Calling!" repeated Gobin, indignantly. "Dost thou believe we provincials to be all craftsmen? We are gentlemen cavaliers till found to be otherwise. Hast thou ne'er heard of my cousin Renault the Quadroon? He hath three hundred brave men at his beck and bid for the freedom o' the state. There will be doings, gossip, there will be doings the morn," he added, looking mysteriously; "let thy master look warily to himself; for in that he hath gotten the city, it argues not that he will hold it. Wait till the morn, man. There will be events! Here's to cousin Renault the Quadroon."

"Being thy cousin, gossip, here is to him," he said, filling and emptying his glass. "Is it he who did the fighting in the square and slew so many?"

"Nay, that was Black Jules, as men call him. A devil−born gentleman, with a cutthroat's breeding. He hath been in rebellion against the province because he could not rule after his father. Save us all, gossip! There would ne'er be found an honest man in his government. He hath great show of virtue, and talks loudly of patriotism. He hath a dark soul, with a bloody hand to serve it. But his hand will scarce wield sword again. It hath ended its mischief, and hath the colour o' red it likes so well. Wouldst behold a wicked man's hand?"

"Hath it more fingers than another man's?" asked Boviedo, with sober inquiry.

"See for thyself," said Gobin, taking from his bosom a human hand cloven at the wrist, and laying it upon the trumpeter's knee. Boviedo looked upon it with a cold shudder of affright, and moved back aghast.

"There was a good blow," he said, after Gobin, at his trembling entreaty, had removed it from his person. "Who dealt it, gossip?"

"My brave *bon cousin* Renault, who hath my blessing for it. Is it not a proper hand—shapely and delicate? It should have been his ears; for rogues' ears fetch a price now. Rascas will have the more work to do."

"It hath a diamond in a green stone upon it," said Boviedo, Gobin's words rousing his cupidity.

"And thus it shall remain as the mark by which all men will know it," he answered, almost with fierceness. "It shall be a sign that Orleans was made free the very hour she was enslaved to Spain, when they do see it nailed up in the broad day," he added, with a spark of that spirit occasionally emitted from his fitful mind, betraying, amid a medley of wit and folly, the existence of generous feelings, that held their empire independent of the obliquity of his mind. His head, but not his heart, was wrong; and when the latter, as it often would, did obtain a momentary asendancy, there was something in his character that commanded respect while he remained under its brief influence. He spake, therefore, under the inspirations of his feelings, with a degree of enthusiasm that for the time endowed him with new attributes, and caused the surprised Boviedo to believe for the moment that his character had hitherto been assumed.

"Thou art a valiant fool to be a fool, gossip Gobin!" he said, looking upon him with surprise and doubt.

"Thou wilt soon learn that Gobin's brain is motley like his costume," said the fool, with a sad expression, as if, by some wonderful operation of the mind, he had become for a moment conscious of his inferiority. "Poor Gobin, he hath no wit. Folly is his birthright. Mother tells me I shall die one day, and God will give me my soul back again! Dost know, gossip," he said, with a change−like thought to his former manner, "the devil stole away my wits when I was born, lest Gobin should be wiser than himself!" This was whispered as a fearful secret in the ear of the trumpeter.

"Thou shouldst go to the pope! He'll have it out o' his black clutches for thee, if he have to knock him down with the key o' heaven to get it! Come with me to Rome!" added Boviedo, patronisingly.

"Hast seen this key, gossip?" asked Gobin, with simple curiosity, his ideas flying rapidly from subject to subject, the lightest word acting upon his brain like a revolution upon the phase of a kaleidoscope.

"Marry have I, gossip! It is a league and a half long, and solid gold."

"How big, then, is the pope?" asked the fool, very sensibly.

"Seven leagues," said the unblushing trumpeter, whom Gobin's question rather staggered. But he had the gift of lying, and got over it without stumbling.

"I have heard o' his boots," said Gobin; "I would not like to have the cleaning o' 'em."

"He makes the devil do it for him," answered Boviedo, stoutly.

"And useth his tail for a brush, gossip, doth he not?" asked Gobin, gravely.

"Verily, gossip, thou hast a brain and wisdom in't," said Boviedo, who saw the fool had taken his vein.

"Nay, gossip, it cometh by contagion. I do but catch it from thee! The saints grant I take not thy lying with it, which thou hast come by in the natural way! It is by contagion I grow wiser than wise men I hold discourse with, catching their wisdom while they catch my folly to balance it. Thus do I make wisdom out of folly. Marry, gossip! folly is a rare capital i' the world."

"Thou art scholarly, good fool! Hath thy mother, who snoreth in her bed like an ill−keyed bugle, taught thee what thou knowest?"

"Nay. How got thy trumpet hacked so, gossip?"

"I' the wars."

"Thou hast thyself done it to swear by!"

"Nay, an' it were not done in fair battle, I will eat it."

"Then wilt thou have as much brass in thy belly as in thy face."

"Thou art witty! Come thou to Spain, and I will make thee tutor to the king's son."

"Art thou in favour at court?"

"None higher; the king hath nodded to me."

"I know thou art a courtier, then, by thy lying."

"'Tis true," said Boviedo, roundly.

"The lie?" asked Gobin, mischievously.

"That I am a courtier!"

"Then the lie is true."

"Thou hast, methinks, somehow the better o' me, gossip," said Boviedo, after endeavouring to make his dull brain comprehend the subtlety of his speech.

"I will puzzle thy scull anon; dost thou know what is a paradox?"

"Is it a tune?"

"A gamut for thy wit."

"Ne'er heard of it, good fool, as I am a courtier."

"I'll prove thee no courtier by thine own mouth."

"Thou art challenged."

"Are not all courtiers liars? Confess."

"Liars most villanous," answered Boviedo, stoutly.

"But thou sayest thou art a courtier?"

"Yea! gossip Gobin."

"Therefore what thou sayest is not true, and therefore thou art no courtier."

"By the blessed Saint Jude, thou hast rogue's wit. I am no courtier, as sure as my cup is empty. Here's to thy devil's scholarship, Master Gobin," he said, with an amazingly perplexed air, as he turned over in his mind the classical Gobin's paradox.

"I will prove thee a courtier again by thine own lips."

"Do it, and I will make thee a present of a new jerkin, thine being something worn," said the trumpeter, with animation, fixing his dull eyes upon the playful visage of the jester with mystified wonder.

"Art thou not a liar? Confess."

"Yea, gossip! I confess I have lied in my life twice."

"Twice in a minute!"

"Nay, in an hour."

"Then thou art a courtier; and being a liar if thou sayest thou art a courtier, then thou art not a courtier. So thou art both a courtier and no courtier."

"Thou hast got the better o' me in some sort, friend Gobin," said the trumpeter, staring in his face with inebriate wonder, and looking ludicrously bewildered.

"Save in round lies, I can square with thee over a bottle, gossip. We must finish the jug, then I will put thee to

bed; for state matters call me to be abroad. I have great affairs on hand, brother, of which, if thou hadst the tenth to do, thy head would be top−heavy, but not with good wine, as it now is. Didst play on thy bugle before the king?"

"Till he hath fainted with the delight o' it"

"Till thou didst affright him with thy braying discord. If mother weren't asleep, thou shouldst give me a note or two o' thy skill."

"I'll do it, gossip," said Boviedo, briskly; "if she wake not at her own nose, she will scarce hear my bugle."

"Nay, let her sleep; she is a poor creature, and hath not had an idea since she gave birth to me. It took her whole stock to furnish me out, gossip."

"I would thou hadst heard me play before the king, Gobin."

"Verily, brother gossip," said Gobin, with a sage nod, "it is a wisdom that hath kept cousin Don Carlos from turning his crown into a cap and bells if he listened to thee."

"He hath the art o' fooling by begetting, I have been told. He needeth not to go to school to learn folly."

"Let us drink his health, comrade mine," said the trumpeter, stoutly. "He is a brave king, and carrieth a long sword."

"Then be he henceforward dubbed cousin Long−sword," said the jester, quickly; "but, if he hath bravery, saints bless us! he should inoculate some of his warriors. I wot of some that have more wind than valour."

"That's a well spoken, and hath a moral to it, gossip Gobin; I'm a coward an' it haven't."

"It hath, and thou art a coward, nuncle Pauncho."

"Nay, sayest thou I am a coward, gossip?"

"By this green−bellied monster, that is thy twin brother, I swear it," answered Gobin, flourishing the globular−shaped jug, and bringing it down again upon the table with an emphasis.

"There lieth wit in that, gossip, an' I could dig it out," said Boviedo, with a tipsy, knowing look. "Wherefore am I twin brother with that green bottle?"

"Because thou art a wineskin, a liquor puncheon, a leviathan claret−bottle."

"Prove me green! prove me green, gossip!"

"I can prove thee green till thou art blue, from which thou art not far off. Thou art green in wit, and green to lose thy horse, and greener to trust thyself to me, not knowing me to be an honest man."

"Nay, gossip Gobin, thou carriest it in thy visage."

"Then my countenance giveth me the lie in my face. Doth my nose look virtuous, gossip?"

"Yea, as an icicle."

"And thine is a most modest nose; verily, it blusheth like a pomegranate."

"Nay, gossip Gobin, I will swear a pleasant jest lieth in the kernel of that speech, an' I could come at it."

"Make a hammer of thy head, gossip, and crack it."

"By my valiancy, thou art a humorous fool," said the thick−sculled trumpeter.

"And thou a bragging coward."

"Call me not coward, comrade."

"Thou art an arrant coward, a white−livered coward, a chicken coward! Dost thou deny?"

"Nay, I am a coward were I a fighting soldier, an it like thee, gossip; yet, being a trumpeter, I am no coward."

"Prove me that, and I will help thee to a steed."

"A soldier, gossip, hath his valour in his arm, his occupation being to lay on blows stoutly."

"Nay, his valour lieth in his soul."

"A soldier, worthy Gobin, hath no soul but the captain's word to go and come; to do this or to do that. He hath no soul, being one in the ranks. His courage, therefore, like a smith's strength, lieth in his strokes. Now, if he lay them on thick and fast, it is courage."

"Bravo, gossip; now to thy second−part."

"The trumpeter, friend Gobin, not being, as thou knowest, a soldier to deal blows withal, but to blow the trumpet, being, as it were, the smith's man at the bellows, his courage lieth not in his arm, but in his wind; and the longer his wind, the more courage hath he; and the larger his abdomen, the greater his wind."

"Who taught thee logic, gossip?" asked the fool.

"An' logic be a note on the bugle, I got it by induction!"

"Is induction a tune?"

"I will play it for thee, then thou shalt judge. There is ne'er a tune thou canst name I have not played before his majesty," he said, loosing his bugle from his belt.

"There be *braggato, braggadocioso, liaralto!* Dost play 'em, gossip?"

"I have them all three at my fingers' ends."

"Thou hast them at thy tongue's end, I will swear, gossip: play me logic."

"I will do it, so thou wilt ne'er come to listen to music again, if thou canst not hear mine."

"To it, to it, gossip; I would have a touch of thy windy valour."

The doughty and half−tipsy trumpeter, whose brain and abdomen were of nearly equal mental calibre, placed his brazen bugle to his lips, and, distending his scarlet cheeks like a pair of bagpipes, wound a low, preparatory note, and then blew a long, clear blast. It was instantly answered from without by the loud, martial neighing of a horse, which caused them both to start from their seats.

"*El diablo,*" shouted the astonished Gobin.

"It is a horse!" cried the trumpeter, on whose brain the image of a horse had been painted from the moment of his disgrace, while his wits had been ever busy to divine some means of making himself master of one, although his faith in Gobin's often−promised assistance was firm. In his eagerness to reach the door, he threw over bench and table, while Gobin, with a doubtful look, seized the bottle by the neck, and followed close in his rear.

When he opened the tottering door, they beheld, within a few feet of it, a finely−limbed white horse, standing with his ears erect, his neck arched, and his whole attitude that of a war−charger, who "smelleth the battle afar off, and cries among the trumpets, `Aha, aha!' "

"It is the horse I promised thee, gossip," cried Gobin, with ready quickness, instantly recognising Renault's steed. "Mount him and ride. Wo! ho! Baptiste."

"I fear me he hath a wicked spirit," said Boviedo, with hesitation, his joy at once subsiding on observing his startled eye and spirited attitude.

"Thou wilt ne'er be restored to thy condition of trumpeter, gossip, if thou falter. See, he knoweth me! Lay thy hand upon his mane."

"But he knoweth not me; I have a misgiving of him."

"If thou do not get on him, thou art an ass. Hast thou not won him by thy valour, as thy master bade thee do, else not come before him?"

"Nay, I have not struck a blow for him," said the fat Boviedo, eying the animal askance.

"Doth not thy valour lie in thy wind, and did not the blast o' the trumpet bring him?"

"Thou shouldst ha' remembered my flesh, gossip, and got me a quiet beast. He hath a devil in him."

"He hath spirit: climb to his back, and spur. When thou hast returned to favour, speak a good word for Gobin to thy master." Boviedo, seeing that the animal remained passive, and permitted the fool to touch his bit, grew confident, and, placing one foot in the stirrup, essayed to mount. At this instant, the cunning and ever−watchful Gobin chanced to see the plume of Renault waving above the ruined wall; and, prompted by the subtlety and mischief inherent in his nature, instantly vanished behind a projection of the ruin, and left his fat companion to the tender mercies of the animal's master. The broad back of the unfortunate trumpeter was turned towards the direction from which Renault was approaching, and he was, moreover, too busily engaged in the achievement of getting into the saddle to give heed to anything but his own footing, the while most tenderly soothing the horse, with many a Spanish diminutive of kindness, to induce him to remain quiet. Suddenly he felt the grasp of a strong hand upon his shoulder, and before his eye gleamed a sharp steel weapon.

"Mercy, in the name of the mother of Heaven!" he cried, taking his foot from the stirrup, and dropping bodily on his knees.

"Who art thou I find in the act of robbing me of my steed?" demanded Renault, with a slight smile, his hostile manner at once changing on seeing the fat, oily body of Boviedo. "Speak, or thou diest! By thy speech thou art a Spaniard, and art taken to thieving early after thy coming!"

"Nay, I am no thief, signor," he said, seeing the change in his manner; "ask Master Gobin, whom I have drunk

with; he knoweth me to be an honest man."

"Nay, cousin Renault, he is the greatest rogue in all Spain, and hath been sent to the provinces lest he should corrupt the kingdom with his iniquities and diabolities," cried Gobin, suddenly making his appearance on hearing this appeal. "He hath married seven wives, all living, and hath sinned other ways. See his lusty fat! He hath got drunk on the church's wine, and kissed a holy nun of seventy through the grate; look at his lecherous lips! He hath robbed the king's treasury, and slept in his pew of a Sunday fore−noon; hath he not a godless look! He hath killed a monk, trod on a cardinal's great toe, and twice sworn by the queen's beard, which is heresy! Moreover, he hath been a courtier, which were a summing up and a crowning of his enormities!"

"Gobin, did I not give thee a message to bear to Charleval? Wherefore art thou here?" demanded Renault, when Gobin had finished his testimony to the astounded Boviedo's honesty.

"I would ha' done it, but this bale o' swine's flesh tempted me to go iniquitizing with him. Should I tell thee, cousin, what loose questions he put to me respecting certain temptations o' the town, ere we had been acquainted ten minutes, thou would stick him with thy dagger—though, by'r lady! there be laid six inches o'fat to go through ere it draw blood! Out upon him, to get me to vouch for his honesty! Marry! was he not in the very act of stealing thy horse? an' thy dagger be seven inches long, give him one inch o' it aneath his ribs."

"Do it not, good youth; heed him not; he is brainless and thin witted! I am an honest man and true, as I am a Christian."

"He is a pagan, and worshippeth his belly. Stick him, cousin."

"Nay, Gobin, thou art at thy mischief. Thou art a companion of his, and, spite of the character thou hast given him, I will let him go, and shall make thee, he being a Spaniard, surety for his good behaviour. Thou hast an errand to do: delay it not!" he added, in a tone of authority. "Spaniard, wert thou stealing my horse?"

"No, signor, as I am a poor devil trumpeter! It were this graceless gentleman fool, who calleth himself cousin to your excellency's worship, bade me mount and ride, I having been discomfited of my own, he averring on the Gospels that he were himself the owner of it."

"Take heed, Gobin, what thou doest! Rise, signor! I think I can divine the cause of your discomfiture. Be patient, and thou mayst get thy steed once more."

"May the blessed saints bless your excellency," said Boviedo, embracing his knees. "If I get not my horse again, I shall break my heart of grief."

"An' thou hadst got on Baptiste, thou wouldst ha' broke thy neck," said Gobin, shaking at the same time his head at him, as if he intended to have his revenge for what the trumpeter had said of him.

"See thou follow me," cried Renault to Gobin, as he mounted his horse. "I have something for thee to do ere the dawn. *Adios, señor* ! If thou wouldst mount thyself again, trust not to Gobin's ownership, lest thou escape less easily than thou hast now done!" Thus speaking, he put spurs to his horse, and galloped away in the direction of the barrier he had first approached.

"Thank Heaven, nuncle Pauncho, that thou art standing beside me safely on thy two short legs, instead o' being astride that flying horse's back," said Gobin, in as amicable and confident a way as if he had not defamed his friend.

"He would ha' broke my neck," said Boviedo, instinctively moving his head to see if it worked right on his shoulders, likewise showing in his voice and manner no ill−will towards Gobin for his charitable backing of his character.

"Thy neck will one day be broken, gossip," answered Gobin; "but it will be by hemp, and not by horse. In with thee, cousin Spain, and drink or sleep, as thou wilt; I have matters to keep me abroad; and see thou stir not forth till I come back."

"The bottle is wellnigh emptied, worthy Gobin," insinuated Boviedo, taking the capacious jug from the ground, where the fool had dropped it on seeing Renault, and holding it up between his face and the moon.

"Thou wilt find another aneath the table. In with thee, cousin! If mother wake up, quick clap the bottle to her mouth, and she will be soon off again. *Adios, señor*," he added, after the manner of the quadroon; "when next thou choosest a friend, see that he hath less brain than thyself, which, by'r lady! thou'rt ne'er like to do till thou find one of thine own or thy father's begetting." Thus speaking, he bounded away like a harlequin.

"Good wine is too precious for an old woman," soliloquized the trumpeter, entering the house; "it shall ne'er be said Boviedo Pauncho e'er poured wine down an old woman's throat. This Gobin hath a rare wit— a rare wit hath he, an' I could get to the top and bottom o' it. Natheless he is rare, and hath wit."

Here, taking a long look after his late companion, who was gliding swiftly along the wall of the street in the direction taken by Renault, he closed the door behind him and disappeared within the ruinous tenement.

## CHAPTER XV. SCENE WITHIN THE BARRIERS.

When Renault left the ill−jointed friends, he rode rapidly back in the direction of the barrier he had left in pursuit of the sorceress.

As he approached the post, the sentry levelled his arquebuss, and challenged him as before. Renault hastily gave the countersign, galloped with unchecked speed across the avenue that connected the barrier with the *Place d' Armes*, and entered the dark lane into which he had been about to turn when first challenged from the barrier. The lane was bordered on one side by a few low−roofed, ancient houses, stuccoed with white plaster, having their windows guarded by upright iron bars; and on the other by a line of that universal shade−tree in the south, the "Pride of India," or "China−tree." They stretched their umbrageous limbs quite across the narrow alley or court, and so shut out the moonlight, that the horseman proceeded on his way almost in total darkness. At length he came to the extremity of the lane, where, stopping up farther passage, stood a vast, gloomy edifice, with a single tower at one angle, in ruins. It was built after the massive models of the age, with a low, elaborate facade, embrasures around the roof, long, narrow, iron−fenced windows, with a projecting balcony to each, and a surface of gray stucco, dingy and crumbling with time. It was in the midst of a grove of majestic sycamores; and so densely were they planted, it appeared to stand surrounded by a vast forest. The gateway, or *grande porte*, was a low arch, from which the keystone had fallen out, and the bastions of which had partly sunk. One of the massive leaves of its gate hung by a single hinge; the other was gone, while the long grass grew rank and thick wherever it could find roothold in the crevices of the broken flagging. It had the appearance of an edifice of a public nature rather than of a private abode; and an unhung bell in the tower, the decayed fragment of a flagstaff rising from the centre, and the royal arms of France carved in stone above the entrance, showed that at a former period this must have been its destination.

As Renault approached the gloomy building, with its dark, iron−guarded windows, through which the moon shone into tenantless apartments, save that the lizard and the owl abode there, he slackened his rein; but, without stopping, his horse trotted through beneath the echoing arch, and issued into an area open to the sky, the four sides of which were bounded by the inner walls of the edifice. All was dark and still around him, and the iron fall of his horse's hoofs reverberated with startling loudness.

In the midst of this court towered a lofty palm−tree, half shielding with its spreading leaves the whole space within. Beside it was a broken fountain, now become a silent and motionless pool, in which the water lay black and dead, while rank verdure grew around it. Here, as elsewhere, the pavement was broken and in ruins. At the opposite side of the court was a lofty door, which, from its height and situation, appeared to lead into an extensive hall beyond. Renault rode across the court to this door, and, without dismounting, took his bugle from his belt, and wound a low, peculiar note upon it. It was immediately replied to by a similar one within, and the quick fall of bars and the clanging of chains were instantly followed by the opening of one of the gates, and the appearance of a young man in the costume of a *courreur du bois*, like that he wore, but less rich in its decorations.

"I am tardy, Jean," said Renault, riding past him into a long, paved passage or corridor. A lamp hung above a door at the far−distant extremity, by the light of which numerous saddled horses were rendered visible, secured by their bridles to the iron bars of a row of windows, and guarded by two young men in the same costume as the other. "Are all here?"

"All, Signor Captain. Alfrède had feared something had happened to you with these dangerous times."

"I sent Gobin to tell him I should be detained till one; but he chanced to fall in with some gentleman of his own capacity, and forgot my message. Ha! Charleval is impatient!"

While he was speaking, a door beyond the farthest of the troop of horses was flung wide open, and a vast lighted apartment was shown, crowded with men. A handsome young man, dressed precisely like the quadroon, save the addition of a scarlet sash worn across his breast, came forth, and warmly welcomed Renault, who dismounted beside him, giving his horse in charge of one of the young men.

"You are well arrived, Renault," said the youth.

"Gobin should have informed you of the cause of my delay. I met him as I came in from the fortress, and bid

him hasten to say I should be detained an hour after midnight."

"There is yet time for action ere the dawn," answered the other, with spirit.

"Patience, Charleval! How is the band?"

"Enthusiasm itself!"

"I will see them."

Renault entered the hall as he spoke, and four hundred swords clashed together in the air to welcome him, but not a voice was heard; it was one martial ringing of steel alone, such as would make a soldier's blood leap. The apartment was lofty and wide, and beneath the white flag of France at one end hung drooping a Spanish flag, its silken folds soiled and torn.

Renault waved his sword in acknowledgment, and then, while every eye was fixed in silent expectation upon the two, walked apart with the young man he had called Charleval to a recess, where stood an elderly soldier leaning upon his sword, beneath whose military hat were visible the noble features of the president of the council. He was surrounded by several gentlemen in arms, who a few hours before were presiding in the council−chamber.

"Are we to ride?" asked the president, with interest.

"Osma's night−landing hath defeated our plans utterly," answered Renault, with mortification; "there is no alternative but retreat."

"For this we may thank the Count Jules," replied the president, quickly.

"My brother Jules hath more than this to answer for," answered Renault. "We must to the fortress, and plot now with Ihuahua how to recapture, now that we can no longer save the town."

"One hour earlier," said the other, warmly, "and Orleans would have been lost to Spain for ever!"

A few words will explain the character and object of this midnight assembly, and the ends of its leaders, which were so signally defeated, as it appears, by the sudden step taken by Osma in occupying the city before morning. In the first demand made by Spain three years before for the submission of Orleans, Renault had made himself conspicuous by cutting down the Spanish flag after the Count of Osma had hoisted it upon the flagstaff. This gallant deed operated as an act of oblivion to the memory of his acknowledged Ethiopian blood, and, in the enthusiasm of patriotic feeling, the youth of the province and city passed a resolution to receive him as one of themselves in all relations and circumstances. This at once gave him a high degree of influence, not only among the quadroons, but, being a youth of a military spirit, brave, daring, and patriotic, and gifted with eloquence, he soon gained a moral power over those around him; and in the preparations made for the defence of the city, and maintaining of the allegiance to France, he had conferred upon him the rank of major, and was appointed by the Marquis of Caronde, his father, one of his *aides−de−camp*. Two years having glided away without any interruption from Spain, the diligence of the citizens abated, their military spirit subsided, and the troops were so far disbanded, that only a nominal guard was kept on duty at the barriers of the city. The marquis, who had so long governed them under France, at length dying a few months before the second appearance of the Condé of Osma, the city became divided into two parties, which had their origin in the bold claim of young Jules Caronde, who, at the head of some forty young men as unprincipled, took possession of the government−house and the insignia of rank, and proclaimed himself governor.

This step was met with indignant surprise by the better portion of the citizens; but his gold, which he lavished freely, brought to his party a large accession from that class whose desperate condition any political change might improve; from men whose patriotism lay no deeper than their interests, and who, flattered by the notice of a noble, attributed to their worth what was due only to their worthlessness, and became willing "paws" to the subtle leader who would make use of them. The citizens got possession of the gates of the armory and of the treasury, while Jules and his insurgents maintained their position in the government−house and Place d'Armes. There they were regularly and closely besieged for twenty days, at the end of which time they were forced to capitulate: the *canaille* , in number three or four hundred men, being permitted to resume their occunations, and retain the freedom of the city as before, while Jules and his party were banished from the capital for the term of a year and a day.

They retired to a small fortress on a lake a league from the town, adjoining one where a horde of the "Ladrones of the Lagoons," ninety in number, had their stronghold, with whom they formed a treaty of amity, and afterward admitted, with subordinate privileges, several of their number to their companionship. These *Ladrones* were composed of outlaws of the province, escaped criminals from Cuba, and others who, by their crimes, had become

outcasts from the civilized world. Their position commanded, by various outlets, both the bay of Mexico and the river, and their pastime (or profession, it may be) was that of piracy. This they carried on by small, sharp−prowed boats of great speed, in which they issued from their inland fastnesses, and suddenly, like a troop of hawks, pounced upon their unsuspecting prey, whether it were the voyager descending the Mississippi with his richly−laden barge, or the lugger freighted with ingots from the mines of Mexico; while the murdering steel silenced for ever all claimants to the ill−gotten booty. Such were the *allies* of the leader of the insurgents, though Jules and his friends had no share with them in their piracies. Their alliance was based on mutual jealousy and fear rather than on feelings of love or amity; although, if kindred tastes offer any basis for friendship, the two chiefs should have been on terms of the closest brotherhood.

After the expulsion of Jules, which restored the city to its civic propriety, and made a happy and bloodless end of a civil war that threatened to over−turn the state, the citizens assembled, and chóse from their body six councillors or rulers, who, four months afterward, as has been seen in the person and conduct of their president, showed so much virtue and honest patriotism. Among the warmest movers for, and subsequent supporters of, the electoral government, was the young quadroon Renault, who also was the most direct and formidable opponent of the young Caronde. The hostility of these two young men had originated in parental partiality, and was nourished on the part of the latter by the various mortifications and disappointments of which he had been made the victim. He hated Renault also, naturally enough, because he was his brother, and had Moorish blood in his veins; but he hated him most for his virtue, and the superior rank he held in men's minds. He garnered up vengeance in his soul, and fed upon it; and, knowing Renault's heart's dearest idol, he resolved (not that the lawless passion which the beauty of Azèlie kindled in his thoughts was not incentive enough) to couple his vengeance with his lust, and with the same blow gratify the two deepest feelings of his bosom. Renault knew the heart of his brother well, and hated him, as the good man hates sin, with a virtuous and indignant hatred, and free from any mixture of vengeance. He also feared him and watched him!

Lest he should visit upon the city, in alliance with the *Ladrones* , some retributive mischief, the councillors had appointed a municipal guard, consisting of one hundred quadroons under Renault, and one hundred and fifty young creoles under Sieur Charleval, the son of a noble exiled friend of the Marquis of Caronde, and of whom the marquis became guardian on the death of his father. Between himself and Renault there existed a firm friendship, which had been formed on the eventful day Osma had been so disgracefully driven back to his ship. He was the leader of the band of "Seven Brothers," all of whom, save himself, had united themselves now to the cause of Jules, thus eclipsing the bright star of gallantry they had won on that day. About this time a deputation arrived from the Commanche warrior Ihuahua and his son Prince Tlasca, offering to come with a thousand men to aid the defence of Louisiana against Spain, if Count Osma should return. This extraordinary offer was viewed with suspicion, as no motive could be assigned for it; and answer was returned, that when the province should be in a strait to call in foreign aid, it would avail itself of this prince's courtesy.

Affairs remained in this condition until the day Count Osma again appeared below the town and demanded its submission. On the morning of that day it happened that Jules was in town with eight or ten of his party; for he himself, with small bands of his adherents, were permitted by the mild councillors, at the earnest solicitation of relatives and friends (all of them being in some way connected with the leading families of the place), to enter the town occasionally, and remain until sunset. It was on this occasion that he conceived the plan of getting possession of the person of Azèlie, by the diabolical plea of the bondage of her mother. It was the silence of the council that imboldened him, aided by a few of his former adherents among the lower class of citizens, who furnished him and his friends with weapons to attack Renault, unsuspicious of danger, in the public thoroughfare, and subsequently to assail his dwelling, for the prupose of seizing Azèlie and bearing her away to his stronghold. This latter step was only required to rouse the lion in the breast of Renault, and arm him with the deadliest hostility towards the author of it. The startling report of the arrival of the Spaniard had alone preserved the life and honour of his sister. At the news, the mind of Jules, which was ever active to seize upon advantages that would escape less subtle men, was impressed with a scheme to obtain an influence in the city that might ultimately lead to his investiture of the sole authority. He instantly acted upon the impulse; and, hastening from the assault, presented himself before the council, which he knew opposed to the Spanish yoke, and offered his services and those of his adherents for the defence of the city. It was a crisis that admitted of no deliberation; and, hoping the best, the rulers consented to accept the aid he offered, seemingly with much fair patriotism. This step

gained, he hastened from the city to the fortress, and returned with the sixty young men composing his band. The magistrates, however, with all the precaution circumstances would admit of being taken, deprived them of their arms when they appeared at the barrier, with the intention of returning them in the council−chamber, when the crisis should arrive for demanding their aid. They, however, had succeeded in obtaining arms of a peculiar invention from a skilful smith, who was a tool of Caronde, and were not long in making use of them for purposes of their own. Their object, whatever it might have been beyond the possession of the keys of the treasury, and, through the defeat of the Spaniards, to inspire confidence in the rabble, was, however, not only unsuccessful, but, as has been seen, attended with the most disastrous consequences to the person of their chief.

This hostile and untimely slaughter in the Place d'Armes, by inducing the captain−general, Osma, to land his troops and take possession of the city by night, also defeated a plan for his disputing his anticipated occupation of the town by daylight, which had been formed by the patriotic Renault and Charleval, with the consent and aid of the president and council. The plan had been conceived by Renault when the council was first called together by the missive of the captain−general; and he secretly sent a messenger, none other than Gobin himself, with a sprig of myrtle to every young man who had composed his former command under the marquis, as well as to those who constituted the municipal guard, and who were denominated *courreurs du bois*, from the resemblance of their costume to that of the Mexican hunters. This silent message was understood by every one who received it, as well as the time and place for the meeting; for, on sudden emergencies, he had before called them together by the same sign. There was no hesitation. Each youth placed the myrtle sprig in his bonnet; and, keeping himself away from the Place d'Armes, notwithstanding the excitement there, when night approached hastened to the well−known rendezvous. Hither Renault himself instantly repaired, after conveying the wounded Don Henrique to his dwelling, and found four hundred of the bravest spirits in the province, with Charleval at their head, ready to receive him. He here detailed to them a plan for defending the town, and explained to them the means by which it could be carried into successful execution.

Concert in action, courageous hearts, and the full determination to cast off the yoke of Spain, were sufficient, he said, to effect anything. "We have twelve pieces of cannon in the Place d'Armes, and ammunition in abundance," he continued. "In twenty minutes we can form a battery that shall blow the Spanish fleet out of the water. If the Spaniards are permitted to land in the morning, the first imprint of their feet upon our sands will be indelible. If they attempt to land, let us dispute their foothold, knee to knee, breast to breast! If we would be free, the blow must be struck this might. Let us march to the Place d'Armes, and save the city. It is a sword in our hands now, or fetters about our necks to−morrow."

"If we are defeated, Renault?" asked Charleval.

"I had laid my plans for success, not defeat," he answered. "If Heaven give us not the best of it, we must return from the town, and form an alliance with Tlasca, and try to regain what we have lost. The fortress of St. John will, till then (if God be not with us to−night!), alone represent the liberties of Louisiana!"

At this moment, the bustling and ever−busy Gobin came running to the hall, and cried that the Spaniards had left their ships in great numbers, and were making a landing.

"The battery, then, is lost to us! Alfrède, ride, I pray thee, and bring back the report. I will marshal the men, and be ready to gallop to the Place d'Armes at a word," cried Renault to Charleval. "Ride fast and free! If the landing is effected, the city is lost, and not a blow struck to save it! It is the night's work of Jules that hath done this for us!" added the indignant quadroon, as he turned to give the stirring orders for his party to mount.

Charleval flew at winged speed towards the spot, swiftly followed by the inquisitive jester on foot, whose restless desire to know what was happening on all sides would not permit him to miss seeing the end of Sieur Charleval's errand, whom, without doubt, he expected to behold attack, sword in hand, the whole Spanish army, and drive them back into the river, which would have been a rare spectacle for Gobin, and an event by no means to be missed.

When Alfrède reached the Place d'Armes, he saw at a glance that all was lost. The *levée* was already bristling with long lines of steel, and waving with plumes, while a squadron of Spanish horse was drawn up along the shore, ready to ride forward and take possession of the square.

He dismounted, and, leaving his horse loose, glided along within the dark shadow cast by the Cathedral, for the purpose of observing them and ascertaining their numbers, when he saw, waving in the sky above him, the white flag of France. He was more than sixty yards from the foot of the staff, and, forgetful of his steed, immediately,

and with but one thought in his mind, ran towards it. Gobin came up at the same instant, and, divining his purpose from the upward direction of his eye, bounded after him across the green.

Charleval already had the cords in his hand, and was endeavouring to lower it, when he discovered that it was entangled near the summit of the pole. Gobin also saw the obstruction, and, without a word, clasped the mast and rapidly ascended it. At this instnat they were surprised by the approach of a horseman from the Spanish party, who galloped towards the flag−staff, bearing the standard of Spain. Alfrède at once divined his purpose.

"Haste, Gobin," he cried, "and we may win a pair of them."

The rider came up as he spoke, and Charleval, turning upon him at the moment he himself was discovered by him, seized his horse by the head and struck the rider a blow upon the helmet that made him reel. Boviedo, the horseman being none other than the Andalusian, recovered himself, and instinctively interposed his trumpet between his head and abdomen, and several rapid blows which the *ambuscado* aimed at them. Never trumpet did such service! never brass met steel so stoutly! never trumpeter fought so with trumpet! The clash of steel against brass—the clanging reverberation of the hollow metal— the warlike din! it were no marvel the Count Osma believed his herald engaged in terrific mortal combat! When Charleval beheld the Spaniard riding across the *Plaza* to his rescue, finding his endeavours to hit his antagonist fruitless (such skilful and praise−worthy use did he make of his trumpet), he suddenly sprang upon him, pitched him outright from his saddle, tore from him the Spanish flag, and, throwing it across the saddle−bow, leaped into his place. Gobin at the same instant having disengaged the−cord, lowered the broad standard within reach of his grasp. The next moment, with it wound about his body, he spurred past the surprised Condé at full speed, and regained the rendezvous. On reaching it, he flung himself from his horse, and entered the hall with a triumphant step.

"The Place d'Armes is occupied, and Orleans is now under a Spanish king," he exclaimed; "but her flag has not yet been raised, nor the unstained banner of our own land dishonoured. Behold!"

He displayed, as he spoke, the Spanish banner affixed to his sword, and, waving it above his head, cast it upon the ground, and, in his enthusiasm, trampled it beneath his feet.

"Gaze on your own proud standard!" he cried, waving that of France in the air; "it is sacred to our cause, and be it consecrated the winding−sheet of every brave man who dies for the liberties of his country. *Vive* France! *Vive* Louisienne!"

Shouts of "*Vive* Louisienne, *Vive* France," resounded through the assembly; and, in the enthusiasm of the moment, all forgot that the object of their heart's wish had been defeated.

After Alfrède had related what he had discovered on his arrival in the Place d'Armes, and stated the number of troops to be at least one thousand men, and then, in fewer words, mentioned the part he had acted in getting possession of the two flags, he himself, with the president Sieur d'Alembert, Renault, and one or two of the subordinate officers, retired apart to consult upon the step to be taken for the expulsion of the Spaniards before they should extend their power from the city over the whole province. It was at length decided, after an hour's deliberation, to withdraw secretly that night in a body from the town, and hoist the provincial flag beside that of France upon Fort St. John, on the borders of Lake Pontchartrain.

This formidable body then broke up, secretly to reassemble at the same place at midnight, and there leave behind them that city which they had hoped soon to re−enter as conquerors. Renault passed the intervening hours until twelve o'clock in preparations for the contemplated movement, and then hastened, as has been seen, to see and bid a good−night to Azèlie, in whose charge he had left the wounded youth.

After his departure from home he again sought the rendezvous of the Orleanese patriots, or "*Amis de France*," as they came to be designated, where, after being turned aside by the pursuit of the sorceress, he tardily arrived, finding the brave band already some time assembled.

## CHAPTER XVI. THE PASSAGE OF THE BARRIERS.

Renault now informed them of Osma's intention and command given (though afterward countermanded) to fire the city. The intelligence was fuel to their patriotic resentments. After a few minutes passed in animated discussion of their present plans and future views, it was decided that the president, with the councillors, and a guard of forty young men, should remain in the city in their homes, to observe and report the progress of events, keeping only so far in concealment as the course of the new governor should render it expedient, disguising their object, and outwardly appearing as quiet citizens who had cheerfully determined to submit to a government they found it in vain longer to resist. This determination being taken as the clock tolled three, the young leaders embraced the president and his friends, and the order was given to mount.

The vast hall was instantly deserted, and above three hundred young men leaped across the backs of as many saddled steeds in the long corridor; for then, as now, in Louisiana, every creole was the owner of a favourite riding horse, was an admirable horseman, and was ever in the saddle. The vast, gloomy corridor now presented a stirring and martial scene. The doors opening into the court were swung back, and, with Renault, the president, and Charleval at its head, the spirited cavalcade wound around the fountain, their line moving half in the light and half in the shade cast from the spreading palm−tree.

Beneath the outer arch they halted, and the president and his party of young citizens took leave of the youthful leaders, and, turning aside to the left, rode along a by−street to the hospitable, dwelling of the chief councillor, there to remain until day should permit them to go to their several homes undiscovered.

Renault then gave the command to ride forward. At a slow trot the whole troop moved along the shaded lane by which he had come towards the barrier, where he had been challenged. The course they should pursue to get out of the city had been decided on between him and Charleval, provided Gobin, whom he had commanded to meet him, should not make his appearance, which it appeared he was not likely to do. It was their determination, therefore, to ride against the barrier, carry it at the sword's point, and gallop through to the interior; a course Renault determined upon only as an alternative to one less likely to arouse the city, which, for the sake of those in it, he desired should rest in quiet so long as the Spaniards would suffer its repose. This less violent plan was to send Gobin to amuse the guard, and trust to his cunning and address, when they should ride up, to throw open the gates for them. While he was regretting the necessity of a violent course, that might needlessly alarm the citizens, he saw directly before him Gobin himself, seated on a stone in the path, grievously bewailing, and perseveringly lifting up his voice louder and louder at every step of their approach towards him. To return a page or two to this personage!

When Gobin came in sight of the barrier, a few moments after parting with the trumpeter, he stopped suddenly, as if he just then remembered that the gates of the town were in possession of the Spaniards.

"Here be the Philistines, and Gobin 'll get a baggenet in his ribs," he said, with ludicrous fear.

At the same instant he beheld before him Renault, galloping across the avenue leading from the gate, and heard the quick challenge and reply as he disappeared in the lane.

His reply did not distinctly reach his ear, and he was perplexed to know how he should pass the barrier without bodily danger. "A baggenet was ne'er a bodkin i' the flesh. I ha' been stuck i' the thumb wi' a bodkin, and ne'er minded it," he soliloquized: "but a baggenet and a bullet make a penetration! I would I knew the password! Cousin Renault should ha' lent it me till I get by these enemies. I must needs now trust to my folly, as I ha' done all my life. 'Tis a quality hath stood me in stead, when wit would ha' ben hanged. I care not how many wounds they put in my soul, so they harm not my body. I am brave i' the soul, but my flesh hath cowardice in it."

He instantly turned from the street in the direction of the wall, which, by the aid of a bastion, he climbed with activity, and gained the top of a rampart at a spot about one hundred yards from the barrier. He ran, or, rather, skipped swiftly but noiselessly along the summit; and, without being perceived by the steadily−pacing sentry, in a moment stood above him over the arch of the gate. There was a bastion within reach of his foot, and he prepared to descend by it. The sentinel turned at this instant in his walk, and, seeing Gobin's shadow added to the bold outline of the ramparts, stopped short with astonishment, and watched its motions as it appeared gradually to sink into the shadow of the wall. Just as intelligence seemed to break upon him, his musket was mysteriously lifted

from his hands into the air, and he felt himself clasped around the neck by a pair of legs, and his throat grasped by no gentle hand.

"The devil has got me at last!" he hoarsely exclaimed, with horror in his face.

"And he hath caught no saint, brother! The countersign— out with it, or I will choke thee!"

"Orleans and Spain!" answered the soldier, between pain and affright.

"Treachery! treason! Ho, guards, up!" shouted the captain, rushing from the guardhouse on hearing the voices, but stopped with surprise at the singular scene.

"If thou open thy mouth now, villain, I will kill thee!" whispered Gobin in the soldier's ear. "A *bon noche* to thee, brother Spain. Have I disturbed thy sleep?" he asked, with great address, coolly turning to the officer. "If I have, I meant it not. Cousin Blue−cap and I are having a moonlight gossip o' it. I sit upon his shoulders, I being a−short−legged, and gossip something long in the bones."

"In the fiend's name, tell who thou art?" demanded the captain of the guard, who was now at the head of a score of men, all equally surprised at what they saw. "Gaspar, what means this?"

"Cousin Gaspar hath the lockjaw, brother," answered Gobin. "I leave him to your skill. Give him a glass o' wine; nothing like wine to loosen the jawhinges. Take thy arquebuss, Gaspar," he added, placing the weapon in the hand of the soldier, whose fear was rapidly turning to rage, which was not a little increased by the smile that he detected lurking in the face of his captain, who by this time began truly to appreciate the character of Gobin.

"Jump to the ground, and I will give thee a cup o' my best Malmsey, merry Jackanapes," he said to the jester, whose broad visage could not be long in producing its legitimate effect upon the risible muscles of those who for the first time beheld it.

"Wilt thou treat me fairly, cousin, if I get down?" he asked, warily.

"Down with thee, and may Beelzebub have the roasting of thy carcass!" cried the huge soldier, furiously, vainly endeavouring to shake him off, amid the maddening roars of laughter of his comrades.

The fool gave him a ringing box on the ear; and, leaping to the ground with a loud laugh of mischievous triumph, ran off with the speed of the wind.

"Nay, thy cup of wine, gossip mine," called after him the amused captain of the guard.

"I will give him a barrel of it," fiercely said the soldier Gaspar, levelling and cocking his piece.

"Hold! or I will cut thee down," cried the officer.

"I will fire if I die for it!" he answered, fiercely; and deliberately he pulled the trigger and discharged the piece.

Gobin, who had not got eighty yards from the post, instantly fell with a loud shriek, rolled over on the ground several times, and then, to the surprise of all, jumped up, and fled along the path taken by Renault with renewed speed, while, at the same instant, the soldier received the sword of his enraged officer deep into his shoulder, and sank, with a heavy groan, to the ground.

Gobin, who had fallen between sudden pain and affright, on getting to his feet, ran a few hundred yards farther, when, feeling his hand wet and glutinous, he looked at it with misgiving (for the pain had instantly passed away with the first shock), and to his horror discovered that the joint of his little finger was shot off. He instinctively gave utterance to a loud, terrific yell, and cast himself headlong upon the ground, where for a few minutes he rolled and roared in the most extraordinary manner—now with rage, now with grief, now with pain. At length becoming exhausted, he sat down upon a stone, and began to comfort himself with shreds of philosophy, and see how he could best turn his wound to his own personal profit and account, not forgetting, meanwhile, to bind it tenderly in his handkerchief. He was at length about to rise up and go towards the old government−house, when he saw the troop approaching, with Renault at their head. He then changed his mind and sat down again; and presently began to give voice to the wailings that reached the sympathizing ear of the quadroon.

"What aileth thee?" asked Renault, feelingly, dismounting from his horse beside him.

"Slain, cousin Renault! Slain! Bullets and baggenets! Gobin ha' got it! I have bled a barrel and a bucket full. I haven't two pints o' pure red blood left!"

"What hath harmed thee, Gobin? I see no wound. If any one hath hurt thee in malice, he shall repent it! Show me thy hurt!"

Here Gobin tenderly raised his left hand, and showed Renault the mutilated member.

"What brute hath done this?" he asked, with indignation.

Gobin informed him in a few pathetic words, and Renault bade him mount behind him and he would avenge him.

"Nay, he ha' got it; I saw him cut down by the captain for it."

"Then rest content, fair cousin," said Renault, with playfulness; "thou wilt ne'er be the worse for the loss of thy finger joint; the story of it will be worth to thee a silver penny each one of the seven times an hour thou wilt tell it, if thou canst find listeners so often. Go back to the gate, and couple with the merry captain thou hast told of, and see if thy blood−letting hath not cleared thy wits, for thou must, by stratagem, open the gates, that myself and troop of brave riders may sally out. Thou knowest, with thy quick perceptions, all I want. Do it fairly, and I will give thee a pension for thy little finger's sake, and no man shall say thou didst not get thy wound fighting side by side with stalwart men−at−arms. Bind up thy finger, and forget it till morning. I will then give thee golden salve for it. Go now to the barrier, while we ride slowly forward. Let me hear from thee within a quarter of an hour. All depends on thy address, remember, Gobin!"

"Wit, cousin, is not perfect wit without folly. Wit is a golden *louis−d'or* in the pocket when a penny is needed, while folly is its small change. As thou and thine are all gold coins, and must needs have some light money to pay thy toll through the barrier, I must e'en give it thee in charity. When thou hearest an ass bray, cousin Renault, know I am among asses, and that the gate is open for thee."

Thus speaking, Gobin, in whom the prospect of a pension and the consideration his wound would give him, with all his former character returning upon him, limped ludicrously away as if he had lost a toe instead of a finger, and soon disappeared in the direction of the post. He had not been absent above twenty minutes, when Renault, who, with Alfrède and his whole troop, had been impatiently listening, heard the loud braying of an ass just as he had turned himself in his saddle to give the order to dash forward and surprise the post.

"It is the signal, Charleval! The fool hath done it: though I must confess, much as I trusted in his peculiar powers and cunning, I had not calculated on success. It may still be doubtful. But let us ride. Fall in two by two, and trot forward in double file and close column!" he cried, spurring on.

The whole line was instantly in rapid motion, and, issuing from the shaded lane into the broad avenue, wheeled round the corner and pressed towards the barrier, which Renault and Alfrède both at the same instant saw was open. "*Victoire! brave Gobin!*" they both exclaimed in the one breath.

"Advance! at a gallop!" shouted Charleval.

"Close column, and spur to the rowel!" added Renault.

Sword in hand they came up to the wide opened barrier, over the top of which Gobin was descried, grinning from ear to ear with mischievous triumph and extravagant delight, capering and shouting as if gone mad with the excitement of the moving spectacle; while on either side of the gate, paralyzed with sudden fear, stood the astonished Spaniards and their captain.

"Orleans and Spain!" shouted Renault, as he dashed through.

"Orleans and Liberty!" cried Charleval, following him like the wind.

The Spanish captain looked on with fear, as if a troop of spirit−riders were prancing by, while with ringing chains, thundering hoofs, and a loud, rushing noise, the three hundred horsemen passed through the barrier into the open country. In a few minutes afterward they were lost to the eyes of the awe−stricken soldiers in the windings of a forest path, which penetrated deep into the gloomy recesses of the forest.

## CHAPTER XVII. SCENE AT MASS.

The morning sun shone on a stirring and brilliant scene in the Place d'Armes. Trumpets were sounding; banners of gold and green were flouting in the sky; arms flashed like noonday lightning; horsemen glittering with steel, and gay in plumes and velvet, galloped to and fro across the *Plaza*, and the voices of captains marshalling their men, mingled with the heavy tramp of moving columns, and the thunder of squadrons wheeling into line. The Count of Osma had commanded a *Te Deum* in gratitude for his conquest, and was preparing, with his whole army, to enter the Cathedral, where, obedient to his orders, the priests were already assembled, waiting only for his presence.

In few towns taken by storm has there been known any suspension of daily mass; and with the occupation of this province and subversion of the former government, the captain−general did not, therefore, desire to proceed so far as the suspension of religious worship on the very day of his triumph; and, fearing that the daily oblation should cease through his agency, he had yielded to the control of certain superstitious fears rather than to any feelings of religious veneration. With his proclamation for *Te Deum* to be celebrated an hour after sunrise, he issued an invitation, or, rather, mandate, for the citizens to assemble at mass as usual, promising that a space on either side of the crypt should be appropriated to the females, while the porch and places not occupied by the soldiery should be given up to the males: to this invitation he annexed an amnesty for all past offences, on condition of its being generally complied with. Consequently, when, an hour after sunrise, the chimes tolled for mass, the hitherto deserted streets were filled with citizens, the majority of whom were females, on their way to the Place d'Armes. Here the men lingered a while to survey the spectacle, while the women entered the Cathedral, and, with feelings of mingled curiosity, devotion, and expectation, crowded around the altar.

The count had just come forth from his pavilion, and now stood in front of it, surrounded by his principal officers, his hand upon the mane of his warhorse, accompanied by his daughter, the bridle of whose palfrey was held by the Ethiopian eunuch.

The face of the haughty chieftain was pale, and his brow, partly shaded by the sable plumes of his casque, was thoughtful and gloomy. He had evidently passed a sleepless morning since the departure of the enchantress, and remorse was as evidently not unmingled with the motives that led him to proclaim a *Te Deum*. He sought in it also the peace of his own conscience, which, chased by guilty fear, would fain fly to the altar for refuge and protection. The fitful clouds of emotion that now passed across his face betrayed a troubled spirit rather than a devotional heart; and his eye roved piercingly over the troops into the crowd beyond, as if in search of some person whom he feared, yet hoped to discover. At length, as if satisfied with his scrutiny, he assumed a more cheerful countenance; and, turning to his daughter, who, habited, *à l'Amazon*, in a suit of silver cloth scaled like armour, with a green robe fastened across her left shoulder by a single diamond, stood by his side anxiously watching his face, said, with a smile,

"To thy saddle, Lil! The troops are marshalled, and the mass waits our presence."

"I am most happy, dearest father," she said, pressing his hand and speaking low, "that you have the will to do this holy duty this morning, instead of the fearful deed thou didst contemplate. The glorious sun smiles on thy piety."

"Thou wouldst have made a rare abbess, girl! Thou art infected with piety, and hast prayers ready at thy tongue's end, like a saintly nun," he said, pleasantly returning her caress.

"Had I not religion, father, I should ne'er have had the courage to follow thee into battle at thy command. It has taken from me all fear of death, and so o'ercome my woman's weakness."

"By the red rood! thou dost not, in truth, fear death, as I have often witnessed! but I did lay thy gallant bearing to the blood in thy veins."

"Lay it to my faith and my duty to thee, sir, neither of which shall fail while Heaven gives me life and hope."

"Thou art a good girl, and a brave! Thy piety hath done thee little harm; yet I would, for my pride's sake, thou hadst borne thyself in the field as thou hast done alone by the blood that thou hast gotten from thy ancestors. Put thy prayers to account, then, child, this morning, for I know thou lovest thy father, and he hath full need of them!"

He spoke with scornful bitterness the last sentence, and, turning from her, sprang into his saddle. His example was instantly followed by those about him; and with his daughter on his left, and beyond her Sulem the Ethiopian, whose gigantic size and ferocious aspect drew all eyes upon him, rode to the front of the line, and gave the command to fall into open column. Having stationed himself, with his staff, before the grand entrance to the Cathedral, the whole body of troops, with slow and solemn martial music, passed in review before him. First came the cuirassiers, shining with poitrel and casque, mounted on gayly−prancing steeds, and moving noisily along with jingling chains and clashing sabres. In their midst, lifted proudly aloft, was borne a crimson standard, on which was inscribed, in letters of gold, "ESPANIA IN NOVO ORBE VICTRIX."

Then came the body of lancers, with a cloud of flying pennants fluttering from the upraised lances, and helms streaming with flaming horsehair. Then came, in a long column, the body of men−at−arms, marching in close phalanx to the slow measure of the military music, mingled with which, occasionally, was heard the deep thunder of the organ within the Cathedral. As they approached the entrance, the cuirassiers opened to the right and left, and formed on either side of the door: the lancers did the same; and the foot, marching down between the lines of cavalry, entered the church. The count then dismounted, which was a signal for the whole troop to leave their saddles; and, preceded by a Spanish standard, surmounted by a crucifix, borne by the *alfarez real*, the royal standardbearer, passed into the church; the dismounted troopers, marching six abreast in his rear, filed off to the right and left, and filled the entire body of the vast temple; while the men−at−arms occupied the sides, and the cuirassiers and lancers the centre. Lifting his helmet, which the soldier raises only to his Maker, as he crossed the threshold with Estelle by his side, the count dipped his finger in the font of holy water, and blessed his brow and breast, and was about to proceed on when his eyes rested on Sulem. They instantly blazed with fierce light, and he cried, with indignant horror,

"Dog of a Mohammedan! would you defile the holy church with your presence? Back with thee beyond the outer portal, and wait my coming!"

The Moor crossed his hands submissively upon his bosom, and retired from the vestibule amid the holy execrations of the soldiers, while with slow and martial tread the Count of Osma moved up the aisle of warriors towards the high altar. Numerous candles, towering like columns of marble, burned around and upon it; and with the dazzling display of gold, and silver, and precious stones on cross and crozier, with the rich dresses of the priests, and all the pomp and circumstance of Roman worship, the whole seemed a blaze of glory.

When the men−at−arms first began to march in, the priest at the foot of the altar commenced chanting "*In nomine patris;*" and, as the knight entered, he ascended it, chanting "*Aufer à nobis*" in a clear, distinct voice that filled the house. The count advanced to the crypt, and, kneeling above it before the altar, seemed for a few seconds to be engaged in inward prayer. He then lifted his head, and, apparently forgetful of all around him, was intent solely on the progress of the mass. The gorgeous apparel of the altar; the imposing manner and costume of the priests; the religious tone of the temple; the clouds of ascending incense; and the sublime anthem of "*Gloria in excelsis*," swelling from the choir and filling all the dome, impressed his mind with holy and reverential awe. His soul was overpowered; his spirit enchanted; and, willingly yielding up his senses to the scene, he deluded himself with the belief that his emotions of pleased awe proceeded from reverential piety. The worship of Estelle, who knelt beside him, was as pure as her own spirit. It originated in the soul, and was far elevated above sense. Her responses were deep and fervent, and her adoration humble and sincere.

After the adoration and oblation of the Host and of the chalice, and when the priest had blessed the incense, the count rose from his knees as if he were wearied with his devotions, or had performed enough of an accustomed duty to make his conscience easy, and began to survey the worshippers about him. His eyes, after glancing with military pride over the serried hosts that kneeled along the vast pavement, rested on a group of female worshippers on the left of the crypt, and became suddenly fixed, as if fascinated. There were many lovely forms clad in flowing veils, and many dark eyes of beauty in that group; but there was one figure—one pair of eyes, that timidly encountered his—that enchained his vision, and the glances of which penetrated his heart. They were of a most piercing black, yet so soft that they seemed to be dissolving in their own fire. They had no sooner met his, being inadvertently directed towards him as he rose from his knees, than they were again turned upon the altar full of adoration, while the lips of the fair owner moved in prayer. He thought she shrunk from his gaze with fear. He observed, too, that her cheek grew pale; that the hand that held the silver−clasped missal trembled; and he was

skilled enough in woman's heart to know that, though her lips were praying, and her eyes turned towards the altar with devotion, she was thinking of his fixed look with alarm. He was conscious that she was terrified, and he became more deeply interested in her; for her alarm heightened her rare beauty, and filled him with curiosity to know who she was. Passion at the same instant inflamed his bosom, and he inwardly resolved, if the maiden was to be won, she should become his. That she was a quadroone, the flowing lace veil fastened at the top of the head and descending to the feet, the raven hair, and voluptuous outline of the symmetrical person, sufficiently betrayed. As he gazed, his soul was fired with the guilty desire that had taken possession of it, and the sublime anthem of *Te Deum* swelled unheeded upon his ears, for thenceforward he had neither ears, nor eyes, nor thought, save for the fair creature who had fascinated his senses.

Beside the maiden he observed that there kneeled a dark and singularly handsome woman, who, from her air and manner, was her mother or her *duenna;* and he saw with pleasure that she had discovered his silent admiration of her *protégée*, and by word and look reproved the timidity with which she shrunk from it. He acknowledged her favouring part in this pantomime by a glance, which she returned with such intelligence that he was at once assured that the chief obstacles to his success were removed. It has been said that the Count of Osma, notwithstanding he was the father of a beautiful girl of sixteen, was still a gay and gallant man; and that, although forty years of age, female beauty had for him the charm and fascination of his youth. Enough, too, has been given of his character to show that, in seeking the indulgence of his wishes, he was likely to be restrained by no very lofty moral sense. It was Azèlie who was the object of his passion; and the proud and gratified look of her mother betrayed that the moment she had hoped for had arrived; that the plan she had conceived for the ambitious advancement of her daughter, and her own revenge upon the gay Marquis Caronde, had opened as she would wish it. From the hour of the Spanish governor's arrival, after being satisfied that she could look no longer towards the outlawed Jules, she had secretly determined, trusting to the surpassing charms of Azelie, to place her, on the first public occasion, in the view of the captain−general. The proclamation for mass presented to her active mind an opportunity not to be passed by; and, commanding Azèlie to follow her, she entered the Cathedral, and kneeled with her near the spot reserved for the governor. She saw, as she had anticipated, the effect of her beauty upon him, and her triumph was thus far complete.

The mass at length terminated with the brief ceremony of consecrating the standard by sprinkling it with holy water, and the benediction of the priest was pronounced upon the assembly. A thousand voices responded "*Amen;*" a hundred banners waved above a sea of plumes, and the organ sent out its answering thunder, while through clouds of incense gleamed the lances of the retiring columns. The Spanish knight, whose piety had so soon changed to passion, and whose adoration for the image of the Virgin had so readily become transfixed to a living maiden, after vainly endeavouring to encounter once more the timid gazelle eyes of the lovely quadroone, which had produced such an extraordinary effect upon him, left the altar with Estelle, and passed at a hastened step through the line of men−at−arms to the door. They here received their horses from the Ethiopian, and sprung into their saddles. With an impatient eye, the count then watched the lively tread of the men−at−arms as they marched forth to the loud, martial crash of instrumental music, and, as the rear platoon crossed the threshold, he commanded the cavalry to form column and trot forward, and ordered the troops to display their line across the *Place d'Armes* as before. He then remained in his saddle near the door until the female worshippers came forth, when his eye sought among them for the form of Azèlie. At length he discovered her shrinking within the throng from his observation; and, though modestly veiled from head to foot, he could not mistake the air and figure of her who had captivated his senses. Bending in his saddle, he touched the ear of the Moor.

"Sulem, seest thou yonder maiden, veiled, yet vainly striving to conceal the celestial beauty that shines through?" he said, in a low tone, in the listening ear of the ready slave.

He followed the direction of his glance as he spoke, and replied with a look of secret intelligence.

"'Tis enough, Sulem," he answered, approvingly; "I would know who she is, her abode and condition."

"Your slave lives but to obey," replied the Ethiopian.

"Signors!" cried the count, turning from him, and addressing the officers and regidors of the provincial cabildo, who were on horseback around him, "we have done our duty to God and the church, now let us do it to the king and his province! We will presently review the troops, and appoint them quarters, and then take possession of the government−house and offices of state. I would, once for all, this day settle on a firm basis both the municipal and provincial government, and see the *alcalde* and *alguazil mayor*," he continued, bowing to each of these chosen

dignitaries, "forthwith assuming the honours and duties of their stations. Before sunset the Spanish laws shall have superseded those of the former superior council, and Spanish officers shall administer them. By the rood, signors, we will have a loyal Spanish city of it ere many hours."

"With the cutting off a few heads," said one of the officers, with a decided tone and manner, that sufficiently showed his willingness to have the recent slaughter of the men−at−arms atoned for by blood.

"We have enough on hand to−day, Don San Juan, to establish ourselves firmly in power; there will be time enough to−morrow to look to these things," said the governor, with a meaning smile of anticipated vengeance; "we must do nothing now to destroy the happy confidence our proclamation of this morning has inspired in the citizens. All in good time. The town's−people must be encouraged to resume their occupations, pursuits, and amusements: by this means we shall at once secure their confidence, and we may then take our vengeance into our own hands. We will imitate the chirurgeon, who gives a sleeping potion before he proceeds to amputate the limb. The line is formed! Let us ride, signors!"

There was a smile interchanged by the gentlemen present ere they spurred after him, partly at themselves, that they should be mistaken for a moment as to the known character of the count, and be deluded into the belief that he was about to exercise unusual clemency towards the town, with the blood of thirteen of his body−guard not yet drunk up by the earth, and partly at their mutual gratification on the prospect of retribution upon the authors of the massacre.

In less time than the Count of Osma had named, the government was settled, and all its offices filled, from the *alguazil mayor* down to the *guarda major;* and by the middle of the day all the former laws and usages of the province were changed or abolished. The *Cabildo* he established was composed of six perpetual *regidors* , two ordinary *alcaldes*, an attorney−general *syndic*, and a clerk, over which he presided in person; but it was provided, during his absence, that one of the ordinary alcaldes should assume the chair, and immediately on adjournment, that two *regidors* should go to the palace, and report to him what had been done. It held its first session the same afternoon in the council−chamber, and from that time the laws of Spain became the sole guide of this tribunal in their decisions; but as these, as well as those of the former *régime*, were founded on the Justinian Code, the transition did not become apparent to the citizens before it became complete. The count, as governor, reserved to himself the exercise of judicial power, both in civil and criminal matters, throughout the province, and was the sole arbiter in the tribunal of the cabildo. Thus, in a few hours, Louisiana changed laws and masters. The citizens, judging it useless to repine at what could no longer be avoided, at once threw off their hostile character, and received the Spaniards with, if not real, at least outward cordiality. Before night things resumed their wonted course, and the hum of business and the laugh of pleasure were again heard from the bench of the craftsman and the *boudoirs* of beauty; and, save a body−guard retained at the gate, no troops remained in the Place d'Armes, and nothing was suffered to remain to offend the townsmen's eyes.

The sumptuous chambers of the governor's palace were at noon thrown open to the possession of the new ruler, and its corridors echoed to the step of a Spanish master. Here Estelle found a suite of rooms that seemed to have been expressly prepared for her, and met with a luxury and elegance that compensated her for the gorgeous apartments of the Spanish mansions she had left behind. To confirm the universal confidence, and to give the citizens an opportunity of paying their court to him, he being now in full possession of the governor's house, the count issued a proclamation from his private cabinet for a *levée* to be held in the hall of his palace in the evening, to which he invited all citizens friendly to his government, while to the former councillors he sent a courteous command requiring their attendance. Thus, in one short day, with consummate address and wisdom, and with a fair countenance of peace, did the wily and politic governor lay the foundation of his power, which shortly he was to exercise in a deed of barbaric revenge, that has no parallel save in the conduct of an Asiatic despot. In the mean while, during the hours that intervened before the approaching *levée*, he made himself acquainted with the state of parties in the city, and also learned who were the true authors of the attack upon his embassy.

## CHAPTER XVIII. SCENE AT THE LEVÉE.

The eventful day closed amid the roar of artillery from the fleet and the battery, and the hour at length arrived when the new governor was to receive the homage of the townsmen and of the chief men of the province. The moon had just risen, and shone brightly upon the Place d'Armes, where a military band of music was playing national Spanish airs, surrounded by crowds of spectators of the lower class, gayly dressed in their holyday attire, while around, on casement and balcony, were grouped beautiful women, listening to the martial melody, and gazing with curiosity upon the lively throngs beneath. All was life and brilliancy. The windows of the palace were illuminated with a thousand lamps, the lights glancing upon the steel and silver of the governor's body−guard, who, in their rich and brilliant costume, were drawn up before the door, increasing the dazzling effect and enchantment of the scene.

The citizens already began to enter and ascend towards the audience−chamber, some advancing with timidity, yet with stronger curiosity, to behold the face of their new ruler, and mingle in the splendid pageant of the evening; some going from self−interest, some actuated by their love for *spectacle*, some governed by one motive, some by another, but very few influenced by a sincere desire to pay homage to the Spaniard. The hall of audience was an upper room, of large dimensions, opening on one side, by windows descending to the floor, upon the Place d'Armes, and on the opposite side upon a corridor, which ran around a spacious inner court, paved with marble and ornamented by a magnificent fountain, shaded by fruit−bearing lemon and orange trees. From the lower porch or hall of entrance, which extended from the front through to the court, a spacious stone staircase, guarded by an iron balustrade, conducted to the lofty door of the audience−chamber, which, thrown wide open, displayed the greatest magnificence within. The tall, deep windows were draped with curtains of purple and damask silk, falling from gilded spears like trailing banners; columns were wreathed with vines and flowers; the standards of France and Spain, intertwined, festooned the arched ceiling, and from a choir at one extremity the softest music floated through the apartment. The floor was already crowded with citizens, above whose heads danced the plumes of many a Spanish officer, mingling amicably in their midst. Near one of the windows that looked upon the *Plaza* stood the Count of Osma, in the splendid uniform of a Spanish general, his breast blazing with diamonds. On his arm leaned Estelle, no longer the youthful Amazon, but robed like the noble maidens of her country. A spencer of sable velvet fitted her bust and waist, and was secured at the throat by a ruby of great size and rare beauty. From the girdle a light green robe of satin descended to her feet, and, flowing into a train, was looped up on one side just far enough to display an exquisite foot. Her hair was braided and bound above her temples like a coronet, with a wreath of pearls entwined in it; and a single star of rubies above her brow. Her manner was all grace and feminine witchery. How gloriously beautiful she appeared! How many charms had been disguised by her Amazonian costume! Hadst thou vanity, Estelle, and didst know the power of thy sex's attire, thou wouldst scarce don helmet or corslet more!

With embarrassed eyes and heightened cheek, yet with the grace and dignity of a Juno, she stood beside her stately sire and received the homage of the citizens; for his wily wisdom led him to embrace this occasion of presenting to them a daughter in whom he took such pride and loved so tenderly; a sort of love and pride that made him, rather than be separated from its object, give a soldier's education to a maiden whom Nature had endowed with every feminine grace; that led him to convert the lute into a lance, and seek to make a warrior of a woman. Yet, save a certain degree of decision, and a *brusque* air of independence, that came as much from her father, perhaps, as from the camp, she was still gentle, delicate, and feminine—a woman to love and to be loved with all a man's heart.

By the side of the count stood the *alguazil mayor*, who, first demanding the names of all who came forward, presented them in turn to him. Nearly all the chief citizens had paid homage to the Spanish ruler, and, after having delivered and answered one or two phrases of courtesy, had retired up the hall to converse with one another upon the events of the day, to listen to the music from the orchestra, or curiously watch the progress of presentation. Osma had hitherto worn a placid brow and a smiling lip; but as the evening advanced without the appearance of the councillors, he became impatient; and by the knitting of his brow, and his inquiring glance directed towards the door, showed that a storm was brewing that would soon burst upon the heads of the objects of his displeasure.

"What mean your laggard councillors, sirs?" he asked of several of the citizens who were near him ominously watching their indications of angry disappointment. "Why loiter they in their duty? Do they hesitate to acknowledge, or dare to withhold their allegiance? By the red cross of Calatrava! if they be not here presently, their heads shall roll upon the scaffold!"

"Nay, father, bear them with patience!" said Estelle, gently. "They are perchance old men, and may not have had time to reach the hall of audience."

"They shall be dragged hither by their beards if they are not here within a quarter of an hour."

"They will be, sir," she said, earnestly. "Nay, see how thou hast disturbed the confidence and hilarity reigning here but now. Surely, sir, this general homage of the town should gratify thee!"

"Peace, daughter! And you, signors," he cried, turning and sternly addressing those about him, "shall be answerable for their appearance with your lives. Sulem," he added, in a low tone, to the Ethiopian, who stood behind him, "bid Garcilaso hither!"

"Garcilaso lieth wounded to the death," interrupted the Moor.

"'Fore God, 'tis truth! and these shall answer it. Bear then this signet to Don Guzman, captain of my body−guard! He will know its import."

The eyes of the slave glistened with sanguinary delight; and, receiving the ring, he was about to leave the hall, when there was heard a sudden movement near the door, and the cry of "The councillors!" rose from a hundred voices.

"Stay, Sulem," commanded the count; and the slave, kneeling, offered him the signet.

"Nay, keep it; we may yet need its aid."

Those about the governor now gave back, and left a space for the approach of a small body of men, at whose head walked the venerable and dignified president of the abolished council.

"Silence, *mayor!* these need no usher," said the count to the officer, who was advancing to meet them to demand their names and rank, as he had done to the others.

As they approached, the count assumed a stern bearing; but when they came nearer, apparently struck with the calm and dignified port of the president, and the firm and manly presence of his companions, he addressed them with less severity than he had determined to do, but still with a displeased tone.

"You are well arrived, signors! We had wellnigh given up the honour of your countenance to our poor *levée*, which had been naught you being absent. You are well come, though, by'r lady! full late; and I am at a loss whether I shall refer your tardiness to contempt of my proclamation and express command, or to the fashion of your province."

"We have no fashion of homage with us towards a conqueror, signor, never before having done homage save to our king and Heaven," answered the president, stopping near the governor, and looking him full in the face.

"Then, by the rood! you would doubtless have us refer it to your contempt of us," he demanded, with angry surpise.

"The Count of Osma may interpret his own words as best suits him," answered the president, with irony.

"Nay, father, speak not!" said Estelle, interposing: "they are here to show you that form of homage you commanded, doubtless that they may obtain for their families and goods the undisturbed security and protection you appended to their obedience. I pray thee receive them with grace!"

"Signors, you see an intercessor for yourselves in my lovely child. For her sake I accept your presence as a sufficient homage and token of your allegiance."

"Nay, signor, our allegiance hath no king but Louis of France," answered the president, quietly.

"Be it so, Signor President. If thou hadst an army to back thee, thy words were of weight; but, methinks, without such, thy allegiance will little avail France."

The president smiled meaningly. The count saw the smile, and seemed for a moment to be endeavouring to interpret it; but, being foiled, he appeared to forget it, and said, with the courtesy of a hospitable entertainer, yet with awakened suspicion,

"Now that you are arrived, signors, we will proceed to the banqueting−room, where you will find something for the refreshment of yourselves and fellowcitizens."

A signal then being given, the doors on the south side of the hall were immediately thrown wide open, and the guests, preceded by the count and his daughter, went into a large and lofty room, where was spread a sumptuous entertainment of wines and fruits. Here the governor pledged his numerous guests, and, by the suavity of his manner and unexpected condescension, worked an extraordinary change in the minds of all present in his favour; while the beauty and grace of his daughter won all hearts.

"Now, Signor President," he said, with a smile, to the Sieur d'Alembert and the other councillors, "we will leave these loyal town's−people to their repast, and retire to a more orderly entertainment, which I have prepared purposely for yourselves."

From the peculiar manner of the speaker, the president thought that there was more meant in this invitation than met his ear, and would have declined it; but, seeing no suspicion awakened in the minds of his friends, and trusting for security from treachery to the promise of amnesty and the present company of his lovely daughter, he replied, evasively,

"We thank your excellency! We are plain burghers, and have ever mingled freely with our fellowtownsmen, and are now satisfied to share what thou hast provided for them."

"Nay, signors," replied the count, "I would do you especial honour; and, besides, knowing how loyally you have held the trust reposed in you, I have hopes that I shall possess eloquence enough to persuade you to transfer this loyalty to Spain."

The councillors knew not whether to construe his words literally or ironically; but they felt sure that they had to do with a crafty man, who, with an outward seeming of friendship, cherished a spirit of hostility against the people he had come to govern. Still, trusting to his knightly word of general pardon to the province, they followed him into a smaller chamber, hung with crimson and gold, lighted with costly girandoles, having a table spread in the midst, dazzling the eyes with gold and silver vessels with which it was laid, and tempting the palate with the rich and rare viands that covered it. There were eight covers, and by each, save that placed at the head, stood a black slave, silent and statue−like.

"You see, signors, I have prepared a private banquet for ourselves; therefore your absence to−night would have been ill−timed. Be seated, and by−and−by, over our wine, we will discourse of those matters of which I just now hinted. I will but see my daughter to her apartment, and be with you."

Thus saying, the count departed by a side−door with Estelle, who secretly gave the president a warning glance as she passed him; and in a few moments he returned, followed by the Moor, ere the surprised councillors could exchange opinions upon this extraordinary courtesy. At the moment the door had closed upon them, the Sieur d'Alembert, who could not fail to translate the earnest look of the maiden, also quitted the apartment and returned into the general banqueting−room, where he gave a signal to a young man in the costume of a *courreur du bois*, lounging near, to approach. He whispered a few words in his ear, and the youth instantly left the hall, while he himself quickly returned into the room he had left, just as the count himself re−entered, followed by the Moor. He had scarcely taken his seat, however, before the massive doors were closed behind him by some invisible agency, convincing him that the supper was meant to be at least as private as it was costly and elegant.

"Now, signors, let us to our banquet," said the count; "our number is small, but the zest of a feast consisteth rather in the spirits around the board than in the number of guests."

## CHAPTER XIX. SCENE IN MASQUERADE.

When the count left Estelle in her chamber to return to the banquet−room, he sternly commanded her not to leave it, nor suffer her slaves to quit it that night. His manner startled her; and a suspicion which entered her mind on beholding the magnificent entertainment, the silent slaves, and the privacy of the room, which had prompted her to seek the eye of the president, became impressed upon her mind, and she believed that her father meditated evil to the councillors.

She vainly strove to banish the thought, but it grew more vivid with the effort. The peculiar look of sinister gratification with which he parted from her; his firm, confident tread as he walked away; the private nature and costly character of the entertainment— which could not have been given solely in honour of men against whom he had, more than once that day, breathed vengeance—with her painful knowledge of his dark character, all led her to the conviction that these men, whose age and dignity of appearance (especially that of the venerable and patriotic president) had interested her, were in danger of death or of foul wrong.

To boldness of spirit in the young is ever united a generous nature. With the singular education her father had given her, she retained all the tenderness of a virgin that had never roamed beyond bower and *boudoir*. She was proud, noble−hearted, and self−sacrificing. Pure in heart, she knew no evil herself, and wondered at it in others. Loving her father, she was not blind to his errors; and, while hating his crimes, and, like a guardian spirit, working to avert the consequences of his imperative and wicked disposition, she loved himself no less. It was a hard task for her to cherish love and hate towards the same object—to nicely discriminate between the good and evil; to preserve the balance between filial affections and virtuous indignation; to know where to love and where to condemn! She had now a bitter and sore trial of her filial love and sense of moral duty. That her father contemplated evil to his guests, the more she dwelt upon the idea, the more firmly her conviction was settled. Humanity and every benevolent feeling prompted her to save them—from what fate she knew not. Poison, assassination! each pressed upon her mind in turn, making a distinct and terrible picture. But, whatever threatened them, she felt she was called upon to exert herself to prevent crime. How she should proceed, she knew not! Her love for her father pointed out a course, that, while operating for their safety, should protect his honour and shield him (if the act could be averted) from having contemplated it. It was a hard trial between filial love and moral justice.

"What I do must be done now. A moment of delay may be fatal to them, and involve my poor, mistaken father in a crime that men will shudder to name. How shall I proceed? How shall I take the first step? If I enter the banquet−room, my poor arm and voice will avail nothing! Heaven in mercy direct me— aid me to save a beloved father's honour!" she cried, casting herself on her knees.

For a few moments she remained in deep meditation, and then rose with a countenance full of hope and resolution. Looping her flowing train to her belt, she cast over her shoulders a military cloak, which completely enveloped her person, and placed low upon her jewelled brow a broad creole's *sombrero*. Then placing a naked sword beneath her arm, she left her chamber, and, entering the long, cloistered gallery that surrounded the court, cautiously moved along in the shadows of the vines that crept luxuriantly over it. Directed by the sounds in the general banqueting−room at its extremity, she approached one of the open windows, through which the cool night−wind was suffered to enter into it, and looked in upon the revellers—for such they had now become. There she lingered a moment, and then, as if her mind was made up, she more carefully arranged the folds of the *roquelaure* about her form, drew the hat deeper over her eyes, and passed through the lofty Venetian casements into the hall. The loud music from the orchestra, the bacchanalian voices of the banqueters, the sound of a thousand moving feet, and the ringing of clashing winecups, created a scene of confusion that she paused an instant to contemplate, and to assure herself of her self−possession.

"This is the way my father would enslave the wills of the town's−people, and gain their approval of his contemplated deed. Men feasted and made drunk, as they have been, will be willingly blind to the evil acts of their entertainer. This, then, is the policy that hath assembled this multitude here. Alas! my dear father, flowing seas of wine will not wash out from thy conscience, or Heaven's dread doom−book, one drop of blood!" were the thoughts that passed through her mind. "Now must I seek for one of those youths I have to−day learned were

devoted to the party of the councillors. I should know them by a sprig of myrtle worn in their bonnets and worked on their breasts."

Thus soliloquizing, the bold and generous maiden mingled carelessly with the feasters, scarce attracting attention amid the crowd as she slowly passed along, her eye fixed upon every man's bonnet with anxious scrutiny. She moved towards the upper end of the hall, where the door led into the banquet−room of the councillors, that she might, perchance, learn something there of what was transpiring within before she took her final step. As she approached the upper end of the table, she observed that here the noise and confusion of voices were greatest, and that some one was seated in a chair upon the table, surrounded by a great number of the revellers, who were applauding and encouraging what appeared to be an address to them. At the same instant, she caught sight of a myrtle−sprig in a bonnet twenty feet from her, and was about pressing forward towards it, when she was rudely addressed by a man whom she had rubbed against somewhat quickly.

"Not so fast, signor," he said, speaking thick with wine, "till thou showest thou art better than those thou treadest upon!"

"Nay, good fellow, I meant not to touch thee. Pray let me pass on."

"He hath made apology, Rascas," said one near, who seemed his companion; "let him go."

"Nay, I bethink me he looketh like a traitor," said the other with a hoarse laugh. "Cock thy hat, master, and let us look thee i' the eye."

"Thou wilt see but a youthful one, signor," said Estelle, putting back the flapping brim of her *sombrero*, and looking him steadfastly in the face.

The creole surveyed for an instant the fair and boyish countenance presented to his gaze, and then said, roughly,

"Hadst thou a beard, boy, I would have made a quarrel of this matter. But I have none with a stripling like thee. Pledge me and pass on."

"Willingly," said Estelle, receiving the cup he filled and gave to her.

"Name the cup, master," he said, eying her with fixed suspicion.

"Osma," she answered, firmly, lifting the wine−flagon to her lip. Instantly he dashed it from her hand to the ground.

"I would have sworn thou wert one of them. He who pledges the Spaniard with Rascas shall drink his next pledge from a poisoned cup."

"Ha, villain!" she cried, indignantly, "and thou, too, drinking and feasting at his own board! Thou shalt be remembered, sirrah!"

"Lest thou shouldst forget me, take this!" he cried, ferociously, drawing from his breast a stiletto, and striking savagely at her heart.

His arm was arrested ere he could effect his deadly purpose, and the weapon torn from his hand by a stranger, habited precisely like herself, in a *sombrero* drooping over his eyes, and his person wrapped in a dark roquelaure.

"Wouldst thou mingle blood with wine?" he demanded, in a deep, stern tone.

The man, foiled and abashed, turned away with a lowering brow, and mingled with the throng, though Estelle trembled when she saw that his final glance rested upon her with vindictive hate, and she feared he might again cross her path, and defeat her success in the work she had undertaken. But, trusting to the purity of her purpose, she instantly banished this fear, and turned to thank the mysterious individual who had so opportunely interposed to save her life; but he had already retired several paces from her, and the closing throng hid him from her view. She sent after him a grateful thought, and then pursued more guardedly her way to the door of her father's banquet−room.

As she approached it, she saw that the individual upon the table, whose head only she had before seen, was a person of an extraordinary fantastical appearance, with a broad, extravagant visage, uncouth in feature, but glistening with quirks and smiles, while around him she heard roars of laughter, excited by some jest issuing from his cavernous jaws. She thought it was the ugliest and merriest face she had ever beheld; and, notwithstanding the weight of anxiety upon her mind, she could not forbear smiling at the grotesque appearance made by this singularly strange being. Near him, above the heads of the crowd, towered the myrtle sprig she sought. Pressing forward, she was within a few paces of the wearer, when, as she was urging her way eagerly along, her form

caught the eye of this elevated personage, who, with an orange impaled on the point of a knife held in his right hand, and a huge cup of wine elevated in his left, seemed to be the presiding spirit of the revel.

"Ho, cousin Broadbrim; too much haste maketh ill speed," he cried, singling out the hapless Estelle, and directing all eyes towards her.

She stopped confused, and trembled with alarm; but she felt too much was at stake for her to yield to womanly weakness, and that, at every sacrifice, she must now sustain her assumed character.

"Art thou bailiff?" he continued; "there be no rogues here, no escapados from justice! Art thou priest? ne'er penitent wilt thou find till day dawn, and then we shall repent us all that we be too drunk to drink more! Art thou—"

"Nay, your highness," said the disguised maiden, at once taking the humour of the king of the feast, and anxious to escape as soon as possible from observation; "were I bailiff, I should be better bred in my duty than to seek escaped rogues in thy august presence! Were I priest, I should be at my prayers for thy soul's benefit, as in duty bound; or did I seek penitents, it would be at a fast and not at a feast. May your highness live for ever!"

"He has well answered, my subjects and gossips," gleefully cried Gobin, now become a priest of Bacchus. "What shall be done in honour of his rare wit and wisdom? Doth he not deserve to be chosen my prime minister, and to sit at my left hand. If we, both together, rule you not wisely, then there lieth no virtue in good government."

He was answered by a general cry of approval, and one or two of the bacchanals laid hold upon their newly−chosen prime minister to elevate him to the destined honour.

"Thou hast heard our decision, cousin Gray−cloak. Mount! ascend! elevate! Seat thyself at our right hand. We will induct thee into thine office with three pint cups, one poured on thy head, and two down thy gullet. Thanks to cousin Osma, wine is not lacking. Here, cavaliers, let us drink to him!" Cups were filled and lifted in the air, and at cries of

"*Viva* Osma! *Viva* Gobin!" they were emptied at a draught. Estelle set her cup down untasted, and, in the temporary excitement, sought means to withdraw. But the eyes of Gobin were unusually vigilant.

"Nay, cousin, thou hast too rare a wit to be lost to the state. Come up on the table and be prime minister," he cried, "or give a weighty reason why thou shouldst not," he added, with humour.

"Listen, then, great king of the revels! I am in the court of Cupid, and am hither sent to bid thee and thy court to a feast in the planet Venus on Wednesday se'nnight. I pray thee, therefore, that, having now delivered my message, thou wilt do no injustice to King Cupid by seeking to rob him of his prime minister, and wilt graciously permit me to depart."

"A proper speech, and a conclusive," exclaimed Gobin, whom the humour of the stranger pleased; "thou art at liberty to go after thou hast borne testimony to our regard for thy master, Don Cupid. Fill bumpers, gossips, round! and let us drink to the health of King Cupid, who hath the wisest of prime ministers. May his shadow never be less."

While every cup was upturned on the lips of both Gobin and his courtiers, Estelle adroitly passed behind the revellers, and gained the upper end of the table and the rear of the jester. She was now within a few feet of the door, which she approached in a listening attitude; but the noise in the hall prevented her from hearing anything from within; but her worst fears were confirmed by discovering that a bar was dropped across the door, and that a bolt on the side next to her was shut down into the sill.

"Treachery!" involuntarily fell audibly from her lips. She fortified herself for the duty she had imposed upon herself by remembering both her father's endangered honour and the imminent peril of the councillors. She now looked anxiously around, and saw standing near her the individual distinguished by the myrtle sprig, whom she had such difficulty in reaching, and whom she had lost sight of during her detention by Gobin, who now once more pursued his orgies, as if of Don Cupid and his prime minister he had never heard.

This person appeared to be observing her with interest, and had evidently approached near the door when he saw her advancing towards it. This did not escape her; and the suspicion that he might be one of her father's instruments passed across her mind, and she feared she might betray herself to an enemy, instead of one who should prove a friend of the victims of his displeasure. Nevertheless, the crisis called for decision, and without hesitation she approached him. There was an expression of honesty and good−nature in his countenance which

invited rather than repelled confidence, and, as he seemed to be something under the degree of a gentleman, though young and well−favoured, she felt less embarrassment in addressing him than perhaps she would have done had he been a cavalier of rank.

"Signor, if it please you, step aside with me; I would have a brief word with you," she said, coming near him and speaking in a low tone, then passing him and crossing over to the shadow of a column.

He started with evident surprise, followed her with his glance suspiciously, and then, loosening his sabre in its sheath (for the flapped hat and closely−folded mantle looked treacherous to his eye), walked up to the spot where she stood awaiting him.

"By the myrtle sprig in thy bonnet and on thy breast, thou art one of the *courreurs du bois!*" she said, in the same tone in which she had first spoken to him.

"If thou art a friend of the *courreurs du bois*, thou wilt give me the sign; if thou art an enemy, this hall is no place for the show of thy sword−skill," answered the young man, haughtily, and with something like defiance in his tones.

He was turning away, when she said earnestly, reassured by his lofty spirit and bold language, and confident that nothing like murderous guilt or treachery dwelt in his bosom,

"Nay, brave sir, I know no sign of brotherhood save that which binds in one all noble hearts. Art thou a friend of the venerable president of the late provincial council?"

"I love him as a father," answered the youth, fervently; and the warmth of Estelle's inquiry assured him the speaker was not less a friend to him.

"Then Heaven bless thee, for thou art he I seek."

"Doth danger threaten him?" he demanded, half drawing his sword, and taking a step towards the inner room.

"Hold! be not rash!" she cried, detaining his arm; "the president and his council, I fear me, are in great peril!"

"Then are his suspicions true."

"How! did he suspect?"

"From the first; and, returning after he had entered, he sent word by one of our number to our chief, Renault, that peril menaced him."

"My poor father! Thy honour is already shaded; yet I will save it and thee, if there is virtue in a child's love!" she said, mentally. "Wherefore art thou here, then?" she asked.

"To see what passes, and that no one enter but tried men, save across my body. So I promised the good president when he sent my comrade Martin away for Renault!"

"Bless thee, bless thee!" she exclaimed, pressing his arm with sudden earnestness in her thankfulness. "Yet the danger is not from without. Dost thou see the heavy bars and bolts that repel all ingress from this side?" she added, pointing with her finger towards the door. "What force will thy captain bring with him?"

"Forty young men, signor, that have but one will, and that one his. He should be here; it is a quarter of an hour since Martin went for him, and he is not wont to be slow when there is a friend to succour or work to do."

"Yonder is a myrtle sprig; but, alas! it is but a single one," cried Estelle, speaking with animation at first as she descried it, and then dropping her voice with disappointment.

"Thou wilt be disappointed, signor, if thou lookest to see them marching like a Spanish phalanx into the palace. Look by yonder column, and thou wilt see a second myrtle sprig; and, wert thou an inch or two taller, thou couldst discern, as I can, two more of our green plumes waving in the entrance. Even the windows opening upon the corridor are means of admitting them into the hall."

Estelle clasped her hands together in silent gratitude, for wherever she turned her eyes appeared a myrtle sprig; and the bonnets to which they were attached were seen moving, one here and one there, in the direction of the spot where she stood, seemingly without design, but all with a certain and steady advance towards the same object. She trembled with mingled joy and apprehension as they came, one by one, towards the column, feeling that the moment had now come when her father was either to be saved from crime and his knightly honour preserved, or to have a hundred witnesses of his consummated guilt.

She turned listeningly towards the inner door; as if she would catch an outcry, and shuddered lest it should be too late. This latter reflection restored her self−possession, and assured her there was no time to lose.

"Yet must no wrong come to *him*. He must be saved if guilty, if I lay down my life for him," said she.

"There is our captain, signor; would you speak with him?" asked the youth.

"Without delay. Is he among these?"

"There," he said, pointing to a tall young man, slowly, and with a careless air, walking up the hall, nodding pleasantly and shaking his head in the negative to those who, as he passed, would have him pledge them in their wine. When he came near Gobin, this personage immediately laid claim to him, and swore on his goblet he should not pass through his vinous dominions without cracking a cup with him.

"I will crack thy crown for thee," he replied, with a good−humoured smile.

"Thou wilt do me a kindness, cousin Renault, an' thou dost; it is over−full with good wine, and I would let out some to make room for more; I have many a round goblet to put aneath my belt the night."

"Thou wilt scarce get that goblet in thy hand aneath it, Gobin; thou wilt have to steal those of less size, an' thou wouldst not have the governor's guard opening thy girdle."

"Out upon thee, gossip! Twit not thy cousin upon his failings! Have not I been i' the wars?" continued the jester, showing his finger bound up. "Because thou didst know I had stolen a silver bodkin or so, shouldst thou blab it? Discretion should ha'kept it secret. It will hurt my credit i' the town. I had looked for better charity at thy hand, cousin. Ah, cousin!" he added, with a sad countenance, "thou hast done me great mischief. Go on—and leave this goblet−stealing rogue with the rogues thou hast found him companying with. Rogues all—arrant rogues all are we!"

The young chief smiled, and, passing on, came into the broad area that intervened between the upper end of the table and the door, near which, in the shadow of one of a row of columns that supported this extremity of the roof of the hall, stood the *courreur du bois* and the disguised Estelle, who by this time had counted above twenty bonnets bearing the myrtle−sprig, within a few paces of the young chief. With his lofty bearing and fine face she had been struck, as her companion pointed him out to her advancing up the hall; and while she wondered at his coolness and self−possession with so weighty a matter as she knew to be upon his mind—his deportment defying the keenest scrutiny of a covert purpose—and while she yielded her admiration to the tact with which he escaped from the king of the revels, she felt awakened in her bosom an undefinable interest in him, that made her heart palpitate with emotions hitherto unknown. The deep, manly tones of his voice; the rich beauty of his smile; the haughtiness, yet becoming loftiness of his manner, as if speaking forth a noble spirit, deepened the instant impression; and, without hesitation, she determined to place the fullest confidence in him.

"Yes, I would speak with your captain," she said, earnestly, while the blood that quickly mounted to her cheek and brow at her own ardour, which she could not conceal from herself had a deeper source than the safety of the councillors, would have told one skilled in reading the open heart of a young maiden that in hers already was the germe of what, if not suffered to die, would one day become a flourishing tree. From a careless glance cast by a passing eye often grows the strongest love. Alas! how many a germe, bursting from a seed thrown by the wayside of the heart, has withered for want of the sower's care, for ever unknown to him; or has grown up to blossom and then perish in the heart's waste! If in thy bosom, gentle Estelle, one seed of true love has fallen, may it take deep root, and grow till the sower shall lie down in its shadow, and the golden birds of affection come and lodge in its evergreen branches, "Love, love, love," their undying song!

The young man directly crossed the area, and spoke in a low tone to his captain. Renault glanced in the direction of the column against which Estelle leaned, and then, after a hasty inquiry if any one had passed in or out, and all had remained quiet in the banquet−room, moved across the space towards her. Her heart almost ceased its pulsations; for the danger of the councillors, the honour of her father, and the responsibility she had drawn upon herself, all rushed upon her thoughts. What, before seeing the *courreur du bois*, had been only strong suspicion, was now certainty. Danger and death hung over a body of innocent men, and her father's hand was ready to be dyed with the crimson stains of murder. The thought nerved her with resolution; and when Renault, coming up, addressed her in an under but earnest tone, "Monsieur, would you speak with me?" she answered firmly, "The president and his council, banqueting within yonder chamber, are menaced with danger, sir."

"Am I then too late?" he demanded, loosening his bugle from his girdle. "They must be rescued, if I have to contend with the whole Spanish army."

He was about to place the bugle to his lips, which would in an instant have gathered about him the determined band of forty young men, that had fortunately been left in the city that morning with the president, when she caught his arm, and said commandingly,

"Wind not a note, or you will perish with them! If you would save your rulers, follow me forthwith with twelve tried men."

"May I trust you?"

"If I prove false, am I not in your power? Lose not a moment here, but follow me! We have delayed too long!"

"Yonder is not the way to the banquet−room, monsieur," cried Renault, seeing her advance with a quick step towards one of the windows.

"Dost thou not see that this door is barred?" she demanded.

"I do. Treachery most foul! Lead on! It shall be as you desire, for there is an earnestness and sincerity in your tones that are no part of treachery!"

"Send your men upon the corridor singly, and meet me there," she said, crossing the hall, and disappearing through the casement.

Renault immediately walked down through the hall, speaking a word or two to one here and there, each person addressed at once separating himself from the crowd, and moving towards one of the windows, through which he disappeared. This movement was made with caution and an assumed carelessness in the change of position, without attracting the attention of the banqueters, who, amid the miscellaneous and moving throng, would scarcely note the particular movements of any one individual. Two of the party were Martin, who had been sent away by the president, and the *courreur du bois* who had been left to guard the door of the banquet−room. Renault (who had arrived in town from the lake fortress, whither he had ridden at the head of the chief part of his troop in the early morning, but a few moments before the message from Sieur d'Alembert came to him informing him of his suspicions), having seen the men he had chosen leave the hall, followed them shortly afterward himself. Here he found the stranger, to whom he had surrendered his motions, awaiting him at the extremity of the corridor.

"You see, monsieur," he said, addressing him, "that I have obeyed you, and placed in you the most open confidence."

"It shall not prove misplaced, brave signor," answered Estelle, warmly. "I, as well as yourself, have reason to believe danger menaces the liberties, if not the lives, of the venerable body of councillors; and I was seeking in the hall for some of your band (having knowledge of their attachment to the president), to communicate my suspicions and seek their aid, when I fell in with the young man who had constituted himself guard at the door. In a few moments you appeared, as if in answer to my prayers, with a host of strong arms and brave hearts."

"Who art thou, fair youth (for such thy scarcelyseen cheek and voice betray thee to be), who hast taken so deep an interest in the father of our city? Thou art a stranger with us!"

"It matters not, so that I am the friend of those thou lovest. Will you be led by me?"

"I were a base craven were I to refuse thee, generous stranger. For, though I do not see thy features, I see thy heart. Lead on!" he cried, with energy.

Without a word, Estelle walked forward a few steps, and, turning to the left into a dimly−lighted anteroom, crossed it to an opposite door, which was partly open. Renault, with a sign for his men to fall in and move with silence after him, followed close to her, his hand upon his sword, not from fear of treachery on the part of his guide, but with the ready grasp of a man who is prepared to use his weapon in open and hostile encounter with a foe. At this door, which led into the passage that conducted past her own chamber to the private banqueting−room, she paused to listen before proceeding farther. Hearing no sound, she threw it open, and, motioning them to follow, led them into the passage, which was brightly lighted from the lamps shining into it through her own chamber door.

"Now, signors," she said, with a beating heart (for paternal love was struggling with the duty humanity called upon her to perform), "if you will be guided by me and obey my orders, you shall, if not too late, save the lives of many innocent men. But first, on your crossed blades, sacredly swear that the Count of Osma shall not come to harm! for, if I may not save his honour, I must his life." As she spoke, she drew her own sword from beneath the folds of her cloak, and held it aloft.

"Comrades, let us take the stranger's oath," said Renault, drawing his sword, and crossing that of Estelle.

Twelve more glittering weapons were laid across these, forming a brilliant star of martial crosses, upon which every eye was fixed.

"Swear!" she said, fervently.

"We swear!" repeated Renault.

"We swear!" responded the rest, in one deep and solemn voice.

"It is well," she said, folding the mantle about her; "at the extremity of this passage is a private door leading into the banqueting−room. Follow me silently; and you, signor, I trust, will do nothing save by my orders."

"Till this event be accomplished, I yield thee obedience, monsieur. Pray lead the way!"

With a quick but noiseless tread, they moved along the narrow hall, and came to a low door covered with green cloth, which, after a moment's listening pause, she softly opened. It led into a dark and spacious closet, the width of the passage, and one that seemed to be the ante−chamber to the banquet−room, the door of which was on the farther side, and was the same through which her father had conducted her to her own apartment.

"A whisper or careless movement may be fatal to both them and us," she said, softly, as she stood on the threshold. "Enter one by one, signors, and station yourselves in the dark sides of this closet, ready to obey me when the time shall come to demand your swords' aid."

"Yes, comrades," said Renault, over whose mind a sudden suspicion of foul play crossed on finding himself and his men led into this dark chamber as if to an ambush; "yes, my brave comrades, be every man's weapon in his hand, for we know not what nor whom we have to deal with. But, if I have led you to death, I shall die with you."

"Shame on you, signor!" said Estelle, understanding his words; "look with me through this aperture, and trust a cavalier's honour henceforward."

She placed her hand upon his wrist, and led him to a recess behind the door; then drawing carefully aside a curtain from a small lattice, that seemed to have been made for the occupant within to communicate with attendants in the little anteroom where they stood, she showed him the interior of the banquet−room, with the Count of Osma seated at the head of the sumptuous table surrounded by the seven councillors.

"Pardon me, signor," he said, pressing Estelle's hand deprecatingly, but instantly withdrawing his grasp, as if astonished and surprised at the softness of it; "I will be guided by thee."

"Do so, and thou mayst save them. Let us be thankful to Heaven we are not too late."

"'Tis a sumptuous feast, and methinks the rulers share it with convivial zest. Our president hath done the Spanish noble wrong," said Renault, looking in upon the gorgeous festive scene with admiration.

"The deepest danger lies deepest hidden!" answered Estelle.

"Poison! would he poison the cup?" he exclaimed, with sudden suspicion and alarm; "then are they dying men as they sit there! They have already drank to the dregs the poisoned cup. There remains nothing for us but vengeance on the assassin."

"Thine oath!" said Estelle, impressively.

"Nay, it should scarce save him!"

"Then, by the twelve sacred crosses thou hast perjured thyself upon, I will set upon thee an armed band that shall not leave one limb among thee joined to its fellow," said Estelle, whom fear for her father's safety roused. "But enough! thou hast no fear of poison. Dost thou not behold behind each chair a silent Ethiopian slave?"

"The attendants whom the courtesy of the Spaniards has given to each guest. I see in it no more."

"Dost thou see each slave has his right hand in his bosom?"

"And, by Heaven! there was then, half drawn out by one of them, the shining hilt of a dagger!"

"Thou seest the danger! Be not too hasty. Dost thou not hear that courteous words fall from my—from the Spanish knight's lips? The time is not yet come."

"Is this door open, that we may enter to the rescue?" asked Renault, burning with ardour, his soul filled with horror and indignant surprise at what he saw.

"'Tis just ajar, and a single effort will fling it wide. Let us be patient, and, with the blessing of Heaven, which has inspired me to this thing, we shall yet save the Spanish noble's honour and the rulers' lives."

"Methinks, fair sir, thou art equally affected towards this wicked knight and the councillors. If thou art a Spaniard, as thy speech and bearing would bespeak thee, verily 'tis wonderful thou art a friend of these rulers; and if thou art of the province, I marvel at thy regard for the new governor."

"He hath virtues with his crimes, signor," said Estelle. "No man is altogether bad—no one so wholly wicked

that he hath not some redeeming quality that invites love and confidence. How else is it that the darkest bandit and most ferocious outlaw have ever found woman's affection to entwine itself around their rugged hearts?"

"Truly woman's love is ever a mystery! Methinks it loves most where men hate most," answered Renault, surprised at the ardour of his companion. "It may be that Heaven in mercy hath given her to us for this very end, so that the heart, outcast and desolate, shrinking from the scorn and contempt of men, may not be utterly desolate and lost to humanity."

"Thou sayest, perhaps, truly. Heaven hath never suffered a human mind to live, however lost to the world's charity, without a witness of its benevolence. It would not have any of its creatures live among its fellows without awakening the sympathies that are its birthright. The divine image, however obscured, is never extinguished, and it is given to woman alone to revive it with the torch of affection."

"Your words, signor, are worthy a cavalier, and, heard by a maiden, might win you laurels," said Renault. "Doubtless thou hast been taught this pretty sentiment by some gentler lip than thine own—though, by'r lady! thy lip, what I can see of it, is full gentle for one who carrieth a sword."

"Thou mayst repeat it to the lady of thy love, signor," said Estelle, with a tone that seemed to ask if the youthful chief, in whom she became more and more interested as his ingenuous and generous nature unfolded itself to her, possessed a ladye−love.

"Signor! if thou knewest me, thou wouldst scarcely have dared to venture that speech!" said Renault, taking a step backward, and speaking in a gloomy and sad tone of voice.

"Good Signor Captain, pardon me! I meant no offence to thy feelings. But we forget our object here. Listen now to their words! The crisis approaches! Remember thine oath!" END OF VOL. I.

# VOL. II.

# CHAPTER I. SCENE IN THE BANQUET−CHAMBER.

The ease and affability of the Count of Osma soon thawed the ice of ceremony and suspicion with which the councillors at first received the honour that had been so graciously extended towards them; and even the president, as the banquet proceeded, began to think his suspicions hasty and ill−grounded. All doubts, however, of honourable purpose of the governor were not effectually banished; and occasionally they flashed back upon his mind with redoubled force, as some sinister word or look would betray itself through his guarded language or manner. That the Spaniard was playing a double part, he was well satisfied; and, though his address and bearing invited confidence, he felt that, in yielding it, he was playing with an adder in his bosom.

"So, gentlemen," said the count, setting down a cup of wine, and speaking as if pursuing easy conversation with his guests, "I learn your fair city has been sadly torn by seditions of late, and that the young Marquis of Caronde, an arrant scapegrace, hath laid claim to the government?"

"He did make the attempt, your excellency," answered one of the councillors, on whose face the count's eye chanced to rest as he spoke; "but, his purpose being lawless, and the king's commission having also expired at his father's demise—"

"You saw fit," interrupted the count, laughing sarcastically, "to create seven uncommissioned rulers instead! Methinks this were aggravating the evil. What say you, Signor President?" he asked, with a careless air.

"Now, by my mine honour, I like not that count's manner well," whispered Renault.

"Hush, and give heed," answered Estelle, quickly.

"That, on the death of the royal governor, the power became vested in the people till resumed by his majesty, who might then delegate it to whom he saw fit," answered the president, firmly.

"And so, until this event, the people made choice of a tribunal to manage the state affairs, composed of seven citizens, which body I have now the honour to entertain at my humble table?" he observed, affirmatively rather than interrogatively.

"We did yesterday morning composed such a tribunal, your excellency," he replied, with dignity, "but we are now private citizens."

"So I learn," said the count, dryly. "It has been so told to me, as well as your reason for dissolving your council."

The president evidently did not like the tone in which this was said, but, without giving utterance to his feelings, replied, in an even voice,

"We are no longer in authority, Sir Count, 'tis true."

"The people took it back to give it to Spain. Was it not so?"

"'Tis true they forgot their country for love of their own interests."

"And thus were basely ungrateful to thee, methinks. I will, out of my gratitude to thee, Signor President, repay it to them. Thou wilt gladly see them requited, I doubt not."

"On the contrary, signor, we hold the welfare of our fellow−citizens to heart, and would fain now urge upon you, who have succeeded us, clemency in changing their laws with the change of government," responded the president, who, with characteristic patriotism, took the first opportunity of securing the welfare of his fellow−citizens.

"And give them to retain their judges also," asswered the count, sarcastically. "We had best restore your power, signor, and go back to Spain, even as you sent us back three years ago."

"Ha! he forgets not that day!" said Renault, involuntarily.

"Nay, signor," continued the president, who saw that the memory of the past had flushed the cheek and kindled the eye of the Spaniard, "I ask not this. Conquered countries are allowed to retain their own laws for a few years, that the transition may be gradual and healthy to all parties. This is not a conquered province, thank Heaven! but yet you would change our laws and the language of the courts in one day. It would be greatly for the advantage and tranquillity of the inhabitants, if justice were to be administered for a while longer according to the laws, forms, and usages of the land. It is oppression, your excellency, in the highest degree, to require that a community

should at once submit to a total change in the laws that have hitherto governed it, and be compelled to regulate its conduct by rules of which it is totally ignorant. No necessity demands it, and no policy justifies it. The friendship hitherto existing between Louis XV. and the King of Spain should have been a weighty influence with the latter to secure this privilege to the other's subjects. Louis expected it, or he would never have condemned us to such a destiny."

"By the rood, signor, you are bold," answered the count, who had listened with surprise to the plain and fearless language of the president, who even now seemed to be ready to risk his life for the people he had governed, although they had so basely revolted from their allegiance to bow the neck to the Spanish yoke.

"I am bold because humanity is so, your excellency," he answered, steadily, and without quailing beneath the stern eyes that surveyed his face.

"This is the temper of spirit I have had to contend with all along in getting foothold in this province! this is the temper that has twice bathed your city's square with the blood of Spanish men! To you, gentlemen, I owe a debt you shall not long stand creditor for."

"The storm is bursting," said Estelle.

"I am ready," said Renault, laying his hand upon the door.

"Not yet," she said, restraining him; "and remember thy oath!"

"That we have disputed the possession of Spain, I admit; that we would have disputed it, if we had the power, to this moment, I confess," answered the president, with spirit. "You are displeased, sir! But these very efforts to preserve our natal soil from the rule of a foreign prince originated in our attachment to our own; and you ought to behold in our conduct a pledge of our future devotion to Spain, if hereafter we should personally yield to her our allegiance."

"*Santiago me!* I have not been misled in my knowledge of your character. You have taken a superior part yourself, signor, in the revolt since the first claim of Spain, both as a citizen and now as a ruler; and it is mainly through your influence in encouraging the leaders, instead of using your best endeavours to keep the people in the fidelity and subordination they owed to their sovereign, that Spain has so long been kept from her just rights, and the whole province in a state of sedition," he answered, warmly. "It is therefore," he added, rising, and speaking with stern displeasure, and his eyes kindling with vengeance, "and it is therefore that your laws are changed and your tribunals abolished! It is therefore that I would place my foot upon the neck of your people. It is therefore that I have called you hither this evening, that henceforward rebellious councillors may learn what it is to excite revolt against Spain, and insult Ramarez of Osma! Ho, secure the traitors!" he cried, in a loud and fierce tone to the slaves, who had, hitherto, stood like statues behind the seat of the councillors.

"Now is the time, in Heaven's name! But spare my father!" cried Estelle.

Before Renault could throw open the door, the hand of an Ethiopian slave was upon the throat of each guest, save that of the president, and a gleaming dagger was suspended in the air above their breasts.

"Seize the assassins!" cried Renault, behind the Spaniard's chair, in a voice not less stern than his own.

Before the count could turn his head, he saw that the banquet−room was filled with armed men, who instantly seized and disarmed his slaves, and then fixed upon himself looks of deadly resentment, as if only awaiting their leader's nod to bury the swords they pressed against the naked bosoms of the blacks into their hearts, and then sheathe them in his own. Among them he beheld a noble−looking youth, whose bearing and dress bespoke him to be their captain, in whose indignant countenance, as he stood before him, fixing upon him his clear, flashing eyes, which it seemed he would never take off, he thought he read his own fate. He sat glaring upon him in silence, paralyzed between surprise, fear, and disappointed vengeance.

From the lattice Estelle had witnessed the whole scene! the grateful but astonished councillors looking upon their deliverer as if he had dropped from the skies; the haughty and indignant bearing of Renault; the cringing and terrified slaves; her wonder−stricken and confused father, as he gazed about him, and shrunk beneath the stern glance of the youth! All this she witnessed with mixed feelings of gratitude, joy, and shame; and deep indeed was the crimson that dyed her cheek when she heard her father thus addressed:

"Sir Spaniard," said Renault, sternly, after gazing upon him as if he would convey through his eyes the bitterness of his resentment against the author of the deed he had been the instrument of averting; "Sir Spaniard, under Heaven thou art indebted to other causes than thine own mercy for not shedding the blood of seven

innocent men with the dagger of the assassin! It is not enough that thou hast abolished our sacred tribunals and overturned our laws, but thou must bathe thy hands in the blood of the judges of the land. If guilty of offences against the state, why were they not arraigned before thee and tried by their peers, according to the sacred laws of all Christendom? Their holy patriotism is guilt in thine eyes. Yet it is not for this thou wouldst do sevenfold murder! Personal wrongs rankle in thy unforgiving bosom, and thou wouldst make these a sacrifice to thy wounded self−love! Thou wert driven hence in dire disgrace three years ago, and, now that the power is in thine hands, thou wouldst have avenged thyself upon the whole province by the slaughter of its rulers! And how wouldst thou have done it? Under the sacred guise of heaven−born hospitality; with thy winecups in their hands, and thy wine warming their hearts— and thine own too, were it flesh and not stone! And well hast thou chosen the hour and the place! the noise of revelry drowning that of murder, and thy carefully−barred doors shutting out human aid, even if the shrieks of thy victims should silence yonder revels!"

"Who art thou, and wherefore dost thou beard me in mine own halls?" haughtily demanded the count, who had by this time recovered from his first surprise at the mysterious presence of these deliverers of the councillors at the very moment when their lives were staked; "who art thou, that dost use language so daring to a chief in the midst of his own army—to a governor in his own palace?"

"I am the defender of the innocent against a tyrant," answered Renault. "Lay not thy hand upon thy weapon, Sir Knight! it will little avail thee; besides, we intend no harm to thy person; not for love of thee, mark! but we have made oath to a stranger who led us hither, that, whatever we do, we will not harm thee. Let these venerable councillors retire, and we will leave thee to the fit society of these trembling slaves, whom thou wouldst have made the instruments of thy private vengeance. They are but tools, and also shall escape—though, by'r lady! you all deserve a common death. See that the slaves retain no weapons, and let them go," he added, to his men.

Dismissed from the grasp of their captors, the cringing slaves crowded together at the extremity of the chamber, as if yet expecting death; while Sulem, who, from the first, had thrown himself upon his face at his master's feet, rose up at Renault's bidding, and presented his colossal proportions to the wondering gaze of his band. In his right hand he held a cimeter; but the hand trembled, and the hideous face of the Ethiopian betrayed mortal fear. True to deal an assassin's secret blow at his master's bidding, the slave was false when open danger menaced, and now betrayed the cowardice of his sanguinary nature.

"Sulem! cleave him to the floor; why is thy cimeter idle?" cried Osma, roused to fury by the cool and resolute bearing of the young chief.

"Martin," said Renault, "take this Goliath's cimeter from him. He seems to have lost loyalty to his master in his adverse fortunes."

Without a word, Sulem surrendered his weapon; and the impression made on Renault's mind by his submissive manner was, that there needed but a word from himself to cause him to plunge it into the breast he should have protected with it.

"Broken, indeed, proves the reed my poor father leaned upon; but he hath taught Sulem treachery, and what but treachery could he have expected from him?" said Estelle, mentally, on seeing this.

Yet it will be seen that Sulem's subtlety and habits of obedience overmastered his fears; and, from his subsequent conduct, it will be questionable if cowardice had as much to do with his actions as cunning.

"Thou seest, Count of Osma, that thy trustiest arm fails thee now," said Renault. "But thou needest not its aid! We are content to have saved these gentlemen, whom thou wouldst have slain at thine own board, mingling their blood with thy wine. Hath God sent the land a demon to rule over it, that the thought of such a crime as thou hast meditated should enter the heart of man?"

While he was speaking, the count caught the eye of Sulem; met it with a stern reproof, and then glanced significantly to his own hand. Sulem understood him; and, in reply, touched, as if carelessly, with his forefinger, the count's signet, given to him in the hall of audience for another purpose. Then, watching his opportunity, at a single bound he leaped through the door, beside which, at the lattice, was stationed the disguised Estelle; and, before he could be arrested, had flown past her, and was far beyond pursuit at the extremity of the passage.

"Hold! pursue him not," cried Renault to his men. "Your presence is needed here! Gentlemen, I pray you retire while you can do it safely," he added, addressing the councillors; "there may be nothing more in this sudden escape than the cowardice of a traitorous servant. But, lest mischief could come out of it, I beseech you let me see you presently in safety. I lived long in this place, as you all are aware, when my father governed, and chanced to

know that there is a concealed door behind yonder arras, which, by a private stairway, conducts you to the outer court of the prisons, and thence into the street. It is not safe for you to pass out through the palace guards as you entered. Follow me, gentlemen."

Thus speaking, Renault crossed the chamber, drew aside the arras, and exposed a low door, which, by touching a spring, he opened. Within was a dark stairway, faintly lighted at the bottom by the moonlight entering from the outer door beneath.

"Gentlemen, this will conduct you to the street; thence your way is plain to your homes. I would despatch half of my men with you as a guard, but their presence would attract attention, and add nothing to your safety. My venerable father!" he said to the president, who was expressing his gratitude for his aid in saving his life, "you owe it not to me, but to a gallant stranger, who has not appeared on the scene to receive the thanks that are his due. Farewell! Mount your horses, each of you, gentlemen, and leave the city within the hour for the fortress, where there are brave men to receive you! The countersign of the east gate, and which I learned from this brave stranger, is `*Osma's justice*,' which liked to have been illustrated but for our timely presence."

"Ha! knowest thou it?" exclaimed Osma, with surprise.

"Mount and ride; this poor town is no longer a place for true men. Say to Charleval," then added Renault, in a lower tone, "I will be with him at evening to−morrow, when I shall not return to the city till we ride into it as conquerors and avengers. Go, with Heaven's blessing, gentlemen!" he added, embracing each as they passed through the door and descended the staircase.

"Now, Signor Count Osma," said Renault, after they had departed, "inasmuch as I have stepped between thee and thy bloody vengeance, and the victims of thy vindictiveness are beyond thy reach, I will leave thee to the residue of thy feast; and, by'r lady! in absence of the gentlemen thou didst make this supper for, intending it should be their last, thou shalt fain have guests better fitting thee. So, slaves, seat yourselves at the board! it is beseeming that slaves should be a tyrant's guests, and it becomes a tyrant to feast only with such. Down with ye, slaves!" cried Renault, between irony and stern indignation.

The trembling slaves obeyed, and the table was once more surrounded with guests. But what guests indeed! Osma heard the command with surprise, and saw it obeyed with a terrific ferocity of aspect. Thrice he looked from the table to the young chief, and thrice from the young chief to the table, alternately, as if questioning his senses. His haughty spirit blazed at the insult. The deadliest vengeance flashed from his eyes. His lips grew livid, and his brow became black as night. Renault watched these tokens of a tempest within him with a smile upon his lip, which was only wanting to inspire the count with fury. Like an enraged tiger; disdaining his sword, he sprung upon Renault, and fixed his hands upon his throat and breast with the grasp of demoniac vengeance. Quicker than lightning, the young quadroon grappled with him in the same manner, and, face to face—the one with eyes literally blazing with rage, the other with a cool and steady gaze—they confronted each other with deadly purpose. Several of the *courreurs du bois* sprung forward to Renault's relief, but he restrained them with a look.

"Unhand me, Sir Count!" at length cried Renault, who grew flushed in the face with the pressure upon his throat, "or I shall do thee mortal injury."

"Never!" said the count, with a malignant smile of desperate revenge.

"I have sworn not to harm thee," he continued, speaking with difficulty.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Spaniard, with hellish sounds, as he pressed still harder upon his windpipe, and, with his other hand upon his breast, seemed to clinch into the flesh, as if seeking to tear through to his heart.

"Thy blood be upon thine own head, then!" gasped Renault.

"Spare—oh spare my father!" shrieked a female voice behind them at this menace.

But, ere he heard, Renault had released his hold upon the count's throat, drawn a dagger from his belt, and, holding it above his breast, threatened him with instant death. At the same time with the shriek, his uplifted hand was arrested by a woman's bright arm passing before his eyes. The hold it fastened upon his wrist was slight, and he could easily have thrown it off; but there is an indescribable power in a woman's voice or intervening arm that instantly stays the fiercest spirit and suspends the strongest hand. Renault felt it. His hand remained immoveable where it had been arrested by the light grasp laid upon it! With the most wondering astonishment, he beheld before him a beautiful girl, habited in the very cloak his guide had worn— the hat itself cast at her feet—her superb head without a covering—and her bright, auburn hair bound with a coronet of pearls and precious stones. Her large blue eyes were turned upon him imploringly, while with the other hand she released the relaxing gripe

of the surprised count from his throat. He gazed upon her with wonder and adoring admiration. The cloak— the flapping *sombrero* —the youthful cheek he had seen beneath it—could it be? it was none other, he was convinced, than his late guide! The count was her father, then! Hence this singular regard for him, mingled with desire to save the councillors. He saw that the noble daughter had risked all to become the saviour of a father's honour, and save the lives of innocent men! He read the whole at a glance. He now remembered the soft hand he had pressed, and the tremulous voice that at times fell on his ear. He remembered the language he had interchanged with her upon love and womanly devotion. His guide was, then, a beautiful woman! As he gazed upon her, the dagger dropped from his hand, and, with eyes full of adoration, he cast himself on one knee before her, and said, with a depth of feeling that surprised himself,

"Gentle maiden, forgive me the act! it was a menace only to save my own life. But, had I known thou wert his daughter, I would have lot him slain me before I could have lifted my hand against him. Pardon me, I pray thee!"

"I have nothing to pardon, brave youth; thy life was endangered, and it was done in thy defence. But thou didst wantonly draw my father's ire upon thee by seating his slaves at his board!" she said, with something like displeasure.

"I confess my fault," he said, with a mantling brow; "but—"

"Nay, thou hast no need to excuse thyself! Thou hast acted with more moderation than I hoped for. Bid those slaves leave the board, and receive my thanks for thy courage and confidence."

She slightly blushed as she spoke; and, turning from the handsome eyes of Renault, which were fixed admiringly upon her beauty, she cast herself affectionately upon the breast of her parent, who sternly continued to survey her and the disguise she partly retained in silence, and by his looks seemed to understand its object.

"Away, traitress!" he cried, casting her from him.

"My dear father—"

"Thou hast betrayed me—begone!"

"Nay," she cried, clinging to him, "I have loved thee too well to betray thee! I knew thou didst contemplate a deed that would tarnish thy name, and wound thy knightly honour—"

"And so, to conceal the guilt, hast led hither an armed band to blazon it to the world. Out! thou art a poor pleader!"

"Nay, it was to save the world from being startled at a deed for which men have no name," she said, with great boldness. "Thou couldst ne'er have concealed the crime! if indeed from earth, never from Heaven!"

"Silence! thou hast done worthy of death thyself!" he said, fiercely.

"I am ready to atone, then, with my life. Heaven is my witness, I sought only thy honour, my father!"

"Cast off this cloak, and retire to thy chamber."

"Wilt thou not embrace me?"

"Away! I cannot abide thee!" he said, waving his hand commandingly.

Dropping from her graceful shoulders the *roquelaure*, displaying by the act a form of the divinest symmetry, with a pale and drooping cheek she slowly retired from the banquet−chamber. Renault's eyes followed her until she disappeared, and he then felt that she had carried away his heart.

"But what have I, an accursed quadroon—*I*, to do with a maiden's love like her? Like the worshippers of the sun, I may adore her afar off till blinded by my devotion, and my heart is burned up by her unapproachable brightness. Alas! for what do I live? wherefore do I court life? From this hour death is most welcome! Why did Heaven give me a heart to love, and then link me with a race to whom love is forbidden? Beautiful maiden! I will not insult thee by thinking of thee; yet not to think of thee were not to exist." Thus thought Renault as he turned from the door through which she had retired from his ardent gaze.

"So, young sir, thou art indebted to yonder foolish girl for thy presence here to−night? By the rood! thou didst happen in at a happy time; and not to make thee welcome were discourtesy to my hospitality," said the count, in a sarcastic tone.

Renault cast aside his gloomy reflections, and looked into the speaker's face with surprise at the words he spoke; but a glance at his ironical lip, and hard, quiet eye, told him how dangerous was the man with whom he had to do.

"We thank thee, Count of Osma, for thy words," he replied, assuming the same subtle tone; "but, having witnessed the display of thy hospitality once this evening, will be so uncourteous as to decline troubling thee for farther exhibitions of it."

At this moment the bolts and bars were suddenly removed by some persons outside the door leading into the hall. Osma's eyes lighted up with pleasure as he replied,

"Thou shalt not depart till thou hast tasted it, nevertheless."

The doors were thrown wide as he spoke, and Sulem the Moor, with a score of men−at−arms, rushed into the chamber.

"Sulem, thou hast redeemed thy cowardice," said the count to him; and then shouted aloud, "Seize and disarm these traitorous rebels, who would−beard their governor in his very banquet−chamber! If the dogs resist, cut them down!"

Renault was not taken unawares; the noise of the moving bolts and the elated voice of the Spaniard prepared him for a hostile surprise. He gave a single command, and his brave *courreurs du bois* formed themselves, with drawn swords and pistols levelled, on the opposite side of the table; and, when the door was thrown open, they were ready to meet and resist the expected assailants. While the last word of command was yet on the count's lip, Renault wound a startling peal on his bugle, and, in answer, had the satisfaction to behold through the door green plumes waving beyond and above the helmets of the men−atarms, and near the door to hear another bugle reply.

"Stay, Count of Osma," he said, with a smile, "and, ere you seek to enforce your command, tell me the meaning of yonder cluster of green plumes!"

Osma looked into the hall, and saw with dismay that his men−at−arms were closed upon from the rear by a band in the same uniform with those within the banquet−chamber.

"Hold, men−at−arms!" he cried, on seeing this superior force; "treachery and rebellion hath the better of it this night. Let these retire, if they will, unmolested."

"Thou hast done well, Sir Spaniard," said Renault, haughtily, "and hast avoided a second scene such as I believe thou wert a party to three years ago!" The count replied with a look of deadly hostility, and, as Renault led his band from the chamber, he scornfully asked.

"Pray what do men name thee, good youth, that I may know to whom I am indebted for this visit to my banquet−room?"

"My name is Renault the Quadroon."

"Ha!" he exclaimed, with unfeigned surprise, and then added, with a peculiar smile, that had, he knew not why, a most extraordinary effect upon Renault, "I have lately heard of thee. Go, and I will remember thee and *thine!*"

Renault had, with his men, passed through Osma's minions, and joined the rest of the band without, before the last words of the Spaniard, which rung forebodingly, flashed in their full meaning upon his ear.

"On thee and *thine!*" he repeated, with alarm. "Azèlie! Hath he seen her? Martin," he cried to his lieutenant, "when we gain the Place d'Armes, ride with the band to the rendezvous, and remain till I join you. Something evil will come of this night's work, I fear me!"

In a compact body the band of *courreurs du bois* marched down through the hall, which had been nearly deserted by the alarmed citizens on the approach of the men−at−arms, and, gaining the square, mounted their horses and galloped to their rendezvous; while Renault, on the wings of apprehension and mistrust, rode to his own abode, which he had not entered since his departure a little after midnight of the night before.

## CHAPTER II. SCENE BETWEEN THE COUNT AND THE ASSASSIN.

The Count of Osma, without a word of explanation, remanded his guards to their station in the *Plaza* before the palace, and was left only with Sulem and the slaves. Sending the latter away, he paced the chamber which had been the scene of such varied events, as if to get time to calm his thoughts. At length the agitated and violent character of his face settled down into a still expression. Not a trace of anger, or vindictiveness, or disappointment remained. All was calm save the eye, which shone with a triumphant light. He had formed a plan to avenge himself upon Renault, against whom he concentrated all his displeasure towards his daughter, and his vengeance at being thwarted in the assassination of the judges.

"Follow me, Sulem," he said, leaving the chamber.

Traversing half the length of the paved passage along which Estelle had guided Renault and his band, he opened a door at the left, and entered a small but elegant cabinet, with which communicated a sleeping and ante room.

"Didst thou not tell me, slave, that this lovely quadroone, Azèlie, had a brother Renault, a youth in great favour with the town's−people, and of late leader of a party hostile to Spain?"

"Even so, cadi."

"Of whom learned you this?"

"Of the same porter at the gate of their dwelling," answered the Moor; for, obedient to his master's orders given at the door of the Cathedral, he had, at an indifferent, careless pace, followed Azèlie to her threshold, where, seeing the old porter take a look out into the street before closing the gate after them, he skilfully detained him, and, by shrewdly−put questions, learned everything he desired to know of the quadroone family. He then returned and reported it to the count, who, involved in the busy affairs of the day, scarce questioned him at the time beyond his relation, though by no means indifferent to his communication. He was now free from his engagements, and, as his sudden passion for the fair quadroone was stronger than his resentment against the brother, he banished from his breast all else, and gave his mind up only to its gratification. He reflected a few moments after Sulem had answered, and then observed abruptly,

"Said you not one spoke with you in the hall who desired to see me on matters of moment?"

"He bade me say he could serve your excellency better than a score of men−at−arms if you would give him audience."

"Did you bid him wait?"

"Nay, I was hastening with the guard to your relief—"

"Well, well, enough. Go, now, and see thou return not without him. Stay! Heard you aught to−day of the whereabout of this eccentric young—of Don Henrique I mean? He seems to delight in mystery."

"Nothing beyond the words of the dark woman."

"Go!"

Left alone, Garcia of Osma threw himself into a seat, and began to think over the events of the evening. He had been thwarted in his deliberate and coolly−planned attempt to assassinate the provincial rulers. Did he hope to do so black a deed in secret, and to escape after without suspicion, and walk among men unmarked by the finger of detestation? No. He was willing—the deed done—to publish it! and, trusting to the protection of the army he commanded, defy the province. To his own king and the Spanish cortes he was the representative of his own person, and the only source through which his personal acts could be officially recognised. He was now foiled indeed; but, inwardly determining that his vengeance should yet have its victims, he banished for the present these reflections, and passed the time until Sulem's return in the contemplation of the enchanting quadroone, resolving to combine his revenge towards Renault with his passion for her.

Sulem had heard from the porter of Renault's pride; and the count's knowledge of character plainly told him that the high−spirited youth would scarce resign his sister to an open enemy, though of so high a rank as himself; and that, in pursuing his passion, he was best bringing about his vengeance. But Ramarez of Osma was not a man to let a deep affront be atoned for alone by moral punishment however degrading. Not only dishonour and

contempt did he hope to heap upon Renault through his sister, but he was sure never to rest until he had also added his blood.

While he was meditating on this theme the Moor reappeared, and ushered in a short, swarthy man, with restless, snaky eyes, that seemed ever watchful with suspicion. His dress was a blue frock, thickly adorned with bell−shaped silver buttons, the breast and cuffs of it covered with needlework. His low−crowned hat was worn with a cutthroat air above his eyes, and his smallclothes and hose were of one piece, and fitted tightly to a pair of spindle−legs, that had a gliding rather than walking motion. He wore scarlet morocco slippers, a scarlet sash about his waist, and a scarlet bandanna kerchief loosely wound about his neck. He looked a thorough−paced villain; and his thin, wiry fingers had a constant and nervous clutch against the palm, that reminded the observer of stilettos and midnight murders. Osma measured him at a glance, and seemed, by a sort of freemasonry and affinity of brotherhood, to read him at once. Without hesitation, he said instantly to him,

"You are the man I want."

"I thought so," said the other, with a cold laugh.

"You thought so, villain!" repeated Osma, sternly.

"I heard you had some matter to settle with the quadroon Renault."

"Who told thee?"

"My own wits, with the aid of my eyes and ears."

"What is thy name?"

"Rascas."

"Rascal, rather, if I might read it in thy face."

"We should be cousins, then, for I read it in thine to−day."

"Ha! this is too bold, sir!" cried the count, half drawing his sword.

"I am here to serve a bold man."

"Go to—thou hast as much brass as villany in thee. In what wouldst thou serve me?" he demanded, eying him sharply.

"With my dagger."

"Thou hast as little grace of speech as of visage, sirrah."

"And am, therefore, fitter for deeds."

"Wherefore hast thou sought me?"

"To aid thee in thy vengeance and thy passions."

"Dost thou know this?"

"I was in the Cathedral to−day," he answered, dryly.

"And now do I remember I met thee in the street, signor," said Sulem.

"When thou wert coming from gossiping with Renault's garrulous porter," he answered, significantly.

"By the rood, Monsieur Rascas, thou art invaluable if thy discretion measure thy subtlety."

"Gold will buy secrecy."

"Be it so. Sulem, place in his hands an onza of gold. Thou shalt have this, sirrah, so long as thou servest me faithfully. But, if thou prove false to me, I shall not be backward in changing it for steel."

"Thou art never backward in its use, if men lie not."

"Thy tongue is flippant, sirrah."

"I did but allude to thy soldierly skill, signor," answered Rascas, with an ironical leer.

"Thou knowest more than thou wouldst seem to know of me."

"We have met in Spain, signor."

"Ha! When?"

"On the night the southern tower of the castle of Osma fell into the sea."

The count started with an exclamation, and for a moment eyed him fixedly.

"Wilt trust me, signor?" asked Rascas, with a confident smile.

"Yes, yes. So thou speak to me no more of this. Thou hast been a wanderer since—"

"That night's work, dost thou mean?"

"Speak of it again, and thou diest."

"Why, blood−letting afterward I took to so kindly, that Spain became too warm for me, and I have since been a traveller on other men's purses. But this province hath no wealthy hidalgoes; and I was wellnigh impoverished and tempted to take to the highway, when your excellency came and filled me with hopes; for, by mine honour, though I have done a kindly deed for many a cavalier since, I have never served so free a hand as thyself."

"Thou art a rare villain, sirrah; and I marvel thou art unhung."

"The devil hath sworn I shall not hang till a greater rogue than I be found to hang with me," said the professional assassin, with a forward and bold bearing, that caused the Count of Osma to bite his lip with shame and vexation; for joint crime is a leveller of all distinctions of rank, and he keenly felt it to be so.

"Rascas, thou hast done well in coming hither; I have need of thee, though not of thy dagger, this very hour," he said, in a grave tone, that gave him to understand it was time for him to restrain his freedom of tongue, and devote himself to the will of his new master. "Your knowledge of this city and people will be of infinite use to me."

"Speak, signor!" he said, with attention.

In a few words the count detailed the scenes that had transpired in the banquet−chamber, much of which the wily villain had learned through listening, and that spirit of ever−active suspicion which caused him to know, as if by intuition, everything that passed around him, if by any means he might work mischief out of it for his own ends.

"Now, sirrah, I would have you bear this note," he said, writing it as he spoke, "to the colonel of my cuirassiers in the barracks. It is a command for him to mount and follow you with sixty horse. These station at the eastern gate, and, if not too late, take these councillors prisoners as they ride forth. Here is a new countersign for the night, Sulem," he continued to his slave, "which bear to the captain of the palace guards, and command him instantly to have it delivered to all the posts; then go thyself, and, on thy life, see that every barrier be closed for the night save the eastern gate. Fly, and, having done my bidding, hasten back hither."

"It shall be done."

"Now, Rascas, I depend on your sagacity and cunning, as much as on the courage of my cuirassiers, to seize these rebellious judges. It is not half an hour since they left, and it will take time for them to prepare and get to saddle. If they have passed the gate, pursue them."

"What shall be done with them, signor, if taken?"

"Cast them into the keep of the prison, and then bring me word. See that it is done without parade or show of tumult. Away with thee."

The assassin glided from the apartment, and when his light, swift tread ceased to reach his ear, the Count of Osma threw over his rich banquet dress a sable velvet cloak, and covered his brow with a black Spanish bonnet without a plume; then exchanging his dress sword for a short hanger, and concealing his face to the eyes with the folds of the mantle, he left the cabinet, and, entering the marble passage, paused an instant, as if undetermined which way to go. At length he exclaimed,

"A guerdon of thanks to this Renault. Yonder private door, which he opened for the escape of the councillors from the banquet−room, will aid my secret departure from the palace."

He was about to turn in this direction, when the light from Estelle's door arrested his eye. He changed his purpose instantly on seeing this, and walked rapidly and noiselessly towards her apartment. The door was ajar, and open wide enough to admit him. He softly entered the antechamber, where two of her slaves were sleeping on mats laid before the inner door of her toilet closet. This door was open, and all was still within. He entered, and beheld his daughter kneeling beside an ottoman, on which her head rested, her face laid on her snowy arm, sleeping like a child. A tear was on one cheek, and a liquid drop glittered with trembling lustre upon her long eyelash. He gazed upon this sweet picture a few moments, and his face grew sad and tender.

"Poor child, thou hast wept thyself to sleep!" he said, half audibly. "She hath but acted like a loving daughter, to save a guilty father from what she esteemed a crime—not understanding I have power of life and death! Sweet child! Thou lovest me, Lil, and thou art, of human kind, all my stern heart yearns to! I have too often wounded thy generous spirit. I will forgive thee when thou wakest, for thou art unhappy."

He stooped and kissed her, and the touch of his lip instantly awoke her. She opened her eyes, and, seeing who it was, and the kind look with which he was bending over her, threw her arms around him, and, joyfully repeating

"my dear father," burst into tears.

"Nay, Lil, thou hast my forgiveness," he said, affectionately.

"Thou art ever kind to me, dearest father! Oh that thou wert not thine own enemy!"

"Thine error is, child, that thou judgest my acts as a conqueror and governor of a rebellious province, as thou wouldst do those of a private person. Does the king commit a crime when he condemns a traitor to the scaffold? Is a judge a murderer who sentences the murderer to death? These men have done deeds worthy of death. They have strengthened the resistance of the colonists; have been the fomenters of sedition in the town; and have not only refused to surrender their authority and the seals of the province, but have traitorously dissolved their body, and, by the act, placed themselves in the attitude of rebels. 'Fore Heaven! they are well worthy of death."

"There is the tribunal of the Cabildo, my father, where they should have been arraigned."

"The judgment of the Cabildo is but the echo of my own, girl. I adjudged them worthy of death in the tribunal of my own mind, the Cabildo would have done the same."

"Nevertheless, thou wouldst have escaped the odium of the act, and not taken into thine own hands the duty of the public executioner!" she answered, with animation.

"Thou hast well spoken, child," he said, with a changed manner, after a moment's thought; "they have now escaped. If taken, they shall be arraigned before the tribunal of the Cabildo, as you desire. I ought to thank thee I did not make my banquetroom a slaughter−house for the rebels," he continued, smiling and tapping her cheek; "but I would have made an example of them to the people, and every hour's delay was dangerous, inasmuch as rumours reached me that they were already conspiring against my power. The *escapade* of three hundred horsemen through the eastern gate before dawn reported by the captain of the guard, I have reason to think they had something to do with. Now, my daughter, I have forgiven thee this once for thy filial love; but let not any future interference in my affairs call from me harsh chidings where alone I would speak the language of affection. Seek thy couch! To−morrow I will have an entertainment for thee to receive the fair signoras of the town, who, doubtless, desirous of following the example of their lords, would gladly throng hither to pay homage to thy rank and beauty."

"Nay, father, I need it not."

"It becomes our station, daughter, to endure the ceremony; besides," he added, with a smile, "I would see, with a father's jealousy, if Louisiana has loveliness to match thine. Seek thy couch early, that the rose in the morning may take the place of the lily now on thy cheek. Good−night, *mia alma*," he added, kissing her.

Then, casting his mantle about his noble form, this subtle, designing, intriguing man—the more dangerous for the virtues that mingled with his vices—left the chamber, and traversed the paved passage to the private banquet−room. He was about to enter, when a voice within arrested his steps. Advancing cautiously forward, he saw through the partly−open door a singularlooking being sitting in his own state−chair, at the head of the gold and silver piled board, with a goblet of wine in one hand and a pineapple in the other, alternately sipping of the wine and eating of the fruit, keeping up a running soliloquy between. His dress consisted of a yellow doublet, spotted with black fleur−de−lis; scarlet breeches, and a high, conical cap of flaming red. His shape was ludicrously deformed, a hump−back here, and a bandy−leg there; while the count wondered at his physiognomy, having never before beheld so extraordinary a one. He, moreover, seemed drunk.

"Now I would steal this gold cup an' I knew it to be gold," he soliloquized, surveying the goblet wishfully; "but gold hath a look o' brass; and, were I to steal a brass goblet for a gold one, I'd hang myself for an ass. Here be a silver tankard; that has a good complexion and genuine. I'll put that in my pocket," he said, suiting the action to the word. "There is a gold salt−spoon; verily it doth look like brass; but, an' it were not gold, methinks cousin Spain would not have it. I will take it at a venture; and, as the saltcellar is of no value without the spoon, like a mortar without pestle, I must needs let it keep company with the spoon. I would gossip Boviedo were here. He could tell me an' these platters be silver. An' I thought so, I would have the largest, and cut it up into twelvepenny bits. This bottle is out, but here is one that hath a cup gone out o' it; I will e'en fill from it. 'Tis strange I am not drunk! Had I brains like other men for the wine to get into, I had been dead drunk two good hours agone! Cousin Spain hath made a bountiful—a bounteous supper," he said, surveying the gorgeous board; "it were a lucky hour I found my way in here, and especially discovered this snug supper, after my false subjects had left me for drunk in the other room. 'Tis true (this wine hath flavour!) I did roll off the table; but wine that doth not put a true man on his back hath water in it—(Ah! this is rare wine; here's to cousin Osma's health!)—but I got to my feet again

when I had laid long enough to do credit to the vintage. (This is grown in Madeira, or Gobin is a fool.) I would cousin Spain were here to hob and nob; 'tis dull work drinking alone; it will take till daylight to put all these seventeen bottles o' wine 'eneath my belt. (I shall never love any other wine save cousin Osma's after this.) I can get drunk nine times at a sitting on't, and go home sober. Out on the vile trash gossip Boviedo and I were sopping our insides with last night! If a man get drunk on it, he lieth twenty−four hours like a hog, and waketh up with his head split in two. Here's to cousin Osma, and may he never want good wine, or Gobin to drink it for him!" he added, emptying his goblet for the third time since he was first discovered by the count.

"Here's to cousin Gobin, who shall never drink bad wine while Osma can give him good," responded the count, amused at Gobin's soliloquy, and instantly appreciating and chiming in with the humour of his character. He had entered the chamber before he spoke, and, advancing unseen to the table, had a goblet already in his hand, when Gobin looked up and beheld him.

"Art thou cousin Osma?" he asked, with ready self−possession.

"None other, gossip Gobin. Dost thou love wine?"

"Doth an unweaned child love its mother's milk?" he answered, without being moved by the sudden appearance of the governor.

"How many goblets hast thou emptied, gossip?" asked the count, smiling.

"When I get this and another down that I shall soon pour out, cousin, I shall have seen the bottom o' it eleven times since I adjourned to this room."

"Hast thou been feasting in the hall, too?"

"Wouldst thou have a man stuff his gullet with meat when wine abounds? I have been *bibing*, cousin, not feasting—no, by my mother's beard!"

"And how many cups didst thou put down there?"

"Nineteen, cousin, and should ha' rounded the score had I not tumbled off the table."

"How comest thou here, then, in such sober guise?"

"The goodness o' the wine, cousin Osma, I got drunk upon. I slept twenty minutes like an infant, and got up as fresh as if wine had not crossed my lip for a twelvemonth. Finding my compatriots fled, and seeing a door partly open, I ventured in, and soon made myself at home here."

"So I perceive, worthy Gobin, and am glad thou lovest my wine. Art thou in service in the town?"

"I am a gentleman of leisure, and live by mother wit," he answered, gravely.

"Wilt thou take service with me at wages? Thou shalt serve at court."

"Nay, folly is at a discount in courts. Nothing hath merit nowadays but wine," he answered, emptying his cup.

"Thou shalt drink such wine as that at thy dinner each day," said the count, taken with a sudden humour to attach him to his household.

"I have a conscience at swearing allegiance, cousin."

"Thou shalt not owe allegiance save to mirth and folly. Our palace is somewhat grave, and we would make thee master of mirth. Wilt thou serve me?"

"Verily will I do't, till I find a master who keepeth better wine than thou dost. Let us take a goblet upon it, gossip."

The count drank to him by the title of Bacchus the Second, and then was about to deliver him, with the deserted banquet−halls, to the care of his master of the ceremonies, who chanced to approach at that moment, when Gobin drew from his vest a small folded and sealed paper, saying, with a drunken hiccough,

"Speakin' o' Bacchus, gossip Spain, reminds me that a womankind made me a Mercury, and bade me place this in thy hands ere I touched goblet to lip. Thou seest I have most faithfully done her bidding!"

"A most trusty messenger," said the count, taking the note from him.

With an eager and surprised eye, he read the superscription to "The most noble Count Ramarez of Osma," in a strong but evidently female hand. He tore it open.

"*Ninine, the mother of the Quadroone Azèlie, has witnessed the noble Count Osma's admiration of her daughter. If agreeable to his excellency to grant her an audience in his own cabinet, the intimation of his wishes will be a command to* "Ninine,"

The connt read this extraordinary, but in that clime, in that day, no unusual document, with a degree of gratification he could not conceal.

"This is far beyond my hopes! Fortune hath favoured me strangely," he said, half aloud. "How well hath that handsome, intriguing mother read my deep passion! This is my first lesson in the romance of this Western Ind. I will go to this interview, and, thanks to my cousin Gobin, I shall not have to trust to stratagem, as I was about to do, to gain admittance beneath the same roof with this divine Azèlie. Now are love and revenge both in my grasp."

He threw aside, as he spoke, the arras that concealed the door through which the councillors had escaped, and, followed by his Cuban bloodhound, descended the stairway to the street. Here he carefully and effectually enveloped his features and person in the folds of his mantle from the scrutiny of passers−by; for at that early hour, nine o'clock having just struck, the Place d'Armes and streets adjacent were filled with revellers retiring from the banquet, and citizens, male and female, drawn forth either by curiosity or the calm beauty of the night. Then, taking his way for a short distance along the shaded wall of the prison, he turned into a side street and disappeared.

## CHAPTER III. TWILIGHT SCENE BETWEEN LOVERS.

After the departure of Renault from the couch of his sleeping guest, Don Henrique (for back to this period does the story now return), the senses of the wounded cavalier, it has been seen, were lulled to sleep by the soft and distant music of the mandoline and co−mingling voice of Azèlie. When he awoke, the golden sunlight of a tropical afternoon shone aslant into the court, and the atmosphere was of a still, dreamy character, that seemed to invite to indolent repose all living things. It was the voluptuous hour of the *siesta*, when the dwellers in southern climes resign themselves to the drowsy influence of the time, and households and cities are buried in the deep repose of midnight, until the evening breezes, that stir the lethargic air, awaken them with renewed life and energies. But Don Henrique required no sleep. Twelve hours of undisturbed rest had invigorated him. He felt free from pain, and all trace of suffering and illness had disappeared. His spirits were fresh and elastic as his body; and, save from the remembrance that he had recently lost blood, he would not have known that the usual condition of his bodily health had been interrupted.

"How perfectly well I am!" he said, on opening his eyes. "If it were not that I am here," added he, looking around him, "I should believe I had been dreaming of conflicts and wounds, of illness, and of a lovely maiden watching my pillow. How my heart bounds at the recollection of her scarcely earthly beauty! I am now well, thanks to her tender care, and that of her brave and gallant brother, and have no farther excuse for intruding on their hospitality. I must depart, yet would, methinks, lie wounded here for ever, for her gentle company; I will see her ere I go, and thank her for her charity, drinking in the while Love's poison from the well of her dark eyes. Ha! I have slept well! There sounds five o'clock, with a thick, muffled tone, as if it would not wake the slumbering town. How still is all, save the falling of the water in the fountain, and the hum of flies that seek the shade to sport in! It is quiet as midnight! Even the birds, that last night made the orange groves without eloquent with song, are now hushed! I will take this time to loiter about the court and pleasant cloisters of the mansion; for these Orleannois have a delightful idea of domestic luxury, and a most perfect taste in the unison of the useful and ornamental: surely this very room hath no equal in Spain! Yonder carved and gilded corridors, with their Venetian blinds and latticed sides, invite to walk; while the music of falling water, and, by moonlight, the singing of birds, and the pleasant groves of orange−trees, are present to delight the ear and eye. I will go and loiter there until my lovely hostess or her brother awake; for methinks I myself am the only one not sleeping in the town!"

He arose when he had thus soliloquized, and, as he did so, a slave, whom he had not hitherto seen, advanced from a recess with a bowl and ewer of iced−water in his hand, and, silently kneeling before him, held them for his service; another followed, bearing a snowy napkin, and holding a silver tray, covered with vessels and instruments for the toilet of the most elegant and costly description. His surprise at their sudden appearance did not prevent him from making the intended use of their services; and having performed his ablutions and made his toilet, he resumed his weapons. Then, placing his Spanish bonnet beneath his arm, he was about to demand of them whether their master had returned, when, to his surprise, he found he was alone.

"These slaves appear and disappear like magic," he said, vexed at their departure before he could learn anything of either of his youthful hosts; "but, by'r lady! they are bearers of sweet odours, and are skilful at a cavalier's toilet. Jove ne'er had his beard perfumed with such rich scent as the rogues have laid upon my mustache withal! If they had ended their handiwork by leaving me a cup of coffee or a— Here am I served with a wish on my lip!" he cried, as two more slaves, bearing salvers with coffee and delicate refreshments, at this instant appeared. "This is hospitality indeed, where one no sooner wishes than his desire is gratified! These ebony gentlemen shall not escape, like their fellows, unquestioned," he added, as he seated himself to the sumptuous repast they spread before him.

"Now, garçons," he asked, when he had completed his grateful meal, to which his long fast enabled him to do justice, turning to the slaves behind him, "prithee tell me by whose orders I am thus princely entertained?"

The slaves crossed their hands upon their breasts, shook their heads, and then touched their lips with a fore finger.

"Are the rogues dumb, or know they not my speech?" he asked of himself. "Where is your master? Say his

guest would speak with him!"

They again made a gesture rather of ignorance of his words than of mysterious silence, as he was disposed to attribute it to at first, and then, making an obeisance, silently removed the salvers from before him and disappeared from the room.

"I clearly see I cannot increase greatly in knowledge from these speechless slaves of my hospitable entertainer, and must fain be patient till he choose to make his appearance in person. I feel in better health and spirits than I have done since I left Spain. There is magic in a maiden's nursing, or strange health is in this southern air! I will forth into the court, where I see the wind is slightly moving yonder acacia top, and inspire it. Perchance fortune may favour me also with a sight of the fair girl, whose image Sleep, with noiseless burin, has engraven indelibly on my heart. I certainly am fascinated with her beauty, and most truly has she impressed me with feelings to which my heart has been hitherto a stranger. This may be, and may not be love. Time will determine. Then her condition! Ha! I had wellnigh forgotten it. A slave— at least the *child* of a slave! the offspring of guilt— and, and—it will out—with Ethiopian blood in her veins! This, then, is she who has touched thy heart, Henrique! Can such a one be loved by thee? No, not if she were guilty of her mother's bondage and of her slavish descent—No! But is she guilty of these? Is she not as fair and glorious in virgin beauty as if descendant from a long line of European kings? Do I love her, then, or hate her for the acts of the generation before her, or for the blood of her ancestors, so long as she bears none of either in her own person, but appears a creation of all beauty, grace, and purity? Besides, if I do love her, as I begin to suspect I do, I love her for *herself!* Had she risen, all lovely as she is, from a fountain, or bounded from an opening rosebud upon the ground (mortal save in birth), would she not have been worthy to be loved and even adored? What is it to me if she is now in all else this very thing, whether she be derived from kings or slaves, or sprung from a rose or a fountain, without father or mother? But this is weak sophistry for the test of the world, and, I must confess, my heart hath more to do in framing it than my head. Nay, I must see her again, and either break or more firmly bind the chain her singular beauty has flung around me."

Don Henrique then idly lounged from the apartment which had been the scene of events so interesting to his heart, sensibly touched by the beauty and condition of the lovely quadroone, and entered upon a spacious corridor, that was continued along the four sides of the quadrangle, and protected from the sun by lattice−work constructed between the snow−white columns that supported it.

This lattice was thickly covered with flowing vines, which, tastefully entwining around the columns to their capitals, fell gracefully down to the ground again, or, artfully fashioned into festoons, swung from pillar to pillar. At intervals were open arches communicating with the court, which was ornamented on every side with dark−polished leaved shrubs, growing in gigantic urns, and bearing magnificent flowers on stately stalks; while lesser plants, in porcelain or marble vases, formed everywhere tasteful walks and figures, and orange, althea, lemon, acacia, and other trees, planted in groups, cast a cool and almost impervious shade beneath. In the midst stood a fountain of white marble, the spray shooting upward from a lion's mouth, and descending upon a statue of Niobe. The soft, hazy sunlight fell upon the scene, and gave to the whole a rich Oriental character, that was in harmony with the youthful cavalier's feelings. He approached the fountain, and startled from their sunny slumbers in its basin troops of gold fishes, while, at his footstep, beautiful birds, with a quick, musical chirp, flitted from the branches of a laurel near the fountain, and sought a retreat in an orange−tree on the farther side of the court.

"This is indeed a paradise, as I conceived when I first waked from insensibility after being brought hither," he said, seating himself upon an Indian settee placed beneath the laurel−tree; "how little do we Europeans know of the voluptuous life of southern climes. I shall have rare modes of luxury to bear back to Castile! and, if I could carry with me this houri of my paradise!—and, pray, what shall hinder me?—if I can persuade her to fall in love with a wandering cavalier, as I have certainly done with her. Ay de mi! I will neither say nor gainsay, but let love take its course. If Heaven has paired us above, we shall surely be wedded below. So I will e'en leave it to Heaven, devoutly trusting it will side with my heart's hopes."

Thus mused Don Henrique as he sat by the fountain, and his thoughts continued to flow in this current, aided by his recollection of all that Renault had related to him, until, imperceptibly, evening stole over the spot, and he was aroused from his meditations by the first notes of the nightingale singing to an early star. He rose with the intention of returning to the apartment he had left, but, seeing that the openings to the corridor between the pillars were alike on every side, he was at a loss to distinguish that by which he had issued; after a moment's reflection,

he walked towards the verdant arch by which he believed he must have entered, and was about to pass through into the corridor, when he discovered that the door that should have answered to his own was partly screened by a circular curtain, and much smaller than the stately folding leaves that led to his apartment.

He was about to retreat, when a voice within thrilled to his soul. It was that of Azèlie. It was the first note of a song, which, in a low, plaintive, and most touching voice, she sang throughout, while he listened entranced. It told the story of her fate, and his heart wept for her. It told that she loved him, and it bounded with strange joy. It told of despair, and he could scarcely restrain the impulse to spring forward, cast himself at her feet, and bid her hope and live. Her voice accompanied no instrument, but flowed a simple strain of liquid, vocal melody, natural and warbling, but of that power which fills the soul with those exquisite sensations that have caused mankind to place oral music in the highest order of intellectual and human efforts. These are the words he listened to: Love bringeth each other young maiden A world of joyance and bliss; But, alas! to me cometh laden With nothing but wo's bitterness. Wo's me! He goeth with smiles in his eyes To all other hearts, far and near; But to mine cometh laden with sighs, To mine ever comes with a tear. Wo's me! Oh! why will he come to my heart, And fill me with grief and despair! Cruel Love! I prithee depart, And to grieve my bosom forbear! Wo's me! Thou hast shown it the image of one, Whom for me 'tis guilt to keep there! Oh! what hast thou cruelly done, In so wickedly guiding him here? Wo's me! His eyes thou hast filled with a charm, His voice to my heart made a snare; Oh! why hast thou wished to me harm? Love—Love thou! I bid thee beware! Wo's me! Thou'st kill'd me, false Love, with thy dart; My heart with sorrow is torn; Thou hast acted the cruellest part, In making me love but to mourn. Wo's me!

I mourn for the calm of the tomb— My spirit will soon be set free— To soar where affection doth bloom, Where true love requited shall be. Joy's me!

The voice trembled, and seemed most full of sadness as she sang the last stanza.

Drawn insensibly nearer the door, lest one sweet note or accent should escape his entranced ear, Don Henrique found himself, when the song ended, standing within a step of the crimson curtain, which, half withdrawn from across the entrance, exposed a part of the interior. It was a lady's boudoir he saw at once by the hundred little delicacies that met his eye.

Silence had followed the music of the plaintive voice. His heart was touched by its echo still. He felt the influence, too, of the hour and time. It was twilight; the soft, rosy light shed a delicate lustre over everything around him, and touched his feelings with the subdued harmony that prevailed. It was the hour of tender thought and gentle feelings: for sadness—for tears. Who has not experienced the power of eventide? Who has not loved to sit by the deep−shadowed casement, through which is faintly reflected the western red of the just departed sun, and give wing to thought? How gentle are the images that come then, whether of memory or of fancy, to the soul! How sad, how tender—often how full of quiet and pleasing melancholy! How the heart loves to lose itself in the misty, dreamy world of its own creations! How often does religion, like gentle dew from heaven, then fall upon it, and how naturally do tears then come into the eyes! Most sacred hour! Sabbath−time of the day! How the heart loves its still communion with itself then, save in the bosoms of the dark and guilty. To such twilight is, indeed, a fearful time. They fly it, because they tremble to yield to a power which compels them to hold converse with themselves. With such, the sun is no sooner set, than the sacredness of the hour is desecrated by the intrusion of artificial light. Oh! who that is innocent in heart, or does not shrink from the knowledge of himself, and knows the blessed influence of the twilight−time upon his own feelings, would consent to part with its sweet pleasure, and deprive himself, in this world, of an enjoyment so intellectual and spiritual, that it may be termed a foretaste of that which is to come!

Don Henrique's feelings were in tone with the hour, and the touching melody of Azèlie's voice filled his soul with the tenderest sensibility. He desired to mingle his feelings with hers! To sooth her grief; and, it must be said, to be once more, if but for a moment, within the influence of her beauty. Involuntarily he laid his hand upon the curtain—hesitated— became irresolute; and then, as if imboldened by his love and the favouring hour, he gently lifted aside the drapery.

Within was Azèlie, kneeling before a small household shrine, her face buried in her dark tresses, which were dishevelled, and fell with the negligence of grief about her scarcely veiled neck. She was apparently in silent prayer. Her whole form was instinct with life, and heaved with strong emotion. At intervals, a faint moan reached his ear. On the altar burned a silver lamp, diffusing an odour of incense throughout the boudoir. The richness and

luxury of the apartment scarcely arrested his glance; his gaze rested on a single object, and, save the lovely worshipper, he saw nothing. He even stilled the beating of his heart, and, softly approaching her, removed his bonnet, and kneeled by her side. Oh, love! what limit has thy power over the heart! For a few moments he knelt by her, and then, in the softest whisper of tenderest solicitude and sympathy, breathed her name.

"Dearest brother!" she said, in a tone of grief, without lifting her head, "you have come to see me die!"

"Nay, sweet Azèlie, if love hath broken thy heart, love shall mend it again for thee. Dry up those starry fountains of tears, and love shall henceforward visit thee `with smiles,' " said Don Henrique, speaking in a tone so frank and generous, so soothing and tender, that her startled surprise at finding, instead of her brother, the young Spanish cavalier kneeling by her side, was in a measure lost in the words he spoke.

She at first lifted her head and looked upon him with wild alarm; but, as he proceeded, convinced by his words that he had heard her song, and knew the state of her heart, this emotion changed to one of maidenly shame. Her brow and bosom glowed with crimson; she attempted to say something, but her voice failed her; the blood rushed back to her heart; a deadly paleness overspread her face, and she sunk forward with her forehead upon the altar step. He thought she had become insensible, and cried with alarm, catching her in his arms to arrest her fall,

"I have killed her by my imprudence!"

Then, snatching up a flask of *eau de vie*, he was about to bathe her forehead and hands freely, when, finding herself in the arms of the young cavalier, the fugitive blood hastened again to restore the brightness to her cheek and lip, and, rising with a dignity most becoming, she said,

"I thank thee, signor, for thy proffered aid. Pray leave me! I have permitted a secret that I meant should have died with me to escape me, and can only atone for it by the deep maidenly shame that now burns my brow. Leave me, I pray thee, signor; and if thou art as good and generous as I believe thee to be, forget that thou hast ever seen me!"

"Dearest lady," he cried, in a tone most impassioned.

"Nay, mock me not, signor! *I am a quadroone!*"

"Heaven is my witness, lovely maid, I meant thee no mockery. I know thy history, thy condition, and its penalty."

"Then why art thou here? Fly and leave me for ever! It may not be that thou shouldst remain here!"

"Dearest. Azèlie!" he said, with deep feeling, "I have been the involuntary listener to your confessed love! Nay, turn not so deadly pale! Here, on my knees, I swear to thee 'tis requited."

"I may not listen to thee without guilt; thy love is shame and infamy! I pray thee leave me."

"Thy heart swells in thine eyes while thou biddest me go, dearest Azèlie! Wherefore be so cruel? I love thee."

"It is because thou lovest me—because thou art loved by me," she said, with fervour, "that I bid thee go!"

"Dearest and loveliest of women!" he cried, taking her hand, "let there be no dissimulation between thee and me. Accident has betrayed our mutual loves. Let us not mutually fill the cup of each other's misery. Heaven hath made us for one another, and I beg thee seek not, to thine own evident pain, to avert its decrees!"

"Nay, signor, Heaven never hath decreed guilt, nor will it let the strongest love of mortals hide crime committed under it. Go, I entreat thee! Each moment thou lingerest here is fatal to my peace."

"Crime! What mean thy words! Is it guilt to love?"

"*A quadroone*," she answered, with a supernatural effort at maintaining sufficient firmness.

"That word has given the key to all thy language and bearing," he said, with a countenance expressive of delight. "Thou hast done me wrong, sweet Azèlie. On such love as I offer, Heaven will smile. Here, kneeling at thy feet, I ask thee if thou wilt become my bride?"

"Thy *bride!*" she repeated, with a voice half trembling between hope and doubt.

"My honourable wife!" he said, solemnly, taking her hand and fervently pressing it to his lips.

"Wife—bride! his honourable wife! said he?" she repeated, unconsciously, aloud, as if lost and stunned by the strange words that fell on her ear.

"Even so, sweet Azèlie! Nay, look not so wildly! Keep thy reason to her seat! Wilt thou become my wife?" and he kissed her brow.

"A wife, and the wife of him my soul loveth!" said she, with deep joy.

"Yes, be my own sweet wife."

"'Tis more joy than my heart can hold," she cried, with the most exquisite happiness in her voice and face.

"Then pour out its fulness into my bosom," he said, clasping her yielding form in his arms, and imprinting upon her lips the seal of his pure and honourable love.

Who may truly describe the happiness of two hearts thus united by the tenderest union of kindred souls! How perfect had been love's work in those hours of watching, when, bending over his pillow, she drank in the delicious poison of her love! Her touching sorrows and gentle beauty, as she kneeled by the altar, had sealed for ever the passion that had entered his bosom when he awoke and beheld her sleeping beside him! Love had done much, very much, in a few short hours; but his work can be done in a day−or in an hour's time, and by a single glance as well as in years of uninterrupted fellowship. Azelie suffered his arms to enfold her for a moment—a moment so happy that it compensated for all her life's sorrows; and then lifted to his her tearful face, through the April clouds of which struggled the sunshine of her happy heart. He gazed on her with tender rapture, and again pressed her to his breast.

"My own sweet Azèlie," he exclaimed, looking down into her soft, grateful eyes; "if I have made thee happy, thou hast made me happier still. Many maidens of many lands have I bowed down before in wondering adoration of their beauty, but never before has woman received the homage of my heart! It has remained for thy retiring and modest beauty— for thine eyes' witchery and thy voice's fascination— for the charms of thy mind as well as those of thy person, to command the worship of my spirit. Thou knowest me not; yet thy love, as it ever does in woman, has ennobled its object. But fear not; thou hast placed thy affections on one who is not unworthy thyself, or the purity and fervour of thy affections. Thy eyes, I now see, would ask me who I am. Thou knowest me to be a Spanish cavalier and gentleman. Call me Don Henrique—nay, *Henrique* were sweeter from thy lips—and thou shalt, ere long, know what, but for reasons connected with thy safety, and that I may in secret observe for a time the doubtful conduct of another, I would now reveal. I pray thee, for the present, sweetest, let me be to thee Henrique."

"Love hath no name nor rank! Be mine—love me still, as thy eyes tell me thou dost—and I seek to know nothing beyond *that thou lovest me!*" she said, in a tone so musical and soft that he rapturously kissed the lips that distilled such melody.

She withdrew blushingly from his embrace, and a melancholy expression passed over her features.

"What is this, dearest? If my love hath offended thy virgin propriety, I pray thee pardon me, for love's offences should have for excuse its love."

"Thou hast not offended me, signor," she answered; but, without lifting her large black eyes from the ground, as if sadness sat heavily on the fringed eyelids, "thou hast scarce offended; but I have thought," she added, with artlessness, "that thou wilt not forget my condition—and despise where now thou lovest."

"Dost thou believe I love thee, then?" he asked, with fervour.

"My heart tells me so. Nay, methinks I could not love thee as I do, didst thou not love me," she answered, lifting to him her eyes, that were bright with affection, and then dropping them again upon the floor.

"Then, if thou believest this," he answered, with passionate earnestness, "why fear that my love shall cease? Thou doest me wrong, dearest," said he, with a countenance so full of sorrow that it was apparent his heart and happiness were bound up in her.

"Nay, then, I will not doubt; yet, if thou wert as constant and strong in thy love as I, thou couldst never but love; for methinks, dearest Henrique," she said, placing a hand in his, and looking up into his eyes full of trust and confidence, "if I were a princess, loving thee as I do, I should not cease to love thee shouldst thou prove to be a—slave! nay, a bandit of the forests or a pirate of the seas—thy hand steeped in blood—thy brow crossed with guilt!"

"Couldst thou love such a one?"

"If he had won my virgin heart—not knowing him to be other than he seemed—where my heart was given, there would my love be!"

"Thou art a noble and true−hearted woman! Thou hast scarce loved a sea−pirate or a chief of Ladrones, my sweet Azèlie," he said, smiling; "methinks love which is so true as thine should have better reward."

"I need none, save to know each day thou lovest me more than thou didst the last."

"Dost thou also wish to have me proved an honest man?"

"The wish could not be in my breast were it not the offspring of suspicion."

"And dost thou not suspect me?"

"No. Wert thou false and guilty, thou couldst never be so dear to me!"

"This is confiding, trusting, dear woman's reasoning; it is this with which she stills those unworthy doubts that may not exist where love is. To her the bright moon is all light and purity, forgetting that the portion turned from her eye is dark and all unillumined," he said, rather addressing himself than her. "Now, as thou hast trusted me, dearest, and believest I will honour thy deep affection with my hand as I have done with my heart—as all doubts, and fears, and apprehensions are to be buried under hope and love, truth and troth, let us banish every thought that can ruffle the placid bosom of our affections."

"Thou hast made me happy, my Henrique, by lifting me to thy heart, and elevating me above that humiliating consciousness of degradation by birth and condition which ever, like a chain about my soul, bowed my spirits to the earth. 'Tis a strange delight for me to hold equal communion with one whom by education I have been taught to regard as—"

"Nay," he said, seeing her blush and hesitate, "I do not verily believe thou art of this race! Renault suggested it by a word he let fall! The beauty of that eye; the delicate damask on that cheek, which the sun, in ripening, hath just browned, like a rare peach he would dye with his favourite shade; those coral lips, and that mouth full of liquid pearls, like the ivory keys of some rich instrument, giving out music whenever you speak; those eyes, like the starry, midnight sky; those lily hands—"

"Nay, nay, Signor Henrique! I prithee stop," she cried, laughing, and laying the hand he would have taken to illustrate his words upon his lips. He imprinted a kiss upon the fair member as it came in contact with them, in retaliation, and then continued,

"Truly, my lovely one, I do believe thou art of other blood than that thou thinkest."

"But my brother—he is even fairer than I," she said, her eyes at first sparkling with the hopes his words inspired, and then dropping with doubt, showing that she felt she could not entertain a hope so unexpectedly and strangely started.

"Fairer than thyself for a man where his bonnet hath protected his temples from the sun. Yet his father is known, and he hath told me his quadroone−mother is scarce darker than he has seen Spanish ladies."

"She is my mother also. My father may have been a fair man, even as this Marquis of Caronde. Do not, I pray thee, excite hopes, signor, that have no other foundation, alas! than in thy wishes," she said, sighing.

"Nay, I could love thee no more wert thou to prove a Princess of France."

"I fear thou hast repented thy love for a quadroone, and wouldst fain defend it by seeking to make me what I am not, one of thy own race," she said, with gentle reproof.

"Thou dost me injustice, dearest Azèlie! I love thee with all my nature; and it is my great love that would do this for thee. Wert thou an angel, as almost thou seemest to me to be, my love would have thee a seraph, and, being a seraph, I would see thee, for the love I bear thee, still more than a seraph. Love, and not my foolish pride, would prove thee to be more than thou believest thyself to be. Dost thou believe I speak truly, my little trembler?"

"Forgive me that I doubted thy love for an instant. If I perchance offend again, let it not be forgotten by thee that this sudden happiness of thy love hath weakened my poor heart. Hast thou not seen a wearywinged bird, who, after a hundred leagues of restless flight above the wide sea, cometh suddenly o'er the must of a stately ship, and, for joy at the unlooked−for resting−place, hovereth long between hope and fear ere he settle upon it; when, finding it secure, he folds his long−spread wings, and fearless sleeps upon the rocking perch. I am this weary bird, and thou my stately bark! Bear with me a while; I will, ere long, rest in thy heart, whence nor fear, nor the rocking of the waves of doubt or of mistrust shall move me!"

"While thou speakest, I think thee each moment lovelier and more worthy of my love!" he said, folding her to his heart. "Now, I prithee, sweet, tell me wherefore I found thee weeping when I came, like a rude wooer as I am, into thy boudoir."

"Thou hast all my heart, Henrique, if I may call thee thus, signor, as my heart prompts me to do, and thou shouldst know its griefs—now griefs no more! My mother hath—nay, I know not how to speak of aught connected with my condition with maidenly propriety—"

"Thou wouldst speak of the young Marquis Caronde, doubtless. I then know thy story from Renault."

"Not of *him!* Yet, as thou knowest the nature of his persecution, I may tell thee, without the necessity of embarrassing detail, that my mother hath taken offence at him, and is now determined to avenge herself for her

disappointment by surrendering me to the new Spanish governor," she said, trembling, as she thought of the count's looks that morning at mass, of his power, and her late helplessness.

"To Osma!" he repeated, with astonishment and indignation. "Hast thou seen him? Hath he belield thee?" he asked, with the most intense eagerness.

"This morning in the Cathedral," she answered. She then briefly informed him of what he was before ignorant, that the captain−general had gone to mass at the head of his troops, and that her mother, on hearing the order for the citizens also to attend, had commanded her to go with her, without explaining to her the reason for her wishing it; that, on arriving there, she sought a conspicuous place to kneel with her, near the spot reserved for the governor, whose attention was soon drawn to her, by her mother's obvious desire to attract it.

"By thy incomparable beauty rather," he said, gazing on her with a lover's admiration as she told her embarrassed story.

"Seeing I became the object of his regards, I trembled with foreboding of coming evil," continued Azelie. "My mother's voice and manner terrified me. My veil concealed my tears, and I returned home to weep and pray. Renault was absent, and my mother remained with me, threatening, entreating, and commanding me to submit to the fate she had destined for me."

"Poor child! thou hast been persecuted indeed. Didst thou not, gentle girl, then think of the guest beneath thy roof?" he asked, with a smile.

"I did, and was tempted to fly to thee and seek protection, for my mother had threatened I should soon see my Spanish lord beneath her roof."

"And wherefore didst thou not, dearest?"

"Because—because—" she blushed and was silent.

"Because thy love held thee back, was't not?" he asked, tenderly.

"How dost thou so well read my heart ere thou hast learned its language?"

"Because it is translated in thine eyes. Now I will tell thee, Azèlie, I had more than suspected mischief would come to thee from Count Osma, but rather by his own discovery of the fair treasure his new province held, than through the unnatural agency of thy mother; therefore did I determine to remain unknown here, till I could ensure thee, for thy brother's sake (for I knew not then I should love thee as I do), protection. It becomes me more than ever now to preserve this secrecy, and even from thee to withhold my name till I can claim thee as my bride. Where is thy noble brother?"

"He hath not returned since he left after midnight."

"I would see him, that I may give him a brother's hand, and, together with him, plot against this scheme of thy mother's. Hath she had communication with Osma since mass?"

"No; yet I left her writing half an hour ago, an unusual occupation with her, and suspect (for fear is ever active) that I am the cause."

"And Osma the object of the correspondence, I doubt not. Hath she sent a messenger away? Ha! there is a footstep without the window, and yonder glides a dark figure into the avenue."

"It must be *she*—the sorceress," exclaimed Azèlie, with surprise.

"And the servant of thy wicked mother?" he demanded.

"Nay, harm her not," she cried, holding him from the pursuit to arrest her; "she is no friend of my mother, but a foe! She must be here for good to me, and not evil. I have thought several times that I heard a noise of some one moving without."

"She has been a listener to our conversation—nay, a witness of our pledged loves."

"Fear no evil from her, whoever she may be; she has taken strange interest in me," said Azèlie. In a few words she then related to him all that she knew of her.

"It is very strange; this relation confirms me more than ever in my opinion that thou art not of the race thou—"

"Cease, Henrique," she said, playfully; "I shall again accuse you of thinking me unworthy of your love, which, indeed, is too true!"

"Thou art worthy of all love—to share a throne with me," he said, with affectionate enthusiasm.

She looked up gratefully into his face, and was about to reply from the fulness of her heart, when an object

suddenly darkened the window. Both turned quickly, and beheld, looking in upon them, a broad, laughing, impudent visage, that seemed infinitely to enjoy their surprise. The Spaniard laid a hand upon his weapon, but the risible expression of the intruder's face instantly excited emotions in him opposite to those of personal alarm, and, recognising in him Gobin the First of the council−chamber, he said, gayly,

"Welcome, *bon cousin*. Have thee grace!"

"Gobin, what do you here?" asked Azèlie, smiling, yet vexed at the intrusion.

"Gramercy to thee, cousin Spain!" answered Gobin, leaping into the room, and paying no heed to the question. "An' I saw not thee killed last night, wi' seven inches o' steel 'neath thy ribs, may I ne'er drink a goblet wi' cousin Osma to−night."

"Thou wilt then go dry; for truly I am alive, as thou seest, cousin Gobin."

"Tell me thy secret o' coming to life again wi' a hole through the body, and I'll teach thee a trick I know at marbles, cousin Spain! Name thy chirurgeon! Out wi't, gossip!"

"Thou seest here both the chirurgeon and the charm," he said, looking at Azèlie.

"Then will I have her burned for a witch, an' she do not presently use her witchery to heal my fingerjoint. Dost see? I got it shot off i' the wars! An' I were not sent for by mother Ninine, I'd recount thee the exploit. But I ha' a friend at home, a rogue that hath his valour in his tongue, will tell thee it some day. He hath a rare wit at a lie, and I have learned a round way at it from him."

"Didst thou say my mother had sent for thee?" asked Azèlie, interrupting him as he rambled from one subject to another, after his light and wandering manner.

"Marry, did I, sweet hyacinth! Am I not a messenger to and from? Goeth a billet save through Gobin's fingers! Cometh a love−gage that Gobin hath not the handling o't? Hath a maiden got the love fever, doth she not send for Doctor Gobin? Doth a youth pine for love, an' I have not the secret o't? Marry, Gobin hath been sent for, and what's the world's matter if he have? Here's matter, indeed, that two lovers within the town's walls are come together, and Gobin never the wiser."

"Thou shalt have little reason to complain that thou art never the richer," said Don Henrique, placing a purse of gold in his hand, at the same time covertly admiring the confusion of Azèlie at Gobin's free words.

"This hath weight, and needeth no tongue to speak for it," said Gobin, weighing the gold in his palm. "Thou art a cavalier of metal; and, before I saw the colour o' the coin thou didst carry, I made up my mind that sweet hyacinth should have my consent to love thee. Methinks, cousin, next to a woman's bright eye cometh a broad gold piece."

"Thou showest thy discretion and taste, *mon cousin!*"

"And in that thou hast discovered these virtues in me, thou hast more wit than ordinary. All men have not wit. The run o' mankind are demi−witted; I will show you three fools out of every five men you take me in a crowd. Wherefore do such men call Gobin a fool, marry? Verily, because, unlike them, he hath a golden vein o' wit streaking his folly, while what they have, like a little treacle in gingerbread, is so thinned by spreading, that I will find you a green lemon that hath more sweetness in't."

"Let thy wit, then, manifest itself in thy discretion, good fool!" said Don Henrique; "thou didst most truly behold me fall wounded. I am restored by good nursing to the sound state you see me in; this gentle maiden hath enemies, and I am now here to protect her. If, as I think, from thy words and manner towards her, thou hast a regard for her, I pray thee keep secret my presence here. I trust to thy honour and friendship for Azèlie to do this, rather than to the trifling gift of gold thou hast received from me; for I am assured *mon cousin* Gobin will scorn bribery."

"Verily, cousin Spain, thou art a *bueno caballero;* and if I betray thee or my sweet hyacinth, may I not touch goblet o' wine the night with gossip Osma."

"Wilt thou see the Spanish governor this night? Dost thou not fear for thy head, as ex−governor Gobin?"

"Head never sat safer on a pair of shoulders! Hast thou not heard he giveth a banquet to the bloods o' wits o' the town! If Gobin stay away, folly would reign."

To his surprise, Don Henrique then learned from him that a proclamation for a public *levée* had been sent out, and that all the town were at that moment flocking thither.

"Go to her who sent thee; when thou hast thine errand, come this way secretly ere thou deliverest it."

## CHAPTER IV. SCENE WITHIN THE PALACE.

Gobin instantly departed through the window, and gliding along beneath a hedge of altheas, came to a winding walk terminating at a lattice on the other side of the *casa* inhabited by the quadroone−mother. Here, silent, stern, and plotting, she had been impatiently waiting since the return of the servant despatched to seek for Gobin, whose tact and address in any private mission rendered him the fit instrument of an intriguing woman.

"Where hast thou loitered, Gobin? The sun hath been down half an hour, and yet thou didst promise me to be here with his setting."

"Wouldst have me slave to my words?" asked Gobin, as he approached her; "because my tongue hath said `trot,' must my feet trot, forsooth, unless they have a mind. A man's tongue hath its own work to do, and so have his feet, and other corporeal appendages."

"Hist! I have a message for thee to take."

"Give it me, *maman!* I will send it by the king's trumpeter I have at home, who hath taken service with me; for I have a banquet on hand myself."

"Nay, thy voice is too loud! This I would have thee do demands secrecy. Be trusty, and I will give thee a gold clasp for thy silver chain. I would have thee bear this *pacquet* to the palace, and place it privately in the hands of the Spanish governor."

"Never errand chimed better with a man's will, *maman!* I am on foot thither, to pay my respects to cousin Spain, and hob and nob wi' him o'er a flagon of Oporto. Since I ha' been i' the wars I ha' taken to Port—it has such a bloody complexion. Ne'er see a man drink Port but thou mayst safely swear he hath smelled gunpowder."

"Out upon thy fool's prate, Gobin. Hie thee with this to the Governor Osma, and be thou speedy—and secret as speedy. Go, as thou camest, by the garden wall."

"Thou hast the highest wall i' all the town to get over, *maman;* thou shouldst ha' a gate cut i' it."

"There is a gate, Gobin," she said, smilingly, "but 'tis known to no one save myself."

"It must be one o' the stone pannels, then; for I ha' looked it all along for a place to put my toes in, and thought, if thou wouldst swing one o' the slabs on a pivot or a brace o' hinges, 'twould be a charity for the urchins that love oranges and nectarines. An' I had not learned to climb when I was a boy, I had lost the eating o' much nice fruit I ha' had the enjoyment of."

"Thou art a rogue, and hast already paid thyself thrice over for thy service, Gobin! But go now, and be secret, and I will load thee with fruit."

"Five nectarines, seven sweet oranges, and a pineapple, with three pounds of grapes, *maman*, in the morning, for me! I drink wine to−night, and fruit hath a pleasant flavour after. I saw a hawk in thy dovecote but now, *maman!*" he added, with that singular want of *morale* and love of mischief so characteristic of that class in whom reason and folly are ever at odds; each alternately holding the supremacy for a moment, but with such uncertain tenure that they can at no time be trusted, and are ever as variable and uncertain as the winds.

He bounded from her with a laugh of cunning and intelligence as he spoke these mischievous words, which for an instant seemed to convey to her something more than his usual jesting way; for her lips parted, and she bent forward as if to demand an explanation. But his instant disappearance and the engrossing subject of her thoughts left no room in her mind for so slight an external impression; so, giving full scope to her ambitious fancy, she threw herself back upon her *fauteuil*, and was soon lost in the contemplation of the results of the bold step she had adventured. Knowing the human heart well, she had little doubt of the most triumphant issue of her hopes; and she now began to look complacently to the consummation of her revenge upon the young Marquis of Caronde, to the punishment of Renault's pride, and Azèlie's most singular rebellion. She did not fail, also, to contemplate the personal consideration she should receive from her association with the governor; a consideration which had as deep a seat in her ambitious soul as any of the other contributary motives. She was, also, herself a beautiful woman still; and there was not altogether absent from her mind a secret consciousness of the power of her own matured charms, and the probable influence they might have over the paramour she sought for her child; which influence she found herself already studying how to use, when acquired, to promote her own aspiring and covetous views. Thus did this dangerous and wicked woman plot the misery of a lovely girl, and in the secret

closet of her heart hatch rife iniquity.

During Gobin's brief absence, Azèlie gave Don Henrique some insight into his singular character, and assured him of his devotedness both to herself and Renault, so far as a creature like him was capable of having fixed attachments.

"Hast thou a message, Gobin?" he asked, when the fool reappeared.

"A message in a note—but not a love−billet, gossip, for there be a gray beard o' the one side, and full two score o' years on the other," answered Gobin, showing the outside of the pacquet that had been intrusted to him.

"It is to Osma, as I suspected," said Don Henrique, with a flush of indignant feeling.

"Heaven now preserve me from evil!" ejaculated Azèlie, clasping her hands together and prayerfully lifting her eyes.

"Nay, tremble not, sweetest! Thou hast no cause for fear."

"Not for myself alone, but for you also. If this dreadful Spaniard should exert his power, he will make you the first sacrifice."

"Do not, I pray thee, give way to fear, Azèlie. Osma hath no power to harm me; and my love shall shelter thee beneath its wing. Go, good fool! bear the letter as thou art commanded to do," he said, without taking the note from Gobin's hand, though questioning if the circumstances did not authorize him to read it. But his purpose was sufficiently answered in noting the superscription, and in satisfying his mind as to the nature of the quadroone−mother's correspondence.

"Now, sweet Azèlie, let not this trouble thee," he continued, after Gobin disappeared in the darkness of the orangerie, turning and affectionately embracing her; "neither thou nor I shall come to danger. It only becomes me to guard the more carefully thy safety. Prithee is it not time thy brother Renault were returned?"

"He should have been here at noon."

"Remain in your room, that I may feel while I am absent that you are in safety, and await my return. If he come, say nothing to him of this note—nay, nor even of our love, dearest! I will myself open it to him. And bid him wait here, and leave thee not until I come. I will go out and observe the conduct of the governor, and learn the issue of this matter between himself and thy mother. Now bless thee, and let thy thoughts run only on happiness and me. If thou art in danger, a thousand swords at my bidding will leap from their scabbards to defend thee! So content thee, sweetest! I will not be long away. Hast thou no cloak and slouching bonnet of thy brother's, for I would do secretly what I contemplate?"

She soon furnished him with these, nor by word or look betrayed any doubt, at such a moment, of his truth and constancy. She measured his love by her own.

Parting tenderly from her in whom his soul seemed to be bound up, as hers truly was in him, he entered the garden, and, traversing the shaded avenue in which Gobin had disappeared, he came to a high wall, which he scaled by fastening a cord Azèlie had given him to a catalpa that grew against it, and lightly descended into an obscure lane on the other side. Upon gaining one of the principal streets, the current of the citizens hastening to the *levée* indicated the direction of the palace and the Place d'Armes.

Wrapped in his ample cloak, and with his sombrero slouched above his eyes, he rapidly glided along by the wall to shun the light of the moon, which was just rising and flooding the city with light. Arrived at the square, he mingled with the banqueters and entered the hall of audience. Avoiding the sight of Osma, who sat receiving the homage rather than congratulations of the citizens, lest he should be haughtily commanded to come forward and do him honour, he remained in a distant part of the hall, and silently witnessed the stirring scene around him. The interview between the count and the councillors did not escape him, and, when he retired with them to the private banquetchamber, he suspected treachery would come of it. For a moment he forgot the object that brought him thither in his anxiety for the safety of those gentlemen; and, having succeeded in gaining the door just after they entered it, he was near the president when he gave the message to the young *courreur du bois*. He did not hear its purport, but the president's manner confirmed the suspicion which he had entertained, more from his knowledge of the bitter vengeance of Osma's character than from any open betrayal of his intentions by his conduct. He was about to speak to the president and warn him, but his instant return to the banquet−chamber prevented him.

"At least there is no present danger to be apprehended," he said, mentally. "He has now another passion than love to gratify, and, till his vengeance against the councillors be satisfied, he will scarce give himself to intrigue.

Methinks I did allow my sense of honour to go too far in letting that missive pass to him with the seal unbroken. I must how let watchful sagacity discover what honour then forbade. I know Garcia of Osma well, and am assured he hath a determination to harm these councillors. Dare he poison them in their cups? I will, at least, try to save them, and must risk discovery in doing so. Ha! there is Montejo!"

At this instant his eye rested on a young Spanish officer, in the uniform of an *aiddecamp,* lounging with one or two other cavaliers through the room.

"Montejo!" he said, in a low whisper, and, adroitly leaving a ring in his hand, he crossed over to the other side of the room without being regarded by the others.

The young officer started, glanced at the signet, and, with a look expressive of delighted surprise, left his companions, and was soon in the shadow of a column by his side.

"Montejo!" said Don Henrique, lifting his hat a little way from his face and exposing his features, "start not; thou seest in me no ghost!"

"It is thyself, then?" he exclaimed, embracing him. "I knew the signet, but ne'er dreamed thou wert the bearer. *Gracios−a−dios!* Osma gave out that you were lying ill sorely wounded, and even Garcilaso mourned you dead! This is a miracle."

"I was stunned rather than wounded, and am now nearly quite as well as before the affray. How is brave Garcilaso? A stouter soldier is not in all Spain. Heaven keep breath in him, and soon give him back to us, for I do owe my life to him."

"He hath good attendance, and will soon be in the saddle again? Where hast thou hid thyself?"

"Montejo!" said Don Henrique, gravely, "I must give thee my confidence, and have, in return, thy faith."

"I am thine in all things, my Henrique," he answered, with enthusiasm.

"I have reason to remain disguised and concealed, that I may defend innocence and punish this guilty Osma. Scarce one sun hath rolled over his head since he came to the government, ere his restless spirit began to seek out mischief. There is a fair being in this town, sister to a citizen who bore me wounded to his house, whom I love."

"Love, Don Henrique!"

"Nay, will make my wife, so soon as the obstacles my careful father hath put in my way shall be removed. 'Till then 'twere dangerous, as thou knowest, to both of us to have our secret divulged."

"Ye would both be soon united in Heaven by the headsman, methinks."

"I make thee my confidant, Montejo, and may need thy services. Osma himself hath seen her at mass, and thou knowest what will be the consequences if he be not counter−met at every point."

"May I ask who is this wonderful creature that hath captivated a heart which the brightest beauties of Madrid have sought vainly to win?"

"Thou shalt see her anon. Meanwhile, I would ask thee if thou dost suspect nothing hidden beneath this banquet, and especially the private entertainment for the councillors?"

"Verily I did think, when I saw them enter there, they would scarce come out without Osma's having got something out of them."

"Dost thou know him so well—and is this the depth of thy suspicion?"

"He hath no motive to imprison them now that the town is his, save in punishment for their resistance, and in vengeance for his former defeat."

"There thou hast it! Those men will scarce behold another sun rise unless we save them. I read their doom in Osma's eyes."

"Thy lady−love's father is one of them, by my beard!"

"Nay, it is for humanity's sake, and that Spain may have no more blood to answer for than need be shed. I count upon thy aid. Here now is Loyola," he added, as a stout Spanish captain, with bold and pleasing features, came near. "Speak to him, and let him know I am here."

"I and my men are at your service, signor," said the captain, coming up and addressing him after Montejo had spoken a few words with him. "Heaven be thanked those knaves did not wound thee to the death."

"To all, save thyself and Montejo, I am still confined to my couch with my wound. I know your affection for me, and that you may be trusted."

"Till death," answered both in the same voice.

"I have reason to believe Osma meditates a crime that will bring lasting shame to the Spanish arms. It must be prevented. Go, select fifty of thy command, and march them to the court between the palace and the prison. As I came by, cautiously inspecting the inlets to the palace, I noticed a small gate which leads to a dark stairway, and which I am assured, from the position of this inner banquet−room, has communication with it. Go! thou wilt find me there to receive thee!"

The captain departed, and Montejo and Don Henrique, after some farther conference in reference to the course ultimately to be taken if action should become necessary, separated, the former going to his duties as warden of the city guards. It was a few moments after Montejo left him that Don Henrique so opportunely aided Estelle in the rude attack made upon her life by Rascas.

When Don Henrique at length arrived at the postern, he immediately paced before it, waiting for De Loyola until the third of an hour had elapsed, when, being anxious for the safety of the councillors, and to confirm or remove his suspicions, he entered the passage and ascended the staircase which he had believed to communicate with the banquet−room. He listened; but the door was so solid, and being also curtained on the inner side, he could detect at first only the indistinct sound of tongues, and occasionally the louder accents of Count Osma. Soon he heard the noise of commotion, the tramp of many feet, and plainly distinguished the stern voice of Renault. He then attempted to force the door, but in vain. He, however, learned enough to be aware that the councillors had indeed been in danger, and that they had been rescued by some other hand than his own; and this he knew must have been that of Renault. He remembered, too, that the messenger he had seen the president despatch from the hall wore a uniform similar to the quadroon's.

"Renault hath done this," he exclaimed, "and Osma is his prisoner! My presence will be necessary to prevent revolution or carnage arising out of it!"

Making another effort to force the door, and finding it unavailing, he descended the stairs with the intention of gaining the banquet−room by the front of the palace. As he reached the last step, the door above suddenly opened, and the councillors appeared. Withdrawing himself within a dark recess at the foot of the passage, he there remained until he saw them pass forth in safety. He then reascended to the half−open door, and, perforating the intervening arras with the point of his dagger, witnessed the whole subsequent scene, prepared to appear in it if his presence should prove necessary, and, by his influence over Renault, prevent evil consequences from breaking out of this angry state of things.

De Loyola had in the mean while arrived, and secreted his men within the dark shadow of an angle of the prison wall, ready for action and instant service. The subsequent events all passed under Don Henrique's observation; and, while he commended the extraordinary forbearance of Renault, he felt the strongest indignation against the thwarted noble.

"Nature hath made Osma a cutthroat, but fortune hath made him a governor," he said, as he looked upon the scene. "Had he done this thing, he should have answered for it with his head, or justice hath taken wing and fled from Spain! Ah, love hath had a hand in it," he added, as he saw Estelle appear, half disguised, and throw herself between her father and Renault. "I thank Heaven I did her such good service in the hall. She was then, doubtless, seeking these brave men, whom she hath guided by that secret way. Providence hath these councillors, or Spain's honour, or both, under its most marked protection."

Surprised, astonished, and indignant at all he had been an unseen observer of, and having, from what passed before him, got a key to all else connected with the count's treachery, and the means by which it had been so signally defeated, he was tempted, after he saw him left alone with Sulem, to enter and confront him, and on the spot challenge him to wash out with his blood the stain he had put upon the knightly honour of a Spanish noble, as well as the reproach his country had suffered through his discovered treachery. But the conversation that followed between him and the slave, in relation to Azèlie, bound him to the spot with a burning ear; and when he saw him depart with the Moor to enter his cabinet, he prepared to draw aside the hangings and follow, lest he should lose sight of him, when the presence of Gobin caused him again to draw back.

He was compelled to amuse himself with the fool's solitary banquet and soliloquies for a few moments, trusting he would soon take his departure, or fall overcome with wine beneath the table. His patience at length became exhausted, and he was about to discover himself, when he heard the footsteps of the count approaching the banquet−room. He was rewarded for his delay by witnessing his interview with Gobin, and the delivery of the

quadroone−mother's note. Anticipating the count's movements from the words he let fall, as well as from the expression of his countenance, he hastily descended the staircase, and withdrew in the shadows at the foot of it as Osma himself appeared at the head. The latter came down, passed the spot without perceiving him, and pursued his way towards the dwelling of the quadroone−mother.

An idea, bold as it was congenial to his feelings, was instantly suggested to Don Henrique's mind. Crossing the court to where the men were posted, he called the captain aside.

"Now, my brave De Loyola, doubtless thou wilt be grieved to know that there will be no fighting to−night. The occasion for which I called thee out is passed. But I have yet something for thy love to do for me."

"Name it, signor, and it shall be done, if it were to put Osma himself under arrest."

"Nay, thou traitor! 'tis a love matter. I have been made captive by a maiden here, and, in revenge, would make her captive also. Thou knowest the captain of the brigantine I came in hath a friendship for me."

"He would put himself under thy orders to sail to the moon!" said the captain, divining his intentions.

"I believe thee; I would have thee seek Montejo, and send him on board, with all secrecy, and tell Captain Estecheria I will be on board within the hour; and that, before midnight, he must be ready to weigh anchor for Cuba, and thence to Spain."

"Spain—*Viva!* Would to Heaven thou wouldst take all thy good friends with thee!" said Loyola, in the warmth of his feelings at the recollection of his country.

"Thou shalt come, and also Montejo, and all who love me better than Osma. Come with me till I show thee where I would have thee meet me with thy men, lest I should fall into danger by the way. Then go on thy errands, and in an hour await me by the garden wall I will presently show thee."

De Loyola accompanied him within sight of the garden, and then parted from him with a promise to return before the expiration of the hour.

"Be silent and speedy, my brave friend!" he said, turning from him and hastening forward after the Count of Osma, whom he saw at the same moment turn into the lane that bounded the wall, in company with one who met him there. A troop of cavalry, at the same instant, came thundering from the quarter of the barracks, passing him at a round trot in the direction of the city gates.

Scarcely heeding the circumstance at such a moment, save that he was detained by its passage a few seconds, he hastened forward into the lane, and saw Osma and his companion, who had evidently been waiting for him, disappear through a gate in the wall. Approaching the spot, he looked in vain for the same entrance, but in the whole surface of the wall none was apparent to his eye. Wondering not a little at the means by which he had effected an entrance, he flew to the cord by which he had himself descended, and scaled the wall, not seeing that he himself was dogged by a third person. He then cautiously followed the path that he believed must lead to the apartments of the quadroonemother, which, as he suspected, he beheld Osma in the act of entering. Satisfied with this hasty observation, he hastened to the boudoir he had left two hours before to play the spy upon the crafty count. Without alarming Azèlie with the knowledge of the presence of the Condé, whom he expected soon enough to appear in her apartment, he seated himself by her side, and amused her with light conversation, while, like a brave man, he prepared himself to receive the guilty intruder.

## CHAPTER V. SCENE WITHIN THE GARDEN−WALLS.

The individual with whom the Count of Osma stopped to communicate in the street near the garden was a confidential slave of Ninine. He led him to one of the slabs fixed like a pannel in the centre of each section of the wall, and, having touched it about an inch from the lower corner, it swung inward, and admitted them into the garden. The slave then led the way rapidly towards the *casa*. With his hand upon his sword−hilt, as if guarding against treachery, followed the bold and wicked count, who, in the pursuit of the object of his passion, was singularly blind or indifferent to the danger of trusting himself abroad in a hostile city at such an hour unattended. He was rapidly conducted through the windings of the thickly−planted garden, whose trees and plants loaded the atmosphere with the most delicious odours, while the disturbed songsters of the fragrant groves flitted from branch to branch at his advance, emitting tremulous and broken notes.

When the slave came near the window that opened from the ground into the luxurious apartment of the quadroone−mother, he stopped silently and pointed towards it. Then, crossing his hands upon his breast, stood in a statue−like attitude. The count passed him, and proceeded towards the Venetian casement, which, partly open, showed within a gorgeous chamber, softly lighted by shaded lamps of roseate hue, shedding around a soft and subdued twilight of the richest and most seductive character. Ottomans, lounges, and *fauteuils* of crimson velvet and silk, with carpets from Turkish looms, met the surprised glance of the Spaniard, who, not unused to luxury, had scarce beheld in Spain more splendour than now flashed upon his eyes through the half−open lattice. On a lounge near the window, the evening breeze just lifting the raven curls from her temples, reclined Ninine, the beautiful quadroone−mother. Her alert ear caught the sound of approaching footsteps. With a triumphant flush of joy she rose, and with an air of indolent grace, that became her voluptuous and languid beauty, threw open the blind, and beheld her expected visitant.

"A fair eve to thee, noble signor," she said, in the easy, self−possessed tone of one who felt that her own charms as well as the object of his coming placed them upon an equality.

"And a pleasant one to thee," he answered, with that air of finished gallantry which marked him as one of the most courteous cavaliers of his time; and he kissed her extended hand ere he seated himself on the same lounge by her side. "By my knighthood! thy charms rival thy daughter's!"

"Hast thou come to woo mother or daughter?" she asked, with a gratified smile, that threatened to beguile him from his first purpose.

"Nay, tempt me not, sorceress," he said, smiling, "I would fain see this Haidée! If I have to answer for worshipping other than the Blessed Mary this morning, thou shalt come in for punishment also. By the rood! thou didst do a sacrilege in taking so much beauty with thee to prayers."

"It was that I might offer it on the altar of thy love."

"Thou hast full confidence in her charms, and, i' faith! in my susceptibility. But thou didst send the bolt truly to the mark. Her loveliness hath captivated me. From her costume and thine, as well as thy dark style of beauty, I know thee to be of the lovely race of quadroones, with whom marriage is not lawful."

"Nor desirable, signor, so that our beauty purchase for us the hearts and fortunes of men! The proudest wife can boast no more," answered the quadroone, giving utterance to the bold sentiments of her class.

"But methinks a woman should marry for her honour's sake."

"A woman's honour lieth in the constancy of her love. And love hath ever proved most constant when 'tis free."

"This is strange doctrine," said Osma, surprised at sentiments so extraordinary from the lips of any woman, to whom marriage is one of the greatest and best gifts of Heaven, and at a mode of thinking so at variance with feminine views in other countries.

"Is there no such thing, then, as honour with you?"

"Yes, signor. Never was a quadroone maiden known to be false to her lord."

"But what pledge has he of her truth?"

"Her honour."

"But she hath it no longer."

"Hath the wife no longer honour when she hath become a wife?"

"But she is an honourable wife."

"And education has taught the quadroone what the laws have taught the wife, that the highest crime she can be guilty of is to be false to him to whom love has united her. Love and inbred honour are pledges of constancy; and to these she is never false. A wife's honour may be fortified by fear; a quadroone's is by love."

"If she do not love?"

"She must obey her mother, if no better choice may by made."

"She will then prove false."

"She will die first, as some have done, signor."

"Can they not be admitted into convents if they wish?"

"A quadroone−nun! No, signor!"

"Neither the convent nor matrimony; they have, then, no alternative but death or splendid misery. By mine honour, thy words have touched me! I would not bring unhappiness to thy daughter if she cannot love me!"

"She is gentle, and her heart is free, signor. Time and convenience will soon enable thee to win Azèlie's affections."

"Azèlie! said you Azèlie?" he demanded, starting with singular surprise.

"Azèlie! 'Tis an odd Moorish name, but—"

"Speak it no more!" he said, recovering himself. "Ha! what is this?" he cried, as a pomegranate struck the floor at his feet.

He looked out through the window, and beheld a pair of glittering eyes fixed upon him from the shrubbery. Drawing his sword, he rushed forth, when Rascas came forward and met him.

"Villain, is it thou? What of the councillors?"

"The troops I ordered out by thy command have just passed by on their way to the gates at the top of their speed."

"And thou—how camest thou hither? Hast dogged me, traitor?" he demanded, with fierce suspicion.

"Nay, signor; as I rode through yonder street at their head, I saw and recognised thy form and step, as well as thy hound, when thou enteredst the garden. I should have passed on, but saw that a person was following, and evidently playing the spy upon you. Drawing rein, I watched his motions, saw him scale the wall, and descend into the garden after you. I dismounted, and, getting over the wall by a cord he had forgotten to draw up after him, tracked him to the apartment of—"

"Of whom?"

"Azèlie, the beautiful quadroone!" he answered, with malicious triumph in his eyes as he delivered this intelligence, well−guessing at the object of the count.

"Didst see his face?"

"Not distinctly; but I could swear he is none of the citizens."

"Perhaps it is this Renault, her brother?"

"Nay, I know the quadroon's height and air. 'Tis not he! I will show thee, if thou wilt follow me, signor."

"Lead on," said Osma, grasping his weapon with determined vengeance.

"Softly, signor, for cooing doves are easily alarmed."

Desiring Ninine, who had not heard this conversation, to await his return a few moments, he rapidly followed his subtle guide across the orangerie to the path that conducted to the maiden's lattice.

Don Henrique was seated at the feet of Azèlie, with his sword across his knees, and his disguise still on, recounting the part Renault had taken in the events of the night, yet with his eye fixed watchfully and expectingly on the door communicating from the boudoir with the apartments of the mother. His back was therefore partly turned to the Count of Osma, who stealthily approached the window behind his catlike guide. Azèlie sat with her eyes bent on her lover's, with a prideful affection which the count could not mistake. He saw that she loved, with her heart's deepest passion, the man who kneeled at her feet. The lamp shed a soft, clear light upon her brow, and betrayed the loveliness of her features and the graceful proportions of her bust, which in the Cathedral her envious veil had half concealed from his gaze. What a fair, bright creature did he now look upon! how infinitely exceeding all that he had imagined! The glorious dark eyes filled with witchery; the ripe lip, eloquent with love; the beauty of her smile, and the thousand charms that, like young loves, made their home in the rich world of her beauty,

transfixed him to the spot in silent wonder and admiration. Yet there seemed to be mixed with his surprise, as he gazed, some painful memory, called up by her face, of which he in vain tried to fix the time, place, or event. But, baffled, he turned his attention upon the cavalier, who, in a low, fond tone, was talking to her, and vainly attempted to obtain a sight of his features, or catch the full sound of his voice. His attitude and presence there—his evidently accepted love, maddened him. The fair jewel of her love he regarded as his own! his passion had made it of all value to him, and he determined alone to share it.

"Knowest thou this cavalier, Rascas?" he whispered, hoarsely.

"No, signor; but every man's blood is red!" he replied, significantly.

"Nay, I would not shed it in an encounter like this; I must be secret in what I do."

"I will pledge my oath your excellency shall never see him again after he leaves this garden!" he answered, touching the handle of his stiletto.

"He shall not die, whoever he may be. He shall live to witness my triumph," replied the count, with fierceness.

"There are dungeons in the prison that communicate with the palace," insinuated Rascas.

"I understand thee. If thou hast thy steed in the street, mount him, ride after the troop, and return with ten horsemen. I will see that they are introduced by the private way through which I came in. Go! let thy horse outspeed the eagle!" Rascas promptly disappeared, and the count turned his attention to his victims.

Suddenly a nightingale from a tree near the lattice poured forth a flood of melody to the rising moon in so ravishing a strain, and with such a richness and variety of notes, that it seemed as if a whole choir of warblers were at their vespers. Don Henrique looked round with a delighted ear, and, as he did so, the Count of Osma started back with a surprised exclamation that had nearly betrayed his presence.

"This, then, is my rival! This is why he would keep private, that he might pass his hours in dalliance! Now, by the red rood! he shall rue this, were he heir to the throne! I did not think I should make such a prisoner when I bid Rascas go! It hath gone abroad that he lieth wounded to the death! It will be easy hence to bruit about his death from his wounds, and, if it should become needful to support it, I will not be backward in making it true. He shall exchange, within the hour, this luxurious boudoir for a dungeon, and this maiden's love for a jailer's companionship. Either he must be put out of the way, or I must give up my passion for this lovely being. An Osma hath never yet turned aside when love or ambition beckoned; and he will scarcely do so now! This is the secret of his retirement! It is love's arrow, I see, that hath wounded him. Soon, youthful wooer, I will take thy place; and if love may not win thee to love me, fair Azèlie, power shall do it. I will see this false quadroone−mother the while Rascas is away. Here, sir! lie there!" he said, to his hound, pointing first to the ground, and then directing his attention in at the window. "I would keep a guard here!"

The obedient dog lay down, and fixed his fiery eyes upon the young man with a settled and immoveable glance.

"'Tis well! If he comes forth, bring him to the earth, but harm him not!" he said, and the intelligent animal seemed also to understand. Then, returning to the quadroone−mother, he cried, sternly,

"False woman! didst thou not tell me thy daughter's heart was free?"

"Yes, signor," she answered, alarmed by his manner.

"Yet at this moment a cavalier is sitting unreproved at her feet, and love is going on between them as busily as if they were married but yesterday."

Ninine uttered an exclamation of astonishment and terror, and would have flown to her daughter's room, but the count detained her.

"Nay, calm thyself! I see thou knowest it not. Didst thou not take into thy house a wounded Spaniard last night?"

"Renault did. It is he that hath done this!"

"Be patient. This cavalier hath won the maiden's heart. I saw in every look and feature that she loves him!"

"Then this knife shall cut her image from his bosom," she cried, seizing a small stiletto that lay in its case upon a marble table near her.

"I command thee to be patient, woman. If it have gone no farther than this, I care not—nay, I like it well! This cavalier I have little good fellowship for, and would fain touch him in a point so sensitive. I have despatched my servant for a guard. Thou shalt hear no more of him."

"It is Renault hath done it, signor."

"If thou wouldst not do injury to thine own interests, breathe that accursed name no more," he said, between his shut teeth, his soul writhing at the remembrance of the young quadroon's insult in the banquet−chamber, as well as from his recollection of his disappointed vengeance against the councillors. "Thou didst admit me by a secret entrance. Send thy slave to wait there for the guard I expect."

The count paced the apartment in stern and silent thought, occasionally pausing at the window to listen for the alarm−growl of his bloodhound or the approach of his guard. At length he heard the sound of galloping horsemen, which the next moment ceased in the rear of the garden. Impatient to receive them, he hastened to the gate. They were already dismounted, and let in by the slave when he arrived. In a low tone, he gave a few brief orders to Rascas, who, followed by eight dragoons, silently advanced in the direction of the boudoir. The count himself, desirous of concealing his agency in the arrest, kept so far in the background, wrapped to the eyes in his cloak, as to witness without sharing in the proceedings. With his characteristic tact, he had commanded Rascas to lead the dragoons into the shadow of a group of orange−trees beyond the range of the window, lest, either recognising who was to be their prisoner, they should be reluctant to seize him, or because he wished no one save himself to know the person of his victim. In pursuance of this plan, Rascas was to enter his boudoir, and induce him, by some duplicity, to walk forth into the garden, and into the snare set before him.

"I have told thee, fair Azèlie," said Don Henrique, in the hearing of those without, pursuing the conversation that had been interrupted by the song of the nightingale, "that my home is in sunny Spain; and that I have an elder brother, during whose life I am forbidden to marry, on penalty of being cast forth penniless. Such is the cruel law of inheritance in my family. Wouldst thou wed me poor?"

"Thou dost mock my love, Henrique!" she said, reprovingly. "Yet my love is so great that I would not have thee become poor for my sake."

"Wilt thou, then, lest my love for thee should make me poor, restore me my heart?"

"Nay, I am perplexed! Love would, and love would not! But I love thee, and would die for thee."

"Nay, thou shalt live for me; I will wed, and take thee with me to Spain. In some little nook, out of the world's way, will we pass our days, and be happy without wealth or name."

"Now that I know how much thou wilt risk by loving me, I shrink at what I bring upon thee."

"Nay, sweet, thou art all the world to me; wealth, honour, and rank are forgotten in loving thee! I look into thine eyes and am happy! I hear thy voice and am blessed! Thy smile is sunshine to my heart, and thy presence to me the purest earthly bliss!" He kissed the cheek she laid upon his shoulder, and was silent a moment; then added, with a smile, "I did not tell thee that my father, lest I should marry, would have made me a monk! And, to escape holy orders, I took to the sea, a wanderer, and Heaven hither hath brought me to crown my happiness. Ha! was not that a voice?" he cried, starting up, and looking towards the door that led into the apartments of the quadroonemother. "Nay, it was nothing," he added, resuming his place. He had, indeed, heard a low growl from the hound, but the direction of the sound had deceived him.

"Why, Henrique, do you keep your eyes fixed so constantly on the door, disturbed by the rustling of a leaf?" she asked, with alarm.

"Nay, dost thou not expect Renault soon?" he inquired, evasively.

"And thou needest not fear Renault; the knowledge of my happiness would be joy to him. He does indeed linger! Whither could he have gone from the palace?"

"Doubtless to look after the safety of the councillors whom he so nobly rescued. I pray they got safely beyond the bloodly fangs of Osma. Nay, I surely heard a footstep approaching," he said, placing himself in an attitude to receive an intruder.

"'Twas not within yonder room," she said, with a smile; "thou hast listened so towards that door, that thou dost imagine every noise to proceed from the point towards which thy ears are turned. It was but a rustling of the breeze in the foliage without. Pray tell me what hath moved this suspicion in thee?"

"Listen—for thou must soon learn—but fear nothing on account of what I am to tell thee. Thy mother hath sent to confer with Count Osma, and he is now in her apartment—thyself the subject of their conference. Nay, dearest, am I not here to defend thee? I have prepared a vessel to escape with thee to Spain, this hour to sail if thou wilt say yes! Shortly my friends will be waiting in the street to receive us, and bear us on board. Wilt thou fly with me, dearest?"

"My brother!"

"Thy *lover!*"

"Wherever thou goest, there will I go. But Renault—"

"Shall follow us. But the time will not now admit of delay."

"Wherefore, then, do we linger here? One moment may destroy both thyself and me. The Count Osma will soon seek my boudoir, and thou wilt be the first sacrifice!"

"I wait here that I may meet him. I would have him be a witness to our love!" he said, with a smile.

"He will slay thee!"

"He will scarce dare lift his weapon against me, Azèlie. And am I not armed?"

"Then blood will flow! Fly—fly—if not for *thy* safety, for *mine*—for I tremble at his wicked power!"

"Be it so, dearest! for thy fear's sake! But I had hoped to have met the tyrant here in thy virgin presence, and looked his villany down his throat! Yet I will go with thee; but first will I leave some record behind, that he may know who hath robbed him of his treasure."

"Mercy! we are lost—lost!" suddenly shrieked Azèlie.

The Count of Osma, not desiring to be known to Don Henrique as an actor in his arrest, had at first kept back in the shadow of the trees, intending to leave the conduct of the whole affair in the hands of Rascas, who, after posting the soldiers in ambush, had softly approached the window. But observing them, through the lighted casement, still in conversation, and fancying, by the motion of Don Henrique's lips, that his own name was mentioned, he felt a desire to listen. He immediately stepped forward, and, passing Rascas, with a sign for him to stay back, stood and concealed himself in the covert of the thickly−leaved vine that trellised the lattice, and, unobserved, overheard all that passed between them: what he said to her of his native country, of his intended flight, and, finally, his last words in reference to himself. The feelings with which he listened may be best imagined! But mostly shame and anger crimsoned his cheek that his guilty purpose should be known to his victim, whom he saw prepared not only to meet his rage, but to triumph over him.

"He shall not live to laugh at me, and make me the scorn of the Spanish *Cortez!*" he muttered to himself. "As he now knows that I am here in pursuit of this amour, I will throw off this disguise and all concealment, and, by the red rood! he shall live to see his inamorata bless these arms!" Thus speaking, he dropped his cloak from his shoulders, and, stepping in through the window, presented himself before the eyes of Azèlie just as Don Henrique had pronounced the word "treasure."

"Of what treasure dost thou speak, fair signor? Methinks I did hear this word," he said, in a sarcastic tone, leaning upon his naked sword, and eying him with mingled triumph and hatred.

"Thy knightly pastime at eavesdropping hath not been fruitless, Sir Garcia of Ramarez," ironically replied Don Henrique, unmoved by his sudden presence. Yet his eyes blazed with his feelings as he confronted him.

"I do congratulate thee, signor, on thy sudden health! Thou hast had a skilful leech. Thy hurt had like to have cost the city its roofs, and some scores of bourgeois their heads! 'Tis well thou art in condition again. Doubtless this trembler, who hangs upon thee as if a lion had come in her path, hath been thy chirurgeon. She hath made a wound in my heart this morning, which she must e'en make whole again, if such be her skill."

"Ramarez, thou hast given full license to thy tongue," said Don Henrique, with manifest surprise at his ironical words and haughty bearing. "If thou depart not as thou camest, our respective ranks shall not deter me from striking thee with my sword!"

"Love and rivalry make all men equal, fair signor," he said, in the same taunting tone. "If an eagle and a falcon pursue the same dove, the captive is to the bird of the strongest beak."

"Villain, defend thyself!" cried Don Henrique, throwing himself upon him with his drawn sword.

Osma was scarcely taken by surprise, though the assault was somewhat sudden, and received him with characteristic coolness and skill. For a few moments their swords flashed fire, so fierce and deadly was the brief encounter. The count had made one or two passes, at first, at the breast of his antagonist, and then, as if changing his purpose of attacking him, stood for the remainder of the conflict wholly on the defensive. Don Henrique saw this, and, on his part, instead of aiming at his life, sought only to disarm him. This, after one or two trials, he succeeded in doing, by dexterously changing his sword from his right to his left hand, and making a sudden

counter−pass, the count's weapon flying from his grasp through the window into the garden. When Rascas saw this, he leaped through the casement, and with his dagger was about to strike the victor to the heart. But his master caught his hand and hurled him backward, crying,

"Hadst thou slain him, I would have laid thee dead at my feet. Go, pick up my sword! Thou hast the best of it, Signor Henrique. Thou art a skilful swordsman as well as thy sire. But, though victory hath sided with thee in war, it must side with me in love."

Don Henrique had remained haughtily and indignantly standing where he had disarmed his antagonist, with Azèlie clinging to him in eloquent silence, looking first in the face of one and then of the other, as if watching the balance in which her fate was cast. She looked far lovelier than ever, and Osma drank in her beauty with intoxicating passion. Each moment his determination, which had begun to waver, to use violence towards Don Henrique, grew stronger, strengthened by the admiration of her charms, which, unless he removed him, he felt would be lost to him for ever.

"Count Osma of Ramarez," said Henrique, whose eyes flashed at his words, and whose blood boiled at his libertine glances towards the maiden, "I have borne thy intrusion hitherto! I command thee to leave me."

"If thou wilt resign to me thy place at this lovely creature's feet, I will obey thee—after that I have wooed a while."

"Demon! I swear to thee, by the cross on my blade, I will not spare thy life if I cross it with thee once more! Hath this distance from Spain made a traitor of thee? Leave me, assassin!"

"Ha! sayest thou!" he cried, fiercely.

"Signor," said Rascas, hastily returning to him with his sword, "one of the dragoons left with the horses hath given word that a company of thy soldiers, under command of Don Francisco de Loyola, are waiting not far off in the street."

"Ha! I had forgotten! Treason? So, Signor Henrique! thou hast been corrupting my troops. They are the friends, as I overheard, that were to conduct thee to thy ship, for they are abroad by no order of mine. Ho! without there! Seize this traitor!" he cried, with ill concealed exultation at thus finding the shadow of a pretence to excuse him for doing what he had resolved to do at all hazards.

"Dost thou mean this?" exclaimed Don Henrique, in the utmost surprise, seeing the window filled with dragoons, two or three of whom advanced within the room.

"I arrest thee as a traitor to Spain!" answered Osma, sternly. "Seize him, and drag him to the state prison!"

"How can *I* commit treason?"

"That shall be tried by judges."

"Count Osma, this mockery hath gone full far!" answered Henrique, as if scarcely realizing the scene: "your jesting is ill timed, and methinks you should have chosen a fitter subject."

"None fitter than thyself. Why do ye hesitate? Seize the traitor!" he cried to the dragoons.

One of the men and the bloodhound sprang upon him at the same instant. The man received Don Henrique's sword through his heart, while the fierce hound fell dead as he seized him by the throat, from a wound dealt in the neck, given by the hand of Azèlie, who, with a stiletto, which she had long worn as the guardian of her honour, sprung between her lover and the savage animal. The death of his favourite enraged Osma to fury. For an instant Don Henrique stood like a lion at bay, and, with his reeking sword, menaced death to whomsoever should lay hands upon him. Again the Count of Osma called upon them to seize him; in vain the youth's skill! in vain his lion−like courage! in vain the sheltering bosom of Azèlie! Overpowered by numbers, he was secured and bound; while Osma seized the quadroone maiden, lest, in the phrensy of the moment, she should use upon her own person the weapon with which she had defended her lover.

"Nay, sweet," he said, confining her in his arms and wresting it from her, "he is but a traitor! and thou art too noble to give thy love basely. Bear him away, Battista," he cried to the lieutenant of the dragoons, "and see that he is placed in a secure chamber of the prison; for thy head will answer for it. Away with him!" Don Henrique struggled fearfully for his liberty; and when, at length, he saw Azèlie in Osma's grasp, he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed his teeth with mingled grief, rage, and vengeance. But all was vain. He was dragged violently away from her presence, but not without receiving a glance that assured him she would seek death by her own hand ere she proved false to him.

Alas! how much poignant misery is mingled with the cup of life! Unfortunate Henrique! Dragged from the presence of thy heart's idol to become the tenant of a gloomy dungeon, on a vain charge of treason, that thy rival may rob thee of thy love and honour. Borne away, too, leaving thy beloved Azèlie in the licentious arms of a libertine! Hapless lover! bear thy lot with patience, for thou shalt be speedily and wonderfully avenged!

Scarcely had the dragoons disappeared through the window, bearing away their prisoner and wounded comrades from the garden by the way they had entered, when Osma despatched Rascas to Loyola with a message, as coming from Henrique himself, to say that his services would not be that night required, and that he might return to the barracks with his men; for he resolved to reserve till the morrow his punishment of that officer.

He was now left alone with Azèlie, who, released from his hold, stood a few paces from him, panting and breathing like a hunted fawn that has unexpectedly been stopped by a new foe. Not a tear escaped her— not a word—not a cry! Her bosom was too full of feelings for utterance! It would be difficult to analyze them! Grief, indignation, terror, despair, all crowded upon her heart, and threatened to crush it! Osma gazed upon her a few moments in silence; and, perceiving that this was no time to press his suit, he was about to call for her mother, when she appeared, full of the intensest alarm.

"I thank Heaven thou art safe, signor," she cried, on seeing him as she entered. "I heard the clash of arms as if in the eastern street, and hastened to the court gate, when the porter told me it was in the direction of Azèlie's chamber. Blood is upon the floor! The intruder hath been slain?"

"Thou wilt scarce hear of him again, signora," he said, quietly. "I was now about to call thee. Thou seest thy fair child is suddenly converted into a statue of passion and grief! I leave her in thy charge, and trust all to thy advice and authority! Thou wilt scarce regret thy change of lovers, fair Azèlie," he added, with a smile of irony. "By Heaven! she stands there like marble. See to her, signora!" he exclaimed, with a voice of alarm and wonder.

Azèlie's blood had suddenly rushed back upon her heart, and left her face indeed like marble, while every limb became rigid and fixed. She looked like life converted into stone! Her very breathing was stilled!

"It hath killed her!" shrieked her mother, taking her icy hand, and letting it fall again powerless at her side.

"I fear it hath!" repeated Osma, with emotion.

Suddenly a piercing and terrific shriek escaped from her breaking heart, and she fell at length upon the floor.

"That hath relieved her, signora! Tears will flow apace, and by the morning she will be calm. I leave her in thy charge, and remember that thy life will answer for her safety."

"Need I say to your excellency that I have no wish than that she shall be thine!"

"Be this thy mind, and thou shalt be rewarded to thy heart's wish," he said, wrapping his cloak about him. "I came not hither to−night to remove my prize, but to secure her. See that she have no communication with her brother Renault, and send me word on the instant of his return! Poor child! she sobs! Adieu, Ninine. Pray send thy slave to let me forth!"

Thus speaking, the Count of Osma left the boudoir of the hapless Azèlie, and, with his breast full of the passions which the last hour had awakened in it, departed from the garden, and secretly and swiftly regained his cabinet. In a quarter of an hour afterward De Loyola was the inmate of a dungeon, and the soldiers of his command under arrest for revolt.

## CHAPTER VI. THE PURSUIT AND CAPTURE.

When Renault departed from the palace, after defeating the governor's purpose of assassination, he left his party and galloped alone towards his own dwelling, full of anxiety for the fate of Azèlie, for whom he feared every evil while she remained under the power of his cruel mother, or so long as the rumoured libertinism of the new governor could give her ambitious mind the faintest hope of personal aggrandizement by offering him so lovely a victim. As he rode along, he resolved to remove her at once, not only from his mother's roof, but from the town, and become the personal protector of her happiness and honour.

She was dear to him for her affection and for her gentle beauty, and he felt that for her safety and welfare he would willingly sacrifice his own life. With these thoughts mingled apprehensions for the safety of the president and his friends, who, though safely without the precincts of the palace, were not yet beyond danger. The more he reflected upon the character of the governor, the more his solicitude for their escape increased; so that, when he reached his own gate, instead of entering, he relieved his anxiety for the safety of his sister by inquiring of the old African porter after her welfare; and, learning nothing that could alarm his fears, he spurred forward, and in a short time arrived at the private mansion of the president. He found him in the court with two others, ready to mount their horses, and delaying only for the arrival of the remainder of their friends from their respective homes. In a little while these arrived, each armed, like the president and his party, with a heavy sword at the side and pistols in their holsters.

"Gentlemen," said Renault, who was received by them with the warmest expressions of joy and gratitude, "this night's treachery should teach us caution. The Count of Osma has too much hatred and unsatisfied revenge in his bosom to let you escape without an effort to arrest your flight. He has been foiled, not defeated. I pray you, allow me to escort you with my small band a mile beyond the gates. Nay, I will not be said `*no!*' Remain here a few minutes, and I will return and ride with you to the barriers. It may not be you should go alone."

Leaving the house of the Sieur d'Alembert, Renault then rode rapidly towards the rendezvous, in the hopes of finding there the most of his band of reserve of forty men; though with some doubts of it, as he had dismissed them to their private quarters on leaving the palace. He galloped forward, however, with great speed; and, entering the echoing court among the ruins, traversed it to the extremity of the hall without finding a single loitering individual of his party.

"At the very moment each sword is worth its weight in ingots, they are dispersed. My bugle will scarce reach the ears of half a dozen. Yet six brave hearts were a bulwark before the venerable president's breast!"

Thus speaking, he wound his bugle loud and long, the notes sounding far and high in the still evening. Thrice he repeated the well−known signal of his band, to the surprise of the guards at the city gates, and the curious wonder of the soldiers in the distant barracks.

It was a bold step, and he felt it to be so; but it was a crisis that admitted of no hesitation. In a few moments afterward every street seemed to give out a horseman, who rode in the direction of the rendezvous; and in ten minutes Renault galloped forth at the head of thirty young men. The president and councillors were soon received into their midst, and the whole body moved at a rapid trot towards the gates.

"*Osma's justice!*" cried Renault, as they came thundering up to the guardhouse.

"Pass!" answered the captain of the guard, throwing wide the broad gates, and letting them forth into the country.

Their rear was barely beyond pistol−shot from the walls ere Sulem appeared at the post, and delivered to the captain of the guard the new countersign given him by Osma. It was "The Quadroone!" He had hardly gone before a troop, consisting of fifty mounted dragoons, spurring at full speed, came up to the barrier.

"Ho! Barrucas!" shouted their leader to the captain of the guard; "has a party of half a dozen old men passed through the gate to−night?"

"In the midst of a squadron of horse that went by just before you came, I saw several elderly men riding, surrounded by a guard of horsemen with drawn swords," answered the other; "but, though they gave the countersign, I was sure, before they had one third passed through, they were none of our troops."

"Forward, in pursuit," shouted the leader, waving his glittering sabre above his head, and dashing headlong through the gate. "Forward! forward!" rung along the line of cavalry from mouth to mouth, each soldier, in his momentary ardour, forgetting the strict discipline that enforces silence on men under command. Then, with waving plumes and thundering hoofs, the whole squadron swept through the gate like a tempest of iron.

Renault was not yet a quarter of a mile beyond the gates when he heard the sounds of pursuit, and his suspicions left him no room to doubt the cause. Riding up by the side of the president, he said,

"I fear me, venerable sir, your life will be once more exposed to peril. I pray you, ride forward with your friends at the top bent of your speed, and leave me to check the pursuit. My horse is fleeter than thine. Mount him, and give me yours. So that you are in safety, I am content."

"Nay, brave Renault, this may not be; keep thy horse, and I will remain here. I am an old man, but can nevertheless wield a sword to purpose."

"Sir President, pardon me, thy danger has put thirty young men in peril to save thee. Wilt thou, by remaining behind when escape is before thee, render that peril vain for yourselves? Ride, sir; ride, gentlemen, all! We will place ourselves between you and pursuit. In half an hour you will be safe within the fortress. Eight or ten of my young men shall accompany you."

"Be it so, since you so warmly urge it, my son," answered the Sieur d'Alembert; "but, as I live, I had rather die than expose thee to harm on this occasion."

"Fear me not, sir. Danger in these times is to me meat and drink. Do you ride on, in Heaven's name, and leave me to give a good account of these Spaniards."

"Be it as thou wilt, noble youth," said the president; "thou hast put thyself in the way of danger for us, and we were ungenerous not to obey thee. Let me embrace thee! Doubtless they pursue *us* alone. If they find us not with you, you will scarce come to blows, and nothing evil may grow out of it. It is best, therefore, that we do ride on. Come, gentlemen, our absence will prevent bloodshed; let us spur forward."

Thus speaking, the councillors, guarded by five or six young men, separated from the escort, and with freer rein, though the whole company had hitherto rode at good speed, galloped ahead.

"Now, my brave *courreurs*," said Renault, having given orders to his troop to ride at a less rapid rate, "on our prudence and courage depend the lives of those venerable men. Yonder advancing troops are Spaniards, doubtless in pursuit of them. They cannot certainly know that they were of our party, and may be turned back from the chase peaceably. But if they will not be prevailed on to return, but are resolved to go on in pursuit, then it becomes us to give them battle. They are rapidly approaching! A furlong before us is a slight elevation in an open space of the forest. There we will draw rein and await them. On!"

In a few moments they came to the rising ground, and wheeled into line facing the town. They had hardly done so when the moonlight, flashing upon numerous glittering points in the distant forest−road, as well as the louder sound of galloping horses, jingling sabres, and ringing iron, showed them that those who pursued were immediately upon them.

"Coolly and silently, my comrades, now," said Renault; "their force can scarcely be twice our own, and, for brave and determined hearts like ours, this is but even battle. They see us now and draw rein. This shows Spanish caution."

The pursuing squadron, the same which Rascas ordered out, but which he had commanded to ride on without him, after overtaking and detaching from it the guard to arrest Don Henrique, on discovering Renault's troop posted in their path, suddenly drew up, and their leader, riding forward a few paces, sounded a parley. It was answered by a note from the young *courreur* chief's bugle, and he, in turn, rode forward to meet him.

"Your servant, Signor Captain," said the Spaniard, with some show of courtesy. "I am in pursuit of a troop of rebel horse that but now left the city gates, escorting certain escaped state−prisoners. I should have suspected thy party; but I see their faces are turned city−ward, and discover in it none of those I seek."

"Save my party, no other horse have passed this way within the hour," said Renault.

"Thy party is that we seek, signor," said a grayheaded lieutenant, riding up. "This, Signor Captain, is the very leader of the party that rescued the councillors in the banquet−chamber. I was present when the men−at−arms entered, and now recognise him. It is this troop, and none other, that came through the gates. They doubtless have sent the prisoners forward, and are drawn up to stay pursuit."

"Then, in the name of Santiago of Spain, let us charge through them!" cried the Spanish captain, with

animation.

So vigorous was the onset, the Spanish horse having the advantage of full twenty yards' momentum, that the *courreurs du bois* were compelled to give way before it, and let them pass through without scarcely striking a blow. Chagrined and angry with himself for having suffered the Spaniard to take him thus at vantage, and fearing for the safety of the councillors, Renault instantly rallied his troop, in his turn pursuing the Spanish cavalry, and attacked them while in full career with the most desperate valour. He assailed them on either flank with such fatal obstinacy and address, that, before they had advanced a quarter of a mile, ten of the dragoons were unhorsed, and left weltering in their blood upon the road. His voice was heard above the loud tramp of the horses, inspiring and urging his men to avenge their dishonour. And well did they obey him. Once he galloped to the van of the Spaniards, and in person attacked the Spanish leader, cheering his troop, and shouting for them to strive to gain the front.

This desperate flying conflict continued for nearly half a league, the hovering *courreurs* dealing death and wounds upon their foes, and they, by the command of their leader, who each moment expected to come up with the fugitive councillors, only acting on the defensive, and using their spurs rather than their swords. All at once Renault, who had fallen to the rear for the purpose of assembling his party to take advantage of a winding in the road to cross the forest and gain the van, heard a shout from the Spanish leader that betrayed the discovery of the pursued. He looked ahead, and his worst fears were confirmed by seeing them galloping along an open glade, upon which the moon shone brightly, fully exhibiting the small party to the eyes of the Spaniards.

"Now, my brave friends," he cried to his band, "let us defend and save our judges, or die with them. Follow me!"

The way was too narrow, as well as the speed at which the Spaniards rode too great, for him to pass them before they could come up with the fugitives. Therefore Renault, after giving the command, turned off to the right, followed by his whole troop save three or four that had fallen in the flying contest. Riding a little way at full speed through a natural avenue of the forest, he came to a narrow path which admitted but two abreast. This he entered, and, after galloping about five minutes, emerged suddenly into the great forest, ahead both of the pursuers and pursued. It was with joy that he saw the councillors had not yet passed by, though they were visible not a hundred yards off, approaching at a rapid pace, the dragoons close upon them, and the voice of their captain shouting upon them to surrender.

The appearance of Renault surprised the Spaniards, and, slackening their pace, they came to a halt. But the absence of the party that had so annoyed his rear instantly accounted to him for this apparently fresh squadron, and he was about to give the order to charge them. But Renault, with whose party the fugitives had united, profiting by his former experience, and seeing his only safety was in fighting, anticipated him by leading his own men to the onset ere the Spaniards could get in motion. The meeting was terrific and most sanguinary. The president fought by the side of Renault; and the councillors were seen everywhere the fight was thickest, dealing deadly blows.

The force of the Spaniards was far greater than that of the *courreurs du bois;* and, after a severe conflict of ten minutes, the latter were ready to give way, half of their number already lying dead on the ground. Even when the battle waxed warmest, the Spanish leader did not forget the object he had in view; and, notwithstanding their stout defence, the councillors, through his coolness and skill, were one after another made prisoner and carried to the rear. Thrice the president had been seized and borne from his saddle, and as many times had Renault, assisted by two or three of his party whom he summoned to his aid, rescued him from their hands.

"This determination to take me alive, Renault," said the president, "shows me that, if taken, I am reserved for a worse fate than can await me here. So I will die here, sword in hand."

"Nay, thou shalt escape with me!" said Renault. "My poor comrades!" he sighed; "this has been a fatal night for them. Thy friends, sir, are all fallen or taken captive! What do we battle for longer save for thyself? Thy horse bleeds to death! Mount mine and fly!"

"Alas! that my worthless life should have caused so great bloodshed! If my escape will end it, I will do as thou wilt!" answered the president, despondingly.

Renault wound a recall upon his bugle, and the remnant of his band gathered round him. Then, mounting the president upon his own horse, and leaping upon another, he placed him between himself and one of his troop; and, ere the Spanish captain, whose force was very much diminished by the slain and the absence from the field of

those necessary to guard the captives, could divine their intentions, they were in full speed of flight.

"Hold, signors! pursue them no farther! We have six of them captives, and we had best return with these ere we are attacked by a fresh troop, and risk the loss of them! for I am told these forests are filled with roving gentlemen of the blade, and we are in little condition to do battle again to−night. Mount and guard your prisoners, and then spur for the gates! If Osma give me not a colonelcy for this night's bloody work, he hath little appreciation of a cavalier's merits! Are you all to horse? Then forward!"

Obedient to his command, the Spanish troop, one third less in number than when they left the town, guarding between them the six venerable prisoners, weary, wounded, and bleeding, formed into marching column, and at a slower pace than they had come out, returned towards the city.

Count Osma was seated in his cabinet an hour after his return from the quadroone's dwelling, his satellites Rascas and the Moor closeted with him, both having fulfilled their respective missions, save, as has been seen, that Rascas, instead of continuing on with the dragoons as he had been ordered to do, transferred his services more immediately to his master's person. He was waiting impatiently for news from those who had been despatched to intercept the flight of the councillors. Suddenly the sound of a body of horse reached his ears, and he started to his feet.

"Go, Rascas, and quick bring me their report!" he cried.

During his absence he paced his room with rapid and nervous strides, and half met him at the door when he returned.

"So! what tidings?"

"Taken," answered Rascas, laconically.

"All!"

"Six of them."

"Where is Captain Lopez?"

"Here, your excellency," replied the captain of the troop, who had followed at the heels of the count's messenger.

"You are well returned, Signor Captain! Are these rebel judges taken?"

"All save one; but with the loss of sixteen of our party."

"And but seven old men to oppose thee! How is this, sir?"

"They had an escort of some thirty *courreurs du bois*, I think they are called."

"Ha! this Renault once more!" cried Osma, in an angry tone of surprise. "One escaped, saidst thou? If thou hast the old president, they might all have fled."

"I know not their rank, signor," answered the captain; "every man of them is old and gray−headed."

"Conduct them hither."

In a few moments afterward the captive judges stood before him.

"You are welcome, gentlemen," said the count, with haughty scorn, as they were led in, guarded, one after another. "Ha! Signor Captain, are these the six? Are these all your captives?" he demanded, with keen and violent disappointment, as the last entered. "Where is the president?"

"If he be not here, it is he who has escaped," replied the Spanish captain.

"Then thy head shall answer for it! I had rather he were here in chains before me than a score of lesser men."

"It may not be helped, signor. We fought till I lost a third of my men. The one who escaped was wrested from us by the coolness and address of the *courreur chef*, who galloped off with him, his hand upon his rein, the remnant of his men circling him with their bodies."

"They have then escaped to their fortress, signor," said Rascas. "If you have not trouble ere many days from that quarter, I know not the mettle of this Renault."

"I would give his head's weight in gold for it!"

"Give me the weight of his brains in silver, and I will bring it thee, signor," answered Rascas, slightly and significantly touching the haft of his dagger.

"We will talk of this anon. How now, sirs!" he added, fixing his glance with stern vindictiveness upon the captives, "do you not deserve death?"

"Not for doing our duty," replied the oldest of the judges, firmly.

"Nor shall Osma for doing his. Drag them away to prison, and send them a priest; for they die at sunrise!"

The count turned from them as he spoke, and they were led forth from his presence, without his bestowing upon them another glance.

"Ho, Sulem! go bid Lopez conduct them into the council chamber ere they be taken to prison, and summon the cabildo to me there forthwith. I had forgot. I have promised my daughter they shall have a trial."

In a quarter of an hour afterward, this tribunal of Osma's own creatures was assembled, the prisoners brought before it, and confronted with certain witnesses that were readily to be found. The charge made against them was that of rebellion. Rather for his own amusement than a desire for justice, Osma bade his assessor hear and record the testimony against the prisoners, and then called upon them for their defence.

The elder councillor pleaded that he had done nothing except in the character of commissary−general and ordonateur of the King of France in the province; and to him alone he was accountable for the motives that had directed his official conduct. This plea was sustained; but the Count of Osma, although the *cabildo* was a civil court, in his character as commanding general as well as president of the tribunal, likening it to a court−martial, said he disproved the judgment of the *cabildo*, and that the prisoner was guilty. Another of the councillors boldly offered the same plea, which was in like manner disapproved by the commanding general. The other prisoners, seeing this, denied the jurisdiction of the tribunal before which they were arraigned. Their plea, however, was overruled, and they were convicted under an old statute, which denounces the punishment of death and confiscation of property, not only against those who excite any insurrection against the king or state, or take up arms under pretext of extending their liberty or rights, but against those who give them any assistance. Osma then rose up, and, after declaring that the Sieur d'Alembert and Renault the Quadroon were also included in their conviction, condemned them to be hanged, and pronounced the confiscation of their estates.

On hearing this, several of the better class of town's−people who had sided with Spain, as well as some of the Spanish officers (for the council−chamber was thrown open to the populace, and was nearly filled even at that late hour), sought, by the most earnest entreaties, to prevail on the governor, before he left the forum, to remit or suspend the execution of his sentence till the royal clemency could be implored. He was, however, inflexible and inexorable; and the only indulgence he would condescend to grant was, that their punishment should be inflicted by shooting instead of hanging.

"So! Take them to prison! This farce hath been in play full long. Early to−morrow afternoon let them be led forth to execution!"

Thus speaking, the sanguinary governor strode from the council−chamber, where justice and humanity had been thus openly mocked, and the victims of his bloodthirsty vindictiveness were conducted to the dungeons prepared for them.

"On the ensuing morning," says Francois Xavier Martin, in his History of Louisiana, "the guards at every gate and port of the city were doubled, and orders were given not to allow anybody to enter it. All the troops were under arms, and paraded the streets, or were placed in battle array along the *levée* and on the public square. Most of the inhabitants fled into the country. At six o'clock in the afternoon, the victims were led, under a strong guard, to the small square in front of the barracks, tied to stakes, and an explosion of musketry soon announced to the few inhabitants who remained in the city that their friends were no more. Posterity, the judge of men in power, will doom this act to public execration: an act which no necessity demanded and no policy justified; an act which served rather to gratify a spirit of retributive vengeance in the satisfaction of personal revenge than to answer the ends of national justice."

## CHAPTER VII. SCENE WITHIN THE ISLAND−FORTRESS.

The sun was yet a quarter of an hour high on the afternoon of this murderous execution of the councillors, when a single horseman, in the uniform of a chasseur, issued at full gallop out of a forest two leagues from the town, and drew rein upon the shores of a wooded lake. His coal−black horse was whitened with foam, and his flanks reeking with blood, while the brow of the rider was flushed and stern. Matters of serious import evidently had caused him to take to saddle.

The shore on which he emerged was a shelving beach of white sand, that, like a snowy belt, girdled a small lake about one mile in width, and on every side shut in by noble forest−trees. In the centre of the lake, which lay, like a steel mirror, tinted with gold under the evening sun, was a small island, on which frowned the towers and battlements of a fortress, with the flag of France hoisted over that of Spain proudly waving above its ramparts. Wild ducks sailed in troops about the lake, and the white gull skimmed its surface with arrowy wing; the kingfisher seared midheaven, marking his finny prey with far−sighted vision as it swam deep beneath the surface; while the eagle, balanced still higher, kept watch upon him in turn, ready to descend like a thunderbolt, and rob him of it when he should rise dripping from the flood. The whole scene was brilliant and touchingly beautiful, yet full of majestic repose, slumbering so quiet there in the lap of eternal forests.

Without pausing to bestow a glance upon the scenery, he had no sooner reined up, than, looking wistfully towards the fortress, he wound a horn that hung at his saddle−bow, sending the notes far across the water. After the lapse of a few seconds it was answered from the fortress, and a boat instantly put off from the island and approached the main. It was rowed by two oarsmen, and a third individual stood up in the stern. As it came near the shore, the horseman dismounted, tied his horse to a tree, and walked to the water's edge, as if too impatient to lose a moment in getting to the island.

"Ha, Rapin de Thoyras! Is it thou?" demanded the person in the boat, on coming near enough to the land to discern his features. "Cease rowing, my men! Here is treachery!"

"Nay, Charleval," answered the other, stretching forth his hand frankly, and then placing it earnestly on his heart, "I am henceforth a *courreur du bois!* Take me to your bosom again!"

"Nay, I did love thee as a brother once—love thee more than all our happy band of Seven; now, alas! disloyal and debased. But we will speak of this no more. Wherefore have you sounded our private signal?"

"I would be conducted to the presence of your first chief."

"Renault hath been engaged in a sacred duty since the morning. Sieur d'Alembert lieth at the point of death, and he waits by his bed's head to receive his latest breath. This is no time to intrude thyself upon him. I fear treachery from thee, De Thoyras. Wherefore shouldst thou see him?"

"They have slain my father!"

"Thy father! Who hath done it?"

"This Count Osma. Within this hour, my father, with five of the other judges, have been shot in the square."

"Sayest thou this on thy faith?"

"True as I stand here shedding hot tears of grief and vengeance."

"I believe thee! They shall be avenged!" said Charleval, with deep sorrow. "What wouldst thou do?"

"Avenge my father!" was the stern reply. "Every sword in our band shall be thine. To offer them to thee I have ridden hither."

"Take a seat beside me," he said, as the boat touched the shore; "our brave, noble councillors! Hath Osma done so bloody a thing? Then are his own days numbered! I will trust thee, De Thoyras, for grief hath made thee penitent. Nay, I will embrace thee, and give thee my confidence. Now know that a messenger, a swift Indian runner, hath been despatched to the Camanchee king, who has often pressed upon us his services, to come and aid us in driving out the Spanish troops, with a thousand of his warriors. He has a deadly hatred, it seems, for the Spaniards, and desires to meet them in battle. It will be ten days before they can reach us. One hundred of the noble Atchafalayas, with a fleet of pirogues, will waft them to this side of the river, while their horses swim beside the boats. In ten days, at the farthest, they will be here. We had intended only to drive out the Spaniards; but now, blood shall atone for blood, and that of Osma's heart must flow ere vengeance is appeased. Poor

councillors! Savage and bloodthirsty tyrant!"

"The whole town are indignant and alarmed," said the chasseur; "this act has filled every bosom with terror. Men are flying to arms everywhere, and Renault and thyself may lead full two thousand men against the city."

"Doth thy chief, Caronde, know this? and if he does, will he not side with this guilty governor?"

"He lies suffering from shame and pain in our stronghold, and hath, in his rage, slain two of our party for mocking at his mutilated hand. This has enraged the whole band against him; and their affection hath ever been more for myself than for him."

"Will they obey you?"

"To a man!"

"And these Ladrones of the Lagoons, that are thy allies, some two hundred in number?" asked Charleval, as the boat moved swiftly across the lake.

"They will fight where the booty and pay is best. Caronde is become nearly penniless through his extravagances, and they will easily be persuaded to use their knives and carbines on this side."

"This I will leave to you, and also the conversion of Caronde's band."

In a few moments they reached the island, and the messenger was escorted into the fortress; which, as he passed along, he saw was filled with the adherents of Renault.

In a small room of the fortress, with rough stone walls, and a single aperture for a window, through which the sunlight shone in cheerfully, lay an old man upon a rude pallet. His thin, white hairs were scattered over his expansive forehead, which was pale, and, to the eye, cold like sculptured marble. His majestic features were of the hue of death, but on them patience in endurance struggled with suffering. It was the Sieur d'Alembert. He had received a mortal wound in the attack the night before, and death was fast fixing his seal upon his brow. Beside him stood a priest, in silent waiting for his departure, having administered to him the last sacraments of the church. Near his pillow stood Renault, full of grief; for he loved him as a father, and affection had bound him to his bedside since he first placed him there on reaching the fortress after his escape with him. The venerable man had his fading eyes fixed upon the small spot of sky through the window, as if surveying the path along which his spirit was to take its upward flight. Reason was clear, and serene resignation sat upon his countenance.

"My son!" he said, faintly.

Renault pressed his hand, but could not speak.

"I have wearied you this day, my son. My time here will be but a few moments longer. I would ask a dying favour!"

"Speak, my father!"

"That you avenge not my death. Louis has seen fit to give our province to Spain; and Spain has done no more than take her right. Forgive your king, and suffer Spain! Disperse your band, and be a peaceful citizen. This world hath enough evils that come uncalled; seek to live in peace in it with all men, even with thy enemies. If you would look upon human wars and ambition as they now appear to me, you would, so you could serve Heaven in conscience, scarce heed who ruled the different nations of the earth for the short time you lived upon it. Now promise me, Renault, my son, you will live peaceably under the Spanish rule, nor seek to avenge my death!"

Renault dropped the hand he had so long held, rose from the bedside, and hastily paced the room a few moments without replying, his bosom torn by conflicting emotions.

"My son," said the dying councillor, with a slight accent of reproof.

The voice instantly drew him to his pillow. "Forgive me, my more than father! Thy wish shall be granted!"

"Bless thee, bless thee! I shall go happier, feeling that I do not bequeath civil commotions to my unhappy country."

There was at this moment a low knock at the door, and Charleval then entered.

"How is it with the venerable judge?" he asked, softly. "The rapid chisel of death hath sharpened his features."

"He will go with the sun," answered Renault. "What news bring you from the main land? Your countenance is troubled."

"The councillor will in a few moments rejoin his friends," was the evasive reply.

"What mean you?"

"They are dead!"

"How? Do I hear rightly?"

"Too well. The six councillors have been shot, by order of Osma, in the square."

"Then Osma dies!"

"Dead are they all?" said the dying judge, who had overheard and understood their words. "Then have they exchanged misery for happiness." With a triumphant lighting up of his countenance, he then half rose up in his bed, and cried,

"I come to thee, my friends! I come! Heaven receive my spirit!"

He fell back and expired.

"Another victim has gone to accuse Osma at the bar of Heaven!" cried Renault, with mingled grief and indignation. "Happy councillor! Heaven hath a great gain in our loss."

"He must be avenged!" said Charleval, sternly.

"Nay, I have sworn he shall not."

"But not to avenge the other councillors thou hast not sworn?"

"No; but the president looked at me as he expired, and I knew what his tongue would have spoken had not death taken away the power of speech. No, Charleval, we must not do it. To avenge them were to avenge him also. We must live either under this Spanish rule, or leave our native land for maternal France."

"Art thou in earnest, Renault?"

"The chamber of death is no place to trifle in, my friend. We must disband our adherents, or leave Spain in quiet possession of the province."

"Be it so, Renault," answered Charleval, grasping his hand; "but we will talk of this anon. Rapin de Thoyras is waiting to see thee," he added, quickly, hoping that his account of the sanguinary massacre might fire his friend's bosom, and lead him to forget his promise to the dying councillor.

The interview between De Thoyras and Renault, which grief did not permit him to grant for full two hours after the death of the councillor, was brief, and terminated with Renault's rejection of his offer of assistance.

"I pray thee, sir," he said to him, as he was about dismissing him, "use thy influence over thy band, and persuade them also to disperse. It is best the province should be settled in quiet, and we shall most show our love to our country by forwarding, all that lies in our power, the wishes of our departed father and councillor."

While he was yet speaking, a bugle was heard from the main, blown in a harsh, discordant key.

"That is Gobin, and none else," said Charleval, as the unskilful bugler continued to wind note after note.

"Despatch a boat for him," said Renault; "I fear worse tidings still. Didst thou learn aught of my sister, Sieur de Thoyras, while thou wert in the city?"

"Nothing touching her welfare."

"It may be she hath come to no harm. Now Heaven hath taken the spirit of my friend to itself, I must see to her safety."

In a little while Gobin, for the messenger was indeed he, was brought into the presence of Renault. His countenance was expressive of great alarm, and his limbs trembled.

"Gobin, I pray thee deliver speedily and briefly the message thou art charged with," said Renault, impatiently.

"Brother Spain ha' a shotted the councillors."

"Hath any harm come to Azèlie?"

"Not yet, gossip. I took service last night wi' brother Spain, but I was a drunk when I did't. I went to bed, and slept till six o'clock, when guns a−firing woke me up, and I looked out o' the window, and I see the six councillors lying dead, shotten through the heart, on the ground," he added, as if his mind was deeply impressed with the scene he had witnessed.

"We know it, Gobin; did this alone bring thee hither?"

"No, gossip. Soon as it was well dark, before the moon got up, I ran off from the palace, afraid cousin Spain would a−chop my head off, and was going to hide myself in your house, when a gray woman met me and gave me this note," he continued, fumbling in his vest; "and told me to bear it to you with the wind's speed. I dropped myself down the outside of the wall, and was coming a−foot, when I saw gossip Boviedo on a horse he had found running loose after the last night's battle. He swore he had won him by his valour; I bade him keep him by his valour; and, setting upon him, overset him like a cotton bale to the ground, robbed him of his bugle, jumped into the saddle, and am here wi' the first news o' the councillor's being shotted. The note will scarce give thee more

sorry news, gossip Renault."

He delivered the note as he spoke. It contained but one line. Renault read it, and with a loud cry of misery and despair, fell forward, and would have quite fallen to the floor but for the sustaining arm of Charleval. He was for an instant in convulsions. By a strong effort of his mind, he, however, recovered himself, and once more glanced over the note.

"'Tis writ there in letters of fire. Blood alone can quench them. Ho! Charleval! sound the gathering cry of the band. De Thoyras, I will accept thy aid. To horse, and meet me an hour hence at the Pontchartrain gate, with every man thou canst make follow thee. To arms and to horse!" he shouted, madly.

The chasseur lieutenant instantly took his departure, full of surprise at this sudden change in the temper of the *courreur chef* , and wondering at the cause that produced it, though gratified at the result. The fortress was at once in arms. In less than half an hour, a flotilla of horse−barges left the island, and steered for the main land; while Renault, full of impatience, his brain burning with the fever of his mind, and incapable of enduring the slow progress of the barges, leaped from a rock into the lake, and swam on horseback before them to the land.

## CHAPTER VIII. OSMA AND THE QUADROONE−MOTHER.

The Count of Osma had glutted his appetite for blood in that of the six councillors, and the vindictive demon within him, which demanded their lives, sated for the present with this sacrifice, slumbered; but another was now awakened scarcely less devilish. This was the fiend of lawless passion. After the massacre, the streets were deserted save by the soldiery. A gloom like that of the tomb hung over the city, and no sounds but those from armed men met the ear. Osma was in his cabinet waiting for the twilight. It came, and, attended by the Moor Sulem, he sought the habitation of the Quadroone. He was admitted as before, and found Ninine alone.

"Where is my beautiful Azèlie?" he asked, gayly, as he entered through the Venetian casement into the apartment.

"She sleeps, my lord," she answered, significantly.

"Thou hast given her the sleeping potion I sent hither by my slave?"

"An hour ago."

"And she has slept ever since?"

"Some twenty minutes, my lord."

"It is well done of thee. Lead me to her. I would feed my love by banqueting on her beauty while she slumbers. Sleep hath a thousand charms unknown to waking life. Lead me on, I pray thee, signora."

The quadroone−mother rose, and led the way to the chamber of Azèlie. A small silver lamp, suspended above the couch, shed a soft lustre around. With one arm pillowing her cheek, her raven hair falling like a half−drawn veil about her, slept, like an infant, the pure object of Osma's passion. Her beauty struck him with increased surprise. He was awed by it, and a thought of his own daughter crossed his mind as he for a moment contemplated the virgin loveliness of the fair child before him. But these thoughts were by no means welcome, and he banished them, though not without an effort. He knelt beside her, took her soft, unconscious hand in his, and admiringly traced the azure veins that lined it. He watched the gentle rise and fall of her young bosom with desire, and impressed, with licentious lips, an impassioned kiss upon her maiden cheek. Still she slept on, Heaven alone the protector of her innocence.

"Signora, I knew not till now half the value of thy treasure! I will bear her privately to my palace while she sleeps. Ho, Sulem!"

The Moor, who had followed him like his shadow, stood before him, and made a profound reverence of submission of his will.

"Nay, my lord," said the quadroone−mother, quickly; "ere thou remove her to thine own roof, certain conditions must be complied with."

"Ha! a price?"

"Ten thousand crowns."

"Wouldst thou sell thy daughter like a slave, woman?"

"Nay, have not wedded brides a bridal portion?"

"The bride, but not the bride's mother."

"Thou seest Azèlie!" she said, artfully pointing to the slumbering girl, confident in the power of her singular beauty; "have I demanded too much?"

"No. Sulem! hie thee to my treasury, and forthwith bring the amount in told gold."

The slave departed, and, during his absence, Osma stood gazing upon the lovely sleeper in silence. As he gazed, an expression of singular thoughtfulness came upon his features, and, with growing surprise, he seemed to be tracing some fancied resemblance that disturbed him.

"How like is the shell−like curve of the pearly eyelid, and long jetty fringe that turns back from the cheek it shades!" he said, half aloud; "how like is the smile that lingers upon the mouth, and how very like the mouth itself! 'Tis a strange and wonderful resemblance that cometh upon me, feature by feature! Methinks I toyed with that dark hair eighteen years ago. Hath Heaven awakened this likeness to defeat my purpose? Hence—away, superstitious fears! Shall an idle memory, a fancied resemblance to the long−buried dead affright me?"

"What wouldst thou, signor?" asked the quadroone−mother, hearing him speak.

"Art thou listening? Nothing. Hath he not yet returned? Ha! Methinks there is a shadow in the window. Good Heavens! dost see that?"

The quadroone−mother flew to the casement as he spoke, and beheld a tall figure looking in upon her, with blazing eyeballs, and one finger lifted warningly and menacingly. Uttering a shriek of horror and mortal fear, she fell senseless upon the floor. When she came to herself a few moments afterward, she looked wildly about her, as if seeking the object of her terror.

"What means this fear, signora?" asked the count, concealing his own alarm at the sight of the sorceress, lest a confirmation of his terror might defeat his purpose, which had received a shock, but not a defeat, by the presence of one his experience told him was no messenger of good to him.

"Didst see it?" she gasped.

"What?"

"The—spirit—the Moor!"

"He has not returned?"

"Nay—a—a woman!"

"I have seen nothing but branches waving without in the night−breeze. Cease your alarm."

"Was it nothing, then, signor?"

"Nothing but an image of thy brain."

"Could it have been fancy? If the dead do appear, my lord, it should be at such a time as this!"

"Thou hast seen nothing that is not of this world. What didst thou fear?" he asked, seeing her calmer, desirous of learning something of the mysterious being who had before exercised such an influence over himself, as well as now over the quadroone−mother.

But she waved her hand, and signified her desire not to be questioned. In a few minutes afterward Sulem reappeared, and the gold was told down to the mother, who, at the sight of it, forgot her late terrors.

"Azèlie is then mine, signora?" asked Osma, approaching and kneeling on one knee at the couch of his victim, as Sulem counted the last piece into her hand.

"Thine, your excellency. But thou wilt have to keep her in a golden cage, for a young hawk will be hovering o'er thy palace roof to pounce upon the dove when once the keeper is away," she said, with a malicious feeling which was inherent in her, and would break out even to a benefactor, if it might be she could mingle poison in his cup of enjoyment. Osma she thought was too happy, and her heart was envious. So from its abundance she spake.

"How meanest thou?"

"That the son of the late Marquis Caronde hath long sought her—and that thou art his rival."

"Methinks I heard something of this from Rascas. He lieth ill at ease, signora, maimed and sore from disappointments and wounds."

"The hurt tiger is most ferocious. I warn thee! Besides, my lord, he hath a claim upon her as a master."

"Azèlie his slave! Doth he assert this?"

"He doth—listen! I was a slave, and the Marquis of Caronde purchased me and made me free, but forgot to record my manumission on the provincial records; and his son hath revived the question of bondage, and claims me as his slave, that he may possess the person of Azèlie."

"This is new. And, singular enough, the only law that I have not changed is that of slavery, which I have sanctioned, and proclaimed shall remain as heretofore."

"Caronde will claim thy mistress," she said, coolly. "He hath a restless and vengeful spirit, and will give thee no rest, my lord!"

"Wherefore dost thou press this upon my ears, woman? Hast thou a purpose in't?"

"*His death!*" she answered, fixing her eyes full upon his.

"Dost thou hate him?"

"He hath wronged me. Doth a woman ever forgive a wrong?"

"Wouldst thou have me slay him? This seemeth to be what thou aimest at."

"Thou nor Azèlie may live while he lives."

"Nay, if I slay him, men will call it fear of a rival."

"Wilt thou brook that thy mistress should be publicly claimed by thy rival as his slave?"

"No, woman."

"Then he who alone can claim her as such must cease to live."

"Thou hast deeply considered this matter. This Caronde, then, shall die ere the morrow's sunset."

"For this promise, see what I place in thy hands!" she said, with a smile of gratified revenge, taking from her bosom a small casket, and delivering it to him.

"What is this, signora?" he asked, opening and drawing from it a small roll of parehment, to which was affixed the provincial seal.

"It is the instrument of my manumission; a gift from the Marquis of Caronde to me after the birth of my son."

"Wherefore do you now place it in my hands?"

"That the laws may not disturb your possession of Azèlie, whom this instrument makes your slave, and that you may make use of it for your own ends if her haughty spirit should rise superior to the condition to which her birth has destined her."

"Thou art a deep and subtle woman. Thy sagacity shall not go unrewarded. Slave! go to yonder escritoir, and draw briefly after this model a bill of manumission in the name of Signora Ninine. Thou shalt have it as an evidence that thou thyself art free, while this I retain, to attest, if need be, the bondage of thy daughter to herself!" he said to her, with a smile of triumphant power.

The Ethiopian secretary soon completed the instrument he had been commanded to draw up, and Osma, affixing to it his signature and seal of state, delivered it to her. Azèlie, the lovely victim of this diabolical scheme, still slept, under the influence of the potion the Count of Osma had sent to be administered to her, unconscious of the fate to which she had been consigned.

"Now, my gentle Houri," said he, bending over her, and feasting his eyes upon her beauty, as a miser gazes upon a newly−gotten treasure, "thy charms shall bloom in a palace, and for thy beauty I will return thee honour. Sulem, the cloak!"

Receiving a large mantle from his slave, and folding it about her, he lifted her from the couch and placed her in the Moor's arms.

"Now, slave, see that thou bear her gently. If she waken by thy roughness, thy head shall answer it. Proceed! Signora, adiou!"

Thus speaking, the licentious Spaniard, whom guilt had sunk to such a level as companionship with this wicked bondwoman, wrapped his cloak about him, and followed the Moor through the dark avenues of the garden towards the secret gate in the wall. As he passed through it, he thought he saw the same mysterious figure that had appeared at the window of the boudoir, gliding across from one path to another; but, after stopping a while and not seeing it again, he fancied it was his own guilty imagination that offered to his mind a picture which he was momentarily dreading would appear openly to his vision.

By the private postern that communicated with the banquet−room, the Moor re−entered the palace, closely followed by his master, and bore his sleeping burden without observation to a small but sumptuous apartment, richly and luxuriously furnished, that opened from the cabinet, and which, from appearances, had been prepared expressly for her reception.

"Place her upon that ottoman. Gently, slave. Dost thou think thou art letting down a bale of goods?" he demanded, as they entered unobserved this room.

The Moor obeyed, and then, drawing back a few paces, stood with his hands folded upon his breast. The count softly removed the mantle that enveloped her form, and dwelt upon the expressive face, to which the motion had given a slight colour, adding to her beauty. The position in which the slave placed her was, unintentionally, most graceful. She still slept profoundly, and with so faint a breathing that Osma, after watching her a few moments, turned to the Moor, and said with alarm,

"She sleeps soundly, Sulem, and, methinks, full long."

"Lalla Azèlie will wake when the nightingale first sings to the moon."

"When will that be, slave? the moon hath risen."

"When the moon hath been an hour up, the bird will sing her first song."

"'Twill be three quarters of an hour yet. This times with thy saying that her sleep would last but two hours. If thou hast overdrugged the potion, thine own cimeter shall serve to sever thy head from its shoulders."

"Sulem hath skill, and fears not the result," answered the Ethiopian, with confidence.

"Be it so," replied the count, with a menacing doubt. "Return with me into my cabinet. I will pass the intervening hour in preparing despatches."

With these words, after gazing a moment upon her, during which some painful memory, awakened by a likeness, seemed to agitate him, he dropped the damask hangings before the entrance of the boudoir in which she reposed, and seated himself in his cabinet.

Drawing a sheet of paper before him, he seemed to be concentrating his thoughts to fix them upon the subject with which he was to fill it. But he had, within the few last days, passed through too many and varied scenes easily to command his ideas to flow into a given current. The scenes he had been an actor in rushed irresistibly and painfully upon his mind, and the images of the murdered councillors, with the contemplation of his own conduct in the present affair, were forced upon him by a conscience that seldom played the monitor in his bosom. He could not conceal from himself his deep criminality in every feature of the proceedings, whether against the judges, Don Henrique, or the lovely and innocent Azèlie. The more he reflected, the more bitter his censures against himself became; and when he thought of his own beautiful Estelle, whose image was mingled with that of Azèlie in his mind, he felt a shame and contrition that promised repentance of his purpose. The innocence and helplessness of Azèlie pleaded loudly for her; but that very loveliness, as well as her unprotected state, were only stronger arguments to his passion. Suddenly, too, the remembrance of her love for Don Henrique rushed like a torrent upon his senses, and filled him with resentment and vengeance against both. This reflection extinguished all the emotions of human tenderness and sympathy that had been kindled in his bosom towards her, and inspired him with the determination to make her the victim, as well of his hatred to Don Henrique and Renault as of his passion. Thus, though pity and honour pleaded for her, hatred and revenge pronounced her condemnation.

## CHAPTER IX. A VISIT TO THE DUNGEONS OF THE INQUISITION.

The thought of Don Henrique seemed to inspire the Count of Osma with some suddenly−conceived resolution. He rose from his chair, and demanding of Sulem a bunch of heavy iron keys that he carried at his belt, bade him remain in the cabinet and guard the fair sleeper. Then, with a dark lantern in his hand, he left the room, and, going out into the marble passage, followed it until he came to a low door, scarcely visible within the panneling of the wall. This he opened by touching a spring, and entered a stairway narrow and dark.

Guided by the rays of his lantern, he descended to the bottom, and followed a winding, subterranean passage, that led in the direction of the city prison. On coming to its extremity, he opened with one of the keys a massive oaken door, heavily secured by iron bars and plates. It swung slowly on its hinges, and admitted him into a sort of hall, damp and dark, which was situated beneath the foundation of the prison. It was octagonal in shape, and on four sides were as many iron doors leading into cells. It was apparent that the dungeons were no part of the prison above, and that the only communication they had with upper earth was by the subterranean avenue through which he had come. He gazed about him upon the thick gloom, which his lamp could scarcely illumine, with a smile of malignancy.

"This is a pleasant abode for a lover so lately sighing at the feet of his mistress. The Fathers of the Inquisition are skilful in the construction of dungeons. Methinks these were on a plan invented by the archfiend himself. How fearful and awful is the silence! How oppressive the breathing! Yet Rascas must have placed him deeper yet, for his instructions to me were, on arriving at the octagonal hall, to seek a trapdoor and descend again! This assassin hath the essence of cruelty in him. *I* should have been content to have placed him in one of these cells. If Rascas means treachery by sending me lower, I am well in his hands!"

"Satan seldom harms Satan," said the voice of the assassin in his ear.

Osma's blood rushed icy cold to his heart, and he started back several feet with undisguised alarm at the sudden surprise in such a place.

"Villain, is it thou?" he demanded, instantly recovering himself.

"I was sleeping on my pallet when you passed me in the anteroom, and followed you lest you might not find your prisoner, my lord," he said, unmoved.

"Thou hast thrust him into a foul dungeon! Cruelty hath no medium with thee, villain."

"Thou gavest me my first lesson in it, signor," he answered, ironically.

"Thou art over free with thy speech, sirrah! Show me to the dungeon!"

Rascas lifted a trap−door in an angle of the vaulted chamber, and there rushed upward a cold, dead atmosphere, that chilled the tyrant to the heart. He at first hesitated to descend; but, recovering his resolution, bade Rascas go down before him, and then followed with cautious and suspicious steps. At the bottom of the stairs was a circular vault, with a low iron door opening into an inner dungeon. To this door Rascas applied one of the keys of the bunch held by the count, and, swinging heavily on its hinges, it exposed within a cell about eight feet square, dimly lighted by an iron lamp suspended from the moist and dripping roof. The sides, floor, and ceiling of this horrid dungeon were plated with iron, and its atmosphere was like that of the charnel−house. At his first step the foot of the count struck against something, the hollow sound of which filled him with horror. He glanced on the pavement at his feet, and beheld a scull, and near it human bones fastened to chains bolted into the iron sides of the dungeon. He felt that he was, indeed, in the dungeons of the Inquisition, which had early established its dread power in that province. He saw before him the remains of victims of ecclesiastical cruelty. He was appalled, and would have retreated had he not already proceeded so far. Rascas took the lantern from his hand, and, entering the cell, approached an object lying in the corner. The lamp showed it to be a man.

"Is it he?" asked the count, hoarsely.

"Look for thyself, signor," answered the other, putting the lamp near his face.

It was Don Henrique. He was calmly sleeping upon the iron floor, as if on the couch of ease in the chamber of luxury. It was the repose of a good conscience; the rest of innocence! The Count of Osma had sought his dungeon to mock and exult over him; to lacerate his soul with recounting his triumph; to madden him, and then to destroy

him! He expected to find him insane with grief. To see him sleeping, oblivious of all sorrow, was a dagger to his soul. He envied him his repose. He gazed upon him with surprise and wonder; for he could neither appreciate nor understand the virtue that o'ertops misfortune.

"Rascas, thou rank villain," he said, shuddering, and glancing around the place, "when I commanded thee to take him to prison, I did not bid thee place him in a tomb. This cold damp will eat into my bones."

"Ah! thou art speaking for thyself, signor," said Rascas, with a sarcastic laugh; "I did at first imagine thou wert feeling some compunction for thy rival."

"Rival? Thou hast said the word! Ho, Signor Don Henrique! thy sleep is sound," he cried, touching him with his foot.

The sleeper started to his feet awake and conscious, and, at a single glance, seemed to comprehend the meaning of what he saw.

"Tyrant and traitor," he cried, fixing his eyes upon him with fiery scorn and contempt, "dost thou come hither to torment me with thy presence?"

"Nay, good signor," replied the Count of Osma, not without embarrassment in his voice and bearing, "you do me wrong. I have sought thy prison to restore thee to light and freedom."

"False knight, thou liest! Thou darest not, *after this*, let me breathe the air of Heaven, or behold the blessed light! My freedom were thy ruin, and thou well knowest it. I am prepared to die."

"I pray thee, signor, believe me. This moment follow me, and each footstep thou takest shall lead thee towards liberty."

"Lead on, and we will see what comes of this extraordinary clemency," replied Don Henrique, contemptuously. "Ha! I had forgot that thou hadst tethered me."

"Rascas, hast thou put this chain to his feet?" demanded Osma, sternly, yet secretly pleased at this security. "Unlock the chains instantly, sirrah. I pray thee bear witness, signor, that this was not done by my command."

"He who hath placed me in prison hath heavier guilt. Lead on!"

Rascas, not without surprise at the count's command to release his rival, freed him from his fetters; but, from his knowledge of the total depravity of his nature, he looked for a characteristic termination to his clemency. Arriving at the upper dungeon, the count, whispering to Rascas to guard vigilantly against the escape of the prisoner, followed by him, led the way along the subterraneous passage, and, ascending the private staircase, regained his cabinet.

"Now, Signor Don Henrique," he said, speaking in a tone that made the young Spaniard's heart shrink with an omen of mischief, "if thou wouldst learn wherefore I have sent for thee from prison, and wherefore I have kept thee there, follow me into this inner room. Sulem! Rascas! why linger ye behind?" he demanded, at the same time, with a look bidding them stand ready to seize upon the prisoner if he should offer to escape.

He then raised the drapery from before the entrance to the inner chamber, and the unfortunate Don Henrique followed him into the apartment. The first object that met his eye was Azèlie, lying in gentle sleep upon the ottoman. He neither started nor spoke. He seemed to be paralyzed by the sight. With a steady, vacant, stony gaze, he stood on the spot in which he had become arrested by the sight of her, like a statue. Osma had his exulting eyes upon him from the moment he entered, that he might enjoy his anguish, and triumph in his misery! An effect so opposite to that he had anticipated surprised and vexed him; he saw that the shock had been too sudden; that, in trying to bring about too much, he had effected nothing, and defeated his own ends. It was too much for his victim's reason.

The miserable Henrique continued in this strange, horrid state for a few minutes, then broke into a peal of wild, nervous laughter, that terrified and appalled each one present, and fell upon the floor insensible. The Count of Osma felt that he had been most signally defeated in his unnatural scheme of cruelty; and, turning away with a curse upon his lips, bade his attendants lift him up and bear him back to his dungeon.

"He shall yet witness my triumph, and at a time when he shall feel it," he said, half aloud. "Bear him hence."

In the fall Don Henrique struck his forehead against the corner of the ottoman upon which Azèlie slept, and the blood, gushing freely from the wound, had the effect of partially restoring him to his senses before he was carried from the chamber. His eyes once more fell upon the object of his devoted love, and, breaking from the Moor, he was about to cast himself upon her bosom, when, suddenly drawing back as if he had been stung, he cried, bitterly,

"No, no, it may not be! she—*she is lost to me for ever!* Fiend! that hast ruined so fair a temple— where art thou?" he cried, looking wildly about him.

"Here, signor! Dost thou not see how calmly she sleeps?" tauntingly said the Count of Osma, re−entering from the cabinet at his voice. "Nay, thy struggles are vain! Thou wilt scarce break from the slave. Be calm; she how sweetly she slumbers on my couch! Such sleep could only follow a willingness to become a captive. There is no starting from fear! no sighing! Do you see tears on her cheek? is the cheek itself pale? is there sorrow in the face? Her continued and quiet repose—does it not show she feels that she slumbers securely?"

"Demon! thou hast had thy triumph! Lead me back to my cell, and send to me thy executioner," he answered, with the deepest despair and wo the human heart is capable of bearing without bursting.

"So thou feelest it! I am glad of it. Thou shouldst thank me for giving thee a sight of the object of thy love ere death shut her out from thee for ever! Nay, I see thou art impatient. Rascas! lead the prisoner to his cell. Away with him! In this matter, signor," he added, as the young man was carried past him, "I repay, not only thy rivalry, but certain passages of scorn and contempt from thee to me both in Spain and the Havanna. I have ever hated thee; and, now that secrets will be safe unless thou whisper them into Death's ear, I tell thee it is for thy virtues and thy ever−wakeful suspicion of my guilty life that I hate thee. Thou art a better man than I, and I love thee not for it. I speak freely, meaning to pay thee no flattery; for thou art as one already dead, and therefore am I careless of thy opinion."

"Hast thou well weighed the consequences to thyself, traitor, of my death?" asked Don Henrique, with a look of warning.

"All men know, or, rather, believe that you fell on the night of the occupation of the town sorely wounded, and that you now lie at death's door from the hurt. I have to−day taken care to circulate the rumour of your probable death on account of it. To−morrow it will be proclaimed, and your body laid in state with public mourning. Think you Osma will be suspected of striking the blow?"

"Thou hast well planned," said Henrique, unmoved. "Bid thy slaves lead on."

"Nay, be not impatient. I shall address a letter of commiseration to thy sire. He will feel that a great responsibility is removed, and thank Heaven for taking thee out of a world where thy continuance might be productive of mischief, especially if thou wert to marry and beget sons—for sons of younger sons are Discord's grandchildren."

"Methinks, if my memory serves me, thou art a younger son, Sir Count; and by some foul deed, that hath rather been hinted at than spoken out, art now the head of thy house!"

Rascas cast a look of malicious pleasure at the count, who was for an instant confused, and took one or two turns across the apartment ere he replied, with a dark and lowering countenance,

"Thou hadst spoken thy death−warrant then, had I not already consigned thee to death! Ay, signor, I am a younger son! And if thou hadst had the bold and ambitious hand of Garcia Ramarez, thou wouldst now have been—"

"Villain! silence! lead me to death. Why do ye linger, slaves?"

"Wilt thou not take a parting look of the lady of thy love?" he asked, with a malicious smile.

"Incarnate fiend! Hath hell disgorged its chief, that I am thus tortured?"

"Thou dost think thy cup is full. It will hold one drop more. Thou goest to prison and to death so calmly, because thou believest she is lost to thee through dishonour. Thou wouldst scarce go so resignedly if I told thee the victim hath not yet been offered up."

"Monster, thou liest but to madden me, and imbitter death!"

"She is yet worthy, Don Henrique, of thy dying prayers and holy love! I tell thee this," he continued, with a smile of most triumphant malice, "to sweeten thy cup of death, Her sleep is artificial. Behold her there! See her unprotected state! In the power of thy rival! Worthy thee still, yet thou unable to possess her. Wilt thou die calmly *now?* Wilt thou demand to be led to thy execution? Signor Don Henrique, this is the happiest moment of my life. Hadst thou not rejected the offer of my daughter to thee in marriage, I had been less bitter with thee."

Don Henrique struggled between the Moor and Rascas, desperate with this moral torture he was doomed to endure, and in vain striving to reach his tormentor. But the ever−ready stiletto of Rascas was suspended above his bosom, and the iron grasp of the slave was irresistible. Osma enjoyed for a moment his misery, and bade them

drag him away.

"Shall I do it now?" asked Rascas, looking back at his master, and then directing his glance significantly to his stiletto.

"Not to−day; I am not ready. Leave him in his dungeon. I would have him live to think. It were mercy, Rascas, to slay him now."

The assassin returned him a satanic leer; and, assisting the silent and sullen Moor, dragged, rather than conducted, the wretched young man forth from the cabinet.

Such was the present triumph of guilt over virtue; the power of wickedness, and the fulness of revenge! Alas! what will limit the iniquity of a man's heart when he flings the rein to his passions, and rides whither they will! Who hath not reason to rejoice in an overruling Providence, that wisely governs and directs the human will, and mercifully confines it within fixed bounds; to be grateful that God, and not man, is the governor of the earth; that he alone disposes all events; and that nothing is done without His permission, who at a glance beholds both the causes and effects of all things.

Such were the reflections of Don Henrique after he was again left alone in his dungeon; and, though human feelings bore his heart down to the ground, he sought to lift his soul heavenward on the wings of faith, and, with Christian philosophy, bear his grief as coming from a higher power than that of the guilty instrument that immediately caused it, and therefore requiring his resignation and uncomplaining submission.

## CHAPTER X. THE PARAMOUR AND THE VICTIM.

Different, indeed, were the reflections of the Count of Osma from those of Don Henrique. His sensations on the departure of his victim were those of gratification and sated cruelty. He contemplated the misery he had caused with exquisite sensations of pleasure.

"I would save him if I now dared," he at length said, after thinking over all that had just transpired; "but I have gone too far. My safety is secured only in his death. Yet I would save him in that I like not to answer for the blood that flows in veins like his. But he hath ever been an eyesore to me; I could never meet his clear, quiet eye that it did not seem to be reading my soul. This Rascas will do the deed, and the wound may be shown as that received in the affray. He *must* die, for his injuries may not be expiated save by laying my own head upon the block. It were a pity he should die for such slight offences; but I have gone too far to hope he will pardon and forget should I permit him to live. Were he other than he is, he should live; but now his life must save mine. Ha, my child! I have seen but little of you since yesternight. Wherefore do you visit me now?"

His manner was impatient, and his voice angry as he spoke, for the time of Azèlie's waking was at hand, and he was about to enter her apartment when Estelle appeared. She was pale and serious, and filial love struggled in her countenance with reproof and fear. She approached, and, kneeling silently at his feet, kissed his hand. He felt a tear fall upon it as she did so, and, raising her to his breast, tenderly embraced her, while, with a smile of affectionate fondness, he said,

"What has disturbed thee, Lil?"

"A dream, as I fell asleep over my missal; and, waking with terror, I came to see that you lived."

"Prithee what was thy affrighting dream?" he asked, playfully, though not without a slight feeling of superstition; "when I was in Morocco I learned the art of interpreting dreams. Tell it me."

"Nay, now that you are here by me and in safety, 'tis nothing. Yet it deeply impresses me."

"The dream—out with it!" he exclaimed, ill concealing the feverish interest he took in learning it.

"It was—forgive me, sir—but I dreamed," she said, with a shudder, hiding her face, "that I saw thee beheaded on the king's scaffold, and that the young king and his whole court were present to witness thy ignominious death! Thy head rolled from the platform to my feet, and I awoke with horror! Nay, look not so fearful, sir; 'twas but a dream! I have let it weigh upon my spirits foolishly. It has given thee pain, my father."

"A young king, said you?" he said, placing his eyes upon her with searching and anxious inquiry.

"A young king; but not the Infante Don Carlos. I thought his face resembled—"

"Whose? Speak quickly."

"The young cavalier, Don Henrique."

"Ha, ha, ha! Then is the dream false!" he cried, with a wild, hollow−sounding laugh, while his countenance lighted up with malign satisfaction. "Go to, child; if such be thy dreams, dream on. Thou wilt scarce do harm by them. Wilt thou to thy chamber now? I have business, and would be alone. There is a kiss for thy dream. I pray thee bring me a pleasanter one to−morrow. Why do you linger, child? There is a question on thy tongue."

Estelle hesitated; but, seeing her father's impatience, with blushing embarrassment said, "Have they taken the president of the council, sir?" But her manner showed that more was hidden beneath her question than she would have known.

"He hath escaped, and this rebel Renault as yet. A price is upon their heads, and they will soon be captured."

"I thank thee, Heaven," she said, impulsively, as if relieved of doubt and fear.

"This shows thy loyalty, girl," he said, approvingly, referring her ejaculation to the last clause of his speech. "This *courreur chef* is a lion in my path. Nothing but the loss of his head will restore peace to the province. He is already plotting and conspiring against the state. He hath the talent, genius, and military skill in him of another Frederic of Prussia. Go to thy chamber," he added, quickly, his ready ear detecting a slight noise within the boudoir. At the same instant a nightingale from the palace gardens broke forth into a strain of ravishing song.

Estelle listened an instant to the melody, and then, unsuspicious, obeyed him.

With her heart dwelling upon Renault, whose unintentional praises from her father's lips filled her with pride and pleasure, and whose image she had fondly cherished with all the devotion of first love, she sought her

chamber, from which her startling dream had driven her to seek her father. To learn the fate of Renault, for which she trembled on hearing the condemnation and execution of the councillors ("by the cabildo," as it was told her), was also a motive, and a very strong one, that had induced her to leave her room and go to his cabinet.

At the moment the nightingale broke the silence of night by his shrilling notes, Azèlie opened her eyes, wholly free from sleep or drowsiness, and with all her faculties at command. Her first sensation was that of delicious refreshment. She lightly bounded to her feet as if she had awakened in her own chamber, and, catching a note of the bird's song as she rose, warbled along with him, scarcely less sweetly than himself, for a moment as happy−hearted and cheerful as if oblivion of past sorrow had been mingled with the Moor's sleeping−draught. All at once the consciousness that she was not in her own room struck her. There seemed to be the same rich drapery and costly furniture— the same ottomans and tables—for Osma had taken her chamber as a pattern for this, the better to content her with her imprisonment; but the apartment was larger than her own, and the little altar, with its silver lamp upon it, was not there. The clock of the Cathedral at the same instant tolled eight, so loud and near, that the dreadful suspicion which began to enter her mind, that she was in the tyrant Osma's palace, to which the Cathedral adjoined, nearly overpowered her. With a low, sharp cry of apprehension, she flew to the only window, and a single glance out upon the Place d'Armes before it confirmed her worst fears. Her situation and peril were instantly comprehended in their full extent.

"Now Heaven in mercy aid me!" she cried, clasping her hands and lifting up her eyes in tears to the Protector of the innocent, as, after a single trial, she found that the barricaded window mocked her feeble strength.

With the peril, her spirit and courage seemed to rise to meet it. She felt within her vesture for the stiletto she had carried there since she had become the victim of lawless persecution, and, with an exclamation of joy, laid her hand upon it. "Now hath Heaven answered my prayer!" she said, as she loosened it in her girdle, so that it would come freely at the touch.

Her eye, searching for an avenue of escape, now fell upon the curtain that was drawn across the entrance communicating with the governor's cabinet. She flew across the apartment, and was drawing it aside, when she heard a footstep close without. She started back with terror, and the next instant the Count of Osma was in her presence. Startled, but not surprised, to see her in this attitude, he would have approached her with a smile, and soothing language upon his tongue. But she no sooner beheld him advancing than she retreated to the casement, saying, in a firm and collected tone,

"Stand there, my lord! Approach me a step nearer, and thou wilt embrace a corpse for thy mistress."

He gazed upon her spirited attitude, her dilated eye, and resolute mouth, as she stood before him with heightened beauty, and hesitated.

"Nay, gentle Azèlie, this loveliness was not bestowed upon thee for this! This haughty and indignant bearing truly becometh thee; but a lover liketh best to see his mistress tender and submissive. Prithee! now thou hast displayed thy spirit, drop that lofty look, and let me lay my deep and devoted passion at thy feet!"

"My Lord of Osma, this language ill becometh the lips of a parent, and the father of a daughter who hath the years of womanhood!"

"Words from lips so sweet can ne'er be bitter, lovely quadroone. The more thou speakest against me, the more thy prettily−moving lips and flashing eyes will fire my passion. Thine own weapons thy beauty will arm against thee."

"Hoary mocker! Thy speech ill suits gray locks and dignity like thine. Remember thou art a knight and a noble of Spain—governor of this province—a chief of an army! while I am a maiden of an outcast race—the child of bondage and infamy. I pray thee, by thy honour, tarnish not thy name, rank, and station, by the thought that is in thy bosom!"

He listened to her eloquent appeal to his feelings, but, save that her inspired beauty increased his desire to become its possessor, it had no effect upon him. She saw the nature of the impression she had made, and, as he advanced a step towards her, once more commanded him back in a tone that he instinctively obeyed.

"Will nothing turn thee from thy purpose but the destruction of the victim of thy guilty passion? How will it sound in the halls of thy master's palace, that Count Garcia of Osma hath sold his honour for the love of a quadroone maid? hath dishonoured his gray hairs, and brought infamy upon his child? How will the proud Count of Osma love to hear his name coupled in a ballad with that of a slave, and sung at the street corners? Shame on thee, knight! Dismiss this passion, which can only end in thy disgrace and the tragic death of its object!"

"Maiden, thy scornful speech hath not the power over me that thy beauty hath. Did it fall from lips less sweet, I might listen to it. A curse from thy mouth were turned into a blessing, through the richness of the voice that conveyed it," he said, with a free gallantry and warmth of admiration that terrified her; while he made a step towards her as if he would terminate a scene, of the continuance of which he had already become impatient.

"Nay, my lord," she cried, in a voice so solemn and imploring in its eloquence, and in tones so full of pathos and entreaty, that he paused and listened without power to move; "nay, nay, my Lord of Osma, if there is no appeal to thy pride! none to thy honour— none to thy shame, let me plead to thy heart! Heaven surely hath given thee human emotions: a heart to feel—a bosom to be touched with sorrow! I implore thee by thy humanity—by thy hopes of a blessed immortality— by thy fear of judgment and dread of final retribution, to depart from me, and let me go free and innocent! By thy daughter's love to thee—by her beauty—by her virgin innocence, spare me! Drive me not to self−murder; for never shalt thou lay thy touch upon me living!"

As she spoke she drew her dagger from her bosom.

"Dost thou mean to do this, indeed, maiden?" he demanded, with surprise and alarm, for the first time really believing that she would lay hands upon herself, and fearing that thus she might escape him.

"The grave were preferable to thy licentious love, and death shall stand between me and dishonour!"

"Dishonour! A quadroone speak of dishonour! Thy beauty hath maddened thee, girl. What love so high as that I proffer thee wilt thou find? Not a maiden of thy race that would not esteem it her highest honour to be elevated to the station thou scornest. Thou hast played thy part well, and I give thee credit for it; now thou must end it. This boudoir is to be thy prison till thou art tamed; so thou wouldst best suffer thyself to be caught, pretty bird; for escape, there is none for thee." He advanced towards her as he spoke.

"Iron bars and locks cannot hold the released spirit, tyrant!" she cried, elevating her dagger, and deliberately aiming it at her breast.

Anticipating her intention from the enthusiasm of her voice, and the uplifted, prayerful eye, he sprang forward, and caught in his sleeve, in its descent, the glittering steel. With the other hand he was about to grasp her by the arm, when, uttering a cry of despair, she bounded away from him, and, reaching the curtain, fled through the door into the cabinet. Glancing around her with the rapid, searching gaze of a hunted doe, she discovered the only door that led from it. It was shut, but instantly yielded to her hand, and she darted through it, as Osma, burning with his discomfiture, entered the cabinet in pursuit, with the naked stiletto held menacingly in his grasp. Without looking behind, she fled through the anteroom, and, not observing that it contained a tall, shrouded figure, reached the marble passage.

Here, for an instant, she hesitated which way to fly; but her pursuer's voice, calling upon her to arrest her flight, gave her wings, and she took the way to the left, in the direction of a faint light shining into the passage from one of the state apartments that opened upon it. This light held out to her hopes of escape through the presence of others, and, running forward with breathless speed, she reached the half−open door as the Count of Osma appeared behind her in the passage. Without a moment's hesitation, she sought refuge through this door, and found herself in a small antechamber, where two or three female slaves were sleeping upon mats. A door was on the opposite side ajar, which she flung open and bounded through. Before she was aware, she found herself in a softly−lighted chamber, where, by an open lattice, sat a youthful maiden with a lute in her hand, discoursing most sweet and plaintive music, while the cool wind just stirred her golden hair. Azèlie half arrested her flight at her presence, uttered a cry of wild joy, and cast herself imploringly at her feet.

"Save me, save me!"

Estelle started with surprise and wonder at the beautiful vision that had so suddenly appeared before her; but, ere her astonishment would permit her to inquire her danger, and ensure her the protection she sought, her father entered the chamber in pursuit. His presence and bearing, as well as her knowledge of his character, explained to her all that she would have asked. She instantly threw her arms about the lovely fugitive, and, warmly embracing her, said, in a low voice,

"Fear not! the presence of the daughter shall shield thee!"

Then, starting to her feet, she cried, while her whole person seemed instinct with the insult and dishonour she felt she had received at her father's hands, "Stand there, sir! This is holy ground! Innocence hath sought this altar, and the foot of the spoiler shall not desecrate it. Leave me, sir!"

Her eyes seemed bursting with the tears her indignation would not let her shed, while shame and bitter grief swelled her heart to breaking. She stood before him like an angel reproving a demon. Her guilty parent bent his head at her reproof, though his wrath kindled fiercely against her; while Azèlie, glancing with a fearful eye from father to daughter, still knelt, clinging to the robes of the maiden, and looking as if her soul hung upon the words of her lips. After surveying them both with feelings of mingled shame and disappointment, he cried, in an authoritative tone of voice,

"To thy bed, girl! This is no matter for thy interference."

"When a father's honour is endangered, and the blush is brought into the daughter's cheek, love and duty command her intervention. Sir, thou hast forgotten thyself! This trembling child shall find a protector in me, and Heaven will forgive this rebellion against thy will. Go, sir, and forget thy intended wrong. By my filial love, sir, it shall never, by word or look, be brought again to thy remembrance. This gentle fugitive will also forgive thee; and, save in the condemning censure of thy own breast, the past will be as if it had never transpired."

The passions of the Count of Osma were too deeply seated to be moved by this filial appeal; and, much as he loved his child, and now admired her forbearance on such an occasion, he could not forgive her the disappointment nor this unpleasant exposure. He therefore, with reckless hardihood of manner, that showed he was not to be turned aside by any moral means from his purpose, answered,

"Since my accursed fortune has brought this thing before thee, girl, I shall not mince matters either with thyself or her. I am thy father, and my actions are not to be submitted to thy scrutiny. I alone am accountable for them. As you suspect, this young woman is the object of my passion."

"A passion that a daughter should never hear named by a father's lips," said Estelle, indignantly.

"Would you have me degrade honourable love, wench, by placing it upon a quadroone? Wouldst thou have a slave for thy stepdame?"

"A quadroone!" repeated the maiden, looking with surprise upon the dark, intelligent beauty of the young girl at her feet; "a quadroone, my father!"

"A daughter of the race of Ham. I will wed her if thou wilt," he said, ironically.

"If she then be of that race of which rumour hath talked so much, then is thy crime the greater! Oh, my father, how art thou fallen! How hath the glory of the house of Osma become dim!"

"A greater crime, girl, dost thou call it? In her case there can be none. Is the Sultan of Orient guilty of crime for filling his harem with the houris of Circassia? This is the destiny of the females of that land, and such is their only wedlock. And is there dishonour to them in it? Ask the Circassian maid if she feels herself wronged in being taken from her mother's roof to become the favourite of the sultan? Will she answer yes? So it is with the race of quadroones. Their destiny is the same with the maiden's of the East, and they would laugh at thee, child, if thou shouldst ask them if they were degraded by the fulfilment of a fate which they have ever been taught to be the summit of happiness."

"If such be this trembling maiden's feelings, why is she now a suppliant at my feet, sir?"

"She hath a passion for another, and hath taken some high notions that her surpassing beauty is worthy the recompense of marriage."

"And *thou*, sir, thou wouldst break her heart by tearing her from its hope, and destroy the virtue that hath elevated her above her race. Shame and dishonour upon thee, my father! Oh, that I had been spared this degradation. I could sink into the earth with the burning shame that weighs upon my heart. I know not, indeed I know not, whether to hate thee, scorn thee, curse thee, or throw myself at thy feet, and with streaming tears implore thee to come to thy right mind, and forget as I will forgive."

"My purpose hath gone too far: concealment is now vain: the first emotion of shame hath passed by, and I will not now be defeated in my object."

He made a step towards his victim as he spoke, as if he was about to seize upon and bear her off.

"Thy daughter first!" she cried, placing her person between that of Azèlie and his approach.

"Wilt thou proteot my slave? She is my slave!"

" 'Tis false," cried Azèlie.

"Thy mother hath surrendered to me her papers of manumission."

"Then death must free me."

"Fear not," said Estelle, resolutely.

"Nay, Estelle, wilt thou beard thy father!"

"Father! Darest thou remember that thou art a father?" she cried, with the accent of keen reproof.

"Thou shalt remember it to thy wo in a cell, a score of fathoms under ground, if thou thwart me, girl," he cried, with the desperate recklessness of a man bent on doing the evil that he contemplates, having now thrown aside all shame and remorse, all paternal delicacy and self−respect.

He laid one hand rudely upon her as he spoke, and with the other was dragging Azèlie away from her, when he felt a hand upon his throat like a grasp of iron. His hold upon the maiden convulsively relaxed, and he sunk upon one knee, his eyes forced from their sockets, and his whole frame nearly powerless. At the same instant Renault flew past him, and Azèlie, with a cry of joy, was clasped to his heart. The hold upon the count's throat was now released; the sorceress stood before him, and fixed upon his face eyes of deadly malignity and triumph! He stared upon her with terror, and, recovering with an effort the use of his speech, said, with tones in which superstitious fear had taken place of every other feeling,

"Fearful being! Dost thou appear again to torment me? This is not the day thou didst appoint to meet me. What evil cometh of thy presence now?"

"Wo to thee and joy to others, man of iniquity and blood! is ever where I come," she said, in a solemn voice; "I did hope that thou wouldst have let me remain out of thy sight until the day I promised thou shouldst see me again. But thy sins come fast and sudden, and it becomes me to watch lest thou do more than I would have thee, Beware! This is the second time of my coming. The third shall be the day of thy doom."

## CHAPTER IX. SCENE BETWEEN RENAULT AND OSMA.

Thus speaking, the sorceress strode from him, and, kneeling reverently, kissed the hand of Azèlie. Then, gazing into her eyes with singular tenderness, she unobserved slipped a small locket into her hand, and, with a pressure of silence and secrecy, rose, and at a slow pace, with her eyes fixed menacingly upon those of the count, stalked from the chamber. He followed her with his glance until she had disappeared, when the spell under which he had been bound was suddenly broken.

"Ho, my guards! Sulem! Rascas! Traitors and treason! Ho, without!" he shouted, drawing his sword and rushing on Renault, who still held his sister clasped in his arms. The young *courreur chef* immediately released her and drew his sword.

"Thou needst not call thy guards, my Lord of Osma," he said, catching the count's sword on his own blade.

"Traitor, hast thou made me prisoner in my own palace?" he cried, turning pale.

"Thou art free, and thy satellites are at the gate; but—"

"Yonder fearful woman, hath she done it?" he asked, dropping the point of his sword.

"I know not what she may have done, Signor Governor," he said, smiling at his fears; "but this I know, your guard did just now freely admit me and herself without question."

"Dost thou know thy head hath a price upon it?"

"I do, your excellency," he answered, calmly.

"And that thou art under condemnation of death, with the rebellious president of the provincial council?"

"I have heard this too; but Heaven hath taken the venerable councillor from the power of thy bloody hand."

"Methinks thou art fearless to use such speech, as well as to stand thus alone in the palace of thy foe. Dost thou not fear my power and vengeance?"

"I? No, no; I have found Azèlie safe; she has told me she has escaped thy lust, and I have no other fear *now!*" he said, with a haughty smile, embracing the lovely girl, who continued from the first to hide her head trustingly in his bosom.

Osma surveyed his bold and ingenuous countenance for a few moments, as if undecided what face to put upon the affair. At length he addressed him with a totally changed bearing, caused by certain motives which it would be difficult, in such a man, accurately to determine.

"I have had wrong at thy hands," he said, "and yet am disposed to pardon it. Thou knowest that the councillors thou didst release were condemned in fair trial by the tribunal of the cabildo?"

"I did hear so, my lord," said Renault, with a sarcastic smile.

"Therefore," continued Osma, without noticing, though keenly feeling it, "thou seest thou didst do me wrong in that matter. As governor of a newly−acquired province, believe me, I seek to make peace and render justice."

"Is it justice to steal a sister from a brother's roof? Is it justice to ruin innocence? Is it justice to wrong the unprotected? If it is thy desire to protect thy new subjects, why is thy first act of power exercised in wronging the defenceless?"

"There need be but few words between us," answered Osma, with singular patience; "the destiny of quadroone maidens I need not remind thee of. I did but seek to elevate thy sister to—"

"A couch of dishonour, signor!"

"Was it ever called so before with a maiden of thy blood?"

"Thou hast reason for thy interrogation, signor; few of the daughters of our race do indeed feel their degradation."

"It is, therefore, to them none."

"If, then, their *not* feeling it is an evidence of their degradation, how much deeper must be their degradation when they do feel it! and who would consign one such to a fate so dishonourable?"

"Yet by your own laws this sense of virtue may not have its reward in marriage. It were better it were corrected

in them than suffered to beget misery."

"This may be thy notion of virtue, Sir Count, but not mine. Heaven hath given my sister a virtuous and noble nature; and, as long as she has a brother to protect her honour, she shall be no man's leman," answered Renault, with indignant animation.

"Dost thou reverence the laws of thy province, Signor Renault?" asked the count, suddenly, and evidently with some significant purpose couched under his question.

"I do, signor—all, at least, that thy clemency has spared."

"Is there not a law that gives to the owner of a slave the right of property in that slave?"

"It is a law well known, signor."

"Oh, Renault, protect me, or I am lost," cried Azelie, clinging to him, at these words of the count, with wild alarm.

"Thou shalt come to no harm," firmly said Estelle, who, during the whole scene, had stood beside her with one hand clasping hers, ready to interpose her person bteween her father's sword and the life of Renault, who, with pain and bitterness, she now, for the first time, learned was descended of a race slavish and degraded. "Fear not; I will share thy fate, whatever it be," she whispered. Renault heard her, and fixed upon her a look of gratitude.

"This statute also decrees that the offspring of a slave−mother shall be the property of the owner of the mother. Is it not so?" he continued, with that tone of malicious meaning that already had aroused the suspicions of Renault.

"Such is the law, signor," he said, with embarrassment; for he felt assured that the count meant in some way to judge him by his words.

"Then, as thou dost reverence the laws, thou wilt scarce withhold the master from his slave," he said, all the gathering and concentrated cruelty of his nature suddenly expressing itself in his dark countenance.

"How mean you, Sir Count?" demanded Renault, with a quick rush of hot blood to the brain.

"That thou and thy sister are my slaves!"

"Ha!" exclaimed the young quadroon, with a start of surprise and inquiry, holding Azèlie yet closer to his heart, while, with his drawn sword in his hand, he stood as if to protect her.

"Thy mother and thy mother's offspring are my bond−slaves. Dost thou weigh well the word? *Slaves!*"

"I demand the proof?" said Renault, after a moment's suffocating pause, under this bold and confident assertion of his foe.

" 'Tis easy given. Thy mother was a Moorish slave, and your late governor, the Marquis of Caronde, became the purchaser, and, after, manumitted her."

"Well," cried Estelle, who listened with feverish eagerness, while Renault stood surveying the governor with a contemptuous look, that told his fearless soul laughed at his power, and scorned his base resort to establish it over Azèlie.

"The laws that this youth so much reverence require that there should be a record of this manumission made in the public registry, or that the original instrument should be there deposited. She is therefore a slave. Is not this the spirit of thy law?"

"Thou hast well interpreted it, Sir Count," answered Renault, while both Estelle and Azèlie turned pale with apprehension; "but thou hast not yet exhibited proofs of thy title to the slaves thou wouldst claim. The young Marquis of Caronde, my brother, hath already advanced this claim, and that, too, for the same criminal end," he added, sternly.

"His claim is based only on the non−existence of the bill of manumission. No such having been registered or deposited in the provincial archives, he believes none exists, and so claims thy lovely sister as his slave."

"Thou hast well informed thyself on this matter, signor," said Renault, his scornful smile scarcely concealing the filial affection in his eyes.

"There is a rich treasure pending on it," answered Osma, glancing at Azèlie with a look that caused Renault to grasp more nervously the hilt of his sword; "now know that that bill of manumission exists, and was in thy mother's possession until this evening. It is now in *mine!*" he cried, with savage exultation, drawing from his bosom and holding out to view the parchment he had received from the quadroone−mother as the price of the young *chasseur* chief's death.

Azèlie hid her face in her hands, and her young bosom heaved as if the heart were bursting through; but there

was no shriek, no cry! her wo was without speech—too deep for language.

"Nay, nay, sweetest, this shall not come upon thee— *it shall not!*" said Renault, soothingly.

Estelle looked upon her father with a face in the expression of which was mingled wonder and disgust, scorn and grief. But there was no fear, no terror there! Her eyes shot like lightning; her lips seemed on fire with the words that rushed to them, but could not escape; her whole frame was pulsating with the emotion that threatened to rend it. Thrice she essayed to give utterance to her feelings; to pour upon her father's head curses, and tears, and infamy. Her utterance totally failed her; and thus she stood, leaning slightly forward towards him, looking to him so fearful, so awful! as if Heaven had written its own judgment upon her forehead, touched her lips with the burning coal of indignant justice, and lighted in her eyes the intense fires of its consuming vengeance. He gazed upon her with fear and trembling. The parchment dropped from his hands; and, involuntarily stretching forth his arms towards her, with a look so humble, so remorseful, that, overcome at seeing him, whom, notwithstanding his errors, she loved with singular attachment, becoming a supplicant to her, she suddenly cried out, "Oh, my father! Heaven, not thy child, should judge thee;" and, running forward and throwing herself upon his neck, she burst into tears.

What a wonderful thing is human nature! How mysterious the workings of the heart! It is a compass with a thousand needles, and no fixed polar point. It will never do to steer by while affection applies the magnet; for, to which ever side it is offered, there gather the needles of its thousand feelings, and she magnetizes all! Estelle believed her father's conduct had hardened her heart against him for ever. She had desired to love him no more. But she knew not the strength of natural affection, and that the chords that bind the heart of a child to a parent are hardly severed. She wept a moment on his shoulder, and he smiled inwardly at the victory he had achieved; so sudden was the transition on his part from the feelings that had produced this change in her to triumph. He now felt, because he knew not that the existence of filial love did not necessarily involve approbation of parental guilt, that he had gained her to his views, or, at the least, that she would oppose him no farther. He released her from his embrace with a kiss, and stooped to pick up the parchment, of which Renault had not made a motion to possess himself. Estelle thought her father was changed in his purpose, and, approaching Renault, said quickly,

"I pray thee, signor, depart now with thy gentle sister. In quieter times I will seek her friendship."

"Sweet lady," said Renault, "I feel my sister will ever find in thee both a protector and a friend. My Lord Count, is it thy pleasure I should depart with my sister?" he said, fixing his doubtful gaze on the governor, who had heard his daughter's words.

"This parchment makes me the holder of both your destinies," he said, with the look of a man who loves cruelty for itself, and felt that the exercise of it was now in his power; "you are my slaves, and will henceforward be at the pleasure of my will."

"The possession of that parchment, Sir Count, can give you no right over our liberties."

"Thy mother hath conveyed it to me. While she held it, her liberty, with thine also, was vested in herself. She had the power to retain or transfer it. She has transferred it to me. It being in my hands is therefore evidence that I hold the power to establish your freedom by placing it in the archives, or perpetuate your bondage by destroying it."

"In that case I should be under bondage, not to thee, but to Jules Caronde," he answered, with firmness.

"But if this Jules Caronde hath ceased to live?" asked Osma, with a look of exultation he scarcely strove to conceal.

"Then God, not thyself, tyrant, shall be our master," answered Renault, feeling now assured that the fate of his sister was sealed, and that there was no escape for her but through his own daring.

"Then call upon Heaven to aid thee!" shouted Osma, in a fierce tone, attacking him with his sword with a degree of fury that exposed Renault to imminent death, trammelled as he was by the embracing arms of his sister.

He nevertheless parried several blows with extraordinary skill and self−possession, and kept him at bay till Estelle, springing forward, caught her father's sword−arm, and clung to it, so that he was unable to use it, and in the act exposed his bosom to the point of Renault's blade. But he forbore, for the sake of her who had found such favour in his heart, to take advantage of his adversary, and turned the point of his weapon to the ground. At this instant, drawn thither by the clash of steel, Rascas made his appearance.

"Where hast thou been, villain, when thy presence was worth thy foul life?" demanded Osma, flinging his

daughter from him.

"Giving the last holy consolation to thy prisoner," he said, with a laugh that chilled the current in the veins of Estelle, whose eyes were fixed upon him with inquiring surprise as he entered.

"Hast thou dared to—"

"Nay, signor, he is well as yet. I have been but comforting him with a picture of the pleasantness of death when it is given by a true and steady hand, the steel being sharp and three−edged. I did comfort him with the thought that he would have an executioner that knew his art, and could hit the large artery of a man's heart in the dark."

"Thou art a demon! Wherefore lingers the Moor?"

"He left me in the upper dungeon to return to thee. Methinks I heard steel ringing. Shall I strike him down for thee?" he asked, waving the stiletto slowly before his eyes, as if measuring the distance he should leap to reach the heart of the young quadroon, plainly understanding the whole scene.

"Thou art too ready for blood, nor hast more conscience in shedding it than a wolf. Use thy weapon only if he resists. Slave," added the count, sternly, addressing Renault, "deliver up thy weapon and submit. Thou seest odds are against thee."

"Were the whole phalanx of thy myrmidons drawn up to oppose me, they should not stay my path," he cried. Then looking fervently upward and saying, "Protector of the innocent, nerve my arm!" he clasped Azèlie in one arm, waved his sword in a wide sweep above his head, and shouting, in a loud voice, "*Stand aside!*" bounded with her towards the door.

Before the count or the assassin could recover from their surprise, he was through it, and flying along the passage towards the banquet−room. Estelle caught her father by the neck to prevent him from pursuing them; but he cast her violently to the floor and flew after them, preceded already by Rascas with his uplifted dagger.

"Harm not the maiden, but strike thy steel into the slave's heart if thou reach him," he shouted, as Rascas, almost at the same instant with the fugitives, passed through the door of the inner banquet−chamber.

Renault cleared this room at a bound, and placed his hand upon the spring of the private postern. It refused to yield to his touch, for Osma had that morning replaced it by another, the secret of which was known only to himself. He uttered a cry of despair, not for his own danger, but, alas! for that of one dearer to him than his own life. He turned round just in time to shiver in pieces the stiletto which was impetuously, and with deadly aim, levelled at his heart, and with the same thrust buried his sword to the hilt in the body of Rascas. With an execration in language most fearful and appalling, the assassin staggered backward and fell at the feet of his master.

"What hast thou done, slave?" demanded Osma, appalled at seeing this.

"Rid the world of a monster," answered Renault, menacing his surviving pursuer with his reeking sword. "Approach thou another step, and even thy daughter, whose shrieks now ring through the palace, shall not save thee. I am a desperate man, Sir Count, and calm and collected as I am desperate. Beware how thou bringest upon my head thy blood!"

The Count of Osma stood before him trembling with rage and vengeance, when the sound of advancing feet, as of armed men hastening along the paved passage, reached his ear. Renault also heard it, and, bending his face over the colourless cheek of his sister, he whispered a few words in her ear, to which she replied by a look of heavenly resignation, though with a slight shudder in her whole frame. The sound approached, and the next instant the entrance was filled with men−at−arms, and Osma's features lighted up with the most intense and savage joy. Pointing to Renault, he cried,

"Ye could come at the shrieks of a wench, but are deaf to the voice of your chief. Seize him, and bind him hand and foot! Slave!" he added, triumphantly, "now is thy sister mine."

"Tyrant, she is Heaven's!" he answered, sublimely, elevating his sword, and calmly directing the point of it towards her bosom.

"Hold, rash youth!" cried a voice that made even the soldiers give back, as they were advancing to obey their chief.

It arrested his sword as it was suspended above her heart. At the same instant the sorceress stood in the midst.

"Lay not thy hand upon her, Renault; she is under Heaven's protection, and will come to no harm."

Then advancing through the men−at−arms, who gave way before her, and putting authoritatively aside the sacrificing weapon of the brother, she knelt and kissed reverently, as before, the hand of Azèlie, who suddenly felt towards her a degree of confidence and trust that she could not account for. The mysterious woman then turned towards the Count of Osma, who, though startled by her appearance, was much less moved than he had been hitherto, and seemed to regard her intrusion with impatience rather than personal apprehension. She seemed not to notice this; but, coming near, and standing full before him, said, while her glittering glance made his own menacing gaze quail,

"Garcia of Osma, what wouldst thou, that I see thee thus with a drawn sword in thy hand, lust and anger in thine eyes, and vengeance, like a cloud, darkening thy brow! armed men at thy back, and a wounded man at thy feet?"

"Hence, woman! I defy thee. I know thee not. Thou art an impostor, that by accident hath discovered the key to my conscience, and hast used it for thine own ends. Hence! *Thou* shalt never stand between me and my pleasure. Depart in peace! Dare to linger here a moment longer, I will bid my soldiers seize thee, and have thee burned at the stake."

"Ha, ha! Garcia Ramarez! Thou fearest me not! Thou knowest me not! Hast thou forgotten already the evidences of the power I have over thy soul, shown thee in thy tent?"

"Avaunt, fiend!" he cried, the recollection suddenly returning upon him with painful horror.

"Nay, I will show thee that I have still the bondage of thy soul. Hear! Hast thou forgotten the name of Zillah? or the olive bower of the private gardens of Asmil?"

"Who art thou, in the name of all good and holy spirits?" he exclaimed, recoiling from her with infinitely more dread than he had yet exhibited in her presence.

"I am thy evil spirit, and the protector of the maiden thou pursuest with thy unholy passion. Know that I have watched over her from the hour thou first beheld her; have been near her in her greatest peril; but have permitted thee to do what thou hast hitherto done, that thy condemnation may be the heavier. Thou hast had no power to injure her, for my instant presence, with the hold I have upon thy spirit, would ever have struck thee powerless."

"Wherefore, then, hast thou permitted her to be pursued even to the death, if thou art what thou sayest? Thy hand could not have stayed the dagger that was directed by her own hand to her own heart! Thy speech betrays itself."

"That dagger is in thy own possession. Let me see it!" she asked, with a scornful smile.

She took from him the delicate weapon that he had wrested from Azèlie, and fearlessly struck it against her own breast. She raised her hand again, and showed the blade of the stiletto was sheathed in the handle, and that the blow with it had been harmless.

"How came she by that weapon? There never was but one like that—"

"And thou didst leave that one in the gardens of Asmil! And I found it this evening upon her toilet ere thou didst go to steal her away, and, loosening the secret spring, replaced it."

"She knew not of it, then?"

"No; but looked upon the false weapon as her trusty friend. I foresaw what would follow! I knew all thy plans! I was familiar with all the schemes of thy soul! I saw you bear her away under the cover of darkness, and knew the danger she would be subject to; yet left her not wholly to thy power. For I did desire thee, for reasons thou wilt soon learn, to carry out thy wickedness to its top vent, and also to test her own virtue and resolution. It was for this I left her to thee in this recent peril, having the power to help and prevent. Now, Garcia of Osma, the time approaches for thy judgment! Thy wickedness hath nearly its fulness! The day, in hope for which I have passed sleepless nights and weary days, lest mischief should, meanwhile, befall this gentle maiden, is near at hand."

"What meanest thou?" he asked, impressed by the solemnity and warning tones of her voice.

"On *that day* my meaning shall be written in thy soul in letters of fire. Thou claimest this maiden?" she then said, quickly and abruptly; "methinks thou claimest this maiden as thy slave?"

"By the laws of the land she is my bondwoman! She and her haughty brother are my slaves!" answered Osma, aroused to a sense of his present interests by her sudden question, and losing, under the returning influence of it, his emotions of surprise and awe.

"Be it so. Yet, by the same laws, an individual declared to be a slave has a privilege of demanding a trial, and,

before the highest tribunal of the land, to challenge the accuser to prove his claim. Is not this the statute?"

"It is," he answered, hesitating, and with a look that betrayed his suspicion of her aim.

"Count of Osma," she said, addressing him with commanding severity, "though thou fearest not Heaven nor regardest man, yet thou hast a guilty conscience within that makes thee tremble. To this conscience I hold the key! By thy fear of *me* and dread of my power, I command thee to let thy claim to this maiden be tried before the public tribunal. If she be proved to be thy slave, take her; if she be proved to be free, let her go free. Challenge trial, maiden!"

"Oh no, no!" shrieked Azèlie, in whose heart hope had sprung up while the sorceress was speaking; "never, never! Let me die! Oh, my brother, slay me with thine own hand!"

Renault, who had also indulged hopes of his sister's escape through her, now gazed upon this extraordinary woman with indignation, and cried out fiercely,

"Who art thou, that triflest with the liberty of a maiden? Thy words were but now awakening confidence in her breast, only to be followed by deeper despair. If this tyrant Osma, whom this proposal seems to gratify, is to be our judge, let the sentence here be given, and the spirit of this helpless child at once be released to a better world."

"Osma sits not as judge where he is to stand as accuser," answered the sorceress.

"Then I consent not to it," replied the count, quickly.

`Thou darest not refuse. It is my command," she said, authoritatively.

"Be it as thou wilt; 'twill defer my triumph but a few hours. The council shall be summoned forthwith. By the rood! this challenge of trial suits my humour."

"Summon thy council, but summon them from the seventh day from this," she said, sternly. "It is the Christian feast of St. Michael and All Angels."

"Wilt thou madden me?" he cried, between rage and fear at the words.

"Obey!" she responded, solemnly.

"I will, wonderful woman!"

"I then challenge thee, in the name of Renault and Azèlie, who are called quadroons, and declared by thee to be thy slaves, to prove thy claim in open tribunal, or ever after hold thy peace! Dost thou accept the challenge?"

"I do," he answered, knowing not that he was herein sealing his own doom.

"Therefore, until the day of trial, let them both remain prisoners in their own dwelling, with such a guard about it to secure their appearance as thy fears shall lead thee to place," she said, with singular authority.

The Count of Osma, whose mind seemed to be directed by an irresistible fatuity, after a brief hesitation answered,

"It shall be done. Let there be detached a guard of twenty faithful men−at−arms," he said, addressing the officer who commanded the soldiers present, "to escort these prisoners to their own house. See that they are strictly guarded; for every head among you shall answer for their forthcoming on the day of trial! Now, Lil," he said, changing his manner with that readiness characteristic of him, playfully addressing his daughter, who had followed the soldiers her shrieks had brought into the banquet−room, and who all the while had stood beside her father, listening with the deepest sympathy and interest to the progress of the fate of the unfortunate quadroons; "now, my Lil, you will give me credit for forbearance and leniency. Thou seest that in the matter of the rebellious councillors, I did as thou didst desire; and that I condescend, with the proofs of their bondage in my hands, that the accused here present shall have fair and honourable trial."

Estelle faintly smiled and shook her head; then approaching Azèlie, to whom all seemed like a dreadful dream, assured her of her protection, and soothed her with the confident assurance of her ultimate happiness. Poor Azèlie! besides her own fate, she wept for that of Henrique! The uncertainty that hung over him was more dreadful for her to endure than her own present misery. The trial held out to her no hope; and even acquittal she felt would be wretchedness, if Don Henrique was lost to her for ever. Estelle knew not all the wo of her young heart, and could not comfort her. Looking timidly up into the face of the brother, she sighed as she thought, "Heaven hath given me love for this noble youth to slay me! I may not cherish love for one of an accursed race! How proud his bearing! How lofty his look! Can one so haughty be of a race of slaves? Oh, that I had never seen him, or that, seeing him, the knowledge of his degrading blood had never come to my ears! I will let my love die where it sprung up, but I feel that I shall not survive it! Why hath Heaven made me love where love is degradation? Love hopelessly! love fatally!"

Such were the thoughts of Estelle, who, before she knew the slavish lineage (not to be traced in his features, indeed) of the noble−looking youth, whom she had first seen in the banquet−room, had let love for him steal into her heart; but now, from a sense of pride and natural feeling, with painful and the most bitter grief at discovering that her affections were placed on one whom, however worthy, it would be infamy to love, strove to crush it in its birth, even to her own sacrifice.

The Count of Osma now gave orders to the captain to conduct the prisoners from the palace to their temporary place of confinement.

"Shall I bind them, signor?" he asked, approaching Renault, who was restrained from farther resistance by a look from the sorceress.

"Bind them! bind the maiden!" repeated she, on hearing this, her eyes flashing fire, and her skeleton finger lifted menacingly to the startled officer. "Guard them well with a double phalanx, if ye will, but lay no hand upon *her!* Lead on! *I* will go beside her."

"See to their safety with your lives!" said the count, as Renault, with his arms haughtily folded and an erect port, passed him between two men−at−arms, who guarded him with naked halberds in their hands. Azèlie, by his order, was then placed in a palanquin borne by four slaves, also environed by men−at−arms. He would have approached her with a free lip as she passed near him; but the eye of the sorceress, with the strange power it ever had over him, held him to the spot where he stood.

"Let thy wantonness slumber, Count of Osma, until the day of trial. Then shalt thou soon enough possess her, if judgment go against her."

"I have no fear of the result, and do consent to the trial, that these provincials may know I honour their laws, and that I may rivet more firmly this haughty maid's degradation. I have not forgotten the insult she offered to me three years ago!"

"Remember the day of St. Michael!" she said, striding past him as he stood in the midst of the banquet−chamber alone, following with his eye the receding palanquin with a lingering, hesitating glance, as if he would yet recall it.

But fear, irresistible, superstitious fear, of the terrible woman, and the reflection that, though delayed, his triumph was sure and his victory certain—added to which was his confidence in the fidelity of his guards—prevented him from doing it.

"Virtuous daughter of a wicked father, fear not to love where thine heart has been given. He is worthy of all thou canst bestow," said the sorceress, in a low voice, as she overtook, in the paved passage, the palanquin, beside which Estelle walked, clasping a hand of the nearly senseless Azèlie, for whom, on account of her beauty and sufferings, she felt a sisterly affection.

"What mean thy words, mother?" asked the conscious Estelle, feeling her cheek burn and her heart leap with surprise at this knowledge of a secret she had not dared to trust to herself.

"I have marked thine eyes, and there is a language in them that woman can read. Thou lovest, and yet thou wouldst not love. Thy love is thy greatest grief, and yet thy greatest joy. Thou wouldst crush it and trample it; but, the more it is trod upon, the more luxuriantly it will grow. But fear not to love; he is worthy of thee."

"I know he is all worthy, mother, but—" Here, surprised at her boldness and unintentional acknowledgment of her love, she hesitated, while the objection she was about to give utterance to faltered on her tongue.

"But he is a quadroon, thou wouldst say, and his blood attainted: I bid thee a third time love and fear not, for he is as noble and free born as thyself!"

Thus speaking, she descended the broad palace stairs at the extremity of the gallery after the palanquin, which was already at the foot of it, leaving Estelle near the door of her chamber, lost in wonder, hope, and trembling surprise. She paused a moment, dwelling on her words, and then entered her boundoir, fearing yet hoping, doubting yet believing. What a mine of happiness did the few words of the sorceress open in her heart, which the moment before was so wretched and heavy with the weight of its forbidden love! How changed her whole nature! Yet she had only the vague and mysterious language of this singular woman to base her joy upon. But this to her was everything. To the heart of a woman that loves, the course of a feather on the wind, the song of a bird, a dream of the night, is revelation! Estelle cherished a sweet hope in spite of hope, and boldly fed her love with the

image of him she loved.

The Count of Osma also sought his cabinet after giving orders to his slaves to bear the wounded Rascas to a bed, and summon the surgeon of his staff to attend him; he had found him too useful a retainer to let him die while hope of life remained. In his cabinet he saw the Moor, whom he had not seen since he left it to conduct Don Henrique to his cell. The slave met his master's eye with a look of fear, and a countenance indicating secret treachery. Osma did not discover all that it expressed, but saw enough in his deprecating manner to excite his ever−lively suspicions.

"So thou art here, slave!" he cried, after surveying the gigantic Ethiop, who at once had cast himself on his knees before him. "Where hast thou loitered, that thou hast not been present, nor heard my voice calling to thee?"

The slave made no reply, but, submissively bending his neck, offered to his lord his naked cimeter.

"This is ever thy defence, as if I were a Turk, and my pastime were chopping off turbaned heads. Put up thy cimeter, and to thy feet! I have no time to dally with thee. Hie thee after my guard, follow them to the habitation of the quadroone−mother, and bring me true report of the safeguard thither of this Renault and his sister, and the disposition of the men−at−arms about the house. Begone, for I have work for thy deadly steel anon. Take now these keys which Rascas hath laid here, and place them in thy belt, for I have made thee Don Henrique's jailer in his stead."

The Moor hung in his girdle the keys which Rascas, after returning from the dungeon of Don Henrique, had thrown down on hearing the clash of swords in Estelle's chamber, and then left the cabinet with a rapid step. The count listened till the echo of his footsteps along the gallery ceased, and then, closing the door of his cabinet, gave himself up to reflections upon the recent events which had transpired, and began to dwell upon the future with the exulting hopes of a bad man, to whom wickedness has become so habitual as to be necessary to his existence. He felt that there was an ill omen in the day appointed, and laughed as if he would mock his own fears. But the hollow sound of his laugh terrified him, and, casting himself upon an ottoman, he sought to banish in sleep the unpleasant memories which the words as well as the presence of the sorceress had awakened in his breast.

## CHAPTER XII. THE MOORISH SORCERESS.

The written message that Renault had received in the fortress from the hand of Gobin, and which had produced such an effect upon him, was couched in these figurative words, and without date or signature.

"*The wolf hath entered the fold, and borne away the lamb to his lair*."

In a little more than half an hour after receiving it, and crossing the lake with his forces, he came in sight of the gate of the city with three hundred men at his back. He was impetuously thundering on, with the intention of carrying the barriers by storm, when the gray woman appeared suddenly in his path.

"Hold, Renault!" she cried, waving her arm as he approached her at the head of his men.

He instantly halted his troop, he himself drawing rein within three feet of her with so sudden a check to the impetus of his horse that he threw him back upon his haunches. The fore feet of the animal for a moment beat the air, and threatened to descend upon the breast of the sorceress, who saved herself from being struck with his hoofs by adroitly seizing him by the bit, and, with a wonderful display of coolness and strength, turning him aside.

"Dismount; I would speak with thee," she cried, authoritatively.

Impatient as he was to fly to the rescue or to the revenge of his sister, he nevertheless obeyed. Throwing his rein to one of his troop, he followed her, as she preceded him at a rapid pace, until she came beneath the wall, near an angle of one of the abutments, against which stood the ruins of a stone hut. This she entered, making a sign for him to follow.

"Nay, time is more precious than life, and why waste it in mystery, woman?" said Renault, pausing on the threshold.

"Thy sister is in no present danger! but, if thou wouldst finally save her, thou must be guided by me. Did not a message from me bring thee hither at the head of thy troop?"

"Thou hast spoken truly. Lead on! I will be guided by thee!"

She immediately entered the inner room of the dark hut, and, lifting a trap door, descended a dilapidated flight of steps. He followed her unhesitatingly, an idea of the object she had in view flashing upon his mind, and found himself in a cavernous passage, with broken arches and an unpaved floor. Her footsteps, for he could see nothing in the gloom, guided him along the damp, subterraneous passage, which, after several intricate windings, conducted them to a flight of stairs at its extremity. These she ascended to an apartment, into which, through numerous crevices, streamed the light of the moon. After listening an instant at a door, she boldly threw it open, and Renault, to his surprise, found that he was in a street within the walls.

"The knowledge of this passage gives us possession of the town," he cried, with animation, forgetting, in his great discovery, the immediate object in which he was so deeply interested.

"Follow me," she said, on gaining the street, without pausing to look behind her.

"Alone! I can effect nothing alone! In five minutes I will have my men dismounted and let into the town," he said, going back into the building.

"Young man," she cried, sternly, "follow me! Leave thy troop to wait for thy return."

"I will not go without the power to punish this tyrant!" he replied, determinedly.

"Is not thy sister in momentary peril? The evil of one moment's delay a legion of warriors may not undo."

"I obey," he anxiously responded, and followed her.

On the way to the palace she informed him, in her brief, figurative manner, of the particulars of Azèlie's abduction, none of which had escaped her vigilant and ceaseless *espionnage*.

"She sleeps yet, say you?" he asked, with trembling.

"Until the nightingale sings its evening song. I have long been familiar, like this false slave Absulem, with this and every other draught to produce sleep. Their qualities, powers, and effects are all known to me."

"Sleeps she unprotected save by her own innocence? Alas! she is no longer the spotless and gentle dove I have so many years nestled in my bosom," he said, with bitter anguish, while the fierce grasp he held upon his naked sword, as he strode along in the shadows of the buildings, betrayed the stern and deadly character of his thoughts.

"His own subtle and refined passion will be her safeguard till she awakes to the life and warmth of beauty. She

sleeps securely."

"Pray Heaven thy words be true!"

"From the garden, after entering her chamber and writing the line to thee, which, on the way, I gave to one who has proved a faithful messenger, did I follow the Moor with his burden even to the door of his cabinet. Thence passing round the balcony, I saw her through the window laid tenderly upon an ottoman; and from Osma's words and bearing, as well as my knowledge of his character, knew that he had not caused this drugged sleep for a darker purpose than her quiet removal from thy roof to his own. Knowing the moment she would awake, I left her securely, and hastened to the gate to meet thy coming."

"Why not admit my troop?"

"They are but a handful to the Spanish army, and would defeat our purpose."

"Wherefore this interest in my sister?" asked Renault, abruptly.

"Thou shalt shortly know, but not to−night. Now think of her safety, for yonder is the palace."

"And, hark! there is the nightingale singing," cried Renault, bounding forward.

"Be not too hasty, young man. Remain here in this recess of the Cathedral tower, and await my return."

Before he could object or make any reply, she had crossed the space between the church nad the palace, and approached a casement that extended quite to the ground. Pressing her finger against a corner section of the lattice, the diamond−shaped leaf of the window opened inwardly, and let her into a low hall in the basement of the palace. She crossed it with a rapid and familiar step, and, ascending a winding stairway, reached a paved saloon on the main floor. Here soldiers, retainers, and lounging officers caused her to turn aside and glide in the deep shadows among the columns until she came to a door ajar, which by a private stair communicated with the suite of apartments occupied by the Count of Osma. In a few seconds, avoiding in her progress, with singular adroitness and address, an encounter with any of the members of the household, she reached the marble passage, and the next instant was in the very cabinet of the count, an unseen listener and witness of the scene between him and Azèlie. When the terrified girl flew past her, closely pursued by the count, she followed her in turn as swiftly, till she saw her at the feet of Estelle.

"She is for the moment safe," she said, retiring in the shade as Osma passed; "I will now bring the brother hither, that he may fall into the snare I would have set for him. If he be suffered to go at liberty, the public and overwhelming judgment I design for Osma will be defeated by his rashness. This trial Osma shall consent to. Until then, Renault must not be suffered to go free or communicate with his band. There is seeming evil in this, but good will come of it, and the Spaniard's shame and infamy be the more sure. If Allah let me live till the day of trial, I will turn my face to Mecca, and then die."

Thus communing with her thoughts, she re−entered the gallery, and was leaving it by the way she had come, when at the other end of it her active eye detected a door slowly opening. Instantly concealing herself in a recess, she saw the Moor emerge from the secret staircase leading to the dungeons of the Inquisition, and advance towards the cabinet. She directly placed herself before him in his path with a gesture of menace and silence. With a face full of fear, he crossed his hands upon his breast, and stood tremblingly awaiting her commands.

"Thou hast the confidence of thy master. Thy word is even as his. Go to the captain of the guard, and bid him remain at his post whatsoever may happen within the palace, and bid him admit myself and those I bring with me without question, as if by thy master's order. As thou fearest me, obey!"

The Moor made an obeisance of submission, as if to a supernatural being, and was about to leave her, when she inquired the cause of his appearance through the secret door in the wall in so stealthy a manner. From him she learned with pleasure, what she had desired to know, the place of Don Henrique's confinement, of whose arrest she had been an unseen witness while watching to counteract Osma's plots.

"Hath his death been decreed?" she asked, eagerly.

"His soul will be with Allah with the next sunrise," answered the Moor.

"Meet me here at midnight with the keys of his dungeon, or beware my power!" she said, authoritatively.

"Sulem hath no will but that of Azrael whom thou servest," he replied, in a tone of superstitious awe, sinking into an Oriental posture of dread adoration.

"To thine errand quickly," she commanded; and, watching him till he disappeared, returned to the outside of the palace by the way she had entered, and going into the shadow of the tower, where Renault, towards whom her intentions now wore a mysterious complexion, waited with the utmost impatience for her reappearance.

"The tidings!" he gasped, seizing her arm as she approached.

"As I would have them. The crisis for thy presence has arrived! Follow me!"

"Past the guards?" he demanded, with surprise, as she boldly crossed an angle of the Place d'Armes, where citizens and soldiers off duty were listening in groups to the governor's band, which was filling the square with martial and stirring music.

"Do not hesitate. Come boldly on! Thou canst not enter in safety the way I came."

Surprised, yet not intimidated by the danger he incurred in exposing himself thus openly, with a price set upon his head, he obeyed her. Partly concealing his features with the cape of the short capote he wore, he passed through the guards by her side unchallenged, though not without being, from his strange companionship, an object of curiosity. The Moor was standing on the last step of the stone staircase as the sorceress, with Renault by her side, mounted the flight of steps. In a moment afterward, Renault, whose feet were winged by the loud voice of the infuriated count as he seized upon Estelle to separate her from his victim, was in the presence of the Spaniard at the very crisis of the most imminent peril. From that moment until guarded prisoners to their own dwelling, the fate of both brother and sister is known.

Renault felt happy even as a prisoner when he reflected that Azèlie was safe, and that, ere she could fall a victim to the deferred passion of a lawless tyrant, she might yet be offered up a sacrifice on the shrine of virgin purity. On taking possession of his habitation again, the court of which now echoed strangely to the tread of sentinels, he reflected in great perplexity upon the singular conduct of the enchantress. She had clearly manifested an interest in him, yet it was by her agency he had been made captive. She had shown a singular regard for Azèlie, yet by her means the trial, so certain to result in the condemnation of the accused, had been determined on.

"Why," thought he, "did she not exert that wonderful power she possesses over this savage Spaniard, by demanding and securing for her both liberty and a cessation of his persecution. Nevertheless, I feel a disposition to trust her; but it is because, perhaps, that there is none else to trust save Heaven!" He thus mused with himself; and then, kneeling by the couch of his sister, implored the protection and guidance of that Heaven for one so dear to him, so beset by danger, and so borne down with such a weight of sorrow.

From the gate of Renault's dwelling, whither she had accompanied the palanquin, the sorceress took her way in the direction of the bounds of the city; and entering the mansion from which she had issued with Renault, in a few seconds was outside of the walls, walking with rapid strides towards a group of horsemen, who seemed to have rode near the town for the purpose of reconnoitring. One of them saw her and spurred towards her. It was Charleval, the companion in arms of Renault, who, during the hour's mysterious absence of his friend and chief, had become so impatient as to meditate setting fire to the gates and entering the city, believing he must have been betrayed by the mysterious being who had commanded him to follow her. The others of the group were De Thoyras, who had arrived after Renault's departure with forty chasseurs, Gobin, and the trumpeter Boviedo, the two latter mounted upon the same steed; Gobin having generously restored to his paunchy friend the animal of which he had despoiled him, on finding him, upon his return from the fortress, sitting on the ground where he had cast himself, sadly bewailing his loss.

"Where is our chief?" demanded Charleval, on coming up to her.

"In prison," she said, firmly.

"This is thy work, hag! Thy treachery hath cost thee thy life," cried Charleval, presenting a pistol at her head.

"Nay, cousin Charleval," cried Gobin, galloping up at the instant astride behind Boviedo, and striking up the pistol, "it were worth thy soul to harm mother Beelzebub."

"I fear him not," she said, without being moved at her imminent peril. "If thou art the chief in the absence of Renault," she continued, addressing the impatient Charleval, "it is with thee my business lies. Know that Osma the Spaniard hath a lawless passion for Azèlie the Quadroone, and this night hath stolen her from her chamber and borne her to his palace."

"This I know: and the licentious Spaniard had better have formed a harem with every fair quadroone in the province than placed eyes on Azèlie. Not a sword in Louisiana will rest in its scabbard until she be rescued or avenged."

"This is the spirit I would see awakened. Renault was admitted by me through a secret passage and conducted to the palace. There was no moment for delay, and his single arm was of more avail than thy small force of

horsemen, with the whole Spanish army to withstand thee. It was in part to save the massacre of yonder horsemen that I took him alone. He rescued his sister from dishonour, but is himself made prisoner."

"This is both good and ill news! He must be rescued, or the blood of another victim will glut the vengeance of the Spanish demon," cried Charleval, with determination.

"Thou art too impetuous," she said, sternly. "Osma's day of retribution is at hand. Know that, defeated in possessing Azèlie, he hath claimed both herself and Renault to be slaves, and by a certain parchment hath sworn to make good his claim. They have appealed to the tribunal, and on the sixth day from this their trial is to take place. In the mean while, both are imprisoned in their own dwelling, which is strongly guarded."

"This is villany most deep and subtle," exclaimed Charleval through his clinched teeth.

"Hear! The thousand savage warriors Renault informs me you have sent for will be here by the fifth night. Till then, retire to thy fortress, and augment thy numbers with true men. The tribunal will be open at ten on the morning of the sixth day. At that hour be at the head of thy forces within yonder forest, but let nor plume nor steel−point be seen from the walls. The whole of the Spanish troops at the same hour will be drawn up in the Place d'Armes to protect the cabildo, while sitting, from any outbreak of popular feeling on account of unjust judgment. Few will be left to guard the gates, and all men's minds will be bent on affairs within rather than without the city. At this crisis I will meet thee, and secretly conduct thy forces into the town. Then disposing them at hand near the precincts of the hall of council, thou mayst thyself enter it and witness the trial; for I would have all men behold the judgment of Osma."

"Woman, who art thou?"

"The friend of Renault and Azèlie. Wouldst thou know more to give me thy confidence?"

"'Tis enough; Renault hath spoken to me of thee, and himself trusted thee. He shall not be sacrificed by any hesitation on the part of his friends. It shall be as thou sayest. At ten on St. Michael's day, yonder frowning line of forest shall hold within its spreading arms sixteen hundred warriors."

"And ten minutes afterward they shall be within the walls, moving silently and swiftly towards the palace, armed with the judgment of the guilty. Depart, and gather thy strength. The night wears apace, and each moment now is as a day to thee."

"Farewell, wonderful and mysterious woman! Whoever and whatever thou art, I know thou hast given Osma and the city into our hands!"

The sorceress made no reply, but, waving him impatiently to depart, he once more bade her adieu, and, accompanied by the others, including the jester, galloped towards the squadron of horse which was drawn up in a solid column on the edge of the woods. On reaching it he gave a single brief order, and the whole troop, wheeling to the right, moved at a fast trot into the wood, and were shortly afterward lost to the eye and ear.

She looked after them until the last faint rumble of the fall of a thousand hoofs had ceased, and then slowly and thoughtfully, as if weighing over again the plans she had projected, returned to the hut and entered the city. When the heavy tongue of the Cathedral bell had sounded the first stroke of twelve, she secretly entered the palace through the panel in the Moorish casement by which she had formerly gained access to the interior, and, ere it had sounded the last deep note, she was in the marble gallery, gliding like a spectre along its sides in the direction of the private door leading to the dungeons. All was silent as the tomb. Osma slept on his guilty pillow; Estelle was in her chamber, but seated by the lattice in her nightrobe, thinking of Renault, and devising some plan for his escape.

The Moor was not at his post; and, while she waited for him, a groan, mingled with an execration, startled her. It was from Rascas, who lay on a pallet in the antechamber of the cabinet, suffering from his wound. The next instant she was by his pillow of pain. A faint lamp at his bed's head shed a ghastly light upon his countenance. His eyes were shut, and she turned back her cowl from her face and touched him. He then opened them and gazed upon her, at first with a vacant look; but intelligence lightened his glance, and he cried with fear,

"Away, accursed sorceress! Hast thou come to force me to sell my soul!" and he covered his eyes with his hands, as if he would shut out the sight of her, while his whole frame shuddered.

"Ha, ha! Rascas the assassin, as men call thee, dost thou have hope for thy soul, that thou tremblest for it?"

"I am going to die!" he said, as if under the extreme of mortal fear, and wholly overcome with mental horror.

"And now thou wouldst play the coward, who hast played the villain so bravely. Didst thou not know thou wouldst one day die, that death hath now taken thee by surprise?"

"In full life I feared it not. It seemed a long way off—beyond the utmost limits of old age."

"Thou didst think all men mortal but thyself. Thus it is, and death ever comes to all unexpectedly. It has thus come to thee, and methinks thou art poorly prepared to meet it."

"What shall I do?" he cried, with miserable eagerness, which could ill conceal the hopeless despair beneath it.

"Do as I bid thee, and thou shalt live."

"Live!" he repeated, seizing her hand and wildly pressing it to his lips.

"Live, and live to repent!"

"Give me only life—I care not for repentance! Oh, if I could know I should not die now—*die now!*" he repeated, lifting himself to his elbow, and anxiously reading her face with his feverish eyes. "Give me only life, and I laugh at repentance! ha, ha, ha! Oh, life, *life,* LIFE!" he continued to repeat, as the Arabian dying for thirst in the desert cries "Water, water, water!"

She surveyed him a few moments with a look of scornful contempt, and then said in a deep voice,

"Thou knowest the secret crimes of thy master's life."

"Who hath told thee?" he demanded, with fear.

"It matters not. This knowledge may save thy life."

"How?" he eagerly demanded, his desire to live overcoming the agony of his wound, which only betrayed itself in the involuntary contractions of the muscles of his face.

"By bearing testimony against him."

"Will this give me life? Will it?"

"I have learned from the report of the surgeon the condition of thy wound. It is mortal for all the skill of any chirurgeon. He hath said you will die!"

"Save, give me life, and I will do what thou wilt, were it to bury my knife in my master's heart!"

"Ha, ha! Thou wert penitent but now for thy crimes, and thou wouldst purchase longer life by adding to them."

"So that I live, I care not for the price. Put death off *now! save me now!*" he cried, with an eloquence of fear that astonished her, while it excited her contempt.

"Though surgeon's skill will not avail thee, mine will. Swear that thou wilt answer truth against thy master when thou shalt be called upon, and I will exert my power to save thee from death."

"I swear."

"I little heed thy oath. Know that the ointment I shall apply to thy wound is a deadly poison. Six days it must be applied, morning and evening, with the rising and setting of the sun. The seventh day the patient would die a mass of corruption but for a counterpoison, which, for seven days more applied to the wound, perfecteth a cure."

"If thou shouldst fail me on the seventh day—"

"Then thou wouldst become a livid corpse, so that no man could look upon thee."

"I will not trust thee, fiendish enchantress!"

"Be it so. Thou wilt not live to the third day from this in thy present state."

The assassin shuddered, hid his face in the bed−covering, and writhed with intense misery, both of mind and body. At length, groaning heavily and hopelessly, he cried,

"Apply thy medicament, woman, and my testimony shall be thine."

She drew from her girdle a small puch, that, among other articles, contained a crystal vial holding a pale, amber−coloured oil, which, on removing the silver stopper, filled the chamber with an extremely pungent, yet not an unpleasant odour. After cleansing the wound in his side, she poured the healing fluid upon it, and bound it skilfully up. He felt instant relief; and, after pressing her hands with a grateful look, suddenly, from a total cessation of pain, fell into a deep sleep. She contemplated for a moment the effect of her skill, and then sought once more the private outlet from the gallery. A few seconds afterward the Moor appeared, having been waiting at the door of the palace for her entrance that way, and now betrayed evident surprise at finding her already at the place appointed. Receiving impatiently his explanation for his delay, she sternly bade him lead her to the cell of his prisoner.

## CHAPTER XIII. SCENE BETWEEN THE LOVERS.

Don Henrique had been left, by the refined cruelty of Rascas, who proved a faithful successor to those Fathers of the Inquisition, whose inhumanity had framed the iron vaults beneath the foundations of the prison, chained by the waist and hands to iron staples in the side of the vault. He could now neither stand nor sit; and, fatigued by sorrow and overcome by his miserable condition, he had fallen into a troubled sleep while suspended, as it were, from the wall. A massive golden crucifix lay at his feet, which Osma had left with him in mockery.

He had given up all hopes of life; and, striving to forget every earthly tie, fixed his mind on that world into which he felt he was soon to enter. Yet in his dreams he was again in the boudoir of Azèlie, kneeling at her feet, and breathing his passion into her listening ear; was once more in the hall of his fathers, and wandering over the hills of sunny Spain. The spirit that guided his dreams was merciful, and presented to his mind only objects that were agreeable and most opposite to the mournful realities of his waking hours. From the midst of one of these pleasant visions he was startled by the clanging of chains and the removing of bars and bolts.

"Alas! Heaven be merciful to me!" he ejaculated, awaking to the reality of his unhappy condition. "Now is the assassin at hand whose steel will be the key to let my weary spirit into the world beyond! Must I die here like an ox! Oh, for one good sword, and an arm unchained to wield it, that I might fall like a man and a knight!"

The door of his dungeon opened, and the Moor appeared, holding a shaded lantern in his hand, followed by a tall figure wrapped in a gray mantle, which he at once knew must be the sorceress who had taken such an interest in the fate of Azèlie, and also in his own. Hope—that blessed angel and Heaven's best gift to poor humanity in this sad world—was instantly reawakened in his breast by her appearance. She paused on the threshold of the cell, and with a look of compassion and sympathy, that contrasted singularly with her harsh, sepulchral features, surveyed him in silence. At length she advanced, and, kneeling, took his hand, and said with reverence,

"Unhappy prince! Thy cruel captivity is now ended! Alas! that I should behold a prince of Spain in such a state of degradation and misery! Unlock these chains and cast them into the sea, that the record of this dishonour may not exist on the earth!" she cried, with stern indignation.

Sulem obeyed, and Don Henrique stood erect, unbound. "Is this a dream?" he asked, with troubled doubt.

"Thou art free, noble signor. He who hath put thee here will soon take thy place."

"Ha! hath the city rebelled?"

"No; but Justice hath come to her seat."

"You speak mysteriously!"

"It shall be made as clear as sunlight, prince, to thee and every man."

"Prince! I did then hear aright! How knowest thou me?"

"If thy secret be to six, doth it surprise thee that a seventh hath it? Be it enough that I know thee, and wherefore thou art a wanderer from the palace of thy fathers. Follow me, and thou shalt learn all thou wouldst know."

"Then tell me here—*here*, before thou movest," he cried, catching her by the mantle, "what of—of—"

"The maiden whose love thou hast won! Be happy, prince! She is safe, and in all honour beneath her own roof!"

"And thou hast saved her?" he cried, scarcely crediting what he had heard.

"I have, noble signor."

"Then Heaven bless thee—bless thee! for—for I cannot!" he articulated with choked utterance, and, falling on his knees, kissed her robe and burst into tears.

In twenty minutes afterward Don Henrique had Azèlie folded in his arms, whom at length he released only to receive the fraternal embrace of Renault. The Moor, whom the sorceress had enslaved to her own will, had treacherously admitted them in the face of the unsuspecting guards, who silently acknowledged the seal of their commander in his hands, as well as the scarce less authoritative command of the confidential slave. Having witnessed their meeting, the sorceress departed alone and unquestioned.

Estelle sat by her lattice until long after twelve, communing with herself upon the fate of Renault and of his

sister; but the former was uppermost in her thoughts; and each moment love for the handsome and spirited youth grew stronger in her heart from that it fed upon.

Suddenly she rose; and, casting a cloak about her, and otherwise disguising herself as she had once before done, she stole from her chamber, and, unobserved, reached her father's cabinet.

He slept where an hour or two before he had cast himself upon the ottoman, and a tall silver candelabrum with wax lights alone burned upon his escritoir. She softly approached, and from a secret drawer of the secretaire took two of several private seals it contained. Retiring, she hastily left the palace, making use of one of the signets in passing the guard. Then speaking to a soldier, she demanded to be directed to the residence of Renault the Quadroon. From his ready knowledge of this habitation, she discovered that the recent circumstances had made it known to most of the governor's guard. Having learned from him its situation, she departed in search of it. After traversing a part of one street, and turning an angle or two of others, she came suddenly upon a sentry, who challenged her from the foot of a garden wall on the opposite side of the way. Ignorant of the countersign, she knew not what to answer, and trembled lest she should be discovered. Her hesitation was observed by the soldier, who challenged a second time, at the same time bringing his piece to his shoulder.

"Camarada!" she answered, going towards him.

"Stand and give the countersign," he demanded, as she reached the middle of the way.

"Throw up your piece, sirrah!" she cried, in an authoritative tone, advancing upon him. "Do you dare menace a messenger of the governor? Behold my authority!" she added, holding out the signet.

He advanced a step and took it from her, and, after carefully examining it, returned it. "You might as easily, signor, have given the countersign, if it is such a long−winded words as `Death to Osma's foes,' as to have given me this trouble," he muttered; and, shouldering his piece, he bade her pass on.

With alacrity, she cheerfully obeyed, and was soon at the treble−guarded portal of the dwelling. Here, making use of the countersign she had so unexpectedly obtained possession of, as well as of the signet, she was admitted into the court, muffled to the eyes as she was, without question or hesitation on the part of the sentinels. Azèlie's boudoir was pointed out to her, and the captain of the guard, accompanying her to within a few feet of the curtained door, returned again to his post. She paused. Her heart beat tumultuously. She had come thither scarcely reflecting on her object in doing so, and had laid no plan of conduct for her guidance. The danger of Renault and his sister had inspired her to take a step at which she now trembled with maidenly shame and hesitation. They were in peril from her father's united passion and vengeance, and she had suggested to her mind, as she sat in her chamber, the idea to rescue them through the agency of the signets which she had afterward taken for the purpose.

But, now that the moment of action had arrived— that a curtain alone separated her from the young *courreur chef*, who had inspired her with so tender and deep a passion—her heart failed. She leaned against a column of the cloister for support, and summoned all her strength of mind and native energy of character to her aid. At length she became collected, and formed the resolution to present herself boldly before them, offer them the way to escape, conduct them through the guards disguised, and, by the aid of the countersign and signet, out of the city gates to liberty.

"I may never see him more," she thought; "and he will have departed without knowing he has left so true a heart behind him. Perhaps he would scorn my love! Yet his eye told me otherwise, modestly as he sought to shade his love beneath the downcast lid. I will nevertheless sacrifice my love to his freedom. That he is worthy of my affection—that he is *not* of the race that claims him—my heart, as well as the language of that mysterious woman, doth tell me. No, I have too proud a heart to cast my love unworthily. I know he could not be debased, or he would not have awakened an interest in the bosom of the daughter of the house of Osma."

Thus run her thoughts as she paused with her grasp upon the curtain that was dropped before the entrance. She was about to lift it, when the voice of Renault within arrested her hand as suddenly as if it had been paralyzed.

"It is certain, dearest sister," he said, in a melancholy voice, "that this trial, which this wicked Spaniard hath appointed, will be a mockery like that of the councillors. We can hope for no justice but from Heaven."

"Can that fatal parchment by no means be taken from him, Renault?" asked an earnest voice, which she recognised to be that of Don Hernique.

"If it could be done, it would overthrow, in the eye of justice, his claim; which, with this in his hand, he may sustain where false judges and the tools of his will sit in judgment; for every honest judge would see that his claim is founded on injustice and tyranny."

"Yet, with this evidence in his possession," said Don Henrique, "the law must sustain him in his claim without taking into consideration the abstract question of the purpose he has in view in maintaining and defending it. I fear it will go against you, notwithstanding the hope held out by this wonderful sorceress."

"She did not say that it would not be decided against us, brother," said the silvery and touching voice of Azèlie; "but that, if it were, the judgment would fall on his head instead of ours."

"Thou hast great faith, sweet Azèlie, in this woman," said Don Henrique; "and I must acknowledge I think she hath some plan in view for your safety and Osma's shame. Nevertheless, if we could get possession of this parchment before the day of trial, we might, perhaps, through the aid of this sorceress, defeat him."

"I wish it could be done," said Renault; "I have little faith in her; for I have thought that my arrest is owing to her. Indeed, had she led me, with all my men, into the town, Osma would have been my prisoner instead of my being his!"

"And wouldst thou then have saved me, brother, as thou didst do?" asked Azèlie, reprovingly.

"Nay, perhaps it is best as it is," he answered; "for I should have been reluctant, with my sincere passion for that lovely creature, his daughter, to have done him outrage. For her sake, methinks I could submit to any wrong that touched not Azèlie."

"She is a noble girl, and I have seen much of her on shipboard," said Don Henrique; "not to have been ruined for any man's love, by her father's masculine method of educating her, shows that she possesses no ordinary mind. Didst thou tell her of thy love?"

"Nay—I am a quadroon, and could not insult her," he said, bitterly.

"Thou mighst have told it without shame to her or thyself; for methinks I have never met a man better fitted to be worn in a noble maiden's heart than thou!"

"She would have scorned me."

"Renault," answered Don Henrique, seriously, "from some words that fell from the sorceress, who seems to know all things hidden from common eyes, I do not believe thee to be a quadroon."

"Not a quadroon, signor?"

"No."

"Who and what am I, then?"

"I cannot tell. Doubtless she will disclose it to thee, as she has promised to reveal, if thou wilt let me love thy gentle sister here, who I am," he said, smiling.

"Would it could be proved so! But my mother!"

"I do not believe she is thy mother."

"I would, indeed, it could be proven so; yet I would not," he added, "I would not it should be thus; for I should lose this sweet sister then."

Estelle, whose eager interest in their conversation led her slightly to lift the curtain, beheld him then tenderly bend over and embrace Azèlie, who, with Don Henrique, was reclining on gorgeous rugs at his feet. She gazed on the group, with a desire to take the place in it her heart had chosen. Suddenly, as if impelled by an irresistible impulse to obey her wishes, she drew aside the hangings, and was in the midst ere she well knew it. Don Henrique and Renault both sprang to their feet on seeing an intruder enveloped to the brow in a Spanish roquelaure, with a broad *sombrero* flapping over his eyes. But they were both without arms, and only gazed upon him with suspicion and defiance.

"Nay, Don Henrique," she said, turning with instinctive delicacy to the young Spaniard, instead of addressing herself to Renault, "be not alarmed! I pray you both pardon the step; it has in it your safety."

She removed the hat and dropped the mantle from her shoulders as she spoke, but not before Renault had recognised the disguise, and the voice that no disguise could hide from his true ear.

"Senorita Estelle!" exclaimed Don Henrique, on beholding her.

"My deliverer!" cried Azèlie, flying to her to embrace her feet; but she prevented her, and caught her in her arms.

Renault stood by silent and sorrowful. Duty and honour bade him hide his love, and smother it ere it should break out. But she had overheard the confession of his love to Don Henrique. She now saw his embarrassment—construed his feelings—read his inmost soul. She lifted her eyes, and they encountered his. With

a smile she then advanced towards him; and with a graceful dignity of manner, and an open frankness, yet modesty of speech that was extraordinary, said,

"Noble Renault, I have unawares overheard your words in which you confessed your love for the daughter of your foe. The time and circumstances allow no disguise, no empty and heartless forms and passages of ceremony. If it will make thy brow less sad and thy heart lighter, know from my lips that thy love is returned—nay, had its birth with thine! If thou art proved, as I trust and believe thou wilt be, one of my own race, however lowly be thy lot in it, my hand shall be thine if thou demandest it. But if thou art of the race of bondsmen, which Heaven forefend! though my heart is and must ever be thine, my bridegroom will be the church. Wilt thou receive my love on these hard terms, which only as a true and noble Spanish maiden it becometh me to offer, and which, if I know thee aright, it beseemeth thee only to accept?"

"Dearest and most noble lady," said Renault, kneeling at her feet, "thou hast made me the happiest of beings. This ingenuous confession on thy part, which my ignoble condition would never have led me to make, shows the greatness of thy mind as well as the depth and purity of thy love. Thou hast well understood me. Knowing my degraded birth, never would my love for thee have allowed me to forget it. On no other terms than those thou hast named should I have dared to think of one spotless and noble as thyself. Thou, a Castilian by birth, of a noble race, of far and high descent, of unblemished blood, whose rank and beauty would command the homage of the highborn and noble, *thou* to speak thus to me! Lady! I am at once humbled and exalted!"

She extended her hand, much moved at his words, and with reverence and devotion he pressed it to his lips.

"I trust, Don Henrique," she said, turning to him with a becoming embarrassment, "that the strangeness of our circumstances and situations, added to the unsettled state of these times, which may excuse many departures from conventional rules, will excuse me in your eyes from overstepping the bounds of decorum?"

"Nay, Estelle, there needeth no other apology than that thy love hath plainly given," he said, with a smile.

"I need not ask from thee wherefore thou hast lingered here, under plea of being wounded, Sir Cavalier," she retorted, glancing her eyes from himself to Azèlie, who betrayed so much ingenuous confusion at her significant words, that Estelle, after admiring her a moment, suddenly changed the current of ideas by saying abruptly, yet playfully, to Renault,

"Think not, signor, I came hither to declare my love to thee! 'Twas but the overhearing of thine own confession that drew mine from me. I came hither to rescue thee and thine: now our conversation takes a serious turn! 'Twere madness to wait here for the trial. My father hath the wills of the members of the *cabildo* in his own hands; they are his creatures! It therefore matters nothing whether he be its president or not. It is a hard saying for the daughter of a dearly−loved father, but he will have you condemned! Your fate is sealed in his heart! To wait, therefore, is to sacrifice yourselves. Fly!"

"We are prisoners and unarmed, dearest lady," said Renault; "flight were impossible."

"I have here the means. The password of your guard is, must I say it to *thee?* `Death to Osma's foes!' This signet will open every barrier between you and liberty."

"Fair Estelle," said Don Henrique, after seeing from Renault's face that his opinion was the same with his own, "this plan may be feasible, yet it is attended with great danger. Gratitude is due to you for this self−sacrifice, and imminent risk on your part to propose and offer it. To be retaken would be certain ruin and death; while it would appear to the world like guilt, the consciousness of justly being in bondage to him, and he would make use of it to the degradation of his victims and the enlargement of his own triumph. Besides—and I have great faith in her—this Moorish sorceress, who has so much power over thy father, has given us hopes that the trial will result to the honour of one party and the disgrace of the other."

"That is my father! This, I must tell you, is what I fear. It is this that would lead me to aid the escape of both, that whatever evil this dreadful woman hath ready to pour upon his head may be averted—"

"And fall upon the heads of Renault and Azeliè," said Don Henrique, with bitter reproof.

"Oh, whither—how shall I turn? 'Twill wring my sould either way," she cried, with anguish. "Aid me, Don Henrique!"

"Let things take their course. Thou hast confessed thy interest in Renault. Hast thou not, then, a hope depending on this very trial—a proof to be substantiated? Let events flow on; but let us prepare for them, and, if it is possible, lessen thy father's power to do harm. We look upon thee now as of our own party, how much soever thou lovest thy father; and thou mayst serve us and thyself with no more treason to him than virtue will forgive.

To his cabinet thou hast free access at all hours. The parchment of manumission which he now holds must be obtained, and placed in Renault's possession."

"It will not avail, signor. He will yet call on the trial, and demand judgment on his own oral claim."

"Be it so. Such a decision will be unjust and without law, and Renault and Azèlie will have the sympathy of the people on their side. A decision supported by the parchment would meet, notwithstanding the popularity of Renault, with their passive acquiescence."

"It shall be done," said Estelle, firmly, after a moment's reflection, during which she underwent a keen and trying conflict between her filial duty and her love for Renault.

She left them after saying this, and in half an hour afterward the fatal parchment was in the possession of Renault.

During the interval before the morning of St. Michael's Day, the brother and sister remained imprisoned and undisturbed in their own dwelling, with, unknown to all save themselves, the society of Don Henrique, who had determined to appear at the trial, and to support his loved Azèlie in the ordeal through which she had to pass. The sorceress, even up to the morning of the sixth day, did not again make her appearance, and their faith in her began to give way to doubts and distressing fears. From Estelle, who visited them nightly, disguised as she had been at first, they learned that the Moor, by the direction, as they afterward understood, of the sorceress, had reported to her father the death of Don Henrique in prison, at which he expressed a degree of joy that surprised her, until Don Henrique, with as much forbearance as the subject would admit of, related to her the cause of his displeasure against him. While from the Moor, who had become friendly and secretly attentive to their comfort, they learned that the Count of Osma had ordered him, without expressing a desire to see it, to leave the body of his rival in the dungeon where he supposed him to have perished, to wall up the door, cover the trapdoor above with a pavement, and otherwise concealing all traces and signs of a subterranean vault, convert his prison into his tomb.

# CHAPTER XIV. SCENES ON ST. MICHAEL'S EVE.

## Scene First. Osma and the Assassin.

It had just fallen dark on the eve of St. Michael when the Count of Osma left his cabinet; and, after cautiously guarding against observation, entered the faintly−illuminated anteroom, where, stretched upon his pallet, Rascas still lay, weak and in pain, yet hourly convalescing under the daily application of the healing unguent of the sorceress.

"How fares it with thee?" he asked, closing the door and approaching the pillow.

"Ill at ease, my lord, ill at ease. Is to−morrow St. Michael's?"

"It is, and seems as it would never come for my impatience. Each hour I am deprived of my charming quadroone is a loss of bliss no future time can restore. Had I not given my knightly word to this hag, and that the trial is in all men's mouths, I would, ere now, have put an end to this mummery. I trust thou wilt be afoot again soon, man."

"The day after the morrow will be the seventh day!" murmured the wounded man. "If she fail me!"

"What is this thou art muttering within thy lips— prayers? Be not so pious withal; thou art not so near death as thou fearest. By the rood, I would not so readily lose thee! I have e'en now need of thy aid, and have come hither to bid thee point out to me some trusty villain of thy comrades who may take thy place till thou art on thy legs again. I would have his service this night."

"I do know of none save Paul Carra, and I think he hath of late taken to the lakes."

"Canst thou call to mind none other?"

"Not a man, my lord, who hath a true hand and eye; not one that can strike the steel home at a blow."

"Out upon thee, villain! Thou art so full of iniquity, that thou canst talk of nothing but foul murders. If men say `steel,' thou dost fancy it sheathed in a man's ribs. I want no blood−service to−night. Some one hath purloined from my escritoir the parchment of manumission on which I would base my claim upon this Renault and his sister. I believe it to be the handiwork of my daughter. But if I can bring about what I have in contemplation, this theft shall be turned to good account, and whoever took it will pray the saints they had left it. Knowest thou this outlaw, Jules Caronde, who made havoc of my men−at−arms, and since lieth sorely wounded in some place without the town?"

"I know him, my lord. He hath lost a hand in the affray, and hath become savage as a wounded lion."

"I would find him. Direct me to his den."

"Wilt thou go thyself?"

"Thou canst find me no one else. Sulem, of late, I have begun to suspect of treachery, which, if I make clear, he shall answer for with his head ere sunset tomorrow. Give me the direction to find this Caronde. I will see him in person."

"After issuing from the Pontchartrain gate, ride forward a quarter of a league, and take the first left−hand path that offers through the forest. Continue along the by−road until you come to a rivulet, which follow a few hundred yards to its outlet in a small mere. On the shore of this mere, upon a small promontory, you will discover a dilapidated square tower. Ride to its gate, and in a tree that branches above it you will find, hanging within reach of a horseman's hand, a chasseur's horn. Sound this sharply twice. You will then be admitted."

"Thou hast given it plainly, good Rascas. Adieu. I commend thee to sleep in my absence."

## Scene Second. Gobin and Boviedo.

The Count of Osma left the gloomy apartment of the invalid. A few moments afterward, a horseman, disguised so as to defeat the closest scrutiny, rode forth from the palace yard, and galloped in the direction of the eastern gate. He soon arrived in sight of the barrier, and, answering the distant challenge of the sentinel, rode up, and was about to demand to see the officer of the guard, when a noise of clamorous voices without the gate, in altercation with the soldier within, both surprised him and excited his curiosity. He listened an instant, and thought he detected the voice of Boviedo, his disgraced trumpeter.

"By the valour of an Aragonese trumpeter! by the fear of an Aragonese knock o' the head wi' an Aragonese fist, let me in, thou coward! Dost thou fear two men will take thy city, that thou guardest the gate o't so closely? Wilt thou keep two cavaliers standing without to be scalped by the heathenish salvages? Let down thy bars and admit us, thou son of a Philistine's daughter."

"Thou mayst hammer with thy tongue till day−dawn, Signor Boviedo. All men know the governor hath disgraced thee for suffering thyself to be discomfited with the loss of horse and colours," replied the soldier. "Get in as thou didst get out."

"I did get out when the gates were open for the soldiers to go forth to gather the dead slain by the enemy. Touching my disgrace, it hath been wiped away, inasmuch as I have won another steed at the sword's point."

"Thy sword's point should be stuck i' thy throat for that lie," said a harsh voice, which the count recognised as Gobin's; "he got him grazing i' the field after the fight, gossip o' the inside there; and he caught him only by climbing a tree, and letting himself down upon his back, to keep clear of his heels and teeth. Marry come up! he did win him like a true man."

"Friend Gobin, dost thou vilify thy friend, that hath escaped with thee from yonder heathenish salvages, that would ha' made broth o' our bones?" said Boviedo, in an under tone. "Let me lie, so I but get in at the gate by it, and hold thy peace. When I get restored to mine office again, I will remember thee."

"Let gossip Boviedo in, cousin," said Gobin, aloud, "and he will teach thee marvels! He will tell thee the art o' lying till thou art black i' the face, and then lying thyself white again! He will prove to thee how that a soldier's valour lieth in his wind, and he of the king's army who is the most valiant is his trumpeter. Then playing thee a tune for an ensample o' his own wind, marry! will he make thee believe he is the most valorous man in Spain! But bid him defend himself wi' his sword, and he will cry *peccavi*, and show thee naught but an arrant Aragonese coward hath been this braggadocio."

"Ho, signor! what is this uproar?" demanded Osma of the captain of the post, who now made his appearance from the guardroom.

"I know not, my lord," answered the officer, instantly by the voice recognising the commander−in−chief; "'tis but some idle conference with some *paysans* without and my soldiers."

"See if there be more than two, and, if not, admit them."

The officer surveyed them through a slide in the side of the gate, and then, turning to the chief, said,

"There be but two men, signor, both mounted upon one steed."

"Dost thou know either of them?"

"One is the trumpeter Boviedo, and the other, by his motley dress, is the *natural* I have seen in the town."

"Let them in."

The gate was immediately thrown open, and Boviedo and Gobin, both mounted astride a sorry−looking animal, were admitted within the barrier.

"How now, sirrah! what means this mummery?" demanded Osma of his quondam trumpeter, with more of a smile than a frown.

"High and mighty excellency," answered Boviedo, who had evidently lost both fat and wind in his exile from the presence of his master, whose presence he now hailed with the proud confidence of one who has achieved a praiseworthy deed, and feels satisfied with his own conduct, "it was by thy just displeasure that I was dismissed from thy service, until I had recovered by mine own valour a steed for that of which I was so feloniously

despoiled. Behold me mounted upon a charger won by mine own prowess from the enemy! Lo! this saddle! is it not of the fashion of the *courreur du bois?* Lo! this bridle of hide! is it not like the bridle of the enemy? Dost thou not see the evil eye and hang−dog look of the animal himself? Doth he not bear himself as if he knew he were i' the presence of the governor his master hath rebelled against?"

"What is the end of this, sirrah?" demanded the count.

"The end o' it, cousin Spain, should be hemp! He hath stolen a horse, and sweareth he hath won him. He deserveth hanging, and, were I thou, gossip, I'd bid these knaves here, with harquebuses to their shoulders, swing him to the gate−arch. He hath been lying all his life, an' it were a mercy to let him hang i' his death."

"Thou art a merry knave," said the governor; "and, now it bethinks me, I have somewhat against thee. Didst thou not take service with me, and the next day run away?"

"I did fear, if I stayed with thee longer, thou wouldst discover my wisdom, and think me a councillor in disguise, and so have me tried and shot."

"Thou art a shrewd knave. Perez," he said to the officer of the guard, "place this jester under gentle arrest until morning, and then give him his liberty. I am going forth a while, and his knowledge of my absence may work mischief. Boviedo, remain thou in the guardhouse till morning, and then go to the palace and be reinstated in thy office! Let me forth, capitano, and see that no one passes either out or in, on any pretence, during my absence. Good−evening to thee, fair jester. It grieves me to put thee under guard, but Perez hath both wine and viands to amuse thee withal, though, by'r lady! I doubt much if thou wilt find here gold or silver flagon to purloin."

With this quiet allusion to Gobin's former peccadilloes, the count sallied from the gate, and, putting spurs to his horse, was soon riding at a round rate in the direction of the forest.

## Scene Third. Osma and the Chasseur Chief.

By the open window of a large vaulted apartment, situated in a lonely tower by the water−side, and on the same eve of St. Michael, leaned a tall, graceful young man, who had risen from a pallet that stood near. He was remarkable for the symmetry of his figure, and, notwithstanding a languor pervaded his whole person, also for the elegance and flexile ease of every motion of his limbs. His hair was black as the raven's wing; his eyes were large and equally black; while his complexion was remarkable for the brilliancy of the red that mingled with and redeemed the natural brown of his skin.

His features, lighted by an iron lamp that stood near him, on a projection of the rough stone wall against which he leaned, were aquiline and singularly regular in their contour. They were noble in their shape and outline, but their expression, which marks the man more than the features upon which it is called up, was decidedly low and sensual, as if the mind that governed the face was base and wicked, and the soul that illumined it was subtle and suspicious, crafty and designing. They now wore a look of physical pain, rage, and deep mortification. One arm was suspended in a sling against his breast, while with the other he supported himself as if from bodily weakness. He was looking forth upon the water, which reflected a thousand stars in its sable mirror, seemingly another Heaven. His thoughts were not in the scene; they were ferociously brooding upon the misery of his own condition, planning vengeance and bloody retribution. Suddenly the sound of a horse galloping rapidly along the shore caused him to start, and instantly change his position so as to command the approach to the tower. Through the gloom he caught a glimpse of a man on horseback, riding at full speed towards the portal, but the next moment lost sight of him behind an angle of the building.

"If this be that false traitor De Thoyras, come to laugh again at my mutilated limb, while he bids me rise and draw sword to recover Azèlie from the Spaniard, by the blood of St. Stephen! he shall die on the threshold. It is not enough for him that he hath left me here with two miserable slaves, and, at the head of my band, gone playing the traitor by siding with this Ethiopian Renault! What excuse is it that he is only uniting against this Osma? I would rather be sworn brother with Osma against the haughty and insufferable quadroon−slave, than side with him were his sister to be the price of my alliance! There sounds the horn! If it be he, he shall die ere he can deliver the first sentence. I have yet a hand remaining that can send a bullet to a traitor's heart."

Thus speaking, he took up (with his left hand) a pistol that lay near, and, cocking it with his teeth, stood with his eye fixed upon the entrance to the hall, and thus awaited the approach of the visiter, whom he had commanded his servant to admit. He saw at a glance that the stranger, whose face was concealed by the falling front of his hat, was not De Thoyras. To the bearing and height of the intruder, he perceived also that he was wholly a stranger. Without changing his hostile attitude nevertheless, he waited his advance to the middle of the apartment in silence; and then, in a stern and menacing tone, demanded his business.

"If thou art the young Marquis Caronde," answered the Count of Osma, firmly, and in a tone to invite confidence, "my business lies with thee."

"Deliver thy words speedily and begone, for I would be left alone," answered the young man morosely, nay, savagely, as if his whole soul was imbittered against his fellow−men on account of his degrading dismemberment.

"I pray thee, noble sir, listen to me with patience," said the count, in a bland and soothing tone of voice; "I know of thy sad loss, and—"

"May thy tongue be torn from thy throat by the foul fiend! Hast thou come hither to cast it into my teeth!"

"Nay, pardon my inadvertence; I would discourse with thee on a matter touching thine own interest, and, as I well know, thy *revenge!*"

"Out with it," cried Caronde, impatiently.

"Wouldst thou have in thy power the man who—" and the count completed his sentence with a glance at his arm.

"Would I? am I not human? Askest thou would I? Ha, ha, ha!" and he gave so demoniacal a laugh that the count stepped back appalled, and the old tower echoed with it, as if a legion of imps were mocking and deriding.

"I will give thee thy wish!"

"How?"

"Which dost thou love to gratify most, thy vengeance or thy passion?"

"Vengeance, such as I meditate on the accursed slave who hath done this—*this!*" and he tore his arm from its sling, and thrust the mutilated stump before the eyes of the count; "who hath *thus maimed a Caronde*, swallows up all other feelings," he answered, with a deep and settled implacability of revenge that was horrible to contemplate, while it showed how keenly he felt his condition.

"Thou hast loved the sister of thy enemy," asserted, rather than asked, the count, venturing with caution, but yet with boldness, upon his subject.

"*Loved her!* Yes, if that be love which begot hatred, which makes the sister the instrument of revenge, and, through her infamy, makes the barb of that hatred triple−edged, and dipped in poison for the brother's soul! If *this* be love, then Jules Caronde loved the haughty sister of the quadroon Renault," he said, with a laugh of derision.

Osma looked upon him with wonder while giving utterance to these sentiments, and confessed in his heart that he had found a rival in wickedness. He seemed now fully to understand with whom he had to do; and, a degree of kindred feeling inspiring him, he pursued with less embarrassment the object for which he had sought the interview.

"This is as I would have it!" he said to himself, reflectingly, but so loud as to be heard by the other.

"And who art thou that wouldst have things so!" demanded Jules, scornfully and haughtily. "Thou shouldst be a Spaniard by thy complexion and carriage."

"Answer me first, Signor Marquis, one question, and I will tell thee who I am. Wilt thou resign all claim to the affections of this Azèlie for a price!"

"Am I a slave−merchant?" he fiercely demanded; "if I am poor, yet am I noble! By the bright heaven, *there is* a price I would sell her for, soul and body—"

"And that price is—"

"The quadroon Renanlt!"

"He is thine!"

"Who art thou, that darest to kindle a hope thou mayst not have the power to feed with the fuel of revenge?"

"I am Garcia of Osma!" answered the count, removing his sombrero, and throwing back the folds of his mantle from his breast.

"I did half suspect that thou wert he!" said Jules, surveying him with surprise and curiosity. "There is then no mystery between us. Azèlie, rumour hath it, is to be tried on the morrow for her liberty. Had I the parchments that thou hast obtained from that female fiend Ninine, she had been my slave and mistress ere this. I need not doubt, Sir Count, what will be the result of the trial. Yet thy possession of the sister will not place the brother in my hands—*Hands? demon incarné!* does my own false tongue mock me?"

"Renault is my prisoner, in keeping for the trial!" observed the count, with a smile.

"Thine—thy prisoner?" interrogated Caronde, with the most eager interest.

"Under a close guard with the beautiful Azèlie. Both are my prisoners."

"Thou hast blessed me, count, with these tidings. Azèlie is thine so thou give me the brother!"

"He shall be placed in thy ha—I would say in thy power to−morrow, in the presence of the tribunal that transfers his sister to mine."

The young man looked an instant into the count's face with suspicion, to discover if his allusion to his lost hand had been only accidental, and, being apparently satisfied that it was, he said,

"Wouldst thou have me appear there, signor, to be the butt of scornful laughter, of finger−pointing, and nodding heads?"

"I have lost, in a most mysterious manner, noble marquis, the parchment which you heard that I received from the quadroone−mother—"

"Lost it! Then are they both *my* slaves by right of inheritance," he cried, with sudden exultation. "Vengeance will be doubly mine."

"Nay, Signor Marquis," interrupted Osma, with cutting coolness, "they are, nevertheless, in my power, not in thine! Thou canst have revenge of neither but by my will. I am pleased to see that thou dost consider my words with patience. In desiring the possession of Azèlie, thou hast only Renault's pride and arrogance to humble! Am I right?"

"My passion for her had its birth in no other feeling."

"And this would be gratified by degrading the sister, whom the brother, as well as her own ambition, has elevated above her condition, scorning for her all beneath honourable and wedded love. Is it not so?"

"It is."

"Then, if this degradation be effected," pursued the count, "and Renault thereby humbled, it will matter little to thee who is the instrument of it. I swear to thee thou shalt have thy desire in the result. Wilt thou give me the sister for the brother?"

"Hast thou not said that thou hast her already, Sir Count, as well as the brother? Wherefore do you put an empty question to me?"

"It hath this end," answered Osma, coming closer to him; "the loss of the parchment leaves me no ground for claiming them as my slaves, save by an open act of power and will. This I do not wish to exercise in the present state of popular feeling, if I may bring it about otherwise. Without doubt, Signor Marquis, the title rests in you from the neglect of your noble father to record the manumission. It is through yourself, therefore, that I would have the title come to me."

"Darest thou insult me, Sir Count of Osma, with the proposition to use me as a tool of thy lust?"

"Am I not made a tool of thy vengeance?" demanded the wily Spaniard.

"Be it so," answered Jules, after a moment's gaze at the collected face of the count; "and here is my— *Sceleret!* the incarnate fiend hath my tongue," he cried, with a torrent of fearful execrations, hastily withdrawing the mutilated stump, which he had involuntarily and impulsively extended to seal the compact.

The Count of Osma smiled with malicious pleasure. Then, saying that he would immediately despatch a party of horse to escort him to the city and to his palace before midnight, he took his leave of the young man, and was soon galloping with an exulting spirit on his return to the town.

If Jules Caronde had entertained any other feelings than those of deadly revenge against him who had so terribly mutilated him, a revenge grafted upon years of previous hatred, he would have borne himself with the hostile bearing of an enemy towards the new governor on discovering him in the person of his visiter; or, in promising to enter the city, and place himself in his power after the slaughter of his ambassador and his body−guard, he would, at least, have apprehended treachery and retribution. But he had no room for any emotion or thought but that which so completely filled his dark and bitter soul.

## Scene Fourth. The Camanchee Prince and Courreur Chef.

About the same time that Jules Caronde rose from his restless pallet to gaze from the window upon the quiet lake, so contrasted in its stillness and repose to the unquiet of his own bosom, a young man made his appearance in a turret upon the outer wall of the island−fortress of the *courreurs du bois*, which was situated a league to the north of the lonely tower of the chasseur chief, in the centre of a broader link of the same chain of lagoons. His glance was directed towards the northern outlet of the lake, which, through a succession of others, ultimately gave egress into the Mississippi many leagues distant. He listened as if he expected to hear distant sounds from the water, and, with a night−telescope, surveyed, long and intensely, the lengthened "reach" beyond him. A sound at length arrested his ear. He listened doubtfully a while, and then spoke to a sentinel near.

"Didst thou not hear a sound, like the dashing of paddles, or the steady rush of barges through the water?"

"I have heard it often to−night, Sieur De Thoyras," answered the man; "it is the evening wind bending the tops of the forest trees on the main as it passes over them. There, it ripples along the smooth water; and now I feel it!"

"You are right, Leroy!" answered the young man, with a tone of disappointment, as the wind blew his locks about his cheeks.

At this moment Charleval joined him.

"If you look up the lake until dawn, De Thoyras, you will not see your allies. A thousand Camanchee mounted warriors will scarce row when they can ride."

"The same pirogues that will take them to this side, will easily enter the inlet to the first of the chain of lakes, and so reach us with less distance. It is twenty leagues farther by the shores; and, as the runner Lassatchee, on his return, bade us look for them tonight, they will, to get here in time, take water. If they disappoint us, we must be sacrificed along with Renault to−morrow, or rescue him."

"Did I not tell thee I had once seen this noble Camanchee chief, and also the young prince his son," observed Charleval. "Mark me! He will not disappoint us! When, three years ago, he heard that the Count of Osma had arrived to govern the province under Spain, he came from his fastnesses, accompanied by several of his chiefs and by his son, a princely youth, and in the most distinct terms offered his services against the Spaniard should he again return. Since that period he has kept himself in readiness to obey our call. From some cause, hostility to Spain is deeply rooted in his breast. He will not disappoint us. Lassatchee reports that he received the message of the arrival of the Spaniards with a kindling eye; and, forthwith gathering his warriors, bade him return, and say that he would not be long behind him. When they came here before it was by land, swimming the river on horseback. The Camanchee, like the Arab of the desert, is ever in the saddle, and it will not be a slight reason that will induce him to exchange his horse for a barge. Listen! That was a horse's neigh from the main land! Carondelet and Marigny, thy two penitent *frères*, De Thoyras, who seek to atone, by the most vigilant duty now, for their folly in being led astray by Jules, I have posted on the shore; Marigny's bugle will give us the signal of their approach."

"Hark!" cried De Thoyras, catching him by the arm.

"And there it sounds, the sweetest music ears ever listened to," continued Charleval, with gratitude and triumph. "Now, Osma, is the day of thy power ended."

Ere the notes of the glad bugle which was sounded from the land ceased to float across the lake, Charleval sent back an answering blast that awakened a thousand echoes from the wooded shores, and caused five hundred hearts within the fortress to bound with warlike enthusiasm.

Instantly the whole island−garrison was in life and motion. Charleval, now the *chef courreur* in Renault's place, leaving De Thoyras in command, sprang into a barge, accompanied by the three remaining *frères* that had followed De Thoyras to Renault's standard, and whom he had made his lieutenants, and crossed the lake to the main to meet his allies.

As he left the island, the diminished moon, with tardy rising, at length appeared above the trees of the forest, and, as he approached the shadowy line of the shore, began to illumine its recesses and penetrate aslant into its glades. Standing upright in his barge, with his keen gaze fixed on the gloomy banks, he was borne towards them

with rapid oars. All was still and motionless along the land; and, as he came nearer, he began to fear his joy was premature, and that Marigny had been deceived. At this moment he discovered a man on the beach awaiting his landing, and with a beating heart he sprang to the shore to meet him.

"What tidings, Carondelet? Are they not arrived?"

"Look along the curving edge of the forest, which, receding, leaves a wide lawn between it and the lake," said the young man, the elegance of whose figure was finely set off by the richness of the chasseur costume which he wore, conducting him, at the same time, to a small mound, upon which grew a gigantic and widespreading oak.

"I see nothing."

"Dost thou hear nothing?"

"No."

"Yet there are more than a thousand mounted warriors lining it. Come with me, Charleval," he added, laying his hand lightly upon the wrist of his young friend. "Their leader hath just marshalled them there in covert, as is the practice of these forest warriors; and now, surrounded by his stately chiefs, awaits your coming in yonder spot where the moonlight is falling like silver mist upon the sward."

Charleval followed the poetic Carondelet from the water, and, crossing the edge of the forest, came suddenly upon the left of a line of savage warriors hid within its shades. Passing in silence along their front, not without admiration at the barbaric splendour of their costume and the fierceness of their aspects, he came to a space in the centre of the wood all open to the sky, save that a sycamore, towering from the midst, flung above its hoary arms, between which the moon made its way in many a broken beam of light. Beneath the branches of this tree Charleval discovered a group of savage warriors, plumed and painted, and arrayed in the gorgeous costumes of the chiefs of the Camanchees, to which his eye was familiar. They were mounted on fiery horses richly caparisoned; the skins of wild beasts, that constituted their housings, dyed scarlet and orange; while gold and silver ornaments profusely adorned their bridles, stirrups, and saddle−bows.

They were seven in number, armed with battle−axes; and five of them, in addition, carried long−feathered spears in their hands. The latter were drawn up in stern silence a few feet in the rear of the remaining two, as if they formed a guard of honour to their prince rather than constituted a part of his council. The chief himself, distinguished by his noble and kingly bearing, as well as the war−eagle's feather that adorned the coronet of barbaric gold, was seated in his saddle, with his face turned towards Charleval, who had paused to view his countenance ere he proceeded. The light of the moon shone full upon it, and betrayed distinctly each lineament, while it, at the same time, softened the harsher outlines. It was that of a man nearly sixty years of age. The features were noble, and he thought of that haughty Castilian character which he had observed in Spanish nobles of high birth. Benevolence and firmness pleasingly marked the expression of his well−shaped mouth, and a smile of great sweetness animated his face as he slightly turned his head to reply to some remark made by the young chief at his side, in whom Charleval recognised his son. There was a seriousness stamped on his brow by care and years till it had assumed the fixed impression of sternness, to which the bronzed complexion and the warlike garniture of his temples gave additional severity. Charleval read in his face the preponderance of the more humane and gentle qualities of mankind over the savage and vindictive. His carriage was marked by an air of commanding dignity, that became the native majesty of his whole person.

About his neck was a circlet of plain gold, small chains of silver, and an imposing and barbarous necklace, composed of talons of eagles and the glittering claws of beasts of prey: the records of his own personal achievements in the savage chase. He wore a sort of surcoat without sleeves, made of the glossy skin of the panther, bound to his body by a belt of hide fastened with a rude clasp of virgin gold. His leggins were of orange−coloured deer's hide, highly ornamented, with sandals of the same, elegantly and tastefully wrought with brilliant beadwork, and his shirt was of mountain goat−skin. Over his shoulders was worn a scarlet mantle or *ponta*, which fell in graceful folds about his person. It was garnished with quills of the porcupine, and bordered with the long hair of human scalps. His stirrups were of solid gold, and his bridle was plated with the same precious metal. In his hand he held a shining battle−axe, which, with a broad two−edged dagger stuck in his belt, comprised his arms.

The young chief, his son, was mounted on a black horse of great firmness of limb and matchless beauty of proportion, whose fiery impatience he could hardly restrain, yet governing him with that careless indifference of touch (beneath which is concealed the mastery of skill) characteristic of a man to whom the saddle is a familiar

seat. He was not more than seventeen years of age, yet tall and graceful; shaped like a youthful Apollo, remarkable for the natural ease of his carriage, and the unstudied grace of all his movements. His eye was bright and fearless; his brow open and ingenuous; and the expression of his face, which was dark but handsome, was resolute and fearless. A circlet of the plumes of the war−eagle bound his brows, ornamented with the beak of the kingly bird placed in front, like the visor to a helm. His black hair was braided, and hung in long plaits to his saddle, the ends tied with gay cords of silver thread and tassels. Over his shoulder was thrown the skin of a young buffalo−bull; and on the soft, white texture of the dressed hide, which served as an ornamental lining of the shaggy hide, and of which he ostentatiously displayed outwardly as much as could appear, were painted or emblazoned in scarlet colours the battles in which, young as he was, he had already distinguished himself. His leggins were of the same gay colours; while gaitermoccasins of exceedingly beautiful workmanship covered his feet and legs. His breast was ornamented with gold and silver ornaments, and savage necklaces of birds and tiger's claws; while on his breast hung a circular shield made of the skin of the bull's neck, on which were blazoned, singularly enough, the crest of the house of Osma, as if the young warrior would defy the Spanish chief on the morrow by the open appropriation of his own arms. A quiver and a short bow were slung at his back; in his belt was stuck a long dagger; and, like his sire, he carried in his right hand a naked battle−axe. Near him stood the young chasseur Marigny.

"Ihuahua! the young *courreur* leader is here," said Carondelet, advancing, and addressing the elder chief.

"On foot?" exclaimed the prince, in French, courteously dismounting with native politeness; and, throwing the rein of his horse to his son, he walked forward to meet Charleval.

The young man received him with that warmth of grateful feeling which his prompt coming had inspired. Then, without losing for him that reverence his age and commanding presence, as well as his powerful rank challenged, he entered immediately into the subject of the alliance.

"Hast thou seen this Count Osma?" inquired the Camanchee warrior, after Charleval had given him, in answer to question upon question (as if the minutest detail was to him of the deepest moment), a full and connected narrative of the circumstances that had transpired within his knowledge, from the night of the landing of the Spaniards to that moment; to all of which he had listened with stern and wondering attention.

"I have not seen him, Ihuahua. Yet men say he hath a noble countenance, and looks less the villain than he is," answered Charleval.

"Hath he a daughter who is fair and virtuous, said you?"

"Gentle and lovely above her sex, rumour has it."

" 'Tis a pity; I would it were not so," observed the warrior, with some emotion. "Hath he grown gray?"

"The count?"

"Yes, this *count*," he repeated, with a strong ironical emphasis on the last word.

"I have not yet seen him, prince!" answered Charleval.

"Ah! no—no, thou hast not," he answered, abstractedly, and then gave himself up to musing.

Charleval noticed his manner with surprise; but, not being able to account for it to his satisfaction, entered into conversation with the young prince, who spoke French like a native, until the father should rouse himself from his deep thought and again address him. Suddenly Ihuahua turned to him and said, in a commanding tone,

"Conduct me to thy fortress! I would pass the night with thee. My warriors shall encamp here on the main, and with the dawn be ready to move towards the town. My son Opelouza will accompany me. These chiefs will also remain with my warriors."

Thus speaking, and giving a few orders to his chieftains in their own martial tongue, the dignified warrior, accompanied by his son, both leaving their horses in the charge of their men, followed Charleval to the beach, and, entering the boat with him, were rapidly borne across the lake to the fortress.

## Scene Fifth. The Sorceress and the Quadroone−mother.

On the same eventful eve of St. Michael, ere yet the moon had risen, the beautiful yet wicked quadroonemother sat alone by the trellised casement of her chamber. The gentle airs from the garden, into which it opened, came to her through the open lattice laden with fragrance, and cooled her throbbing temples. Her brow was as queenly, her noble black eye as large and lustrous, and her dark, majestic, yet voluptuous beauty still as striking as before. Yet thought was busy as she leaned musingly upon her arm and looked vacantly into the deep blue of the starry heaven. But her thoughts were not in the direction of her gaze. She had taken her seat by the window as twilight stole over the scene, and insensibly became meditative. Her thoughts, as at that hour they irresistibly will, soon took a sad and serious complexion, and, ere she was aware, she found herself acting over again in imagination the deeds of her guilty life.

She had other cause, too, for sad and gloomy reveries. Renault had cast off the filial reverence which had hitherto so distinguished him; and, though a prisoner in his own house, and daily in her presence, treated her with cold and stern indifference; within the hour she had encountered his silent, reproving, yet contemptuous glance as he passed in and out of her apartment. Azèlie, too, shuddered at her approach, and avoided her.

Both, indeed, had kept aloof from her during the six days of their imprisonment, not only to express thereby their feelings at her criminal compact with Osma, but to enjoy each other's society sacred from her intrusion. The safety of the concealed Don Henrique, as well as the privacy of Estelle's disguised visits to their little circle, also rendered such retirement necessary. This neglect, by throwing her upon herself and her own resources, naturally produced in her a morose and bitter spirit, and at times a melancholy that she would gladly have banished. She was a guilty woman; and the angel of sadness, which to the good and virtuous is the parent of gentle devotion, to the bad and vicious becomes the author of guilty fears, that fill the remorseful mind with dismal contemplations of its present state, and offer it dark and menacing pictures of the future. As she sat and reflected, her soul was filled with forebodings she could not shake off. Thought maddened her.

She remembered, with singular distinctness, among other reminiscences that forced themselves upon her, an event of years long passed, as if it had taken place but yesterday. The more she strove to divest her mind of this unpleasant current of thought, the more perseveringly would it flow on again in the same channel, gathering fresh impetus from the temporary diversion of its course; till at length, giving way to it, she experienced a despairing pleasure in indulging the dark and turbid torrent to its full bent. She remembered the time—the hour—the place! Twenty−three years had passed away, yet the whole was written in fadeless letters of undying memory upon her mind. She was then young—beautiful—a favoured mistress! The Marquis de la Caronde adored her, and lavished upon her the wealth of his heart and his hand. The Marchioness of Caronde wore only his name. Ninine held the cords of his will, and governed him as her caprice pointed. At length the marchioness became a mother, and the marquis, from paternal pride, paid to her who had given an heir to his house the respect that his love had hitherto denied her. Ninine felt the neglect and jealousy that now first poisoned her love. Thrice she attempted the infant boy's life, and thrice the marquis detected, yet forgave her; for the child was not many weeks old ere he yielded himself again captive to her fascinations. A fourth time, when the boy was half a year old, the shaft was aimed at the fountain of its nourishment: the subtlest poison that is was conveyed to the mother in a rose−bud! With the opening flower, she inhaled the invisible principle of death. Like that flower, she faded and soon died. But the boy lived. The father's suspicions were aroused, and he removed him secretly to a foster−mother. Yet his love for the siren who had thrown about him her fatal net was stronger than his horror at the crime. In vain she set on foot every secret inquiry. She was unable to discover the infant; and, in a few months afterward, becoming herself a mother, in the joy of that event forgot the cause of her disquiet. But ambition soon enthroned itself in her soul. She now aspired to the title and estates of the father for her illegitimate son. Her hatred to the true heir was again revived, and she gave herself no rest, night or day, in her desire to discover his retreat. At length—for what will not jealousy, envy, and ambition, united in a woman's heart, accomplish?—when her own boy was two years old, she discovered the object of her search, now a fine child nearly three years of age. It was found by one of her hirelings many leagues in the interior. She had him secretly brought to her. The two boys were wonderfully like

each other, both bearing their father's looks. Hers, being tall for its age, although nearly a year younger, was equal with the other in height. Suddenly this resemblance suggested a thought upon which she immediately acted. The box of poisoned sweetmeats she had prepared to give the child was cast aside, and, drawing it to her, she taught it to call her "Ma." Her own son she sent back to the hamlet in his stead, knowing that the marquis had not seen his child for a year, and would easily be deceived by the likeness between the two, while the alteration that he would discover when he should visit him would be attributed to the natural effect of time and growth; and, lest the face of the other should betray her, she guardedly kept him out of his sight until she could present him without suspicion. At length, satisfied, from her manner (studied to bring about this very result, and establish, without farther uncertainty, her object), that Ninine would not harm him, he sent for the son of the marchioness, now four years of age, and received to his arms instead that of the quadroone.

Such was the field over which the quadroone−mother's thoughts ranged as she sat by the window. She had often sighed; but it was because she did not find the fulfilment of her ambitious hopes in her son a reward sufficient to compensate her for her guilt.

With the embrace with which he received the child, the marquis had detected the deception she had put upon him. But he remained silent upon the subject, though she suspected his knowledge of it even up to the day of his death. But, so long as he winked at her wickedness, which he did, perhaps, either from fear of her poisoning the true heir, or on account of the blindness of his attachment to her, she paid no regard to his knowledge of it, and, with a feeling of security in her guilt, continued to feed ambitious hopes for her son; and thus, until the day of their father's death, did these two brothers grow up to manhood, nature alone making the just distinction between the base coin and that which was of the legitimate ore.

The thoughts of the quadroone−mother still flowed on, downward the tide of time, and unsparing memory again held the mirror of the past to her mental gaze.

She remembered that, fourteen years before, she was walking through the slave−mart, when a beautiful female child, scarcely three years old, held in the lap of a tall, stern woman, arrested her eye; that, pleased with its infantine beauty, she purchased both mother and child, and took them to her dwelling. That, at length, as the child grew in beauty, she conceived the thought of adopting it as her own, and by the refinements of education fitting her to be the companion even of princes; so that, through her promised loveliness, when her own charms and power should fail, and her favour with the marquis be diminished, she might live again in her *protégée*, and by her powerful alliance hold the consideration and rank her ambition coveted. She remembered how the child's mother doted upon it; how she refused to resign it from her own devoted care to hers; and how, fearing her for a secret power she possessed over her mind, she at length gave her to drink of an herb, the property of which is to drive those who take it to seek self−destruction in the water.

As Ninine recalled the wild shrieks of the woman rushing forth at midnight to plunge into the river, they seemed to come again with startling distinctness to her ears; shuddering, she stopped them and hid her eyes, as if to shut out from every sense the fearful curse upon the murderess with which her victim's last cries were mingled. But in vain. The curse was repeated sterner and closer to her ear, as uttered by a living voice. She looked up. 'Twas not imagination!

*It was real!* The murdered woman stood before her, and a deep and solemn curse, thrice repeated, as she heard it fourteen years before, fell from her lips. The murderess gazed upon this appearance from the dead with mortal horror in her glazed stare, with parted lips, and with the fixed and rigid immobility of stone.

The sorceress stood contemplating her a moment with a steady look of contempt, and a triumphant smile in her eyes, which showed it to be a moment of the most gratifying exultation to her. At length she spoke:

"Woman, dost thou remember me?"

Ninine slowly brought her hands together, and clasped the fingers supplicatingly; then sinking to her knees with a pallid countenance, in which awe, and fear, and remorse were blended, twice in vain essayed to move her bloodless lips in reply.

"What hast thou done with her I left with thee?" demanded the sorceress, in a stern voice.

"She—she is—is here!" faintly articulated Ninine. "She is thine!"

"Thou wicked woman! I know thy guilt and thy acts of iniquity, and have watched over the child thou wouldst have made the victim of thy ambitious heart! Repent thee of thy crimes, for thy hour is near!"

"Mercy, mercy, dread being!"

"Didst thou remember mercy when the maiden pleaded to thee?" demanded the sorceress, with reproving sternness.

"Mercy, mercy! thou spirit of another world!" she repeated, with unsubdued terror.

"Be thou in the hall of trial on the morrow to answer truly what may be required of thee, and thou mayst have space for repentance."

"I will answer even to my own hurt, if thou wilt give me hope of mercy in Heaven!"

"Mercy in Heaven ask thy priests for," she answered, derisively. "Mercy on earth I alone promise thee."

"This will give me space for obtaining Heaven's; I will obey thee."

"Know that thou art there to assert thine own dishonour. Wilt thou go?"

"I will."

"To publish thine own infamy! Wilt thou go?"

"I will, dread being!"

"Then farewell till we meet in the Judgment Hall."

With this parting salutation, spoken in a warning tone of voice, the sorceress disappeared as suddenly as she had appeared, and left the quadroone−mother to reflect upon an event which, to her guilty and superstitious soul, seemed to have been directed by the anger of an avenging Heaven, and portended sudden and just retribution. That she had seen an inhabitant of the world of spirits was the deep and abiding impression upon her mind, already by its previous train of thought fully open to the reception of supernatural influences.

## CHAPTER XV. ST. MICHAEL'S DAY.—SCENE IN THE JUDGMENT HALL.

The sun rose on the morning of St. Michael's day with unclouded splendour, kindling a thousand steel points that bristled in the Place d'Armes, and dying with deeper red the crimson banners of Spain, which, bordered with gold, and gay with silken fringes, flaunted above the heads of squadrons of cuirassiers and lancers, and long lines of heavy men−at−arms. The whole Spanish force was under arms, and in battle array before the hall of council. The Count of Osma, in the magnificent uniform of commanding−general, mounted on his sable warhorse, and accompanied by all his staff and aids save Montejo, rode along their line with a proud eye and triumphant bearing. It was near the hour for the sitting of the tribunal; and, as he galloped across the Place d'Armes, reviewing his troops with the pride of a soldier, he was weighing in his mind the chances of an attack upon them from the citizens, who, as the time of the trial approached, began to evince a deep and ominous feeling of sympathy for the prisoners, which he felt was not to be slighted.

All the streets of the city seemed to have disgorged their throngs into the square. It was on every side surrounded with a dense multitude of citizens waiting the hour of trial, and only kept back from the council−chamber by the presence of the military, and a strong guard placed at every avenue of approach. It was Osma's hour of triumph. The calm and settled vindictiveness of his looks betrayed his consciousness that he held his own judgment in his own hands, while the scorn with which he surveyed the imposing display he had made for the trial told that he felt it was to be but a masquerade of justice, and that he looked upon the whole as an amusing pageant, to which he had consented to gratify his vanity and manifest his power, while it should make more signal and public the degradation and infamy both of Renault and Azèlie.

At ten o'clock the roar of artillery announced the opening of the tribunal; and Osma, with his aids and chief officers, dismounting from their horses, entered the government−house and ascended to the Hall of Council. With a haughty port, he preceded them through files of men−at−arms; and, entering the chamber of the tribunal by a side door, advanced towards the forum where sat the six judges in their sable robes and badges of office. He took a seat upon a sort of state chair on the right of it, yet so much lower that he seemed rather a spectator than an actor in the coming scene. The Moor stood like a statue behind him, and Estelle, with anxious solicitude, trembling between hope and fear, sat by his side. In a few moments after he was seated, the wide doors of the hall were thrown open, and the populace, rushing in, soon filled the vast chamber to overflowing.

Reggio, the *alfarez real*, and one of the members of the *cabildo,* was its president. After a deep and expectant silence had prevailed over the hall for a few seconds, he rose, and proclaiming, in a loud voice, the object of the extraordinary sitting of the tribunal, commanded the accuser to stand forth and be confronted with the accused.

The Count of Osma rose from his chair with a derisive smile of conscious power, and was about to advance to the front of the tribunal, when his glance rested on the advancing figure of the sorceress, who, with her eyes fixed upon him, was making her rapid way across the space between the tribunal and the door in the direction of the spot where he stood. Before he could give utterance to any command in relation to her, she was already at his side, and had whispered in his ear, in a low tone,

"There be two Indian warriors without, a chief and his son, accompanied by a young man, who would witness the trial, an' it please my Lord of Osma," she said, rather imperatively than as if seeking a favour.

"Let them enter and stand near the forum," he answered, in a loud voice. "This is no private matter; 'tis not the first trial on record a master hath had to prove his right to his own slaves. Know, citizens, I have consented to this from my love of justice and respect for the laws."

In a few seconds she reappeared, conducting the stately warrior Ihuahua, the prince his son, and Charleval, who, save a sword at his side, was in the dress of a creole citizen. When the emotion excited by the sudden appearance of this party had subsided, and they had taken a place near the tribunal opposite to Osma, Reggio again called upon the accuser and accused to stand before the forum. Osma, with dignified ease, advanced in front of the judgment seat, the eye of the warrior chief the while fixed upon him with an eagle−like and searching glance. At the same instant, from one of the long Venetian windows that opened upon the corridor, guarded by a file of Spanish soldiers, appeared Renault, with Azèlie supported upon his arm. His carriage was haughty and calm, and as he met the eye of Osma his own flashed back defiance. Azèlie was pale, yet firm; and from the

serene yet devotional aspect of her countenance, and the repose of her manner, it would seem she had a hope to sustain her above despair even in that fearful hour. After a moment's silence, the judge, turning to the count, asked,

"Dost thou claim the prisoners here arraigned as thy slaves?"

"I do," answered he, boldly.

"On what legal ground?" demanded Reggio, looking at the people while he spoke rather than at the count, as if he was willing that they should see how bold justice could be, even with so high a party at its bar.

"On that of a deed of manumission, signors, given to their mother by the Marquis of Caronde, which, not being recorded in the public archives, but placed by him instead in the freed woman's hands who had been his slave, gave her the power over her own liberty and that of her issue. This parchment has been transferred to me by the mother, and with it the surrender of her own freedom and that of her children."

Renault smiled haughtily while the count was speaking, who, on his part, with malicious pleasure, secretly marked his confident demeanour, supposing it to be grounded on his knowledge of the loss of the parchment to which he alluded, only the lower to sink his hopes when he should find the equivalent resource he had at command.

"Produce this instrument, my lord," said Reggio.

"He may not, Sieur Reggio," said Renault, taking a folded parchment from his breast, and holding it unrolled before the tribunal. "This is the instrument of my sister's liberty and my own, on which our accuser would found our servitude; and *thus* do I make myself and her for ever free."

With these energetic words he rent the paper in fragments and cast them at his feet. A murmur of surprise and pleasure ran through the multitude, which Osma, with a voice of thunder, silenced by calling on the *alguazil mayor*, who had ushered in the prisoners, to "lead in Jules, marquis of Caronde." Renault's heart leaped to his throat, and Azèlie could scarcely repress a shriek at this command.

In the midst of breathless expectancy, the chasseur chief, pale and invalid, with his right arm in a sling, entered the hall and sat down in a chair to which Osma conducted him, placed near his own.

"There is yet one other—the quadroone−mother!" said the count, turning to Reggio; and Ninine, with looks that showed she had not forgotten her visit from the sorceress, while she obeyed the command of Osma, who had summoned her to attend in order to confront Jules before the tribunal, was led in by the *alguazil mayor*.

"Now, signors," said the count to Reggio and the judges, "first question this woman of this parchment."

"Wert thou once the slave of the Marquis of Caronde?" asked Reggio, with courtesy, playing subtly his given part in the trial.

"Yes," she answered, without lifting her eyes, and with so much embarrassment that Osma glanced towards her sharply, as if he expected her to commit herself in some way. But she thought not of him or his interests now. The fear of what was to follow from the threats of the sorceress alone occupied her mind.

"Did he draw, and then sign and seal for thee a bill of manumission for thyself and children?"

"He did, signor."

"Did he record it?"

"He gave it to me, signor."

"Didst thou file it in the archives?"

"No, I kept it, signor."

"And afterward transferred it to the Count of Osma— was it not so?"

"I did, signor."

"Thou and thy children are then his slaves by this act?"

"My children alone, signor. I have been manumitted by another instrument under his hand and seal."

"Thou dost acknowledge, then, thy son Renault and thy daughter Azèlie to be the slaves of the Lord of Osma?"

"I do, signor," she said, at first hesitating, but instantly answering on meeting the fixed glance of Osma.

"Now, Signor Reggio," said the count, with a smile, addressing the judges, "having shown your tribunal that I had once a clear and lawful right to hold the prisoners in bondage, and all present having witnessed the destruction of the instrument on which alone I founded this right, it remains that the prisoners be acquitted as freed man and freed woman, unless, by a claim equally well−grounded, I can a second time prove my right to

their servitude."

To these words Renault and Azèlie listened, now with hope when he mentioned acquittal, then with poignant despair when he alluded to a new ground on which to base his claim to hold them in bondage. They instinctively cast their eyes towards the implacable Jules, in whose fierce countenance they too plainly read the solution of Osma's words, and divined the instrument through which he was a second time to aim at their freedom.

"This argument is conclusive," said Reggio. "If you have farther evidence to substantiate your claim, my lord, may it please you to produce it."

"I pray you, my lord marquis," said Osma, addressing Jules, "present your claim before the tribunal."

Jules rose, and, supporting himself with his remaining hand on the arm of the chair, said in a low tone, that was expressive of the bitter vindictiveness which had brought him to the hall of judgment,

"Signors, as the only son and heir to the title and French estates of the late Marquis of Caronde, and in absence of any evidence to prove the manumission of the prisoners Renault and Azèlie, I hereby claim them as my slaves by virtue of my father's purchase of the mother, and according to the letter and spirit of our laws. Last night I discovered among his papers this bill of sale, dated twenty−three years back, of the quadroone Ninine, properly attested and sealed, which will prove my claim."

With these words he presented a paper to Reggio, who, after examining and returning it to him, said, as if surprised at this turn of the trial,

"This instrument, my lord marquis, confirms your right beyond dispute."

"This right, then," said Jules, "I here transfer to the Lord of Osma!"

With these words he placed the paper in the hands of the count, and turning, with a hideous smile of anticipated vengeance, his vindictive glance towards Renault, sat down again, wearied with the effort he had made.

Renault listened to the statement of his deadly foe with growing horror, and heard the decision of the *Alfarez real* as if a thunderbolt had burst upon his head. But he felt not for himself. Azèlie had sunk upon her knees beside him, and was looking pleadingly, eloquently, and imploringly up into his face. He knew what she meant. He knew that all hope was past; yet he could not—he *could not strike the blow!* His hand was in his bosom upon a dagger which he had concealed there—but he could not *draw it!* Osma now advanced towards them with the confident and exulting step of triumphant wickedness. The crisis was imminent. The weapon was half drawn from its covert, when the sorceress, who had been seemingly an unconcerned spectatress of all that had passed, stepped between the count and his victims.

"Stand there! Garcia Ramarez," she cried, commandingly. "Renault, hold thy hand. My lords judges! *I* have evidence to bring in this matter. Woman," she added, addressing the trembling Ninine, and speaking in a commanding tone, that filled the house and thrilled the blood of all who heard it, "now give thy testimony, in truth, as thou hopest for mercy and fearest retribution!"

Ninine fell upon her face before the tribunal, and clasped her hands in despair, yet deprecatingly.

"Is this young man thy son? Speak truth, as thou hopest for salvation!" cried the sorceress, laying her hand upon Renault.

"No. He is the son of the Marchioness of Caronde."

"Is yonder young man thy son?" she demanded, pointing to Jules, who had already sprung to his feet.

"He is, dread being!"

"And thou didst transpose the one for the other in their childhood, and thus deceive the Marquis of Caronde? Speak truth!"

"I did," answered Ninine, irresistibly, wholly overcome at this wonderful knowledge of a secret which she had believed locked in her own bosom, not knowing that her thoughts were audible as she sat at her casement the evening before.

"'Tis false!" shouted Jules; and, in the fierceness of his indignant rage, he bounded towards her, seeking, with his mutilated arm, the grasp of a sword−hilt at his side.

Instantly recalled to the loss of his hand, he uttered a volley of curses; and, maddened even more than by the disclosure of Ninine, he literally stamped and foamed with fury at this abortive attempt to grasp his sword. Even Osma, though at such a moment, could not forbear giving him a look of malicious pleasure.

"Here's a hand to help thee, gossip Jules!" cried the shrill voice of Gobin; and, with the words, a withered

human hand fell upon the floor at the phrensied creole's feet.

He turned deadly pale, and, staggering backward, was compelled to support himself by the balustrade of the tribunal.

"What means this, signora?" asked the count of the quadroone−mother, with stern surprise.

"That I speak the truth, my lord."

"She but seeks to make her bastard son noble, my lords and judges," cried Jules, with deep wrath, turning to the tribunal. "There is no proof, my lords!"

While he was speaking, there was heard a general exclamation of surprise from the populace, occasioned by the entrance of the venerable Father Dagobert, vicar−general of the province, in his full and flowing canonical robes, who, with great dignity, slowly advanced towards the tribunal. The judges rose at his approach, and even Osma and Jules Caronde felt awed at his presence. He was accompanied by two Carmelite monks, in their tawny−coloured scapulars of serge, with girdles and sandals.

"My lord vicar, I did leave thee in Cuba a month since," said Osma, courteously; "I welcome thee back."

"My lords and judges," said the vicar−general, after the excitement caused by his presence had in a degree subsided, "I have intruded into this court to bear testimony to the evidence already delivered by this quadroone woman, which I have listened to from the anteroom!"

"Does your reverence mean to prove that she hath spoken truth?" asked Reggio, with astonishment.

"Hear my testimony, and judge! When I was on the eve of embarking for Cuba, the late Marquis of Caronde, being on his deathbed, sent for me to confess and give him absolution. In his confession, be declared, by his hopes of Divine mercy, that the young man called Renault the Quadroon was his legitimate son by the marchioness his wife, and the young man, known as Jules Caronde, was his son by the quadroone Ninine."

"'Tis a foul lie, lord vicar!" cried Jules.

There was a general murmur of pious horror at this impious assertion, while Reggio and the judges started from their seats with astonishment.

"Nay, son, thou hast forgotten thyself," said Father Dagobert, mildly. "This is to thee a bitter truth!"

"I challenge proof!" demanded the degraded young man. "St. Peter himself should not prove this damning charge on his own assertion!"

"I forgive thee, my son, for thou hast reason for bitterness. The sin be with those who have done this thing," said the vicar−general, looking sternly at Ninine, who knelt in silence and despair before the tribunal.

With these words he drew from the folds of his vesture a sealed parchment. Then addressing the judges, he continued,

"In the midst of my lord marquis's confession, respected signors, he took from his pillow this paper, sealed with his own private signet, and, saying that it was a full confession, under his own hand, of his being a party to such great injustice, desired me to make such use of it for the advantage of the true heir as, with reverence for his own memory, I should see fit; taking from me, at the same time, a most solemn promise to see his son restored to his hereditary right. The ship that was to bear me to Cuba was already under sail, and I hastened on board. I returned but half an hour since in a barque that hath arrived from the Havanna; and, hearing of this trial, hastened hither to save the innocent and confound the guilty."

Reggio received the pacquet, and, examining the seals, held it towards Jules, on whose finger was his father's signet with which the impression on the wax had been made, and demanded if that was his father's seal. The young man was silent from conviction; and Reggio, at the command of the vicar−general, broke the three seals, and read aloud the confession, written in his own hand, of the marquis, to the facts stated by the vicar−general. After accusing Ninine the Quadroone of the guilty acts charged to her, he prayed that, although, through a criminal weakness, he could not bring himself to punish her, he trusted she would be brought by a just tribunal to the punishment her crimes merited.

"There remains now," said Reggio, after the surprise created by the reading of his confession had subsided, "two points to be made clear. The first is, the authenticity of the handwriting; and the second, the truth of the confession of the accused party, Ninine. Is this your father's handwriting?" he demanded of Jules.

The young man made no reply; but its genuineness was proved by comparison, in addition to the testimony of the vicar−general, with other authentic instruments written with his own hand. "Art thou guilty of the charge of which thy late lord and master hath charged thee?" he then demanded of Ninine.

"Guilty," she gasped rather than articulated.

"Dost thou swear, in the presence of Heaven, that Renault the Quadroon is the son of the Marchioness Caronde?"

"I swear."

"Dost thou swear, in the presence of Heaven, that Jules, known as the Marquis of Caronde, is thine own son?"

"I do."

"My Lord of Osma," said Reggio, with the decision and coolness he had exhibited to the count throughout, and whom he had made to feel that himself was judge there, and not he, "this seems the clearest testimony. Have you aught to say against it?"

"Nothing, so that it bear not against the maiden, though by it I lose a slave; and," he added, ironically, turning to Jules, "my friend here a marquisate."

"Dost thou mock me?" demanded Jules, fiercely.

"Nay, being thy mother's son, thou art my slave, and I cannot mock thee," answered Osma, with derision, exulting with the malice of a bad man in the wretchedness of his late partner in guilt.

"*Thy* slave, proud count! Neither is thy slave!" cried the sorceress, sternly. "Jules Caronde, behold thy master!" she commandingly added, pointing to Renault.

Jules ground his teeth, and the count, with a laugh, turned on his heel, while the sorceress, with her withered finger still stretched towards Renault, kept her full eye upon the writhing features of the chasseur chief.

Renault had heard the testimony of the vicar−general, listened to the reading of the confession and to the subsequent opinion of the judges, with silent amazement and incredulity, which each moment gave way to the full head of proof that met his doubts: doubts not because the evidence was weak, but that the truth was too great for his belief. At length he felt the confirmation of his true position, and with proud and grateful feelings bent over Azèlie to congratulate her, forgetting, in the moment of his own triumph and honours, that she was no longer his sister. Her looks of sorrow and despair instantly recalled him to the painful consciousness that she was not included in his change of condition. She would have withdrawn herself from his manful and brotherly shelter, but he held her to his heart and whispered,

"Nay, sweet sister! I am still thy brother—still Renault to thee."

"I am thy slave, Renault!"

"Never! no, never!"

At this moment an individual, who had some time stood within hearing, wrapped in a cloak and wearing his hat low over his brows, stepped up, and, pressing Renault's hand, said, in a low tone of voice,

"I congratulate thee, my noble marquis! Thy place here is now better supplied by me," he added, receiving the hand of Azèlie from that of Renault.

"It is the opinion of this tribunal," now said Reggio, rising with dignity, "that Renault, lately called the Quadroon, is the rightful heir of the late Marquis of Caronde, and can, therefore, be no slave; but, on the other hand, is a free citizen and a noble−born gentleman."

At these words Estelle instinctively gave utterance to a cry of joy, and in the presence of the whole assembly rushed forward, half way met by Renault, and was clasped to his true and manly heart.

"S'death! This is a fair scene!" exclaimed the count, amid the general surprise. "Love hath been at hide and seek in my palace!"

"If my Lord of Osma," continued the judge, after a moment's pause, "presses the claim, Jules, lately known as the Marquis Caronde, may be clearly proven to be his slave, inasmuch as he now stands in the position the most noble Renault, marquis of Caronde, so lately occupied. Is it your pleasure to urge this point, my lord?"

Before Osma could give the reply that rose to his lips, the disgraced Jules, who for the last few moments had been fixing his eyes upon his kneeling and wretchedly guilty mother, with an expression in which was concentrated all his fierce wrath against her, suddenly leaped forward like a wild beast, and with his left hand seized her by the throat. His clutch was like that of the tiger fixed in the flesh of its victim. She became instantly livid in the face, and her eyes were forced out. The first joints of his fingers were hid by the depth and strength of his pressure. Osma caught his wrist, but the hand was immoveable, and his hold upon the throat deadly as his vindictive energy.

"By Heaven! loose thy clutch, madman," cried the count, "or I will sever thy hand like its fellow with a blow of my sword."

The only reply he received was a demoniacal and glaring stare, that convinced him madness had taken the seat of reason. He forbore the blow, and with the assistance of Renault and the *alguazil mayor* , finally succeeded in tearing him from his mother.

She was already dead! He had broken her neck.

By the command of Osma, he was instantly dragged forth from the hall to a place of confinement, while the body of the unfortunate and guilty woman was removed. It was followed by the tearful eyes both of Azèlie and Renault; for to the one she was still a mother, and to the other she had ever been as one.

The sorceress, to whom the appearance of the vicargeneral, thus controlling the subsequent progress of events, was an incident unlooked for, now approached Don Henrique, and said warmly,

"Did I not bid thee keep within the crowd? Leave the maiden to me. Osma's eye is already arrested by thy guise!"

The young man obeyed; and, when the count approached to demand who he was, was already lost in the throng, while the sorceress remained by Azèlie, sustaining her with one arm about her waist. Ere the count spoke to the maiden, as it appeared to be his intention to do, he suddenly addressed the Father Dagobert, who was standing near by, now a spectator only.

"Hast thou, my lord vicar," asked he, sarcastically, "any confessions touching this gentle quadroone, that I may not take her to mine own palace as my slave?"

"None, my lord, save those I fear thou wilt with sorrow make in thy death−hour, if thou doest the wrong thou contemplatest in this matter," answered the vicar−general, with fearless reproof.

"I am my own conscience−keeper, priest," retorted the count, with haughty displeasure, turning from him towards Azèlie. "Fiend!" he said, as his eye fell on the shielding form of the sorceress, "thou art ever crossing my path like an evil omen. Transfer the maiden to me, and stand aside!"

"Touch her not, Garcia Ramarez!"

"I will have thee seized."

"I laugh at thy power."

"Resign thy charge!"

"Wouldst thou receive her as thy slave or thy mistress, noble governor?" she scornfully demanded, without moving.

"Is she not my slave now?"

"Ay, *more* to thee than thy slave, Garcia of Osma," she replied, while the deepest meaning seemed to speak out at her eyes, as they rested upon his face.

"What is thy meaning, woman," he demanded, with the quick suspicion of some covert design.

"Thou shalt soon learn!"

She then waved her hand commandingly towards the tribunal, to the immediate actors in the scene before it, and to the whole assembly. Having by this act drawn the attention of every eye in the vast hall, she drew herself to her utmost height, and rested her gaze full upon the face of the Count of Osma, with something of the expression with which the inquisitor watches the countenance of his victim while he is inflicting the torture.

"My Lord of Osma! listen to the story of a Spanish knight I have to tell thee. 'Tis eighteen years ago that a youthful noble of Castile was taken prisoner by the Moors and carried captive to Morocco. The emperor compelled him to labour in the gardens of his palace; and his occupation was to draw water from the marble fountains to wet the plants that grew around the latticed windows of the harem. The emperor had an only daughter. I see thou art listening to me, governor!"

"Go on," said Osma, with interest.

"She was fair as the lily when the snow−cloud lingers between it and the sun; as gentle as the dove; as beautiful in limb as the antelope; and as fleet as the mountain roe. Her voice was the rival of the nightingale; and her spirits were gay and happy as the heart of the morning lark when he mounts upward, singing, as he goes, to welcome the sun. Her hair was jetty as night; and from the shadow of the curls that floated above her brow, her eyes shone out like twin−stars, inviting to a heaven of love. Dost thou listen, Count of Osma?"

"I do; I pray thee go on!"

"From her lattice she saw the youthful knight, and he found favour in her eyes for his beauty and misfortunes. From day to day she gazed on him unseen, till love at length stole away her heart. She sought him in the garden and told her love. Evening after evening they met in the olive−bower of Asmil; and to the falling of distant fountains, the music of the nightingale, and the sighing of zephyrs laden with perfumes, they loved, and discoursed of love, even until the tints of the morning tinged the rosy orient. At length the young princess secretly became the bride of the young Castilian knight, none save the priest of Mohammed and her faithful slave being present. She now proposed his escape, and to fly with him. The hour came for the midnight flight, and *he betrayed her!* The mourning Zillah was left desolate! The husband of her hand and heart, the idol of her soul, had proved false and unworthy the pearl of her princely love! Dost thou listen, count?"

He silently waved his hand for her to proceed, as if he dared not trust himself to speak, while the most absorbing and anxious interest was apparent in every feature.

"From that hour she drooped. Her faithful slave at length proposed that she should seek him in his own lordly halls, accuse him of his perfidy, avenge her wrongs by his presence, and then die at his feet.

"They reached, at length, the shores of Castile, and came one stormy night to the castle of her treacherous lord. It beetled over the sea, was crowned with majestic towers, and encompassed by high and stately walls. From every window and casement blazed a light. It was a festal night, and on St. Michael's eve! They landed weary, yet full of hope, and entered the wide gates of the castle with a crowd of guests. They moved on, and came to a vast hall hung with banners and armour. Knights and nobles, dames and maidens, were gathered there, and every eye was fixed with interest upon a group standing before an altar. She saw that it was a bridal group. The priest was reading aloud the service, and the bridegroom and bride were standing before him, with hand clasped in hand. In the former Zillah beheld him she sought. Rushing forward, she shrieked, `my husband!' and fell at his feet senseless. The ceremony ceased; but the bridegroom, instantly recognising in the princess his wife, sternly commanded his servants to bear off the mad woman, and cast her forth into the storm, and then he calmly bade the rite proceed. Dost thou hear the tale, my lord?" she asked, fixing upon him her full, dark gaze.

He was silent; but, with compressed lips and glassy eyeballs, kept his eyes upon her, as if they were fixed by a spell.

"Her faithful slave," continued the sorceress, "bore her from the outer gate, where the menials had cast her, to a hut on the forest's edge. There, before morning, she gave birth to an infant daughter, and left it her own spirit. The poor peasants dug a grave for her, and she was buried the next night, alone and unwept, save by her devoted slave, who then took the child to the castle of its father, that he might take pity on it; for she feared the innocent would perish in her arms. As she approached the gate, he came forth with horse, and hound, and horn. With the child in her arms, she stood in his path. He recognised the slave, and she told him the fate of his wife, and implored him to cherish her child. The sight of the infant inflamed him with rage and shame as he rode in the midst of his friends, and, with a curse upon them both, he set his hounds upon her to hunt her down. She escaped from them barely with her life to a lonely hamlet. There an assassin sent by him found her; but by her arts and power she escaped, and bound his soul to fear; and he spared the child. There long she hid herself, and became as a mother to this hapless daughter of a Moorish princess, and heiress of a noble Castilian name. I see thou dost listen to my tale, Sir Count!

"When the babe was two years old, she took the long−maturing resolution to avenge its mother's death, even with the life of its cruel father. She sought him in his castle, but learned he was on a foreign battle−field. She followed him from land to land, and from sea to sea, and at length took ship for Cuba, whither she heard he had sailed. But she was taken captive by a pirate ere she reached the island, brought to this port, and exposed openly for sale in the market−place. Fearing lest the child should be taken from her, she called it her own. At length, the mistress of the governor, Ninine the Quadroone, became her purchaser; and by−and−by, struck with the child's beauty, attempted the life of the supposed mother, that she might make it her own, contemplating the wealth and consideration her charms would bring her when she should grow into the bloom of girlhood. Her victim, however, escaped the death designed for her, and, feeling secure of the child's safety for the present, returned to her own country to gather wealth for this beloved daughter of her deceased mistress. But slavery and disaster detained her from the beloved child until a few days before thy arrival hither, Count of Osma, when she found all her watchful care was necessary to save her from wicked persecutors, whom her unfolding beauties had made enemies to her peace and honour. I have now done. Does the tale interest thee? Does it please thine ear?"

Osma continued for a moment gazing upon her after she had ceased speaking; while the Moor Sulem, no less interested in her tale, showed by his countenance he had found the key to her mystery. The count, then starting, as if from a fearful dream, caught her by both wrists, and cried, with an impetuosity that was fearful, while his eyes, averted from her, were fixed upon the beautiful, pale, wondering face of Azèlie,

"Tell me, fearful woman! Is this my child—is she my daughter? Speak!"

"Behold her mother's picture!" she answered, taking from Azèlie the locket she had before given to her, and exhibiting to him the likeness of a lovely Moorish princess in the richest costume of her country.

He gazed upon it with a look of startling recognition, and then glanced from it to the face of the maiden. To every eye the resemblance was perfect.

"Didst thou not once give that miniature to Zillah, thy Moorish bride?" asked the sorceress, sternly, seeing that he evidently bore reluctant testimony in his heart to the truth of her tale.

"If it be the same, it has a miniature of myself within it."

"Give it me," cried the sorceress.

She touched a spring, and the locket opened, exposing within a likeness of a young cavalier, to which the Count of Osma still bore a striking resemblance.

He made no reply, but rapidly walked the space in front of the tribunal in troubled thought, while shame and disappointment, rather than remorse and paternal love, kindled his cheek. His troubled eye rested often on Estelle, pale and almost lifeless in the arms of Renault. To acknowledge Azèlie as his daughter would be to repudiate Estelle. His love gave excuse for his undiminished passion for the Quadroone, and he came to a characteristic decision.

"Thy story is false, thou Moorish impostor! a stale invention, begotten by thy ambition to see thy offspring received among the noble. Ho, guards! Seize her! Bear her off, and answer for her forthcoming with your heads! *Algauzil mayor!* I commit this maiden to your custody! If thou valuest thy neck, see to her safety. This masquerade hath lasted full long. I will now play the governor and judge. Sit back with thy fellows, Signor Reggio. I will take my seat again, and, 'fore Heaven! my authority with it!"

"*Garcia!*" cried a deep voice, that made the count pause, as if chilled to marble, with one foot resting on the lower step of the forum to which he was in the act of ascending.

"*Garcia!*" again spoke the same voice, in tones of warning and reproof.

The count trembled.

"Garcia!" a third time menacingly spoke Ihuahua, to whom all eyes were now turned.

"Who calls?" asked the count, with a deadly paleness on his cheeks and lips, while he seemed as if he would sink into the ground.

"Thy brother!" answered the venerable warrior; and, advancing near, he threw off his loose robes, and stood before him in the costume of an elderly Spanish cavalier.

"Does the sea give back its dead?" cried Osma, with fear.

"Dost thou remember me?"

"Thou art my elder brother, whom I believed dead!" he cried, with horror and despair.

"Thy *will* was surely my death, Garcia, but Heaven gave me escape by the very wickedness of the means thou didst employ to execute it. More gold than thou didst promise Rascas bought him from thee. He saved my life and secured my escape, returning to thee his own report of the execution of thy commands."

"'Tis false! I sought not thy death!"

"Behold the instrument of thy intended crime," cried the sorceress, directing the attention of all to Rascas, who leaned upon two men in front of the crowd. "He hath long since confessed all to me!"

"Ha! Rascas!" cried Osma, with delight, seeing him present. "Bear truly thy testimony!"

"Thou wilt little like it," answered Rascas, faintly, but ironically. "I obeyed thy commands all but the death, and by chance finding a dead fisherman on the beach, severed his head and carried it to thee for thy brother's, for which thou gavest me three hundred golden moidores—a rare price for a fisherman's head! It was on St. Michael's Day I brought thee the gory sight."

"Villain, thou hast destroyed thyself for this treachery," cried Osma, fiercely. "Am I bearded? Am I baited? Are both hell and heaven armed against me, that I am thus held at bay by ye all?"

"Garcia Ramarez," said Ihuahua, or rather Don Louis, count of Osma, as he had shown himself to be, "thou art bayed at by none save the bloodhounds of thine own guilty conscience! I am rejoiced to see thee feel! Yet methinks a brother come to thee after twenty years' absence should receive a better welcome than that which sits upon thy dark and turbid brow! I am indeed thy elder brother Louis! whom, taking advantage of on a sick bed, thou didst imprison three years in the lowest dungeons of my own castle, with yonder assassin for my jailer; at whose hands, when at length thou wouldst have slain me, I received more mercy than at thine! From Spain I sailed for the New World, disgusted with the land that bore upon its green bosom a monster like thyself! With the feelings of an anchorite, I buried myself in the wilderness of America, but from circumstances was at length induced to throw off my solitary life and unite myself with its simple inhabitants. I married the daughter of the prince of the tribe to which I attached myself, and at his death became its chief. I had quite forgotten thee and thy crimes, when, three years ago, I heard of the attempted conquest, by the Spaniards, of this province, and heard also that Garcia, count of Osma, was their leader. From that moment I was filled with a desire to behold thee, resolved, if I found thee a reformed and penitent man, to leave thee to the possession of thy wickedly−gotten rank and title; but if the lapse of years had made thee gray in iniquity, to pluck thy honours from thy brow, and degrade thee to thy merited infamy and contempt."

The voice of Don Louis was elevated at the close to a stern and indignant tone. Garcia Ramarez listened to him while he was speaking with a set lip, bent brow, flashing eyes, a bright red spot on either cheek, and a nervous contraction of the fingers of his hands, that betrayed the fearful pitch of emotion to which he was inwardly moved. When he had ended, he drew in a long, hard breath, as if he would swallow down the feeling that swelled in his throat, and said through his teeth, in a low tone of the most ironical bitterness and scorn,

"And *how* has Louis Ramarez found his brother Garcia?"

"A chief devil in all but power," answered Don Louis, in a tone of horror and detestation.

"I will see whether I have power or not," cried Osma, bursting into a volcano of irresistible fury and vehemency, while his inflamed visage and burning eyes, with the passionate dilation and expansion of his whole form and figure, made him appear the living representative of the arch−fiend himself. Every eye that looked upon him, and witnessed the effect of his demoniacal phrensy, quailed with wondering dread. "If I am not the Count of Osma," continued he, "I am at least the governor of this province, and have the power to punish my enemies. Ho! Monterey! La Torre! my guards! Seize this Count of Osma and bind him! By the red rood! brother Louis, thou shalt find I have power here! and no man, save Don Alphonso, prince of Castile, from whom I received it, shall deprive me of it. Seize and load him with chains! How! Do ye hesitate?" he demanded, seeing the men−at−arms, after advancing a step, stop and look with surprise and alarm towards the windows that opened upon the corridor.

His own quick, fierce glance followed theirs, and he beheld with consternation, entering through every door−like casement, a file of Indian warriors, armed with spears and battle−axes, led by the young chief Opelousa, who, a short while before, had retired from the hall, and now reappeared dressed like a Spanish noble, save that the war−eagle's plume still towered above his head, in honour of the proud maternal blood that mingled with his no less noble Castilian current. In an instant of time, ere Osma could speak or move from the spot where this extraordinary event surprised him, the hall of judgment was filled with grim and painted warriors, who ranged themselves by the sides and in front of the tribunal, in stern and menacing silence, overawing the Spanish soldiery.

"Garcia," said Don Louis, with natural fraternal feeling, after surveying upon his features the effect of this sudden reverse of power, "I would forgive thee if I believed contrition could find a home in thy heart. But Heaven hath doomed thee to destruction, and sent upon thee madness, the incurable madness of habitual iniquity. Thy power here, as well as thy name and title, must now end! Iniquity and crime have prospered with thee during long years in their pursuit. But because thou hast been suffered to go on for a time unchecked, think not the vengeance of Heaven slumbers and will never waken! Wickedness is sometimes permitted to exist by infinite wisdom, that the sudden destruction of its author may not involve the innocent in his punishment. Thy lovely child has, in thine own case, been thy guardian angel, and till now arrested the suspended bolt from thy head! It hath at length fallen upon thee! but not until Heaven hath provided her another protector in the noble youth whose manly arm is sustaining her in this trying hour. It becomes a mortal like me to imitate Heaven. For her sake, I will give thee half of my estate if thou choosest to return to Spain. I will also withhold my attack upon thy forces here—for are they

not all my countrymen?— if thou wilt now resign thy government."

"To thee?" demanded Osma, degraded yet still haughty.

"It is already mine! One thousand warriors, such as you see here, whose will is my will, and who need but the sign of a lifted finger to fall upon thy soldiery, are within thy city's walls! Five hundred Louisianians also have possession of its gates and barriers!"

"Were the leaves of thy forests warriors, and these to a man within the town, and filling my palace and council−chamber, I would not give up my power without a struggle. It shall never be said Garcia of Osma, or Garcia Ramarez, if thou wilt have it so, brother, ever gave up a fortress without striking a blow for its deliverance. I have lived a warrior, and I will die with a weapon in my hand! Naught but death or the command of my prince shall divest me of my authority!"

"Then resign it with what grace thou hast remaining, tyrant, for thou wilt soon be divested of it," cried the gallant Montejo, entering the hall, bearing aloft a silken banner of the house of Castile, and approaching the tribunal. Behind him followed a pursuivant, in the gorgeous apparel and armour of his rank and office.

"Montejo! Traitor!" shouted Osma, as he approached; and then, seeing the pursuivant, he exclaimed with surprise, "How is this? the king's herald, Olivier de Vezin! What brought thee out of Spain? To witness our disgrace?"

"Know, Count of Osma—" interrupted Montejo.

"My name is Garcia Ramarez," said the governor, with irony.

"Know then, Garcia Ramarez," continued Montejo, with some surprise, "that, hearing of thy imprisonment of the prince Don Henrique, who voyaged with thee hither, his rank disguised to all save thyself and a few friends, I fled in the yacht which was to have borne him beyond the reach of thy vindictive power, to demand of the Governor of Cuba aid against thee. Ere I had got to sea, our ship fell in with a brigantine bound hither from Spain, having at Havanna taken on board his reverence the vicar−general. On board this vessel also came passenger the noble Olivier de Vezin, his Catholic majesty's royal herald at arms. He is present with me here, and will deliver his own message and proclamation."

Thus speaking, Montejo drew back a step for the royal herald to advance, when, recognising beneath his disguise Don Henrique standing beside Azèlie, who, with Renault and the sorceress, were deeply intent upon the development of events, he, with a cry of surprise and grateful joy, cast himself into his embrace.

The herald, commanding the attention of the assembly and tribunal, proclaimed, after the usual ceremonial preliminaries, "That Providence, in its wisdom, having removed Don Alphonso, prince of Castile and the Asturias, Infante of Spain, and heir to the throne of Spain and Castile, by death, without issue, it was the will of his Catholic majesty that his royal and−beloved son, the young prince, Don Carlos Henrique, of Aragon, now Prince of Castile, heir and successor to the throne, do speedily return to Spain from his voluntary banishment, incurred," continued the herald, "in dread of the church, to which royal wisdom would have consecrated him, lest by his marriage, the realm, in another generation, should be torn by civil dissensions between rival houses! But Heaven, in its inscrutable ways, having put an end to the elder branch of the royal line, the commands and statutes relating to the younger brother, Don Carlos Henrique, are revoked; and he is hereby, and henceforward ever will be, received and acknowledged as Prince of Castile, and heir to the throne of Spain and the Indies. God and Spain! *Viva* the royal Prince of Castile!"

Garcia Ramarez heard this proclamation with an expression on his countenance that was indescribable. There was a smile just perceptible on his mouth, and a triumphant expansion of the pupil of the eye as he looked up and moved it round upon each face separately. Don Henrique watched him, and, together witl. Renault and the sorceress, understood what was passing in his heart. His glance finally settled on Montejo.

"Didst thou not say but now, traitorous Montejo, that it were a grace to resign my power, lest it should be taken from me?" he asked, with malignant triumph.

"I did."

"This proclamation of De Vezin, methinks, doth not revoke my commission. When this beardless Prince of Castile, whom Heaven would have on the throne to make of the realm a royal masquerade—when this new Infante shall bid me resign the power conferred on me by his brother Don Alphonso, then will I obey; but thou, traitor, shalt not live to see it. To arms, Spaniards! To arms! Sound the battle−cry," he shouted, suddenly waving his sword, and sending his loud voice far into the Place d'Armes. "Lancers! dragoons! and men−at−arms! Spain

and honour calls on you to do battle for your conquests!"

"Hold, Spaniards!" shouted the voice of Don Henrique, casting aside his disguise. "Behold in me Don Carlos, the Prince of Castile! I command your allegiance and obedience! Garcia of Ramarez! you may well stand appalled! I am no spirit, but a living man, whom Heaven hath raised up to be the instrument of its vengeance. Thy power is ended! Thou hast filled the measure of thy crimes, and justice and vengeance wait for their victim!"

"Gobin 'll have to be gov'nor again," said the fool, who had crept upon the forum unobserved, and now stood upon a chair of the tribunal.

"Thus do I mock ye all! Ha, ha, ha!" cried the count, through his set teeth; and with a devilish and most horrible laugh of mingled derision and despair, he threw himself forward upon his sword point, and fell pierced through the body upon the floor of the councilchamber.

A few words will close the tale.

The love and virtue of Azèlie were rewarded by the hand of the prince, to whom, as granddaughter to the Moorish emperor, she was nearly equal in rank. When afterward, as reigning princess of Castile, she presided over the court of her capital, she was distinguished not less for her beauty than for her virtues, with which she won the hearts of all around her; and while she lived, Don Henrique never regretted that he had bestowed his hand and princely coronet where he had given his heart. But she lived not to reach the throne; and when, at length, Don Henrique, under the designation of Carlos IV., seated himself upon it, another and less lovely sat by his side.

Renault also, after the mourning for her father was over, became united to Estelle. The gentle and melancholy beauty of the Marchioness of Caronde, as well as the noble bearing of the young marquis, were not forgotten in Paris, even in the early part of the present generation, by the surviving courtiers of the time of Louis XIV.

Don Louis, the Count of Osma, having no reason to dispossess Spain of the province of Louisiana by attacking her troops, returned with his warriors to the forests, to which habit and disgust of the world had attached him, and died in old age, wept and honoured by his adopted tribe; while his son, whom he had educated with the object of one day inheriting the home and titles of his ancestors, sailed for Spain with Don Henrique, where the castle of Osma received him as its rightful heir and master. Don Henrique took the Moor with him, and thence sent him to Morocco.

The sorceress, whom her skill in Moorish astrology, as well as the knowledge which circumstances, improved by her own sagacity and subtlety, had enabled to play such a mysterious and extraordinary part in the foregoing scenes, and hold such an influence over the minds, not only of the vicious, but the virtuous, became the faithful and devoted slave of Azèlie, as she had been of Zillah, where, at length, she died in Castile. The grieved princess, her mistress, erected a tablet beside a mausoleum, which her filial piety had built above her mother's obscure grave, and long afterward mourned her death. Rascas recovered from his wounds through the healing balm administered to him by the sorceress, and ended his life on the gallows.

Gobin was taken to France under the especial protection of Renault, and being by him presented at court, without the aid of his friend Boviedo, was long known at Versailles as the rarest jester and wittiest fool of his time. Boviedo expired suddenly on horseback, not long after the death of his master, while in the act of blowing his trumpet in honour of the arrival of a new governor; thus dying, as it were, in harness, as became a doughty Aragonese trumpeter.

Reggio and his council were left in charge of the affairs of the province until Don Henrique sent out another governor. Those whom Osma had imprisoned were liberated. The remaining five of the Seven Frères became faithful supporters of the Spanish government, Charleval himself being made by Don Henrique colonel of a regiment of creoles, which he formed from the chasseurs and *courreurs du bois*, and was also created a perpetual *regidor* of the superior council.

"*Thus end I this* BOKE; *for as much as in wrytyng of the same my* penne *is worn, myn hande wery, and myn eyne dimmed with overmoche looking on the whit paper*." THE END.