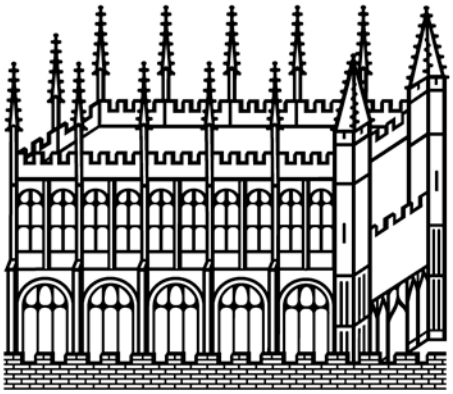

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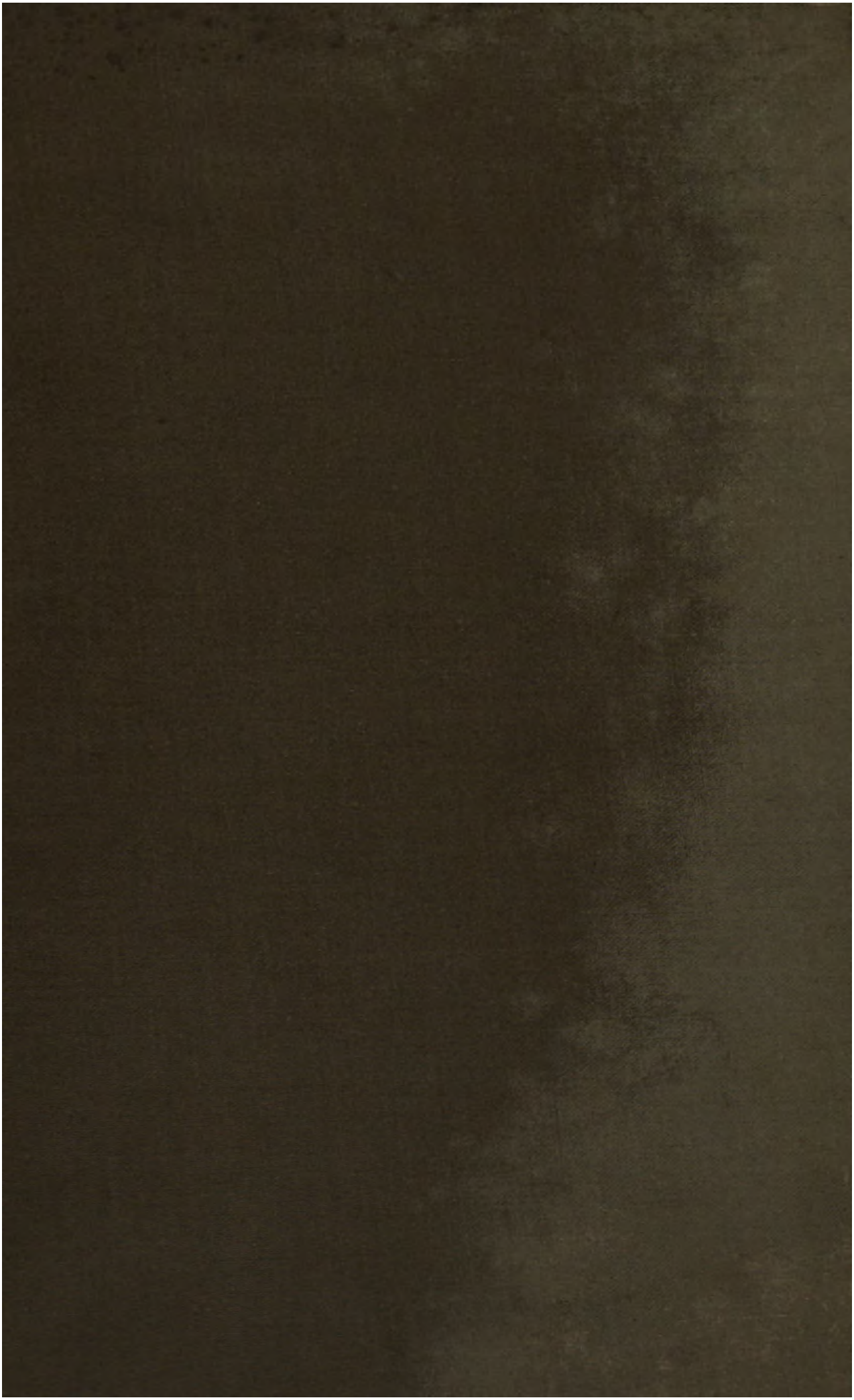

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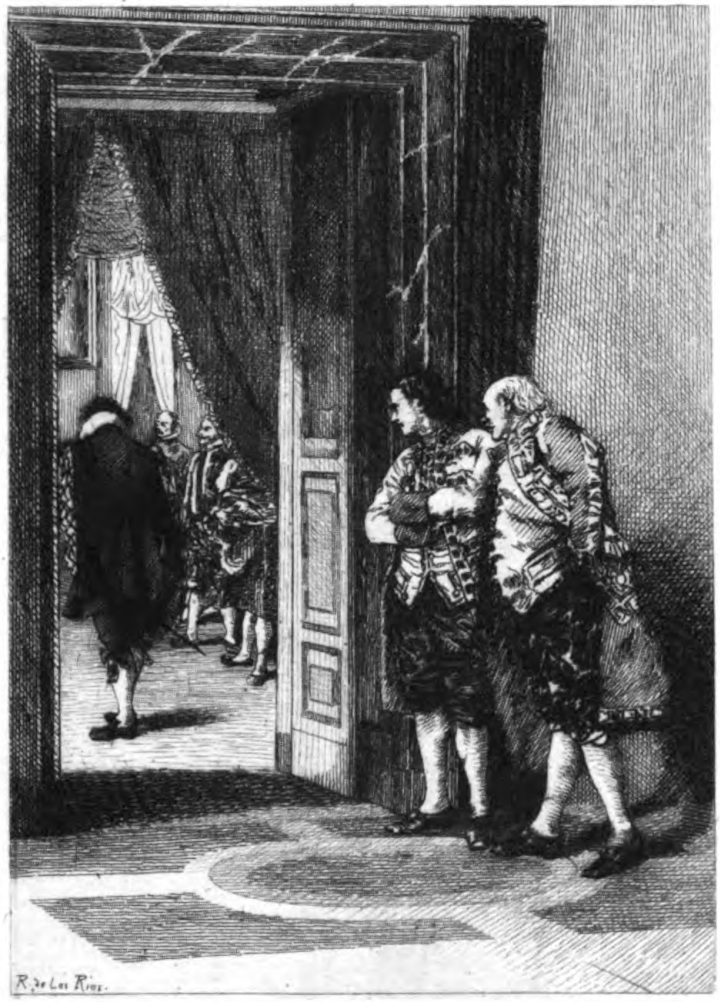
R. de Los Rios.

ALAIN RENÉ LE SAGE

THE ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS

OF SANTILLANE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY TOBIAS SMOLLETT

PRECEDED BY

A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICE OF LE SAGE

BY GEORGE SAINTSBURY

With Twelve Original Etchings by R. de Los Rios

IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. I.

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THE AUTHOR'S DECLARATION.

THERE are some people in the world so mischievous as not to read a work without applying the vicious or ridiculous characters it may happen to contain to eminent or popular individuals. I protest publicly against the pretended discovery of any such likenesses. My purpose was to represent human life historically as it exists: God forbid I should hold myself out as a portrait-painter. Let not the reader then take to himself public property; for if he does, he may chance to throw an unlucky light on his own character: as Phædrus expresses it, *Stultè nudabit animi conscientiam.*

Certain physicians of Castille, as well as of France, are sometimes a little too fond of trying the bleeding and lowering system on their patients. Vices, their patrons, and their dupes, are of every day's occurrence. To be sure, I have not always adopted Spanish manners with scrupulous exactness; and in the

instance of the players at Madrid, those who know their disorderly modes of living may reproach me with softening down their coarser traits: but this I have been induced to do from a sense of delicacy, and in conformity with the manners of my own country.

GIL BLAS TO THE READER.

READER! hark you, my friend! Do not begin the story of my life till I have told you a short tale.

Two students travelled together from Penafiel to Salamanca. Finding themselves tired and thirsty, they stopped by the side of a spring on the road. While they were resting there, after having quenched their thirst, by chance they espied on a stone near them, even with the ground, part of an inscription, in some degree effaced by time, and by the tread of flocks in the habit of watering at that spring. Having washed the stone, they were able to trace these words in the dialect of Castille: *Aqui està encerrada el alma del licenciado Pedro Garçias.* "Here lies interred the soul of the licentiate Peter Garcias."

Hey-day! roars out the younger, a lively, heedless fellow, who could not get on with his deciphering for laughter: This is a good joke indeed: "Here lies interred the soul." . . . A soul interred! . . . I should like to know the whimsical author of this ludicrous epitaph. With this sneer he got up to go

away. His companion, who had more sense, said within himself: Underneath this stone lies some mystery; I will stay, and see the end of it. Accordingly, he let his comrade depart, and without loss of time began digging round about the stone with his knife till he got it up. Under it he found a purse of leather, containing a hundred ducats, with a card on which was written these words in Latin: "Whoever thou art who hast wit enough to discover the meaning of the inscription, I appoint thee my heir, in the hope thou wilt make a better use of my fortune than I have done!" The student, out of his wits at the discovery, replaced the stone in its former position, and set out again on the Salamanca road with the soul of the licentiate in his pocket.

Now, my good friend and reader, no matter who you are, you must be like one or the other of these two students. If you cast your eye over my adventures without fixing it on the moral concealed under them, you will derive very little benefit from the perusal: but if you read with attention you will find that mixture of the useful with the agreeable, so successfully prescribed by Horace.

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ALAIN RENÉ LESAGE.

A CRITIC of whom I desire to speak with all respect —the Rector of Lincoln—has said that "mere style cannot confer immortality upon any book apart from its contents." The context from which this remark is taken deals with the *Provinciales* and *Pensées* of Pascal, concerning which Mr. Pattison thinks that the former are but an ephemeral pamphlet, the latter are for all time. So startling a judgment makes the reader a little inclined to dogmatize hyperbolically in his turn, and to say that there is nothing perennial but style. This, indeed, would be merely running from one extreme to another; nevertheless, there is more truth in it than in the other exaggeration, for the attitude of men's minds changes singularly, from one time to another, with regard to any "contents;" it changes very little with regard to the expression of those contents. This is, perhaps, nowhere seen more clearly than in the case of very voluminous authors whose works are preserved in unequal remembrance.

When such cases are examined, it will generally be found that the reason for the preference which posterity has expressed has been almost entirely due to literary merit. Between the merit of the contents of Defoe's different novels there is not very much to choose; yet no one who speaks with competence will question that the literary art of *Robinson Crusoe* is, on the whole, far superior to that of *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*. So, in the not wholly dissimilar case of our present author, the contents of *Estévanille Gonzales* and *The Bachelor of Salamanca* are not much less interesting, if they are less interesting at all, than those of *Le Diable Boiteux* and *Gil Blas*, while *Guzman d'Alfarache* has perhaps a positive advantage over much of the latter. But Lesage was never so well inspired from the literary point of view as in the two works which have been justly deemed his masterpieces, and in this lies the justice of the selection.

The reasons of the inequality of Lesage's work are to be sought in the same cause which, in all probability, accounts for such inequality in all cases. Where men never write below themselves, it will almost invariably be found that their work has either been thrown off in the heyday of youth, or, if spread over a long course of years, has been written for pleasure merely; at any rate, without any immediate pressure of want. Pegasus, as one

of the greatest of English writers in our time has put it, must, in the unhappier cases, be too frequently spurred, and will not always answer to the spur. Now the long life of the author of *Gil Blas* was anything but one of ease. He had few patrons, and was not of a temper to have many. Literature, unfortunately, was stick, crutch and all to him, and he was unlucky in his law affairs, a fact which probably accounts for the continual satire he pours on law and lawyers. Yet, by birth, at any rate, he belonged to the profession. His father, Claude Lesage, was at once Advocate, Notary and *Greffier* (Registrar) of the Royal Court of the small district of Rhuys, the out-of-the-way peninsula which bounds the Morbihan on its eastern side. Alain René was born on the 8th of May, 1668 (his mother being by name Jeanne Brenugat), at Sarzeau, the chief town of the district, which, it may be well to remind readers, was also the locality of the Abbey of St. Gildas de Rhuys, the very uneasy refuge of Abelard after his calamities. It is not a little characteristic of the peculiar bent of Lesage's genius, that it shows hardly any local colour, though Brittany has, of all French provinces, left most mark on her children as a rule, and though Lesage's birthplace lay in perhaps the most striking part of the Duchy. But Lesage left his native province young; he never, so far as I know, returned to it, and he very

probably had unpleasant associations connected therewith. The father's triple office was profitable enough, but he died when his son was young, and the property he left him was dissipated or embezzled by a dishonest guardian, a personage of frequent occurrence in those days, and one whom Lesage smites again and again in his novels. That the boy was at school at Vannes, the neighbouring episcopal city, until 1686, is known; but this is almost all that is known about his youth, and then he disappears for some eight years. It has been supposed that he may have held some small post in the financial department of the province, or that he may have continued his studies at Paris, the latter being by far the more probable hypothesis. Anyhow, in 1692 he was admitted as an advocate at the Bar of Paris. But he apparently got no clients, and when he was six-and-twenty he took to himself a wife, Marie Elisabeth Huyard. She is said to have been remarkably beautiful, and they lived for many years together, it would seem, happily enough; but she had no fortune, she was only a tradesman's daughter, and his marriage can hardly have added to the young lawyer's resources. Falling in with an old schoolfellow, Danchet, who had already made some mark in literature, he was recommended by him to seek the same refuge for the destitute. His *coup d'essai*, a translation of the letters of Aristænetus,

which appeared in 1695 (he had been married in August or September, 1694), has made his biographers and critics rather merry. He certainly might have done better, but it is doubtful whether the oddity of the choice—comparatively worthless as the book is—struck that age as it strikes ours. The indiscriminate reign of the classics, early and late, good and bad, genuine and spurious, was not yet over, and many a young man of letters had made his *début* with work not intrinsically better. Lesage, however, had no luck—he had not much at any period during his life—and the book fell flat. A more useful adviser in every sense, however, fell to his lot in the person of the Abbé de Lyonne. Lyonne not merely gave him, or procured him, a pension or annuity of six hundred livres—no despicable assistance to modest housekeeping at that time, when living at Paris was extraordinarily cheap—but recommended him to study Spanish literature, of which he himself was a great lover. Three-quarters of a century before, this literature had been greatly admired and largely borrowed from in France, but the age of the great writers of Louis the Thirteenth's time and his son's had put it out of fashion. Lesage began by simple translation or adaptation, and, as in the case of Aristænetus, he was not too fortunate in his models. In drama, at least, he did not go far wrong, choosing Rojas, Lope

de Vega and Calderon for his originals, and producing plays which were sometimes acted. But a version of the worthless *New Don Quixote* of Avellaneda was sorry work for the future author of *Gil Blas*. The play which he conveyed from Calderon —*Don César Ursin*—had some merit; and in 1707, being then hard upon his fortieth year, he scored two great successes. His little piece of *Crispin Rival de son Maître* appeared, and was loudly and deservedly applauded, while the *Diable Boiteux* obtained still greater favour. It ran through several editions in the year, and many legends of the usual character are told about its success. The most characteristic, and probably the truest, is that Boileau found his footboy with a copy, and declared that if such a book stayed a night in his house the boy should not stay another. Lesage was already hailed as a Molière Redivivus, and this of itself was sufficient to irritate Boileau in his sour old age. But it would probably have been sufficient for that vigorous but narrow critic that the book was not in any style which he had himself recommended, or which he could understand; for Boileau was the incarnation of the merely French spirit of literature in its most contracted form; Lesage, as we shall see, was not specially or primarily French at all except in his wit, the very quality which the author of the Namur Ode was least qualified to appreciate.

Lesage, however, had not yet arrived at his apogee. Despite his theatrical successes he was never on very good terms with the players of the regular theatre, and a small piece—*Les Etrennes*—was refused by them at the beginning of 1708. The author took it back, set to work on it, and refashioned it into *Turcaret*, the best French comedy, beyond all doubt, of the eighteenth century, and probably the best of its kind to be found outside the covers of Molière's works. It is in connection with *Turcaret*, the success of which was very great, though the powerful class offended by it did not conceal their displeasure, that one of the few personal and characteristic anecdotes we possess of Lesage is told. He had been asked to read his play to a fashionable company at the Duchess of Bouillon's, and, being delayed by law business, was late. The Duchess—let it be remembered that it was some half-century before all Paris interested itself in the quarrel of two "miserable scribblers who live in garrets"—rebuked him with some asperity for keeping her an hour waiting. "Eh bien, Madame," replied the poet; "je vous ai fait perdre une heure, je vais vous en faire gagner deux;" and he put his manuscript in his pocket, and, resisting all entreaties, went away. The anecdote rests on the authority of Collé, who, in such a case, is fairly trustworthy, and it probably explains why

Lesage's life was one of struggle. Though his independence was, most likely, natural and usual, it is said to have been made more touchy on this particular occasion by the fact that he had lost the case which had detained him. However this may be, his dissatisfaction with the *Maison de Molière* soon assumed a still more active form, and for five-and-twenty years the best living comic dramatist of France gained his bread chiefly by writing for the stage of the *Foire*, the irregular but licensed booths set up during fair time. Lesage is said to have written no less than twenty-four farce-operettas, as they may perhaps best be termed, for these boards, and the number of his works for them alone, or in collaboration, is sometimes put at sixty-four and sometimes at a hundred and one. It was about the time that he took to this occupation, in which he was kept in company by not a few writers of talent, if not of genius, notably by Piron, that *Gil Blas* appeared in 1715. This, his greatest work, was scarcely so popular as *Le Diable Boiteux*, and it was long before it was finished, while the number of editions during the thirty years of the author's life was by comparison surprisingly small. Among the few positive statements that we have about Lesage's literary gains is one to the effect that a hundred pistoles had been advanced to him as prepayment for the last volume

several years before it was completed. It does not of course follow that this was the whole price. The two first parts, as has been said, appeared in 1715, the third in 1724, the fourth in 1735. Thus Lesage evidently took time about his greatest work, though he was compelled to do much else in a hurry. His productions were sufficiently miscellaneous, though most of them had to do with the vein of literary ore which had been so fortunately indicated to him. A version of *Guzman d'Alfarache*, much altered and improved; *l'Histoire d'Estévanille Gonzales* and *Le Bachelier de Salamanque*, were the chief of these, while he also translated the *Orlando Inamorato*. A curious collection of imaginary letters, called the *Valise Trouvée*, and some minor works, came from his pen; besides which he was at the close of his life occupied on a collection of anecdotes which appeared after his death. He also superintended a collection of his *Théâtre de la Foire*, as he had previously one of his regular pieces. One work not yet mentioned, the "Life and Adventures of M. de Beauchêne, Captain of Flibustiers," brings him curiously near to Defoe, especially as in this, not less than in the English cases, a groundwork of actual memoirs is said or supposed to have existed. From his children Lesage had both trouble and profit. The eldest was bred a lawyer, but became an actor and was disowned by his father. The

second took orders, obtained a canonry at Boulogne, and became the mainstay of the family. Worn out by seventy years of life and thirty or forty of literary work, Lesage about 1740 retired with his wife and daughter to the city where his son lived, and spent there his remaining years, dying on the 17th of November, 1747. A very curious and interesting letter from the Count de Tressan is in existence, giving an account of him in his very last days. Tressan is known to all students of French literature as having laboriously dressed the stories of the Chansons de Gestes in eighteenth-century garments for the readers of the *Biblothèque des Romans*—to which act we owe Wieland's *Oberon*—and as having, in ignorance of the existence of the original, bravely extemporized a *Chanson de Roland*, which stands, perhaps, in more absurd contrast to the true Chanson than any other conjectural restoration does to any other original. But he had a real interest in literature, and seems to have been amiable enough at this time. He was a military officer of high standing in the days of Fontenoy, and after that battle was for some time at Boulogne, where he used to visit Lesage. "The old man (he was then about seventy-seven) was," says Tressan, "in a state of half torpor till midday, but he then revived, and was fairly in possession of his faculties till sundown"—a fact from which the philosophic Count makes some

large inferences in proper eighteenth-century style. But, even when most wide awake, Lesage was very deaf, and nothing would induce him to put his trumpet to his ear when persons he disliked were his interlocutors, though it went up readily enough when any one he liked approached. This is the last and one of the very few personal pieces of gossip we have about him, and it proves satisfactorily that a hard worker and a great benefactor of his species, who had not in his time enjoyed too many of the gifts of fortune, at any rate passed his last years in peace and in such comfort as might be. His wife outlived him but a very short time and died at the age of eighty.

If an author is to be judged only by those works whose popularity has stood the test of time, Lesage need only be considered as the author of *Crispin Rival de son Maître*, of *Turcaret*, of *Le Diable Boiteux*, and of *Gil Blas de Santillane*. His other prose works are, indeed, of considerable bulk, but they are for the most part distinguished by the merits of the more celebrated pieces in a less prominent, and by the faults in a more prominent, degree. His *Guzman d'Alfarache* is chiefly interesting as a specimen of extremely skilful *remaniement*, a process more often applied in modern times to dramatic work than to prose fiction, and which, perhaps, in the case of prose fiction, has never been so well

managed as here. *M. de Beauchêne* has, as has been already mentioned, some interesting points of resemblance to the methods of Defoe. *Le Bachelier de Salamanque* has a certain interest, because of its connection with the theory or hypothesis of a lost Spanish original of *Gil Blas*. If Lesage himself may be trusted, there was certainly such an original in the case of the *Bachelor*, and one of the many suppositions tending to deprive him of the credit of his greatest work supposes that both were extracted or rehandled from the same work. *Estévanille Gonzales* is, perhaps, the least attractive of all, while it is also one of the least original, and the translations from the Italian, &c., need not delay us. Among the minor works the chief are :—first, a lively and well-written little dialogue, called *Une Journée des Parques*, which has had the luck to be oftener reprinted than most of Lesage's *opuscula ;* secondly, the already-mentioned collection of imaginary letters called *La Valise Trouvée ;* and, lastly, the collection of anecdotes which was the author's last work and which was not published until after his death. Of Lesage, however, it is truer than of most writers, that he is best seen in his best work. His pot-boilers usually have something of his easy style and much of his pleasant subacid wit, but they fail, as a rule, to show the power of truthful character-drawing which was his greatest merit, and their wit

itself degenerates into mere smartness more frequently than could be wished.

Somewhat more notice must be given to his work for the *Théâtre de la Foire*, not merely because it has considerable intrinsic merit, but because of its volume, of the constant labour spent on it for full a quarter of a century by the author, and last, but not least, because of its curious form. The pieces which were played at the fairs of Paris were very popular, and their popularity was the subject of constant jealousy on the part of the regular actors of the *Théâtre Français*, though the other two branches of the legitimate drama, the opera and the *Comédie Italienne*, were sometimes more or less in alliance with their little sister. Not a few of Lesage's pieces deal directly with the vicissitudes of *la Foire*. The plays represented on these boards were a curious mixture of the *commedia dell' arte* and the old French farce. Harlequin in particular is an almost invariable character, though the full complement of Pierrot, Scaramouche, Colombine, &c., only occasionally appears. The plays were of three kinds. One of these was drama reduced to nearly its simplest terms. There was no speaking on the stage and the actors confined themselves to pantomime in dumbshow, while two little cherubs sat up aloft with a long roller of wood, from which, from time to time, they unrolled placards on which

short songs, set to popular airs, were inscribed. These songs were sung by the audience, assisted by the actors and orchestra. Here, of course, the author's work was limited to the conception of the action, the expression of it by stage directions to the actors, and the composition of the songs. A second kind of piece was the *Vaudeville* proper, in which the whole play is written in lyrical *couplets*. In the third and most elaborate, ordinary prose dialogue is mixed up with songs. This last sometimes attained considerable dimensions and was divided into acts. These popular pieces were, throughout the eighteenth century, composed by authors whose literary standing was by no means low—such as Lesage, Piron, Collé, and many others—and when a piece had a particular vogue it was not unfrequently transferred, at the command of some great personage, to the boards of the opera. Our author, as has been said, wrote a very large number of these curious compositions in all the three styles just described. Their literary value is, of course, far from great, but they display a good deal of invention, a command of easy verse, and much less indulgence in the besetting sin of the fair theatre, license of language, than most of their fellows. *La Princesse de Carizme*, one of the longest, and possessing something like a plot, is also one of the best. It turns on the well-known story of a

princess whose beauty turns all who behold her mad. But, on the whole, the pieces which deal with the rivalry of the *Foire* and the graver dramatic institutions are, perhaps, the most amusing. The contrasted display of the *Comédie Française*, her solemn tragic airs and the mannerisms of her lighter mood, with the impudent coquettishness of the personified *Foire*, gave Lesage a good opportunity, of which he did not scruple to avail himself. The contrast, of course, is an old one, and something like it had been frequently brought with success on the popular stage, even in early times. *La Querelle des Théâtres* has something in it which reminds the reader of the old morality of *Science et Anerye*. The music of the pieces, too, has its interest, because it shows the remarkable conservatism of the French populace in these matters. Now-a-days new airs are a *sine quâ non* for a comic opera that is to be successful. Lesage's pieces are all written to a few score tunes, which remained on duty during the whole eighteenth century, and may be still seen at the head of Béranger's songs a hundred years and more afterwards. But it must, of course, be understood that only regular students of literature can be recommended to attack Lesage's *Théâtre de la Foire*. It has received some mention here chiefly because most of his critics have been content to give second-hand judgments of it, and a second-

hand judgment in matters literary has a habit of going farther and farther from the truth as it passes from pen to pen.

The two pieces of Lesage which, if they have not actually kept the stage, have at least secured their place in collections of the French drama, demand a longer mention. I say if they have not kept the stage, for I have no positive knowledge as to the question whether *Crispin* and *Turcaret* have of late years been represented. They are certainly amusing enough to read, and *Turcaret* is something more than amusing. *Crispin Rival de son Maître* is a much less ambitious piece than *Turcaret*. It is, in fact, only a longish farce in one act, but in a great number of scenes. Something of what an English critic once very unjustly called the "exaggerated manner of Molière" may be observed in it. Indeed, this phrase of Hazlitt has a good deal of truth when applied to this little piece; it is Molière's manner exaggerated by recourse to the Spanish style of comedy, from which the great playwright had refined and purified his own. There is the usual impecunious and unlucky lover, but the usual valet, instead of backing his master, enters with another valet into a wild plan for marrying the heroine himself. By playing into each other's hands the two rascals succeed for a time in hoodwinking the father, and, by gross flattery, in winning over the

mother to their side. The scheme is upset by the simple fact that the father of the suitor whom Crispin personates soon appears, and by the still simpler one that the master, of course, recognizes and identifies his servant. But the intrigue, impossible as it is, is very briskly kept up, and the short bustling scenes hardly allow the audience to reflect on the improbability of the thing. The dialogue is full of brilliancy, rather resembling Congreve than Molière, and this, being unquestionably the best of its kind that a Parisian audience had heard for a generation, probably secured the popularity of the piece. *Turcaret* is a much more important production. It has the full five acts of a regular comedy, and, though its plot is rather loose, the ruin and discomfiture of the financier Turcaret give a sufficient unity to it. The action, too, is well sustained, but the merit of the piece—a merit for which it stands almost alone in the French comedy of the eighteenth century—lies in the striking projection of the characters and the lively natural traits with which they are drawn. The objection which has been made to these characters—that they are rather partial than complete sketches of human nature—applies to all French drama and to almost all artificial comedy, whether French or English. It would not be easy to find a French drama, out of Molière, in which so many figures stand out so strikingly from the canvass, as is

the case in *Turcaret*. The financier, ashamed of the lowness of his origin, ruthless to his debtors, and a swindler in his dealings with his associates, but capable of being bubbled of his money in the most open fashion by a great lady who condescends to permit his addresses; his wife, an incarnation of vulgar provincial vice, as desperately jealous of her husband as she is shamelessly unfaithful to him; the chevalier who exploits Turcaret's mistress just as that mistress exploits Turcaret; the baroness, not too scrupulous to plunder her suitor so long as she believes his addresses to be honourable, but generous enough and not wholly corrupted; the reckless marquis, who has at least the advantage over his friend, the chevalier, that he is not a knave: all these characters, in themselves mere stock characters of the oldest date, are made to live and breathe by touches of Lesage's genius. The most often-quoted scene of the play, where Madame Turcaret, introduced to the baroness's salon, gives an account of the diversions of Valognes, where "on lit tout les ouvrages d'esprit qu'on fait à Cherbourg, à St. Lo et à Coutances, qui valent bien les ouvrages de Vire et de Caen" is a masterpiece of its kind, and not much less can be said of the adroit servility of the waiting-maid Lisette. Frontin, her lover, has the defect of all the valets who descend from the Menandrian comedy—the defect of exceeding improbability—but he is not

more improbable than Molière's Scapins and Gros Renés, and, indeed, not so improbable as some of them. It is also noticeable that, though the dialogue of *Turcaret* is as full of witticisms as any reasonable man can desire, it has not the fault which is frequently noticeable in French manner-comedies and almost always in English—the fault of letting mere wit combats occupy the characters to the detriment of the dramatic interest of the play. Everything in *Turcaret* tends duly to its end. There are few things more surprising, and perhaps it may be added, less satisfactory, in connection with the theory that a subsidized and established theatre tends to encourage the production of works of genius, than the fact of the subsequent disagreement of the players with Lesage. It is almost inconceivable that the man who wrote such a play should not have had it in him to write others of equal, if not greater, goodness. But, as we have seen, Lesage had no opportunity of improving upon *Turcaret* or repeating his success, being almost immediately diverted from the regular theatre to the *Foire*, where, whatever he may have done, he certainly did not work for posterity. His dramatic career, indeed, was that of Molière reversed. The earlier writer began with a long apprenticeship to farce-writing and then turned his attention to regular comedy, the other began with regular comedy and was afterwards driven to

farce. When one considers the special opening which drama presents to a man who, like Lesage, prefers to work on the inventions of others rather than to spin everything out of his own brains, his abandonment of it seems much to be regretted. Perhaps, however, on the whole the world has not lost; for where a play gives amusement now and then to hundreds, a novel gives it constantly to thousands, and it is extremely improbable that the very best work that Lesage could ever have produced in the way of drama would have added to the sum of human enjoyment as much as *Gil Blas* has added.

It has already been observed that Lesage's manner of dealing with his originals when he wrote prose fiction sometimes resembled the usual manner of dramatic authors. If, however, this latter manner resembled the conduct of the author of *Le Diable Boiteux* in the composition of this work, the charge of plagiarism which is constantly brought against dramatists could hardly stand. The *Diable Boiteux* of Lesage and the *Diablo Cojuelo* of Luis Velez de Guevara stand to each other in a very curious relation. At first the later work looks almost like a translation of the earlier; for two chapters it is a translation and very little more. But suddenly Lesage seems to have felt his own power and strikes off on an entirely new path. Neither the course of the story, nor the conclusion, nor even the great majority of the

episodes and detached anecdotes in the *Diable Boiteux* are derived, even by suggestion, from Guevara, while the simplicity of the French style and the unbroken stream of lively *narquois* narration contrast as strongly as anything can do with the euphuism of Guevara and the singular encomiastic digressions on all sorts of personages which figure largely in the *Diablo Cojuelo.* The substance of the book is made up partly, no doubt, of anecdotes borrowed from divers Spanish sources, partly of more or less historical gossip about French men and women of the author's own time—Dufresny the comic author, Baron the actor, Ninon de L'Enclos are usually specified as figuring—partly of inventions of Lesage's own. As most people know, or ought to know, the plot is sufficiently simple. A young student, for whom an ambush has been laid by his perfidious mistress, escapes by way of the roof, makes his way into a neighbouring garret, which happens to be the laboratory of a magician, and is besought by a voice out of a phial to deliver the speaker from durance by breaking the bottle. The request is complied with, and the imprisoned sprite turns out to be Asmodeus, *Démon de la Luxure.* Here almost all borrowing from Guevara ceases. In the Spanish the new confederates journey to different parts of Spain, and the incidents of the story are mainly supplied by the efforts of envious devils to

recapture Asmodeus. In the French the general plan is based on an exertion of the power of Asmodeus, whereby he unroofs the houses of Madrid and exhibits the fortunes of the inmates to the student, Don Cleofas, while an additional human interest is imparted by a fire, in which the good-natured and grateful demon rescues a young lady of high birth in the shape of Cleofas, and thereby secures for his liberator a prosperous marriage. As a connected story, the original, despite its digressions and episodes, perhaps has the advantage, though the ultimate decision on this point must be left to those who, unlike the present writer, can speak with equal authority on Spanish and on French literature. Lesage's pre-eminence must be sought in the scattered traits of wit and knowledge of human nature which he sprinkles liberally over his work, and in the brisk and vigorous style wherein the book is written. This latter is the real charm of the *Diable Boiteux*. Lesage took something from La Rochefoucauld, something and perhaps more from St. Evremond, and, availing himself of the general improvement in French prose style which had resulted from the schoolmastering of the academic critics, from Balzac to Boileau, produced a mixture of singular pungency and elegance. Couched as the whole work is in the form of a lengthy dialogue between the demon and Don Cleofas, the author has

availed himself of the characteristics of his characters in a sufficiently artful fashion. The petulance of the student never allows the good demon to engage uninterrupted in too long a narration, but constantly recalls him to this or that interesting incident, which makes a digression in the midst of the histories and prevents any feeling of *longueur* from stealing on the reader. Now this is a feeling which the general plan of the French-Spanish *Roman d'Aventures* adopted by Lesage was only too much calculated to produce. The pedigree of stories of this kind was a long one. They arose unquestionably, on the one hand, from the prose Greek romances to which the Byzantine period gave rise, and on the other from the incomparable romances of chivalry, to use the usual though rather indiscriminate term of which France must claim the invention. To do the *Chanson de Geste*, the oldest form of the latter variety, justice, digression was not among its faults. But from the first the Greek prose romance seems to have been liable to it, and from the date of the *Romans d'Aventures*, which express in a way the union of the two, it was a crying sin of the western romance, whether it was written in verse or in prose. Everything by degrees became sacrificed to length, and the easiest way of attaining length was by indulging in numerous episodic excursions. Moral disquisitions, personal

panegyrics, sentimental discussions on points of amatory law, which the earlier seventeenth century had endured, were impossible at the time when Lesage wrote, and he confined himself solely to the story within a story which his English followers, Smollett and Fielding, adopted from him, and which lasted even to the days of Scott, with the advantage to literature of producing what is, perhaps, the best short tale in any language—Wandering Willie's legend in *Redgauntlet*. By that time, however, the necessity of connecting the digressions definitely and directly with the general story had forced itself on the consideration of the romancer. Lesage's age was less difficult, and his episodes might be cut out without damaging such central story as he has, but with a woful consequence to the total interest and attraction of the book. What saved *Le Diable Boiteux* was, let it be once more repeated, the smartness of the satire, the acuteness of the observation of life, and the pure fluent style in which the whole was embodied. The one means which has always been able to move a French audience or body of readers has been the untranslatable *malice;* and Lesage possessed the secret of this in an eminent degree. But he had more than this—he had also the faculty of informing his malicious side-hits at human nature, with a certain breadth and truth in which Voltaire himself fails except when he is at

his very best, and of never going out of his way for a gibe, a mistake only too common among French authors. The fantastic setting; the absence of any attempt to get into the pulpit and preach, while a certain subtle under-flavour of moralizing reconciled the most moralizing of all centuries; the urbanity of the style, and the allusions, artfully scattered here and there, to personal adventures and personal gossip, were quite sufficient to attract contemporaries. That the popularity of the *Diable Boiteux* has been more than ephemeral shows—let us repeat it, for it cannot be too often repeated—that observation of Nature, enbalmed with due preparation of art, is never likely to lose its hold upon men; if it were, adieu to literature.

The good qualities of *Turcaret* and the *Diable Boiteux* appeared in far more striking measure and co-ordinated far more skilfully in the great work which these volumes present once more to the reader in the version of the greatest but one of Lesage's followers. Of the general merits of *Gil Blas* it is necessary to say very little. Nor is it necessary to add in this particular place anything to what has been said and will be said of the comparatively half-hearted estimation in which his countrymen have held the writer of this masterpiece. In French histories of literature Lesage holds but a subordinate place, and he is sometimes treated as

second in the race to Defoe, though it is hardly necessary to say that the first and best of the great Englishman's romances is younger than *Gil Blas* by nearly five years. Argument and abstract are equally superfluous. How *Gil Blas* left his scarcely-unwilling kin, how he learnt by bitter experience not to trust too much to flatterers, how he fell among thieves, among the minions of the law, among actors (on whom Lesage took a terrible vengeance in this book for the treatment they had accorded to him), even those to whom the pleasure—*pace* Mr. James Payn—of reading our book is yet to come, know, in virtue of a thousand quotations and allusions in every kind of literature. Of the latter parts of the book, which show in the author some such an idea as that by which Dickens, either before or after the fact, excused the transformation of Mr. Pickwick's character, perhaps less is known by those who have not actually read it. Only one episode—the famous and, indeed, immortal relapse of *Gil Blas* into youthfulness in the matter of the Archbishop of Granada—has passed into general knowledge. I shall only say that it is perhaps the very happiest holding up of a mirror to one particular weak place of human nature that I know. Few people perhaps, save reviewers, who are in continual receipt of expostulations from the reviewed, know how eternal is the verity of the presentment. By some unhappy

fortune the particular stanza of the poem, the particular chapter of the novel, the particular juncture of the plot, which the critic happens to blame is the very thing that is best in the book. "On n'a jamais composé de meilleur homélie que celle qui a le malheur de n'avoir pas notre approbation." This is only an illustration of the supreme merit of the book—its absolute truth to Nature. But another illustration may, perhaps, be pardonably given. It has been said, or hinted, that in the last two volumes Gil Blas is a much better as well as a much less ridiculous personage than he is in the first—this is especially the case in the last. Prosperity, age, the absence of temptation, account for this. But Lesage's unpitying, because absolutely veracious, talent would not suffer him to turn his intriguing fortune-hunter into a saint. The ugly episode of the journey to Toledo, in which the admired minister Olivarez and the respectable reformed rake Gil Blas play such awkward parts, is an instance of the truth which is put in the homely phrase Defoe loved—"What is bred in the bone will not go out of the flesh." Now-a-days, perhaps, when the naturalist school, in its scorn of the namby-pamby, rushes into the opposite extreme and will have nothing but vice and ugliness, such a book as *Gil Blas* is infinitely more instructive, as well as more refreshing to read, than all the rose-pink pictures of impossible virtues and all the half-told

tales of life with the dark side of it kept out of sight that literature can muster. It will scarcely be pretended by any brisk young novelist of the nineteenth century that he has more insight than Lesage, scarcely, either, that Lesage was afraid to say what occurred to him or that his literary vocabulary and general equipment were unequal to the task. Yet here is a book as free from cant or from taint of the *hérésie de l'enseignement* as any one can desire, and which yet leaves no bad taste in the mouth, meddles with no abnormal crimes, and suggests as a total reflexion not merely that all's well that ends well, but that in most cases with fair luck all does end fairly well.

The question of the origin, or, if the word be preferred, of the originality, of *Gil Blas* may not be of much intrinsic importance. But its traditional importance in the history of literature is considerable, and something, perhaps, must be said about it here. The assertions of the more or less complete indebtedness of the author to a Spanish original may be classed under three heads. There is, first, the assertion that *Gil Blas* is taken from the *Marcos de Obregon* of Vincent Espinel. This was advanced very shortly after the appearance of the book, and currency was given to it by Voltaire, who roundly repeated it, in consequence, beyond all doubt, of the galling attacks which Lesage had made upon his early dramatic and

epic efforts, not merely in his farces but in *Gil Blas* itself, where the author of *Zaire* figures as Don Gabriel Triaquero. The second is due to a Spanish Jesuit author, who, avowedly setting before him the object of claiming *Gil Blas* for his own country, endeavours to make out that it is simply a translation of a Spanish original. The third is a more elaborate hypothesis and more difficult of disproof—its foundation, such as it is, has been already alluded to. It is supposed that Lesage extracted the matter, at least, of *Gil Blas*, as well as that of the *Bachelier de Salamanque*, from a manuscript Spanish original which has since disappeared. As to the first charge, it is one of those curiously hazardous ones, the making of which can only be accounted for on the general principle that some of most handfuls of mud which are thrown is likely to stick, for Espinel's work is unanimously confessed by competent examiners to be not in the least like *Gil Blas* on the whole, though a very few detached traits may have been taken by Lesage from it, as they almost certainly were for others of his prose fictions. The patriotic hypothesis of Father Isla suffers only from the fact that there is not the faintest trace of a Spanish *Gil Blas* or of any allusion to such a work. As for the third, it is obviously, and on the face of it, as impossible to disprove as to prove. There may have been French *Macbeths* and *Lears* from which

Shakspeare adapted the existing pieces, for aught we know. But, when we dismiss merely hypothetical argument and examine the matter coolly, we find, first, that there is absolutely no external evidence that Lesage did in any way plagiarize *Gil Blas*; secondly, that there is overwhelming internal evidence that, while he made free use of his Spanish predecessors for details, for local colour and so forth the essential part of the book is fairly his own. The "picaroon" romance, as it is called, was a specially Spanish variety of *Roman d'Aventures* which, abandoning giants and enchanters on the one hand and the long-winded sentimentalities of the *Amadis* and the Scudéry romances on the other, confined itself to the actual life of the still but half-civilized dominions of the King of Spain and to the most exciting incidents of that life. Immense numbers of these books were written by Spaniards during the seventeenth century; and with many, if not the majority, of these Lesage was, we know, familiar. Many of the separate incidents of *Gil Blas* have been traced to this literature, and, perhaps, more might be so. But there is no reason to believe that the general *cadre* into which Lesage fitted these is not his own, and there is every reason to believe that the peculiar spirit with which he informs the whole and which gives it its peculiar value is absolutely his. The shrewd wit, neither sententious nor solemn, of his isolated sayings

is assuredly not Spanish; the peculiar universality of his indications of the weaknesses of human nature is still less so. There is little of the kind, I may venture to say, in the greatest of Spanish writers, in Cervantes himself; there is nothing of the kind—competent authorities vouch for it—in any lesser Spanish writer. To the higher side of Spanish imagination, its poetry, its magnificence, its forgetfulness of the baser sides of life, Lesage has no claim to approach. But in regard to a sort of prosaic infallibility and universality which he has he may as fairly pretend that the Spaniards have nothing of his. If there is little of Don Quixote there is, perhaps, something of Sancho in some of his characters; but it is only such an agreement as writers starting from the most diverse points might attain.

To one charge which has been brought against *Gil Blas*, that of undue length, it is difficult to offer a very valid defence. That this length conduced to the anachronisms which the author admits in a characteristic and sarcastic *avertissement* is very probable, but these are matters of very little consequence and may be ranked with the sea-coast of Bohemia and Hector's reference to Aristotle. It is of more importance that the extreme prolongation of the book has made it—it may freely be admitted—to a certain extent tedious. Nor does it seem reasonable to

doubt that this prolongation was, in some degree, artificial—that is to say, that the favour with which the book was received and the offers of the publishers very likely induced the author to extend it a good deal more than he had at first designed. *Per contra* it can only be alleged that, in the peculiar style of which *Gil Blas* is an example, there is no natural limit to the exposition. The book having no defined plot, but being a picture of *quotquot agunt homines* in so far as the life of a particular person touches that action, nothing but the death of the hero can be said to bring it to a close. This, indeed, is of the essence of the romance as opposed to the epic, and, in its so-called regular or non-Shakspearean form, the drama. These two latter presuppose a definite and limited plot. The romance does not, and it admits not only an indefinite extension in a straight line, but also digressions and episodes *ad infinitum*. That this is rather a weakness than a strength of the style may certainly be admitted, and the fact had been sufficiently exemplified, not merely in the mediæval poem and prose romances but in the *Amadis* cycle, where the reader is conducted from generation to generation in a manner sufficient to weary the patience of the most robust. But it was characteristic of Lesage that he was an innovator rather in detail than in the general. He did not produce the modern novel—that was reserved for his

younger contemporary Prévost. He only took an existing *genre*, made many small improvements in it, and produced a masterpiece therein. Perhaps it would be ungrateful to complain when he did so much that he did no more.

In the controversies which have arisen about Lesage's greatest work it is not very difficult to find a satisfactory explanation of his great and peculiar value. For the Spanish claim—absolutely unsupported as it is by one tittle of external evidence, and, indeed, as we may almost say, completely as it is rebutted by all such evidence—rests in reality on an expressed or understood idea that no one but a native writer could have so dealt with Spain and Spaniards. The retort to the charge is as instructive as the charge itself. Frenchmen appeal to Germans, Englishmen, and other foreigners to decide the cause, and the referees give their decision in a manner which is decisive. *Gil Blas*, they say, is not specially a Spaniard, though the art of his creator has dressed him up marvellously in the habits, garments and speech of Spain. He is simply a man, and the accuracy with which the author has hit the universal beneath the particular would have equally enabled him, had he chosen, to draw an Englishman or a German, and would have entitled Englishmen or Germans, had they been sufficiently shortsighted, to claim his work as

borrowed or stolen from an English or German original. The reply is unanswerable, and the more one reads Lesage the more convinced one is of the sufficiency of it and the more proof one finds of its truth. It is in this quality of universality, of striking at the essential humanity of men and dealing with their accidental nationality only in such manner as might suit his purpose that Lesage's great genius consists, and in this quality he is, as it seems to me, at the head of all French writers, and only second to Shakspeare. Of course the range of the two is very different, it is even hardly commensurable. Lesage had his faculty at complete command within certain very restricted limits, but beyond those limits he was not in the least master of it, indeed it can hardly be said that he endeavoured to show it at all. Whether his thorough and comparatively early steeping in one peculiar and extremely artificial kind of literature — the picaroon romances and intrigue-dramas of Spain—narrowed his mind at the same time that it sharpened it is a question rather of psychology than of literature ; but it is certain that he shows very little tendency to wander out of his own narrow circle, and that when he does so he becomes merely an ordinary man of letters, possessed of a pleasant wit and of a ready and skilful pen. But within his circle he hardly yields to the master himself. Indeed, Gil Blas may hold up his head in

any company, even in the company of Shakspeare's children. There is the same invariable consistency, the same total absence of false notes, the same completeness of presentation. It was in this latter that Lesage differed most from his countrymen. The fatal doctrine of the ruling passion had made but little impression upon him. In drawing Gil Blas he has not an abstraction of intrigue and courtiership of the lower class before him as a model, he has a man who, for a long time, is given up partly by the unkindness of fortune, partly by natural bent, to intrigue and courtiership. To the last, touches of Nature, though they naturally grow fewer and fewer, chequer and diversify the presentment. Now this was what the French, since they had given themselves up to swallow the doctrines and do the bidding of Horace, as represented or misrepresented by the native critics of the Malherbe-Boileau school, could not attain to, and could hardly even understand. Had Boileau lived a little longer it may be shrewdly suspected that he would have regarded *Gil Blas* with much more indignation than that with which he regarded *Le Diable Boiteux*, and it is noteworthy that the greater work was far less popular with its author's countrymen than the lesser. They would, doubtless, have liked Achilles to be always *iracundus inexorabilis acer*, and would have preferred that Gil Blas should have outwitted the parasite in

the matter of the trout and kept the favour of the Archbishop of Granada. *Gil Blas*, too, is far less full than *Le Diable Boiteux* of the epigrammatic *pointes* which have never ceased to delight the true Frenchman—and, indeed, they are delightful enough—and which reach their climax in the writings of Voltaire. Such sayings as: "Vous n'avez pas des idées justes de notre enfer"—"On nous reconcilia, nous nous embrassames, et depuis ce temps nous sommes ennemis mortels"—"Je sais qu'il-y-a de bons remèdes mais je ne sais pas s'il-y-a de bons médecins"—"Tout payeur est traité comme un mari," and a hundred things besides, are worthy of the author of *Candide* at his very best, and his countrymen could not fail to relish them. They were less keen to relish such a presentment as that of Gil Blas, and therefore Lesage's fame, great as it has been even in France, has been more European than French, and he is to be quoted and compared with foreigners rather than with his countrymen.

There is another point of importance in which Lesage has a resemblance to Shakspeare. He has not merely in some not small measure the quality of universality, but he has, and this in very great measure, the quality of detachment. He seems to look at his characters with the same inscrutable impartiality as that with which their creator contemplates Iago and Goneril, Macbeth and Claudius. He

does not describe their monkey tricks with any particular gusto, at least of a personal kind, nor does he regard them with the least moral indignation. All that does not concern him. Writing as he did in a period of very low morality—there probably never was a time when the general moral standard was lower in Europe than in the first half of the eighteenth century—and taking for his models a mass of writings dealing with unscrupulous adventures and intrigue, he has had to describe what is bad much oftener than what is good. But it is impossible to say either that he gloats over the vices and follies which he describes, or that he records them with cynical amusement, or that he holds them up for righteous detestation. The least little appearance of the second attitude may sometimes be found in the utterances of Asmodeus, which are as personal as anything we have of his; but even this is, for the most part, dramatic merely. This quality, beyond all doubt, is connected with the former, and is, indeed, to a great extent implied by it. When a man is very much in earnest about points of morality, still more when he writes definitely with a moral or immoral purpose, he seldom succeeds in giving us the complete presentation of his characters. He is bribed, without knowing it, by his prepossessions, he cannot help, if he objects to the established standards of morality, softening the vicious characters

unduly, or hardening them unduly if he be among the moral sub-division of the heretics of instruction. I do not know that Lesage has been much examined by the strenuous advocates of the moral element in literature, though they have not neglected Fielding, his English parallel. The fact is that Fielding's irregular life rather assists them, while the little that is known of Lesage goes to show that he was in his own person an exemplary liver. It is, however, true that the resemblances between Fielding and Lesage are great, not merely in that they adopted the same general conception of the novel, but that they succeeded in working out that conception and in bringing their characters, or some of them, under the *species æternitatis*. An Englishman naturally speaks with some caution about Fielding, because he himself is not in so good a position as foreigners to judge how far Fielding has accomplished this. Englishmen, however, are the best possible judges of Lesage, because they are equally free from bias connected with the language in which he writes and from bias connected with the country which he illustrates.

There is one important and intricate question which can hardly be passed over, though here, at least, it can only be very summarily dealt with. It has been said that until the present century no French writer, except Montaigne and Rabelais

deserves the title of humorist, and this would, of course, exclude Lesage. On the other hand, the exclusion has been objected to in the interest of some mediæval writers. The truth is, that the whole question turns on one of the most disputed points in literature—the definition of humour. If, as it has been admirably put, the humorist is a man who "thinks in jest when he feels in earnest;" or if, as Thackeray puts it, he is a weekday preacher, then Lesage most assuredly is not one. For not only has he no direct moral purpose, which, indeed, is oftener than not fatal to humour, but it is difficult to discern that he has, as Rabelais, Montaigne, and Shakspeare had, any general theory or grasp of the world or of life, whether poetical, ironical, or sceptical, which could supply him with the necessary background for humour. Neither had he, like Fielding and Thackeray himself, a passionate interest in that world—a sympathy with it which, in its way, is also sufficient to bring out the strokes of the strange invisible ink called humour. It would seem, therefore, that his exclusion is justified, and as he shares it with Molière, and even with Lafontaine, he need not be ashamed of his company. Like these still greater men, however, he had a wit so fine, so flexible, so far transcending the ordinary limitations of wit, that it almost amounted to humour, and may be said to be practically a substitute for it.

This brings us to the consideration of a point of very great importance—the style of Lesage. In all such cases the modern reader who merely looks back is very likely to be deceived by his point of view. Yet even the modern reader, if he has but some notion of the date of his author, must, I should think, be conscious of a singular modernness in *Gil Blas* and the *Diable Boiteux* compared with Bossuet, Fénelon, even Malebranche, and still more with Madame de Sévigné and Saint-Simon. Lesage, indeed, was one of a line of great writers chiefly of the lighter kind, who, perhaps, did most of any of their contemporaries to shape French style, as it has been generally understood until recently. Saint-Evremond and Pascal are the earliest of these, and Lesage, taking up the torch, handed it on to Voltaire. It is noteworthy that Voltaire, perhaps on the principle of kicking down his ladders, was unjust both to Saint-Evremond and to Lesage, though, as has been said, the latter had certainly provoked him. The great distinction of Lesage is the extreme ease of his writing and the manner in which his good things, such as those already cited above, drop naturally out in the midst of his narrative or dialogue, without any effort or apparent leading up. It would demand a much greater acquaintance with Spanish literature than any to which I, even at second-hand, can pretend, to decide whether his studies had any-

thing to do with this; but I think that it may be tolerably safely assumed that they had not, except by way of contrast; for many, if not most, of the works which Lesage translated or followed were written in the extremest *gongorist* or conceited style—a style as remote from his as Lyly's from Steele's. It may possibly be contended that it was in fighting against this excess that Lesage learnt the secret of a wise economy. Certainly, there are not merely few writers in whom there is so little archaism, affectation, mannerism, or deliberate oddity and obscurity, but also few in whom the style is so absolutely plain and unadorned, without being in the least vulgar, or, in the unfavourable sense, homely. His autobiographies, probably owing to this, have, more than most autobiographies, the air of being really told by a speaker and not elaborated in the study. There are no ponderous sentences, no phrases over which the reader sees that the pen has hung a long time, and, as has been already noted, none of the leading-up and preparation which certain witty writers are unable to avoid or to conceal. The most commonplace things are said with perfect simplicity, and yet, somehow or other, in a way on which it is impossible to improve. It must be a bold man who thinks he can better a saying of Lesage's, and that not because of any *tour de force* of unusual phrase or

out-of-the-way thought, but, on the contrary, because the simplicity has reached the lowest term. Nothing can be taken away, and nothing can be added that is not a useless addition.

The question of his alleged plagiarisms has been already, to some extent, dealt with. It has been shown, that is to say, that in the way of absolute stealing the charge has not the slightest probability. The strongest argument of all is, indeed, that when we see what he did with originals which we possess, such as *Guzman d'Alfarache* and the *Diablo Cojuelo*, there could be no motive for discreditable appropriation in other cases. But, when the charge in its offensive sense has been laid aside, it remains to consider the use which he did make of *publica materies*. There can be no doubt that, as was the case with Shakspeare and Molière and many other men of the very greatest genius, he made wholesale and indiscriminate use thereof. There is proof of this in many cases; there is probability of it in many more. Indeed, there is in this and other instances almost ground for the paradox that it is only men of little creative power who are scrupulously original. Many very small poets, by luck or by care, have kept free from the charge of indebtedness to anybody, while Shakspeare calmly versifies whole pages of North's "Plutarch;" while Molière compels restitution of his goods from the unlucky

people who happened to possess them first without the least scruple; while Milton lays Dutch dramatists and French epic poets and Italian opera librettists under contribution as coolly as if they had been Royalist squires. In Lesage's case there is, however, something more than this. In the three great cases just mentioned, and in many others, it is only now and then that the borrowers condescend to borrow; it is a passing freak, or, to speak more respectfully and with more critical truth, an occasional conviction that here are the tools of which they themselves can make the best use. But there are some men, and those not among the least in literature, who, from a certain idiosyncrasy, which may, perhaps, be termed an indolence of brain, have seemed to prefer always, when it was possible, to work on beaten tracks and to take their start from some already-accomplished work. The most remarkable example of this variety of talent in English literature is Dryden; the most remarkable in French literature is beyond all question Lesage. Yet Lesage must in respect of absolute originality be ranked below Dryden, because his greatest work, though its substance may be independent enough, springs in point of general design directly from Spanish originals, while the greatest work of Dryden, his satiric and didactic pieces, was not directly suggested by anything precedent. It

may be said, indeed, that, of the four productions which we have singled out as exhibiting Lesage at his best, the two dramas are far more original than the two novels. Whether Lesage, had he been more favoured by the exponents of the regular drama and had he devoted himself longer thereto, would have produced something even more original than *Crispin* and *Turcaret* must be left among the merely scholastic problems of literature, the " might-have-beens" inquiry into which is bootless and idle. The time, however, had not come for any innovation on the set lines of French comedy and tragedy, even had the author been disposed for such innovation, and it is noteworthy enough that, when in his specially-chosen province of the *Théâtre de la Foire* an opportunity appeared for a bold stroke, he declined it. On one occasion the jealousy of the regular actors had procured a police edict restricting their rivals to a single personage. The managers of the fair stage were in despair, for neither Lesage nor any of their other regular contributors would attempt the task of a monodrama, and recourse had to be had to the untried and fitful but fertile genius of Piron, whose *Arlequin Deucalion* got them out of the difficulty. This anecdote seems to argue a certain indisposition to try experiments which is consistent enough with what we have of Lesage's work. It must be remembered, too, that he did not begin literary labour

very young, and that he did not make any great success in it until he was already a man of middle age. There are not wanting examples of striking originality in conception as well as striking power of execution displayed by late-writing authors. But on the whole it may, perhaps, be safely said that invention is a habit as much as any other, and that it is a habit which is for the most part only acquired in youth.

Such are the principal critical points which present themselves in the life of this great novelist and master of French prose. As one turns over the leaves of a library catalogue and sees the immense number of editions, translations, and what not, that *Gil Blas* has gone through and undergone in its century-and-a-half of life, it is impossible not to draw the conclusion that its goodness is a matter settled and out of hand. One generation may make egregious mistakes, and constantly does make egregious mistakes, about an author, leaving him to unjust neglect, or awarding to him still more absurd triumphs. Subsequent generations may, in a way, continue the mistake by leaving the justice of the verdict, for or against, undisturbed, because the evidence is undisturbed likewise. But when a book has actually been read by half-a-dozen successive sets of the inhabitants of the earth, when its most remarkable incidents and characters have be-

come part of the common stock of furniture possessed even by a very modest housekeeper in things literary, then there is not much reason for questioning the value. The works, even the best works, of Lesage are, of course, not good throughout. Even in *Le Diable Boiteux*, despite its moderate length, there are *longueurs*, and there are most assuredly *longueurs* in *Gil Blas*. Some of it is obsolete, some could be well spared now, some, it is difficult not to think, could have been well spared at any time. But its best things are as fresh as ever and are likely to continue so as long as human nature exists. The opening chapters, the address to the reader—Lesage was never happier than his addresses to the reader, prefaces, and such like things—the episodes of Sangrado and the Archbishop, half a hundred things beside, are as amusing to read for the twentieth time as for the first. What is, perhaps, of more importance, the same may be said of the best passages, even in the work which has been less favoured by the general approbation. But at the same time no one who weighs his words will attempt to deny that Lesage has produced a considerable amount of inferior work side by side with his masterpieces. Nor can it be denied that, as has been more than once here allowed, his range is but limited and that he seems to require a somewhat unusual amount of prompting and crutching before he

is able to make his bow and say his say. These things debar him from the place among the chosen few of the writers of his country to which the wonderful success of his best work and the purity of his style would otherwise entitle him. In theoretical originality, in variety of work, in construction, he is very deficient. *Gil Blas* drags rather than hastens to its end, the author having failed completely to extricate himself from the toils of the endless episodes and digressions of his Spanish models. *Turcaret* in the same manner lacks unity and precision of plot. Excellence of style and surprising fidelity to human nature in character-drawing—these are the two pillars of Lesage's renown, and it is solidly established upon them. He is thus one of the few writers, to return to the point from which we started, of whom it can be definitely said that, if he had been in more fortunate worldly circumstances, he would have done better, unless, which is, perhaps, equally probable, he had done nothing at all. Necessity was with him, as with others, the mother of invention—the invention, that is to say, of his own talent. But with gifts which do not fall to the lot of one writer in a thousand, he did not always or very often succeed in getting those gifts into perfect working order. His selection of foreign subjects, and the very natural, though very unjust, suspicion of grave

indebtedness to foreign models, have also worked against his fame. Yet, with those who have considered novel-writing seriously, he will always rank as one of the princes of character-drawing in its largest and most human sense, while with those who busy themselves with the history of French literature he will always hold the rank of the best writer of the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

HISTORY OF GIL BLAS

OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH AND EDUCATION OF GIL BLAS.

My father, Blas of Santillane, after having borne arms for a long time in the Spanish service, retired to his native place. There he married a chamber-maid who was not exactly in her teens, and I made my debut on this stage ten months after marriage. They afterwards went to live at Oviedo, where my mother got into service, and my father obtained a situation equally adapted to his capacities as a squire. As their wages were their fortune, I might have got my education as I could, had it not been for an uncle of mine in the town, a canon, by name Gil Perez. He was my mother's eldest brother, and my godfather. Figure to yourself a little fellow, three feet and a half high, as fat as you can conceive, with a head sunk deep between his shoulders, and you have my uncle to the life. For the rest of his qualities, he was an ecclesiastic, and of course thought of nothing but good living, I mean in the flesh as

well as in the spirit, with the means of which good living his stall, no lean one, provided him.

He took me home to his own house from my infancy, and ran the risk of my bringing up. I struck him as so brisk a lad, that he resolved to cultivate my talents. He bought me a primer, and undertook my tuition as far as reading went: which was not amiss for himself as well as for me; since by teaching me my letters he brushed up his own learning, which had not been pursued in a very scholastic manner; and, by dint of application, he got at last to read his breviary out of hand, which he had never been able to do before. He would have been very glad to have taught me Latin, to save expense, but, alas! poor Gil Perez! he had never skimmed the first principles of it in the whole course of his life. I should not wonder if he was the most ignorant member of the chapter; though on a subject involving as many possibilities as there were canons, I presume not to pledge myself for anything like certainty. To be sure, I have heard it suggested, that he did not gain his preferment altogether by his learning: but that he owed it exclusively to the gratitude of some good nuns whose discreet factor he had been, and who had credit enough to procure him the order of priesthood without the troublesome ceremony of an examination.

He was obliged therefore to place me under the correction of a master, so that I was sent to Doctor Godinez, who had the reputation of being the most accomplished pedant of Oviedo. I profited so well

under his instructions, that by the end of five or six years I could read a Greek author or two, and had no very inadequate conception of the Latin poets. Besides my classical studies, I applied to logic, which enabled me to become an expert arguer. I now fell in love with discussions of all kinds to such an excess, that I stopped his majesty's subjects on the high road, acquaintance or strangers, no matter! and proposed some knotty point of controversy. Sometimes I fell in with a clan of Irish, and an altercation never comes amiss to them! That was your time, if you are fond of a battle. Such gestures! such grimaces! such contortions! Our eyes sparkling, and our mouths foaming! Those who did not take us for what we affected to be, philosophers, must have set us down for madmen.

But let that be as it will, I gained the reputation of no small learning in the town. My uncle was delighted, because he prudently considered that I should so much the sooner cease to be chargeable to him. Come here, Gil Blas, quoth he one day, you are got to be a fine fellow. You are past seventeen, and a clever lad: you must bestir yourself, and get forward in the world. I think of sending you to the University of Salamanca: with your wit, you will easily get a good post. I will give you a few ducats for your journey, and my mule, which will fetch ten or twelve pistoles at Salamanca, and with such a sum at setting out, you will be enabled to hold up your head till you get a situation.

He could not have proposed to me anything more

agreeable: for I was dying to see a little of life. At the same time, I was not such a fool as to betray my satisfaction; and when it came to the hour of parting, by the sensibility I discovered at taking leave of my dear uncle, to whom I was so much obliged, and by calling in the stage effect of grief, I so softened the good soul, that he put his hand deeper into his pocket than he would have done, could he have pried into all that was passing in the interior of my hypocritical little heart. Before my departure I took a last leave of my papa and mamma, who loaded me with an ample inheritance of good advice. They enjoined me to pray to God for my uncle, to go honestly through the world, not to engage in any ill, and above all, not to lay my hands on other people's property. After they had lectured me for a good while, they made me a present of their blessing, which was all my patrimony and all my expectation. As soon as I had received it, I mounted my mule, and saw the outside of the town.

CHAPTER II.

GIL BLAS' ALARM ON HIS ROAD TO PEGNAFLOR; HIS ADVENTURES ON HIS ARRIVAL IN THAT TOWN; AND THE CHARACTER OF THE MEN WITH WHOM HE SUPPED.

HERE I am, then, on the other side of Oviedo, on the road to Pegnaflor, with the world before me, as yet my own master, as well as master of a bad

mule and forty good ducats, without reckoning on a little supplementary cash purloined from my much-honored uncle. The first thing I did was to let my mule go as the beast liked, that is to say, very lazily. I dropped the rein, and taking out my ducats, began to count them backwards and forwards in my hat. I was out of my wits for joy, never having seen such a sum of money before, and could not help looking at it and sifting it through my fingers. I had counted it over about the twentieth time, when all at once my mule, with head raised and ears pricked up, stood stock still in the middle of the high road. I thought to be sure something was the matter; looked about for a cause, and perceiving a hat upon the ground, with a rosary of large beads, at the same time heard a lugubrious voice pronounce these words: Pray, honored master, have pity on a poor maimed soldier! Please to throw a few small pieces into this hat; you shall be rewarded for it in the other world. I looked immediately on the side whence the voice proceeded; and saw just by a thicket, twenty or thirty paces from me, a sort of a soldier, who had mounted the barrel of a confounded long carbine on two cross sticks, and seemed to be taking aim at me. At a sight which made me tremble for the patrimony of the church committed to my care, I stopped short, made sure of my ducats, and taking out a little small change, as I rode by the hat, placed to receive the charity of those quiet subjects who had not the courage to refuse it, dropped in my contribution in detail, to convince the soldier how

nobly I dealt by him. He was satisfied with my liberality, and gave me a blessing for every kick I gave my mule in my impatience to get out of his way; but the infernal beast, without partaking in the slightest degree of my impatience, went at the old steady pace. A long custom of jogging on fair and softly under my uncle's weight had obliterated every idea of that motion called a gallop.

The prospect of my journey was not much improved by this adventure as a specimen. I considered within myself that I had yet some distance to Salamanca, and might, not improbably, meet with something worse. My uncle seemed to have been very imprudent not to have consigned me to the care of a muleteer. That, to be sure, was what he ought to have done; but his notion was, that by giving me his mule my journey would be cheaper; and that entered more into his calculation than the dangers in which I might be involved on the road. To retrieve his error, therefore, I resolved, if I had the good luck to arrive safe at Pegnaflor, to offer my mule for sale, and take the opportunity of a muleteer going to Astorga, whence I might get to Salamanca by a similar conveyance. Though I had never been out of Oviedo, I was acquainted with the names of the towns through which I was to pass; a species of information I took care to procure before my setting out.

I got safe and sound to Pegnaflor, and stopped at the door of a very decent-looking inn. My foot was scarcely out of the stirrup before the landlord was at

my side, overwhelming me with public-house civility. He untied my cloak-bag with his own hands, swung it across his shoulders, and ushered my honor into a room, while one of his men led my mule to the stable. This landlord, the most busy prattler of the Asturias, ready to bother you impertinently about his own concerns, and at the same time with a sufficient portion of curiosity to worm himself into the knowledge of yours, was not long in telling me that his name was Andrew Corcuelo; that he had seen some service as a sergeant in the army, which he had quitted fifteen months ago, and married a girl of Castropol, who, though a little tawny or so, knew how to make both ends meet as well as the best of them. He told me a thousand things besides which he might just as well have kept private. Thinking himself entitled, after this voluntary confidence, to an equal share of mine, he asked me in a breath, and without further preface, whence I came, whither I was going, and who I was. To all this I felt myself bound to answer, article by article, because, though rather abrupt in asking them, he accompanied each question with so apologetic a bow, beseeching me with so submissive a grimace not to be offended at his curiosity, that I was drawn in to gratify it, whether I would or no. Thus by degrees did we get into a long conversation, in the course of which I took occasion to hint, that I had some reasons for wishing to get rid of my mule, and travel under convoy of a muleteer. He seemed on the whole to approve of my plan, though he could not

prevail with himself to tell me so briefly; for he introduced his remarks by descanting on all the possible and probable mischances to which travellers are liable on the road, not omitting an awkward story now and then. I thought the fellow would never have done. But the conclusion of the argument was, that if I wanted to sell my mule, he knew an honest jockey who would take it off my hands. I begged he would do me the favor to fetch him, which was no sooner said than done.

On his return he introduced the purchaser, with a high encomium on his integrity. We all three went into the yard, and the mule was brought out to show paces before the jockey, who set himself to examine the beast from head to foot. His report was bad enough. To be sure, it would not have been easy to make a good one; but if it had been the pope's mule, and this fellow was to cheapen the bargain, it would have been just the same: nay, to speak with all due reverence, if he had been asked to give an opinion of the pope's great toe, from that disparaging habit of his, he would have pronounced it no better than the toe of any ordinary man. He laid it down therefore, as a principle, that the mule had all the defects a mule could have; appealing to the landlord for a confirmation of his judgment, who, doubtless, had reasons of his own for not controverting his friend's assertion. Well! says the jockey, with an air of indifference, what price have you the conscience to ask for this devil of an animal? After such a panegyric, and master Corcuelo's certificate,

whom I was fool enough to take for a fair-dealing man and a good judge of horseflesh, they might have had the mule for nothing. I therefore told the dealer that I threw myself on his mercy: he must fix his own sum, and I should expect no more. On this, he began to affect the gentleman, and answered that I had found out the weak side when I left it to his honor. He was right enough in that! His honor was his weak side! for instead of bidding up to my uncle's estimate of ten or twelve pistoles, the rascal had the impudence to offer three ducats, which I accepted with as light a heart as if I had got the best of the bargain.

Having disencumbered myself of my mule in so tradesmanlike a manner, I went with my landlord to a carrier who was to set out early the next morning for Astorga, and engaged to call me up in time. When we had settled the hire of the mule, as well as the expenses on the road, I turned back towards the inn with Corcuelo, who, as we went along, got into the private history of this muleteer. When I had been pestered with all the tittle-tattle of the town about this fellow, the changes were just beginning to ring on some new subject; but, by good luck, a pretty-looking sort of a man very civilly interrupted my loquacious friend. I left them together, and sauntered on, without the slightest suspicion of being at all concerned in their discourse.

I ordered supper as soon as I got to the inn. It was a fish day: but I thought eggs were better suited to my finances. While they were getting

ready I joined in conversation with the landlady, whom I had not seen before. She seemed a pretty piece of goods enough, and such a stirring body, that I should have concluded, if her husband had not told me so, her tavern must have plenty of custom. The moment the omelet was served up, I sat down to table by myself, and had scarcely got the relish of it, when my landlord walked in, followed by the man who had stopped him in the street. This pleasant gentleman wore a long rapier, and might, perhaps, be about thirty years of age. He came up to me in the most friendly manner possible. Mr. Professor, says he, I have just now heard that you are the renowned Gil Blas of Santillane, that ornament of Oviedo and luminary of philosophy. And do my eyes behold that very greatest of all great scholars and wits, whose reputation has run hither so fast before him! Little do you think, continues he, directing his discourse to the landlord and landlady, little do you imagine, I say, what good luck has befallen you. Why, you have got hold of a treasure. In this young gentleman you behold the eighth wonder of the world. Then running up and throwing his arms about my neck, Excuse me, added he; but worlds would not bribe me to suppress the rapturous emotions your honored presence has excited.

I could not answer him so glibly as I wished, not so much for want of words as of breath; for he hugged me so tight that I began to be alarmed for my wind-pipe. As soon, however, as I had got my

head out of durance, I replied, Signor cavalier, I had not the least conception that my name was known at Pegnaflor. Known? resumed he in the same pompous style; we keep a register of all great persons within a circuit of twenty leagues round us. You have the character of a prodigy here; and I have not a shadow of doubt, but one day or other Spain will be as proud of numbering you among her rare productions, as Greece of having given birth to her seven wise men. This fine speech was followed as before; and I really began to think that with all my classical honors I should at last be doomed to share the fate of Antæus. If I had been master of ever so little experience, I should not have been the dupe of his rhodomontade. I must have discovered him, by his outrageous compliments, to be one of those parasites who swarm in every town, and get into a stranger's company on his arrival, to appease the wolf in their stomachs at his expense; but my youth and vanity tempted me to draw a quite opposite conclusion. My admirer was very clever in my eyes, and I asked him to supper on the strength of it. Oh! most willingly, cried he: with all my heart and soul. My fortunate star predominates, now that I have the honor of being in company with the illustrious Gil Blas of Santillane, and I shall certainly make the most of my good fortune as long as it lasts. My appetite is rather delicate, but I will just sit down with you by way of being sociable, and if I can swallow a bit! only just not to look sulky; for we philosophers are careless of the body.

These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than my panegyrist took his seat opposite to me. A cover was laid for him in due form and order. First he fell on the omelet with as much perseverance as if he had not tasted food for three whole days. By the complacency with which he eyed it I was morally certain the poor pancake was at death's door. I therefore ordered its heir apparent to succeed; and the business was despatched with such speed, that the second made its appearance on the table, just as we; — no: — I beg pardon; — just as he had taken the last lick of its predecessor. He pressed forward the main business, however, with a diligence and activity proportioned to the importance of the object he had in view: so that he contrived to load me with panegyric on panegyric, without losing a single stroke in the progress of mastication. Now all this gave me no slender conceit of my pretty little self. When a man eats, he must drink. The first toast of course was my health. The second, in common civility, was my father and mother, whose happiness in having such an angel of a son, he could not sufficiently envy or admire. All this while he kept filling my glass, and challenging me to keep pace with him. It was impossible to be backward in doing justice to such excellent toasts and sentiments: the compliments with which they were seasoned did not come amiss; so that I got into such a convivial mood, at observing our second omelet to disappear not insensibly, as just to ask the landlord if he could

not find us a little bit of fish. Master Corcuelo, who to all appearance played booty with the parasite, told me he had an excellent trout; but those who eat him must pay for him. I am afraid he is meat for your masters. Meat for our masters! exclaims my very humble servant in an angry tone of voice: that is more than you know, my friend. Are you yet to learn that the best of your larder is not too good for the renowned Gil Blas of Santillane? Go where he will, he is fit to table with princes.

I was very glad that he took up the landlord's last expression; because if he had not, I should. I felt myself a little hurt at it, and said to Corcuelo with some degree of hauteur: Produce this trout of yours, and I will take the consequences. The landlord, who had got just what he wanted, set himself to work, and served it up in high order. At the first glance of this third course I saw such pleasure sparkling in the parasite's eyes, as to prove him to be of a very complying temper; just as ready to do a kindness by the fish, as by those said eggs of which he had given so good an account. But at last he was obliged to lay down his arms, for fear of accidents; as his magazine was crammed to the very throat. Having eaten and drank his fill, he bethought him of putting a finishing hand to the farce. Master Gil Blas, said he, as he rose from the table, I am too well pleased with my princely entertainment, to leave you without a word of advice, of which you seem to stand in much need.

From this time forward be on your guard against extravagant praise. Do not trust men till you know them. You may meet with many another man, who, like me, may amuse himself at your expense, and perhaps carry the joke a little further. But do not you be taken in a second time, to believe yourself, on the word of such fellows, the eighth wonder of the world. With this sting in the tail of his farewell speech he very coolly took his leave.

I was as much alive to so ridiculous a circumstance, as I have ever been in after-life to the most severe mortifications. I did not know how to reconcile myself to the idea of having been so egregiously taken in, or, in fact, to lowering of my pride. So, so! quoth I, this rascal has been putting his tricks upon travellers, has he? Then he only wanted to pump my landlord! or more likely they were both in a story. Ah! my poor Gil Blas, thou hadst better hide thy silly head! To have suffered such knaves as these to turn thee into ridicule! A pretty story they will make of this! It is sure to travel back to Oviedo: and will give our friends a hopeful prospect of thy success in life. The family will be quite delighted to think what a blessed harvest all their pious advice has produced. There was no occasion to preach up morals to thee; for verily thou hast more of the dupe than the sharper in thy composition. Ready to tear my eyes out or bite my fingers off from spite and vexation, I locked myself up in my chamber and went to bed, but not to sleep; of which I had not got a wink when the muleteer

came to tell me, that he only waited for me to set out on his journey. I got up as expeditiously as I could; and while I was dressing Corcuelo put in his appearance, with a little bill in his hand; — a slight memorandum of the trout! But paying through the nose was not the worst of it; for I had the vexation to perceive, that while I was counting over the cost, this hang-dog was chuckling at the recollection of the night before. Having been fleeced most shamefully for a supper, which stuck in my stomach though I had scarcely come in for a morsel of it, I joined the muleteer with my baggage, giving to as many devils as there are saints in the calendar, the parasite, the landlord, and the inn.

CHAPTER III.

THE MULETEER'S TEMPTATION ON THE ROAD; ITS CONSEQUENCES, AND THE SITUATION OF GIL BLAS BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.

I WAS not the only passenger. There were two young gentlemen of Pegnaflor; a little chorister of Mondognedo, who was travelling about the country, and a young tradesman of Astorga, returning home from Verco with his new-married wife. We soon got acquainted, and exchanged the usual confidence of travellers, telling one another whence we came and whither we were going. The bride was young enough; but so dark-complexioned, with so little of

what a man likes to look at in a woman, that I did not think her worth the trouble. But she had youth and a good crummy person on her side, and the muleteer, being rather less nice in his taste, was resolved to try if he could not get into her good graces. This pretty project occupied his ingenuity during the whole day; but he deferred the execution till we should get to Cacabelos, the last place where we were to stop on the road. We alighted at an inn in the outskirts of the town, a quiet convenient place, with a landlord who never troubled himself about other people's concerns. We were ushered into a private room, and got our supper snugly; but just as the cloth was taken away in comes our carrier in a furious passion: — Death and the devil! I have been robbed. Here had I a hundred pistoles in my purse! But I will have them back again. I am going for a magistrate; — and those gentry will not take a joke upon such serious subjects. You will all be put to the rack, unless you confess, and give back the money. The fellow played his part very naturally, and burst out of the room, leaving us in a terrible fright.

We had none of us the least suspicion of the trick, and, being all strangers, were afraid of one another. I looked askance at the little chorister, and he, perhaps, had no better opinion of me. Besides, we were all a pack of greenhorns, and were quite unacquainted with the routine of business on these occasions. We were fools enough to believe that the torture would be the very first stage of our examina-

tion. With this dread upon our spirits, we all made for the door. Some effected their escape into the street, others into the garden; but the whole party preferred the discretion of running away to the valor of standing their ground. The young tradesman of Astorga had as great an objection to bone-twisting as the rest of us: so he did as Eneas, and many another good husband has done before him; — ran away, and left his wife behind. At that critical moment the muleteer, as I was told afterwards, who had not half so much sense of decency as his own mules, delighted at the success of his stratagem, began moving his motives to the citizen's wife: but this Lucrece of the Asturias, borrowing the chastity of a saint from the ugliness of the devil who tempted her, defended her sweet person tooth and nail; and showed she was in earnest about it by the noise she made. The patrol, who happened to be passing by the inn at the time, and knew that the neighborhood required a little looking after, took the liberty of just asking the cause of the disturbance. The landlord, who was trying if he could not sing in the kitchen louder than she could scream in the parlor, and swore he heard no music but his own, was at last obliged to introduce the myrmidons of the police to the distressed lady, just in time to rescue her from the necessity of a surrender at discretion. The head officer, a coarse fellow, without an atom of feeling for the tender passion, no sooner saw the game that was playing, than he gave the amorous muleteer five or six blows with the butt end of his halberd, represent-

ing to him the indecency of his conduct in terms quite as offensive to modesty as the naughty propensity which had called forth his virtuous indignation. Neither did he stop here; but laid hold of the culprit, and carried plaintiff and defendant before the magistrate. The former, with her charms all heightened by the discomposure of her dress, went eagerly to try their effect in obtaining justice for the outrage they had sustained. His worship heard at least one party; and after solemn deliberation pronounced the offence to be of a most heinous nature. He ordered him to be stripped, and to receive a competent number of lashes in his presence. The conclusion of the sentence was, that if the Endymion of Asturian Diana was not forthcoming the next day, a couple of guards should escort the disconsolate goddess to the town of Astorga, at the expense of this mule-driving Acteon.

For my part, being probably more terrified than the rest of the party, I got into the fields, scampering over hedge and ditch, through enclosures and across commons, till I found myself hard by a forest. I was just going for concealment to ensconce myself in the very heart of the thicket, when two men on horseback rode across me, crying, Who goes there? As my alarm prevented me from giving them an immediate answer, they came to close quarters, and holding each of them a pistol to my throat, required me to give an account of myself; who I was, whence I came, what business I had in that forest, and above all, not to tell a lie about it. Their rough interrog-

gatives were, according to my notion, little better than the rack with which our friend the muleteer had offered to treat us. I represented myself, however, as a young man on my way from Oviedo to Salamanca; told the story of our late fright, and faithfully attributed my running away in such a hurry to the dread of a worse exercise under the torture. They burst into an immoderate fit of laughter at my simplicity; and one of them said: Take heart, my little friend; come along with us, and do not be afraid; we will put you in a place where the devil shall not find you. At these words he took me up behind him, and we darted into the forest.

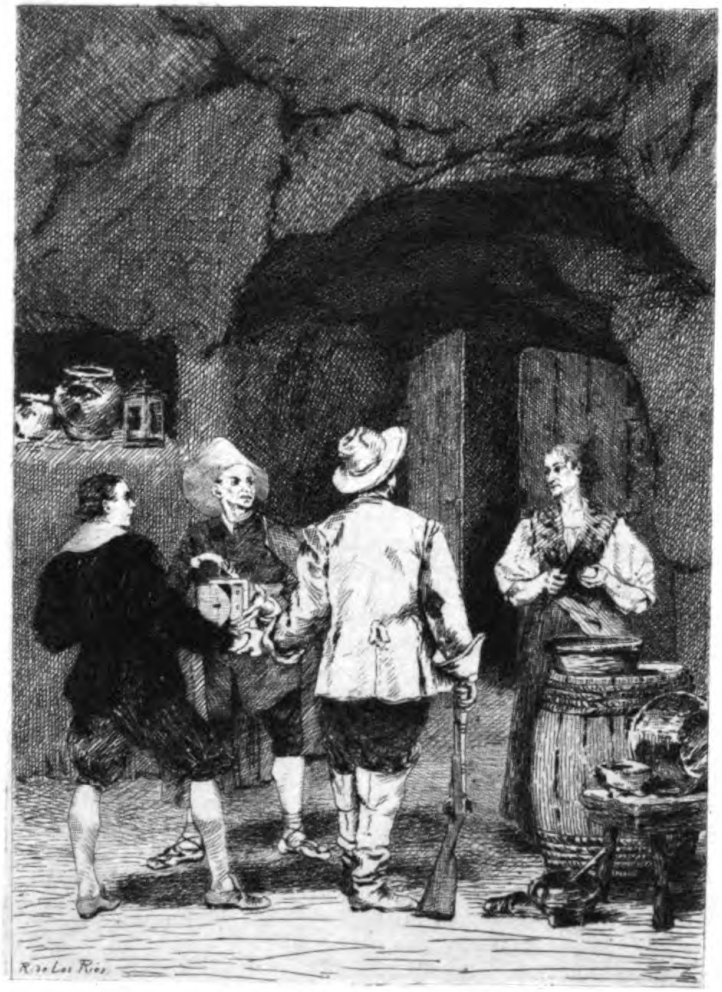
I did not know what to think of this odd meeting; yet on the whole I could not well be worse off than before. If these gentry, thought I to myself, had been thieves, they would have robbed, and perhaps murdered me. Depend on it, they are a couple of good honest country gentlemen in this neighborhood, who seeing me frightened, have taken compassion on me, and mean to carry me home with them and make me comfortable. But these visions did not last long. After turning and winding backward and forward in deep silence, we found ourselves at the foot of a hill, where we dismounted. This is our abode, said one of these sequestered gentlemen. I looked about in all directions, but the deuce a bit of either house or cottage: not a vestige of human habitation! The two men in the mean time raised a great wooden trap, covered with earth and briers, to conceal the entrance of a long shelving

passage under ground, to which from habit the poor beasts took very kindly of their own accord. Their masters kept tight hold of me, and let the trap down after them. Thus was the worthy nephew of my uncle Perez caught, just for all the world as you would catch a rat.

CHAPTER IV.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBTERRANEOUS DWELLING AND ITS CONTENTS.

I NOW knew into what company I had fallen; and I leave it to any one to judge whether the discovery must not have rid me of my former fear. A dread more mighty and more just now seized my faculties. Money and life, all given up for lost! With the air of a victim on his passage to the altar, did I walk, more dead than alive, between my two conductors, who finding that I trembled, frightened me so much the more by telling me not to be afraid. When we had gone two hundred paces, winding down a declivity all the way, we got into a stable lighted by two large iron lamps suspended from the vault above. There was a good store of straw, and several casks of hay and corn with room enough for twenty horses: but at that time there were only the two which came with us. An old negro, who seemed for his years in pretty good case, was tying them to the rack where they were to feed.



We went out of the stable. By the melancholy light of some other lamps, which only served to dress up horror in its native colors, we arrived at a kitchen where an old harridan was broiling some steaks on the coals, and getting supper ready. The kitchen furniture was better than might be expected, and the pantry provided in a very plentiful manner. The lady of the larder's picture is worth drawing. Considerably on the wrong side of sixty! — In her youth, her hair had been of a fiery red; though she would have called it auburn. Time had indeed given it the fairer tint of gray; but a lock of more youthful hue, interspersed at intervals, produced all the variegated effect of the admired autumnal shades. To say nothing of an olive complexion, she had an enormous chin turning up, an immense nose turning down, with a mouth in the middle, modestly retiring inwards, to make room for its encroaching neighbors. Red eyes are no beauty in any animal but a ferret; — hers were purple.

Here, dame Leonarda, said one of the horsemen as he presented me to this angelic imp of darkness, we have brought you a young lad. Then looking round, and observing me to be miserably pale, Pluck up your spirits, my friend; you shall come to no harm. We want a scullion, and have met with you. You are a lucky dog! We had a boy who died about a fortnight ago: you shall succeed to the preferment. He was rather too delicate for his place. You seem a good stout fellow, and may live a week or two longer. We find you in bed and

board, coal and candle; but as for day-light, you will never see that again. Your leisure hours will pass off very agreeably with Leonarda, who is really a very good creature, and tolerably tender-hearted; you will have all your little comforts about you. I flatter myself you have not got among beggars. At this moment, the thief seized a flambeau; and as I feared, "with zeal to destroy;" for he ordered me to follow him.

He took me into a cellar, where I saw a great number of bottles and earthen pots full of excellent wine. He then made me cross several rooms. In some were pieces of cloth piled up; in others, stuffs and silks. As we passed through I could not help casting a sheep's eye at the gold and silver plate peeping out of the different cupboards. After that, I followed him into a great hall illuminated by three copper lustres, and serving as a gallery between the other rooms. Here he put fresh questions to me; asking my name;—why I left Oviedo;—and when I had satisfied his curiosity: Well, Gil Blas, said he, since your only motive for quitting your native place was to get into something snug and eligible, to be sure you must have been born to good luck, or you would not have fallen into our hands. I tell you once for all, you will live here on the fat of the land, and may souse over head and ears in ready money. Besides, you are in a place of perfect safety. The officers of the holy brotherhood might pass through the forest a hundred times without discovering our subterraneous abode. The entrance

is only known to myself and my comrades. You may perhaps ask how it came to be contrived, without being perceived by the inhabitants in the neighborhood. But you are to understand, my friend, that it was made long ago, and is no work of ours. After the Moors had made themselves masters of Granada, of Arragon, and nearly the whole of Spain, the Christians, rather than submit to the tyranny of infidels, betook themselves to flight, and lay concealed in this country, in Biscay, and in the Asturias, whither the brave Don Pelagio had withdrawn himself. They lived in a state of exile, on the mountains, or in the woods dispersed in little knots. Some took up their residences in natural caves, others in artificial dwellings under ground, like this we are in. In process of time, when by the blessing of Providence they had driven their enemies out of Spain, they returned to the towns. From that time forth their retreats have served as a rendezvous for the gentlemen of our profession. It is true that several of them have been discovered and destroyed by the holy brotherhood: but there are some yet remaining; and, by great good luck, I have tenanted this without paying any rent for it almost these fifteen years: Captain Rolando, at your service! I am the leader of the band; and the man you saw with me is one of my troopers.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BANDITTI IN THE SUBTERRANEOUS RETREAT, WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR PLEASANT CONVERSATION.

JUST as Captain Rolando had finished his speech six new faces made their appearance in the hall; the lieutenant and five privates, returning home with their booty. They were hauling in two great baskets full of sugar, cinnamon, pepper, figs, almonds, and raisins. The lieutenant gave an account of their proceedings to the captain, and told him they had taken these articles, as well as the sumpter-mule, from a grocer of Benavento. An official report having thus been made to the prime-minister, the grocer's contribution was carried to account; and the next step was to regale after their labors. A large table was set out in the hall. They sent me back to the kitchen, where dame Leonarda told me what I had to do. I made the best of a bad bargain, finding the luck ran against me; and, swallowing my grievances, set myself to wait on my noble masters.

I cleaned my plate, set out my side-board, and brought up my wine. As soon as I announced dinner to be on table, consisting of two good black peppery ragouts for the first course, this high and mighty company took their seats. They fell to most voraciously. My place was to wait; and I handed about the glasses with so butler-like an air, as to be

not a little complimented on my dexterity. The chief entertained them with a short sketch of my story, and praised my parts. But I had recovered from my mania by this time, and could listen to my own panegyric with the humility of an anchorite or the contempt of a philosopher. They all seemed to take a liking to me, and to think I had dropped from the clouds on purpose to be their cup-bearer. My predecessor was a fool to me. Since his death, the illustrious Leonarda had the honor of presenting nectar to these gods of the lower regions. But she was now degraded, and I had the felicity of being installed in her office. Thus, old Hebe being a little the worse for wear, young Ganymede tripped up her heels.

A substantial joint of meat after the ragouts at length blunted the edge of their appetites. Eating and drinking went together: so that they soon got into a merry pin, and made a roaring noise. Well done, my lads! All talkers and no listeners. One begins a long story, another cuts a joke; here a fellow bawls, there a fellow sings; and they all seem to be at cross-purposes. At last Rolando, tired of a concert in which he could hardly hear the sound of his own voice, let them know that he was maestro di capella, and brought them into better tune. Gentlemen, said he, I have a question to put. Instead of stunning one another with this infernal din, had we not better enjoy a little rational conversation? A thought is just come into my head. Since the happy day that united us we have never had the

curiosity to inquire into each other's pedigrees, or by what chain of circumstances we were each of us led to embrace our present way of life. There would be no harm in knowing who and who are together. Let us exchange confidence: we may find some amusement in it. The lieutenant and the rest, like true heroes of romance, accepted the challenge with the utmost courtesy, and the captain told the first story to the following effect: —

Gentlemen, you are to know that I am the only son of a rich citizen in Madrid. The day of my birth was celebrated in the family by rejoicings without end. My father, no chicken, thought it a considerable feat to have got an heir, and my mother was kind enough to suckle me herself. My maternal grandfather was still living: a good old man, who did not trouble himself about other people's concerns, but said his prayers, and fought his campaigns over and over again; for he had been in the army. Of course I was idolized by these three persons; never out of their arms. My early years were passed in the most childish amusements, for fear of hurting my health by application. It will not do, said my father, to hammer much learning into children till time has ripened their understanding. While he waited for this ripening, the season went by. I could neither read nor write: but I made up for that in other ways. My father taught me a thousand different games. I became perfectly acquainted with cards, was no stranger to dice, and my grandfather set me the example of drawing the long bow, while

he entertained me with his military exploits. He sung the same songs repeatedly one after another every day; so that when, after saying ten or twelve lines after him for three months together, I got to boggle through them without missing, the whole family were in raptures at my memory. Neither was my wit thought to be at all less extraordinary; for I was suffered to talk at random, and took care to put in my oar in the most impertinent manner possible. O, the pretty little dear! exclaimed my father, as if he had been fascinated. My mother made it up with kisses, and my grandfather's old eyes overflowed. I played all sorts of dirty and indecent tricks before them with impunity; every thing was excusable in so fine a boy: an angel could not do wrong. Going on in this manner, I was already in my twelfth year without ever having a master. It was high time; but then he was to teach me by fair means: he might threaten, but must not flog me. This arrangement did me but little good; for sometimes I laughed when my tutor scolded: at others, I ran with tears in my eyes to my mother or my grandfather, and complained that he had used me ill. The poor devil got nothing by denying it. My word was always taken before his, and he came off with the character of a cruel rascal. One day I scratched myself with my own nails, and set up a howl as if I had been flogged. My mother ran, and turned the master out of doors, though he vowed and protested he had never lifted a finger against me.

Thus did I get rid of all my tutors, till at last I met with one to my mind. He was a bachelor of Alcala. This was the master for a young man of fashion. Women, wine, and gaming were his principal amusements. It was impossible to be in better hands. He hit the right nail on the head: for he let me do what I pleased, and thus got into the good graces of the family, who abandoned me to his conduct. They had no reason to repent. He perfected me betimes in the knowledge of the world. By dint of taking me about to all his haunts, he gave such a finish to my education, that barring literature and science, I became a universal scholar. As soon as he saw that I could go alone in the high road to ruin he went to qualify others for the same journey.

During my childhood I had lived at home just as I liked, and did not sufficiently consider, that now I was beginning to be responsible for my own actions. My father and mother were a standing jest. Yet they were themselves thrown into convulsions at my sallies; and the more ridiculous they were made by them, the more waggish they thought me. In the mean time I got into all manner of scrapes with some young fellows of my own kidney; and, as our relations kept us rather too short of cash for the exigencies of so loose a life, we each of us made free with whatever we could lay our hands on in our own families. Finding this would not raise the supplies, we began to pick pockets in the streets at night. As ill luck would have it, our exploits came to the

knowledge of the police. A warrant was out against us; but some good-natured friend, thinking it a pity we should be nipped in the bud, gave us a caution. We took to our heels, and rose in our vocation to the rank of highwaymen. From that time forth, gentlemen, with a blessing on my endeavors, I have gone on till I am almost the father of the profession, in spite of the dangers to which it is exposed.

Here the captain ended, and it came to the turn of the lieutenant. Gentlemen, extremes are said to meet; — and so it will appear from a comparison of our commander's education and mine. My father was a butcher at Toledo. He passed, with reason, for the greatest brute in the town, and my mother's sweet disposition was not mended by the example. In my childhood, they whipped me in emulation of one another; I came in for a thousand lashes of a day! The slightest fault was followed up by the severest punishment. In vain did I beg for mercy with tears in my eyes, and protest that I was sorry for what I had done. They never excused me, and nine times out of ten flogged me for nothing. When I was under my father's lash, my mother, not thinking his arm stout enough, lent her assistance, instead of begging me off. The favors I received at their hands gave me such a disgust, that I quitted their house before I had completed my fourteenth year, took the Arragon road, and begged my way to Saragossa. There I associated with vagrants, who led a merry life enough. They taught

me to counterfeit blindness and lameness, to dress up an artificial wound in each of my legs, and to adopt many other methods of imposing on the credulity of the charitable and humane. In the morning, like actors at rehearsal, we cast our characters, and settled the business of the comedy. We had each our exits and our entrances; till in the evening the curtain dropped, and we regaled at the expense of the dupes we had deluded in the day. Wearied however with the company of these wretches, and wishing to live in more worshipful society, I entered into partnership with a gang of sharpers. These fellows taught me some good tricks: but Saragossa soon became too hot to hold us, after we had fallen out with a limb of the law, who had hitherto taken us under his protection. We each of us provided for ourselves, and left the devil to take the hindmost. For my part, I enlisted in a brave and veteran regiment, which had seen abundance of service on the king's highway: and I found myself so comfortable in their quarters, that I had no desire to change my birth. So that you see, gentlemen, I was very much obliged to my relations for their bad behavior; for if they had treated me a little more kindly, I might have been a blackguard butcher at this moment, instead of having the honor to be your lieutenant.

Gentlemen, — interrupted a hopeful young freebooter who sat between the captain and the lieutenant, — the stories we have just heard are neither so complicated nor so curious as mine. I peeped into

existence by means of a country-woman in the neighborhood of Seville. Three weeks after she had set me down in this system, a nurse-child was offered her. You are to understand she was yet in her prime, comely in her person, and had a good breast of milk. The young suckling had noble blood in him, and was an only son. My mother accepted the proposal with all her heart, and went to fetch the child. It was entrusted to her care. She had no sooner brought it home, than, fancying a resemblance, she conceived the idea of substituting me for the brat of high birth, in the hope of drawing a handsome commission at some future time for this motherly office in behalf of her infant. My father, whose morals were on a level with those of clodhoppers in general, lent himself very willingly to the cheat: so that with only a change of clouts, the son of Don Rodrigo de Herrera was packed off in my name to another nurse, and my mother suckled her own and her master's child at once in my little person.

They may say what they will of instinct and the force of blood! The little gentleman's parents were very easily taken in. They had not the slightest suspicion of the trick; and were eternally dandling me till I was seven years old. As it was their intention to make me a finished gentleman, they gave me masters of all kinds; but I had very little taste for their lessons, and above all, I detested the sciences. I had at any time rather play with the servants or the stable boys, and was a complete kitchen genius. But tossing up for heads or tails

was not my ruling passion. Before seventeen I had an itch for getting drunk. I played the devil among the chambermaids; but my prime favorite was a kitchen girl, who had infinite merit in my eyes. She was a great bloated horse-god-mother, whose good case and easy morals suited me exactly. I boarded her with so little circumspection that Don Rodrigo took notice of it. He took me to task pretty sharply; twitted me with my low taste; and, for fear the presence of my charmer should counteract his sage counsels, showed the goddess of my devotions the outside of the door.

This proceeding was rather offensive; and I determined to be even with him. I stole his wife's jewels; and ravishing my Helen from a laundress of her acquaintance, went off with her in open day, that the transaction might lose nothing in point of notoriety. But this was not all. I carried her among her relations, where I married her according to the rites of the church, as much from the personal motive of mortifying Herrera, as from the patriotic enthusiasm of encouraging our young nobility to mend the breed. Three months after marriage, I heard that Don Rodrigo had gone the way of all flesh. The intelligence was not lost upon me. I was at Seville in a twinkling, to administer in due form and order to his effects; but the tables were turned. My mother had paid the debt of nature, and in her last agonies had been so much off her guard as to confess the whole affair to the curate of the village and other competent witnesses. Don

Rodrigo's son had already taken my place, or rather his own, and his popularity was increased by the deficiency of mine; so that as the trumps were all out in that hand, and I had no particular wish for the present my wife was likely to make me, I joined issue with some desperate blades, with whom I began my trading ventures.

The young cut-purse having finished his story, another told us that he was the son of a merchant at Burgos; that, in his youth, prompted more by piety than wit, he had taken the religious habit and professed in a very strict order, and that a few years afterwards he had apostatized. In short, the eight robbers told their tale one after another, and when I had heard them all, I did not wonder that the destinies had brought them together. The conversation now took a different turn. They brought several schemes upon the carpet for the next campaign; and after having laid down their plan of operations, rose from table and went to bed. They lighted their night candles, and withdrew to their apartments. I attended Captain Rolando to his. While I was fiddling about him as he undressed: Well! Gil Blas, said he, you see how we live! We are always merry; hatred and envy have no footing here; we have not the least difference, but hang together just like monks. You are sure, my good lad, to lead a pleasant life here; for I do not think you are fool enough to make any bones about consorting with gentlemen of the road. In what does ours differ from many a more reputable trade?

Depend on it, my friend, all men love two hands in their neighbor's purse, though only one in their own. Men's principles are all alike; the only difference lies in the mode of carrying them into effect. Conquerors, for instance, make free with the territories of their neighbors. People of fashion borrow, and do not pay. Bankers, treasurers, brokers, clerks, and traders of all kinds, wholesale and retail, give ample liberty to their wants to overdraw on their consciences. I shall not mention the hangers-on of the law; we all know how it goes with them. At the same time it must be allowed that they have more humanity than we have; for as it is often our vocation to take away the life of the innocent for plunder, it is sometimes theirs for fee and reward to save the guilty.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTEMPT OF GIL BLAS TO ESCAPE, AND ITS SUCCESS.

After the captain of the banditti had thus apologized for adopting such a line of life, he went to bed. For my part, I returned to the hall, where I cleared the table, and set every thing to rights. Then I went to the kitchen, where Domingo, the old negro, and dame Leonarda had been expecting me at supper. Though entirely without appetite, I had the good manners to sit down with them.

Not a morsel could I eat; and, as I scarcely felt more miserable than I looked, this pair so justly formed to meet by nature, undertook to give me a little comfort. Why do you take on so, my good lad? said the old dowager: you ought rather to bless your stars for your good luck. You are young, and seem a little soft; you would have a fine kettle of fish of it in the busy world. You might have fallen into bad hands, and then your morals would have been corrupted; whereas here your innocence is insured to its full value. Dame Leonarda is in the right, put in the old negro gravely, the world is but a troublesome place. Be thankful, my friend, for being so early relieved from the dangers, the difficulties, and the afflictions of this miserable life.

I bore this prosing very quietly, because I should have got no good by putting myself in a passion about it. At length Domingo, after playing a good knife and fork, and getting gloriously muddled, took himself off to the stable. Leonarda, by the glimmering of a lamp, showed me the way to a vault which served as a last home to those of the corps who died a natural death. Here I stumbled upon something more like a grave than a bed. This is your room, said she. Your predecessor lay here as long as he was among us, and here he lies to this day. He suffered himself to be hurried out of life in his prime: do not you be so foolish as to follow his example. With this kind advice, she left me with the lamp for my companion and returned

to the kitchen. I threw myself on the little bed, not so much for rest as meditation. O Heaven! exclaimed I, was there ever a fate so dreadful as mine! It is determined then that I am to take my leave of daylight! Beside this, as if it was not enough to be buried alive at eighteen, my misery is to be aggravated by being in the service of a banditti; by passing the day with highwaymen, and the night in a charnel-house. These reflections, which seemed to me very dismal, and were indeed no better than they seemed, set me crying most bitterly. I could not conceive what cursed maggot my uncle had got in his head to send me to Salamanca; repented running away from Cacabelos, and would have compounded for the torture. But, considering how vain it was to shut the door when the steed was stolen, I determined, instead of lamenting the past, to hit upon some expedient for making my escape. What! thought I, is it impossible to get off? The cut-throats are asleep; cooky and the black will be snoring ere long. Why cannot I, by the help of this lamp, find the passage by which I descended into these infernal regions? I am afraid indeed my strength is not equal to lifting the trap at the entrance. However, let us see. Faint heart never won fair lady. Despair will lend me new force, and who knows but I may succeed?

Thus was the train laid for a grand attempt. I got up, as soon as Leonarda and Domingo were likely to be asleep. With the lamp in my hand, I stole out of the vault, putting up my prayers to all

the spirits in paradise, and ten miles round. It was with no small difficulty that I threaded all the windings of this new labyrinth. At length I found myself at the stable door, and perceived the passage which was the object of my search. Pushing on I made my way towards the trap with a light pair of heels and a beating heart: but, alas! in the middle of my career I ran against a cursed iron grate locked fast, with bars so close as not to admit a hand between them. I looked rather foolish at the occurrence of this new difficulty, which I had not been aware of at my entrance, because the grate was then open. However, I tried what I could do by fumbling at the bars. Then for a peep at the lock; or whether it could not be forced! When all at once my poor shoulders were saluted with five or six good strokes of a bull's pizzle. I set up such a shrill alarum, that the den of Cacus rang with it; when looking round, who should it be but the old negro in his shirt, holding a dark lanthorn in one hand, and the instrument of my punishment in the other. O, O! quoth he, my merry little fellow, you will run away, will you? No, no! you must not think to set your wits against mine. I heard you all the while. You thought you should find the grate open, did not you? You may take it for granted, my friend, that henceforth it will always be shut. When we keep any one here against his will, he must be a cleverer fellow than you to make his escape.

In the mean time, at the howl I had set up, two

or three of the robbers waked suddenly; and not knowing but the holy brotherhood might be falling upon them, they got up and called their comrades. Without the loss of a moment all were on the alert. Swords and carbines were put in requisition, and the whole posse advanced forward almost in a state of nature to the place where I was parleying with Domingo. But as soon as they learned the cause of the uproar, their alarm resolved itself into a peal of laughter. How now, Gil Blas, said the apostate son of the church, you have not been a good six hours with us, and are you tired of our company already? You must have a great objection to retirement. Why, what would you do if you were a Carthusian friar! Get along with you, and go to bed. This time you shall get off with Domingo's discipline; but if you are ever caught in a second attempt of the same kind, by Saint Bartholomew! we will flay you alive. With this hint he retired, and the rest of the party went back to their rooms. The old negro, taking credit to himself for his vigilance, returned to his stable: and I found my way back to my charnel-house, where I passed the remainder of the night in weeping and wailing.

CHAPTER VII.

GIL BLAS, NOT BEING ABLE TO DO WHAT HE LIKES, DOES WHAT HE CAN.

For the first few days, I thought I should have given up the ghost for very spite and vexation. The lingering life I led was nearly akin to death itself; but in the end my good genius whispered me to play the hypocrite. I aimed at looking a little more cheerful; began to laugh and sing, though it was sometimes on the wrong side of my mouth; in a word, I put so good a face on the matter, that Leonarda and Domingo were completely taken in. They thought the bird was reconciled to his cage. The robbers entertained the same notion. I looked as brisk as the beverage I poured out, and put in my oar whenever I thought I could say a good thing. My freedom, far from offending, was taken in good part. Gil Blas, quoth the captain one evening, while I was playing the buffoon, you have done well, my friend, to banish melancholy. I am delighted with your wit and humor. Some people wear a mask at first acquaintance; I had no notion what a jovial fellow you were.

My praises now seemed to run from mouth to mouth. They were all so partial to me, that, not to miss my opportunity; — Gentlemen, quoth I, allow me to tell you a piece of my mind. Since

I have been your guest, a new light breaks in upon me. I have bid adieu to vulgar prejudices, and caught a ray at the fountain of your illumination. I feel that I was born to be your knight companion. I languish to make one among you, and will stand my chance of a halter with the best. All the company cried Hear! — I was considered as a promising member of the senate. It was then determined unanimously to give me a trial in some inferior department; afterwards to bespeak me a good desperate encounter in which I might show my prowess; and if I answered expectation to give me a high and responsible employment in the commonwealth.

It was necessary therefore to go on exhibiting a copy of my countenance, and doing my best in my office of cup-bearer. I was impatient beyond measure; for I only aspired after the honors of the sitting, to obtain the liberty of going abroad with the rest; and I was in hopes that by running the risk of getting my neck into one noose I might get it out of another. This was my only chance. The time nevertheless seemed long to wait, and I kept my eye on Domingo, with the hope of outwitting him; but the thing was not feasible; he was always on the watch. Orpheus as leader of the band, with a complete orchestra of performers as good as himself, could not have soothed the savage breast of this Cerberus. The truth is, by the by, that for fear of exciting his suspicion, I did not set my wits against him so much as I might have done. He was on the

lookout, and I was obliged to play the prude, or my virtue might have come into disgrace. I therefore stopped proceedings till the time of my probation should expire, to which I looked forward with impatience, just as if I was waiting for a place under government.

Heaven be praised, in about six months I gained my end. The commandant Rolando addressing his regiment, said: Comrades, we must stand upon honor with Gil Blas. I have no bad opinion of our young candidate; we shall make something of him. If you will take my advice, let him go and reap his first harvest with us to-morrow on the king's highway. We will lead him on in the path of honor. The robbers applauded the sentiments of the captain with a thunder of acclamation; and to show me how much I was considered as one of the gang, from that moment they dispensed with my attendance at the sideboard. Dame Leonarda was reinstated in the office from which she had been discharged to make room for me. They made me change my dress, which consisted in a plain short cossack a good deal the worse for wear, and tricked me out in the spoils of a gentleman lately robbed. After this inauguration, I made my arrangements for my first campaign.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIL BLAS GOES OUT WITH THE GANG, AND PERFORMS AN EXPLOIT ON THE HIGHWAY.

It was past midnight in the month of September, when I issued from the subterraneous abode as one of the fraternity. I was armed, like them, with a carabine, two pistols, a sword and a bayonet, and was mounted on a very good horse, the property of the gentleman in whose costume I appeared. I had lived so long like a mole under ground, that the daybreak could not fail of dazzling me: but my eyes got reconciled to it by degrees.

We passed close by Pontferrada, and were determined to lie in ambush behind a small wood skirting the road to Leon. There we were waiting for whatever fortune might please to throw in our way, when we espied a Dominican friar, mounted, contrary to the rubric of those pious fathers, on a shabby mule. God be praised, exclaimed the captain with a sneer, this is a noble beginning for Gil Blas. Let him go and trounce that monk: we will bear witness to his qualifications. The connoisseurs were all of opinion that this commission suited my talents to a hair, and exhorted me to do my best. Gentlemen, quoth I, you shall have no reason to complain. I will strip this holy father to his birthday suit, and give you complete right and title to his mule. No, no, said Rolando, the beast would not be worth its fodder:

only bring us our reverend pastor's purse; that is all we require. Hereupon I issued from the wood and pushed up to the man of God, doing penance all the time in my own breast for the sin I was committing. I could have liked to have turned my back upon my fellows at that moment; but most of them had the advantage of better horses than mine: had they seen me making off, they would have been at my heels, and would soon have caught me, or perhaps would have fired a volley, for which I was not sufficiently case-hardened. I could not therefore venture on so perilous an alternative; so that claiming acquaintance with the reverend father, I asked to look at his purse, and just put out the end of a pistol. He stopped short to gaze upon me; and, without seeming much frightened, said, My child, you are very young; this is an early apprenticeship to a bad trade. Father, replied I, bad as it is, I wish I had begun it sooner. What! my son, rejoined the good friar, who did not understand the real meaning of what I said, how say you? What blindness! give me leave to place before your eyes the unhappy condition. Come, come, father! interrupted I with impatience, a truce to your morality, if you please. My business on the high road is not to hear sermons. Money makes my mare to go. Money! said he, with a look of surprise; you have a poor opinion of Spanish charity, if you think that people of my stamp have any occasion for such trash upon their travels. Let me undeceive you. We are made welcome wherever we go, and pay for

our board and lodgings by our prayers. In short, we carry no cash with us on the road; but draw drafts upon Providence. That is all very well, replied I; yet for fear your drafts should be dishonored, you take care to keep about you a little supply for present need. But come, father, let us make an end: my comrades in the wood are in a hurry; so your money or your life. At these words, which I pronounced with a determined air, the friar began to think the business grew serious. Since needs must, said he, there is wherewithal to satisfy your craving. A word and a blow is the only rhetoric with you gentlemen. As he said this, he drew a large leathern purse from under his gown, and threw it on the ground. I then told him he might make the best of his way: and he did not wait for a second bidding, but stuck his heels into the mule, which, giving the lie to my opinion, for I thought it on a par with my uncle's, set off at a good round pace. While he was riding for his life, I dismounted. The purse was none of the lightest. I mounted again, and got back to the wood, where those nice observers were waiting with impatience to congratulate me on my success. I could hardly get my foot out of the stirrup, so eager were they to shake hands with me. Courage, Gil Blas, said Rolando; you have done wonders. I have had my eyes on you during your whole performance, and have watched your countenance. I have no hesitation in predicting that you will become in time a very accomplished highwayman. The lieutenant and the

rest chimed in with the prophecy, and assured me that I could not fail of fulfilling it hereafter. I thanked them for the elevated idea they had formed of my talents, and promised to do all in my power not to discredit their penetration.

After they had lavished praises, the effect rather of their candor than of my merit, they took it into their heads to examine the booty I had brought under my convoy. Let us see, said they, let us see how a friar's purse is lined. It should be fat and flourishing, continued one of them, for these good fathers do not mortify the flesh when they travel. The captain untied the purse, opened it, and took out two or three handfuls of little copper coins, an Agnus-Dei here and there, and some scapularies. At sight of so novel a prize, all the privates burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. God be praised! cried the lieutenant, we are very much obliged to Gil Blas: his first attack has produced a supply, very seasonable to our fraternity. One joke brought on another. These rascals, especially the fellow who had retired from the church to our subterraneous hermitage, began to make themselves merry on the subject. They said a thousand good things, such as showed at once the sharpness of their wits and the profligacy of their morals. They were all on the broad grin except myself. It was impossible to be butt and marksman too. They each of them shot their bolt at me, and the captain said: Faith, Gil Blas, I would advise you as a friend not to set your wit a second time against the church: the biter may

be bit; for you must live some time longer among us, before you are a match for them.

CHAPTER IX.

A MORE SERIOUS INCIDENT.

We lounged about the wood for the greater part of the day, without lighting on any traveller to pay toll for the friar. At length we were beginning to wear our homeward way, as if confining the feats of the day to this laughable adventure, which furnished a plentiful fund of conversation, when we got intelligence of a carriage on the road drawn by four mules. They were coming at a hard gallop, with three outriders, who seemed to be well armed. Rolando ordered the troop to halt, and hold a council, the result of whose deliberations was to attack the enemy. We were regularly drawn up in battle array, and marched to meet the caravan. In spite of the applause I had gained in the wood, I felt an oozing sort of a tremor come over me, with a chill in my veins and a chattering in my teeth that seemed to bode me no good. As it never rains but it pours, I was in the front of the battle, hemmed in between the captain and the lieutenant, who had given me that post of honor, that I might lose no time in learning to stand fire. Rolando, observing the low ebb of my animal spirits, looked askew at me,

and muttered in a tone more resolute than courtly: Hark ye! Gil Blas, look sharp about you! I give you fair notice, that if you play the recreant, I shall lodge a couple of bullets in your brain. I believed him as firmly as my catechism, and thought it high time not to neglect the hint; so that I was obliged to lay an embargo on the expression of my fears, and to think only of recommending my soul to God in silence.

While all this was going on, the carriage and horsemen drew near. They suspected what sort of gentry we were; and guessing our trade by our badge, stopped within gun-shot. They had carabines and pistols as well as ourselves. While they were preparing to give us a brisk reception, there jumped out of the coach a well-looking gentleman richly dressed. He mounted a led horse, and put himself at the head of his party. Though they were but four against nine, for the coachman kept his seat on the box, they advanced towards us with a confidence calculated to redouble my terror. Yet I did not forget, though trembling in every joint, to hold myself in readiness for a shot: but, to give a candid relation of the affair, I blinked and looked the other way in letting off my piece; so that from the harmlessness of my fire, I was sure not to have murder to answer for in another world.

I shall not give the particulars of the engagement; though present, I was no eye-witness; and my fear, while it laid hold of my imagination, drew a veil over the anticipated horror of the sight. All I know

about the matter is, that after a grand discharge of musketry, I heard my companions hallooing Victory! Victory! as if their lungs were made of leather. At this shout the terror which had made a forcible entry on my senses was ejected, and I beheld the four horsemen stretched lifeless on the field of battle. On our side, we had only one man killed. This was the renegade parson, who had now filled the measure of his apostasy, and paid for jesting with scapularies and such sacred things. The lieutenant received a slight wound in the arm; but the bullet did little more than graze the skin.

Master Rolando was the first at the coach-door. Within was a lady of from four to five-and-twenty, beautiful as an angel in his eyes, in spite of her sad condition. She had fainted during the conflict, and her swoon still continued. While he was fixed like a statue on her charms, the rest of us were in profound meditation on the plunder. We began by securing the horses of the defunct; for these animals, frightened at the report of our pieces, had got to a little distance, after the loss of their riders. For the mules, they had not wagged a hair, though the coachman had jumped from his box during the engagement to make his escape. We dismounted for the purpose of unharnessing and loading them with some trunks tied before and behind the carriage. This settled, the captain ordered the lady, who had not yet recovered her faculties, to be set on horseback before the best mounted of the robbers; then, leaving the carriage and the uncased carcasses by the

roadside, we carried off with us the lady, the mules, and the horses.

CHAPTER X.

THE LADY'S TREATMENT FROM THE ROBBERS. THE EVENT OF THE GREAT DESIGN, CONCEIVED BY GIL BLAS.

THE night had another hour to run, when we arrived at our subterraneous mansion. The first thing we did was to lead our cavalry to the stable, where we were obliged to groom them ourselves, as the old negro had been confined to his bed for three days, with a violent fit of the gout, and a universal rheumatism. He had no member supple but his tongue; and that he employed in testifying his indignation by the most horrible impieties. Leaving this wretch to curse and swear by himself, we went to the kitchen to look after the lady. So successful were our attentions, that we succeeded in recovering her from her fit. But when she had once more the use of her senses, and saw herself encompassed by strangers, she knew the extent of her misfortune, and shuddered at the thought. All that grief and despair together could present, of images the most distressing, appeared depicted in her eyes, which she lifted up to Heaven, as if in reproach for the indignities she was threatened with. Then, giving way at once to these dreadful apprehensions, she fell again into a swoon, her eyelids closed once more,

and the robbers thought that death was going to snatch from them their prey. The captain, therefore, judging it more to the purpose to leave her to herself than to torment her with any more of their assistance, ordered her to be laid on Leonarda's bed, and at all events to let nature take its course.

We went into the hall, where one of the robbers, who had been bred a surgeon, looked at the lieutenant's arm and put a plaster to it. After this scientific operation, it was thought expedient to examine the baggage. Some of the trunks were filled with laces and linen, others with various articles of wearing apparel: but the last contained some bags of coin; a circumstance highly approved by the receivers-general of the estate. After this investigation, the cook set out the sideboard, laid the cloth, and served up supper. Our conversation ran first on the great victory we had achieved. On this subject, said Rolando, directing himself to me, confess the truth, Gil Blas: you cannot deny that you were devilishly frightened. I candidly admitted the fact; but promised to fight like a crusader, after my second or third campaign. Hereupon all the company took my part, alleging the sharpness of the action in my excuse, and that it was very well for a novice, not yet accustomed to the smell of powder.

We next talked of the mules and horses just added to our subterraneous stud. It was determined to set off the next morning before daybreak, and sell them at Mansilla, before there was any chance of our expedition having got wind. This resolution taken,

we finished our supper, and returned to the kitchen to pay our respects to the lady. We found her in the same condition. Nevertheless, though the dregs of life seemed almost exhausted, some of these poachers could not help casting a wicked leer at her, and giving visible signs of a motion within them, which would have broken out into overt act, had not Rolando put a spoke in their wheel, by representing that they ought at least to wait till the lady had got rid of her terrors and squeamishness, and could come in for her share of the amusement. Their respect for the captain operated as a check to the incontinence of their passions. Nothing else could have saved the lady; nor would death itself probably have secured her from violation.

Again therefore did we leave this unhappy female to her melancholy fate. Rolando contented himself with charging Leonarda to take care of her, and we all separated for the night. For my part, when I went to bed, instead of courting sleep, my thoughts were wholly taken up with the lady's misfortunes. I had no doubt of her being a woman of quality, and thought her lot on that account so much the more piteous. I could not paint to myself, without shuddering, the horrors which awaited her; and felt myself as sensibly affected by them, as if united to her by the ties of blood or friendship. At length, after having sufficiently bewailed her destiny, I mused on the means of preserving her honor from its present danger, and myself from a longer abode in this dungeon. I considered that the old negro

could not stir, and recollected that since his illness the cook had the key of the grate. That thought warmed my fancy, and gave birth to a project not to be hazarded lightly: the stages of its execution were the following: —

I pretended to have the colic. A lad in the colic cannot help whining and groaning; but I went further, and cried out lustily, as loud as my lungs would let me. This roused my gentle friends, and brought them about me, to know what the deuce was the matter. I informed them that I had a swinging fit of the gripes, and to humor the idea, gnashed my teeth, made all manner of wry faces till I looked like a bedlamite, and twisted my limbs as if I had been going to be delivered of a heathen oracle. Then I became calm all at once, as if my pains had abated. The next minute, I flounced up and down upon my bed, and threw my arms about at random. In a word, I played my part so well, that these more experienced performers, knowing as they were, suffered themselves to be thrown off their guard, and to believe that my malady was real. All at once did they busy themselves for my relief. One brought me a bottle of brandy, and forced me to gulp down half of it; another, in spite of my remonstrances, applied oil of sweet almonds in a very offensive manner: a third went and made a napkin burning hot, to be clapped upon my stomach. In vain did I cry mercy; they attributed my noise to the violence of my disorder, and went on inflicting positive evil by way of remedy for that which was

artificial. At last, able to bear it no longer, I was obliged to swear that I was better, and entreat them to give me quarter. They left off killing me with kindness, and I took care not to complain any more, for fear of experiencing their tender attentions a second time.

This scene lasted nearly three hours. After which the robbers, calculating it to be near daybreak, prepared for their journey to Mansilla. I was for getting up, as if I had set my heart on being of the party; but that they would not allow. No, no, Gil Blas, said Signor Rolando, stay here, my lad: your colic may return. You shall go with us another time; to-day you are not in travelling condition. I did not think it prudent to urge my attendance too much, for fear of being taken at my word; but only affected great disappointment, with so natural an air, that they all went off without the slightest misgiving of my design. After their departure, for which I had prayed most fervently, I said to myself: Now is your time, Gil Blas, to be firm and resolved. Arm yourself with courage to go through with an enterprise so propitiously begun. Domingo is tied by the leg, and Leonarda may show her teeth, but she cannot bite. Pounce down upon opportunity while it offers; you may wait long enough for another. Thus did I spirit myself up in soliloquy. Having got out of bed, I laid hold of my sword and pistols; and away I went to the kitchen. But before I made my appearance, I stopped to hear what Leonarda was talking about to

the fair incognita who was come to her senses, and on a view of her misfortune in its extremity, took on most desperately. That is right, my girl, said the old hag, cry your eyes out, sob away plentifully, you know the good effect of woman's tears. The sudden shock was too much for you: but the danger is over, now the engines can play. Your grief will abate by little and little, and you will get reconciled to living with our gentlemen, who are very good sort of people. You will be better off than a princess. You do not know how fond they will be of you. Not a day will pass without your being obliged to some of them. Many a woman would give one of her eyes to be in your place.

I did not allow Leonarda time to go on any longer with this babbling. In I went, and putting a pistol to her breast, insisted with a menacing air on her delivering up the key of the grate. She did not know what to make of my behavior; and, though almost in the last stage of life, had such a propensity to linger on the road, as not to venture on a refusal. With the key in my hand, I directed the following speech to the distressed object of my compassion: Madam, Heaven sends you a deliverer in me; follow, and I will see you safe whithersoever you wish to be conducted. The lady was not deaf to my proposal, which made such an impression on her grateful heart, that she jumped up with all the strength she had left, threw herself at my feet, and conjured me to save her honor. I raised her from the ground, and assured her she might rely on

me. I then took some ropes which were opportunely in the kitchen, and with her assistance tied Leonarda to the legs of a large table, protesting that I would kill her if she only breathed a murmur. After that, lighting a candle, I went with the incognita to the treasury, where I filled my pockets with pistoles, single and double, as full as they could hold. To encourage the lady not to be scrupulous, I begged she would think herself at home, and make free with her own. With our finances thus recruited, we went towards the stable, where I marched in with my pistols cocked. I was of opinion that the old blackamoor, for all his gout and rheumatism, would not let me saddle and bridle my horse peaceably, and my resolution was to put the finishing hand to all his ailments, if he took it into his head to play the churl: but, by good luck, he was at that moment in such pain, that I stole the steed without his perceiving that the door was open. The lady in the mean time was waiting for me. We were not long in threading the passage leading to the outlet; but reached the grate, opened it, and at last got to the trap. Much ado there was to lift it, which we could not have done, but for the new strength we borrowed from the hopes of our escape.

Day was beginning to dawn when we emerged from that abyss. Our first object was to get as far from it as possible. I jumped into the saddle: the lady got up behind me, and taking the first path that offered, we soon galloped out of the forest. Coming to some cross-roads, we took our chance. I trembled

for fear of its leading to Mansilla, and our encountering Rolando and his comrades. Luckily my apprehensions were unfounded. We got to Astorga by two o'clock in the afternoon. The people looked at us as if they had never seen such a sight before, as a woman riding behind a man. We alighted at the first inn. I immediately ordered a partridge and a young rabbit to the spit. While my orders were in a train of execution, the lady was shown to a room, where we began to scrape acquaintance with one another; which we had not done on the road, on account of the speed we made. She expressed a high sense of my services, and told me that after so gentlemanly a conduct, she could not allow herself to think me one of the gang from whom I had rescued her. I told her my story, to confirm her good opinion. By these means, I entitled myself to her confidence, and to the knowledge of her misfortunes, which she recounted to the following effect.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HISTORY OF DONNA MENCIA DE MOSQUERA.

I WAS born at Valladolid, and am called Donna Mencia de Mosquera. My father, Don Martin, after spending most of his family estate in the service, was killed in Portugal at the head of his regiment. He left me so little property, that I was a bad match,

though an only daughter. I was not, however, without my admirers, notwithstanding the mediocrity of my fortune. Several of the most considerable cavaliers in Spain sought me in marriage. My favorite was Don Alvar de Mello. It is true he had a prettier person than his rivals; but more solid qualities determined me in his favor. He had wit, discretion, valor, probity; and in addition to all these, an air of fashion. Was an entertainment to be given? His taste was sure to be displayed. If he appeared in the lists, he always fixed the eyes of the beholders on his strength and dexterity. I singled him out from among all the rest, and married him.

A few days after our nuptials, he met Don Andrew de Baësa, who had been his rival, in a private place. They attacked one another sword in hand, and Don Andrew fell. As he was nephew to the corregidor of Valladolid, a turbulent man, violently incensed against the house of Mello, Don Alvar thought he could not soon enough make his escape. He returned home speedily, and told me what had happened while his horse was getting ready. My dear Mencia, said he at length, we must part. You know the corregidor: let us not flatter ourselves; he will hunt me even to death. You are unacquainted with his influence; this empire will be too hot to hold me. He was so penetrated by his own grief and mine, as not to be able to articulate further. I made him take some cash, and jewels: then he folded me in his arms, and we did nothing

but mingle our sighs and tears for a quarter of an hour. In a short time the horse was at the door. He tore himself from me, and left me in a condition not easily to be expressed. It had been well if the excess of my affliction had destroyed me! How much pain and trouble might I have escaped by death! Some hours after Don Alvar was gone, the corregidor became acquainted with his flight. He set up a hue and cry after him, sparing no pains to get him into his power. My husband, however, eluded his pursuit, and got into safe quarters; so that the judge, finding himself reduced to confine his vengeance to the poor satisfaction of confiscating, where he meant to execute, labored to good purpose in his vocation. Don Alvar's little property all went to the hammer.

I remained in a very comfortless situation, with scarcely the means of subsistence. A retired life was best suited to my circumstances, with a single female servant. I passed my hours in lamenting, not an indigence, which I bore patiently, but the absence of a beloved husband, of whom I received no accounts. He had indeed pledged himself, in the melancholy moments of our parting, to be punctual in acquainting me with his destiny, to whatever part of the world his evil star might conduct him. And yet seven years rolled on without my hearing of him. My suspense respecting his fate afflicted me most deeply. At last I heard of his falling in battle, under the Portuguese banner, in the kingdom of Fez. A man newly returned from Africa brought

me the account, with the assurance that he had been well acquainted with Don Alvar de Mello; had served with him in the army, and had seen him drop in the action. To this narrative of facts he added several collateral circumstances, which left me no room to doubt of my husband's premature death.

About this time, Don Ambrosio Mesia Carrillo, Marquis de la Guardia, arrived at Valladolid. He was one of those elderly noblemen who, with that good breeding acquired by long experience in courts, throw their years into the background, and retain the faculty of making themselves agreeable to our sex. One day, he happened by accident to hear the story of Don Alvar; and, from the part I bore in it and the description of my person, there arose a desire of being better acquainted. To satisfy his curiosity, he made interest with one of my relations to invite me to her house. The gentleman was one of the party. This first interview made not the less impression on his heart, for the traces of sorrow which were too obvious on my countenance. He was touched by its melancholy and languishing expression, which gave him a favorable forecast of my constancy. Respect, rather than any warmer sentiment, might perhaps be the inspirer of his wishes. For he told me more than once what a miracle of good faith he considered me, and my husband's fate as enviable in this respect, however lamentable in others. In a word, he was struck with me at first sight, and did not wait for a review of my pretensions, but at once took the resolution of making me his wife.

The intervention of my kinswoman was adopted as the means of inducing me to accept his proposal. She paid me a visit; and in the course of conversation, pleaded, that as my husband had submitted to the decree of Providence in the kingdom of Fez, according to very credible accounts, it was no longer rational to coop up my charms. I had shed tears enough over a man to whom I had been united but for a few moments as it were, and I ought to avail myself of the present offer, and had nothing to do but to step into happiness at once. In furtherance of these arguments, she set forth the old marquis's pedigree, his wealth, and high character: but in vain did her eloquence expatiate on his endowments, for I was not to be moved. Not that my mind misgave me respecting Don Alvar's death, nor that the apprehension of his sudden and unwelcome appearance hereafter, checked my inclinations. My little liking, or rather my extreme repugnance to a second marriage, after the sad issue of the first, was the sole obstacle opposed to my relation's urgency. Neither was she disheartened: on the contrary, her zeal for Don Ambrosio resorted to endless stratagems. All my family were pressed into the old lord's service. So beneficial a match was not to be trifled with! They were eternally besetting, dunning, and tormenting me. In fact, my despondency, which increased from day to day, contributed not a little to my yielding.

As there was no getting rid of him, I gave way to their eager suit, and was wedded to the Marquis

de la Guardia. The day after the nuptials, we went to a very fine castle of his near Burgos, between Grajal and Rodillas. He conceived a violent love for me: the desire of pleasing was visible in all his actions: the anticipation of my slenderest wishes was his earliest and his latest study. No husband ever regarded his wife more tenderly, no lover could pour forth more devotion to his mistress. Nor would it have been possible for me to steel my heart against a return of passion, though our ages were so disproportioned, had not every soft sentiment been buried in Don Alvar's grave. But the avenues of a constant heart are barred against a second inmate. The memory of my first husband threw a damp on all the kind efforts of the second. Mere gratitude was a cold retribution for such tenderness; but it was all I had to give.

Such was my temper of mind, when, taking the air one day at a window in my apartment, I perceived a peasant-looking man in the garden, viewing me with fixed attention. He appeared to be a common laborer. The circumstance soon passed out of my thoughts; but the next day, having again taken my station at the window, I saw him on the self-same spot, and again found myself the object of his eager gaze. This seemed strange! I looked at him in my turn; and, after an attentive scrutiny, thought I could trace the features of the unhappy Don Alvar. This seeming visit from the tombs roused all the dormant agony of my soul, and extorted from me a piercing scream. Happily, I was then alone with

Inès, who of all my women engaged the largest share of my confidence. I told her what surmise had so agitated my spirits. She only laughed at the idea, and took it for granted that a slight resemblance had imposed on my fancy. Take courage, madam, said she, and do not be afraid of seeing your first husband. What likelihood is there of his being here in the disguise of a peasant? Is it even within the reach of credibility that he is still alive? However, I will go down into the garden and talk with this rustic. I will answer for finding out who he is, and will return in all possible haste with my intelligence. Inès ran on her errand like a lapwing; but soon returned to my apartment with a face of mingled astonishment and emotion. Madam, exclaimed she, your conjecture is but too well grounded; it is indeed Don Alvar whom you have seen; he made himself known at once, and pleads for a private interview.

As I had the means of admitting Don Alvar instantaneously, by the absence of the Marquis at Burgos, I commissioned my waiting-maid to introduce him into my closet by a private staircase. Well may you imagine the hurry and agitation of my spirits. How could I support the presence of a man, who was entitled to overwhelm me with reproaches? I fainted at his very foot-fall as he entered. They were about me in a moment; — he as well as Inès; and when they had recovered me from my swoon, Don Alvar said — Madam, for Heaven's sake compose yourself. My presence shall never be

the cause of pain to you; nor would I for the world expose you to the slightest anxiety. I am no savage husband, come to account with you for a sacred pledge; nor do I impute to criminal motives the second contract you have formed. I am well aware that it was owing to the importunity of your friends; your persecutions from that quarter are not unknown to me. Besides, the report of my death was current in Valladolid; and you had so much the more reason to give it credit, as no letter from me gave you any assurance to the contrary. In short, I am no stranger to your habits of life since our cruel separation; and know that necessity, not lightness of heart, has thrown you into the arms. . . . Ah! sir, interrupted I with sobs, why will you make excuses for your unworthy wife? She is guilty, since you survive. Why am I not still in the forlorn state, in which I languished before my marriage with Don Ambrosio? Fatal nuptials! — alas! but for these, I should at least have had the consolation in my wretchedness of seeing the object of my first vows again without a blush.

My dear Mencia, replied Don Alvar, with a look which marked how deeply he was penetrated by my contrition, I make no complaint of you; and far from upbraiding you with your present prosperity, as heaven is my witness, I return it thanks for the favors it has showered on you. Since the sad day of my departure from Valladolid, my own fate has ever been adverse. My life has been but a tissue of misfortune; and, as a surcharge of evil destiny, I

had no means of letting you hear from me. Too secure in your affection, I could neither think nor dream but of the condition to which my fatal love might have reduced you. Donna Mencia in tears was the lovely, but killing spectre that haunted me; of all my miseries, your dear idea was the most acute. Sometimes, I own, I felt remorse for the transporting crime of having pleased you. I wished you had lent an ear to the suit of some happier rival, since the preference with which you had honored me was to fall so cruelly on your own head. To cut short my melancholy tale — after seven years of suffering, more enamored than ever, I determined to see you once again. The impulse was not to be resisted; and the expiration of a long slavery having furnished me with the power of giving way to it, I have been at Valladolid under this disguise at the hazard of a discovery. There, I learned the whole story. I then came to this castle, and found the means of admission into the gardener's service, who has engaged me as a laborer. Such was my stratagem to obtain this private interview. But do not suppose me capable of blasting, by my continuance here, the happiness of your future days. I love you better than my own life; I have no consideration but for your repose; and it is my purpose, after thus unburdening my heart, to finish in exile the sacrifice of an existence, which has lost its value since no longer to be devoted to your service.

No, Don Alvar, no, exclaimed I at these words; you shall never quit me a second time. I will be

the companion of your wanderings; and death only shall divide us from this hour. Take my advice, replied he, live with Don Ambrosio; unite not yourself with my miseries, but leave me to stand under their undivided weight. These and other such entreaties he used; but the more willing he seemed to sacrifice himself to my welfare, the less did I feel disposed to take advantage of his generosity. When he saw me resolute in my determination to follow him, he all at once changed his tone; and assuming an aspect of more satisfaction, Madam, said he, since you still love Don Alvar well enough, to prefer adversity with him before your present ease and affluence, let us then take up our abode at Bétancos, in the interior of Galicia. There I have a safe retreat. Though my misfortunes may have stripped me of all my effects, they have not alienated all my friends; some are yet faithful, and have furnished me with the means of carrying you off. With their help I have hired a carriage at Zamora; have bought mules and horses, and am accompanied by perhaps the three boldest of the Galicians. They are armed with carabines and pistols, waiting my orders at the village of Rodillas. Let us avail ourselves of Don Ambrosio's absence. I will send the carriage to the castle gate, and we will set out without loss of time. I consented. Don Alvar flew towards Rodillas, and shortly returned with his escort. My women, from the midst of whom I was carried off, not knowing what to think of this violent proceeding, made their escape in great terror. Inès only was in the

secret; but she would not link her fate with mine, on account of a love affair with Don Ambrosio's favorite man.

I got into the carriage therefore with Don Alvar, taking nothing with me but my clothes and some jewels of my own before my second marriage; for I could not think of appropriating any presents of the Marquis. We travelled in the direction of Galicia, without knowing if we should be lucky enough to reach it. We had reason to fear Don Ambrosio's pursuit on his return, and that we should be overtaken by superior numbers. We went forward for two days without any alarm, and in the hope of being equally fortunate the third, had got into a very quiet conversation. Don Alvar was relating the melancholy adventure which had occasioned the rumor of his death, and how he recovered his freedom, after five years of slavery, when yesterday we met upon the Leon road the banditti you were with. He it was whom they killed with all his attendants, and it is for him the tears flow, which you see me shedding at this moment.

CHAPTER XII.

A DISAGREEABLE INTERRUPTION.

Donna Mencia melted into tears as she finished this recital. I allowed her to give a free passage to her sighs; I even wept myself for company, so

natural is it to be interested for the afflicted, and especially for a lovely female in distress. I was just going to ask her what she meant to do in the present conjuncture, and possibly she was going to consult me on the same subject if our conversation had not been interrupted; but we heard a great noise in the inn, which drew our attention whether we would or no. It was no less than the arrival of the corregidor, attended by two alguazils and their marshalmen. They came into the room where we were. A young gentleman in their train came first up to me, and began taking to pieces the different articles of my dress. He had no occasion to examine them long. By saint James, exclaimed he, this is my identical doublet! It is the very thing, and as safely to be challenged as my horse. You may commit this spark on my recognizance; he is one of the gang who have an undiscovered retreat in this country.

At this discourse, which gave me to understand my accuser to be the gentleman robbed, whose spoils to my confusion were exclusively my own, I was without a word to say for myself, looking one way and the other, and not knowing where to fix my eyes. The corregidor, whose office was suspicion, set me down for the culprit; and, presuming on the lady for an accomplice, ordered us into separate custody. This magistrate was none of your stern gallows-preaching fellows, he had a jocular epigrammatic sort of countenance. God knows if his heart lay in the right place for all that! As soon as I

was committed, in came he with his pack. They knew their trade, and began by searching me. What a forfeit to these lords of the manor! At every handful of pistoles, what little eyes did I see them make! The corregidor was absolutely out of his wits! It was the best stroke within the memory of justice! My pretty lad, said his worship with a softened tone, we only do our duty, but do not you tremble for your bones before the time: you will not be broken on the wheel if you do not deserve it. These blood-suckers were emptying my pockets all the time with their cursed palaver, and took from me what their betters of the shades below had the decency to leave — my uncle's forty ducats. They stuck at nothing! Their stanch fingers, with slow but certain scent, routed me out from top to toe; they whisked me round and round, and stripped me even to the shame of modesty, for fear some sneaking portrait of the king should slink between my shirt and skin. When they could sift me no further, the corregidor thought it time to begin his examination. I told a plain tale. My deposition was taken down; and the sequel was, that he carried in his train his bloodhounds, and my little property, leaving me to toss without a rag upon a beggarly whisp of straw.

O, the miseries of human life! groaned I, when I found myself in this merciless and solitary condition. Our adventures here are whimsical, and out of all time and tune. From my first outset from Oviedo, I had got into a pleasant round of difficult-

ies; hardly had I worked myself out of one danger, before I soused into another. Coming into town here, how could I expect the honor of the corregidor's acquaintance? While thus communing with my own thoughts, I got once more into the cursed doublet and the rest of the paraphernalia which had got me into such a scrape; then plucking up a little courage, Never mind, Gil Blas, thought I, do not be chicken-hearted. What is a prison above ground, after so brimstone a snuffle as thou hast had of the regions below? But, alas! I hallo before I am out of the wood! I am in more experienced hands than those of Leonarda and Domingo. My key will not open this grate! I might well say so, for a prisoner without money is like a bird with its wings clipped; one must be in full feather, to flutter out of distance from these gaol-birds.

But we left a partridge and a young rabbit on the spit! How they got off I know not; but my supper was a bit of sallow-complexioned bread, with a pitcher of water to render it amenable to mastication! and thus was I destined to bite the bridle in my dungeon. A fortnight was pretty well without seeing a soul but my keeper, who had orders that I should want for nothing in the bread and water way! Whenever he made his appearance I was inclined to be sociable, and to parley a little to get rid of the blue devils; but this majestic minister was above reply, he was mum! he scarcely trusted his eyes but to see that I did not slip by him. On the sixteenth day, the corregidor strutted in to this

tune — You are a lucky fellow! I have news for you. The lady is packed off for Burgos. She came under my examination before her departure, and her answers went to your exculpation. You will be at large this very day if your carrier from Pegnaflor to Cacabelos agrees in the same tale. He is now in Astorga. I have sent for him, and expect him here; if he confirms the story of the torture, you are your own master.

At these words I was ready to jump out of my skin for joy. The business was settled! I thanked the magistrate for the abridgment of justice with which he had deigned to favor me, and was getting to the fag end of my compliment, when the muleteer arrived, with an attendant before and behind. I knew the fellow's face; but he, having as a matter of course sold my cloak-bag with the contents, from a deep-rooted affection to the money which the sale had brought, swore lustily that he had no acquaintance with me, and had never seen me in the whole course of his life. O! you villain, exclaimed I, go down on your knees and own that you have sold my clothes. Prythee, have some regard to truth! Look in my face; am not I one of those shallow young fellows whom you had the wit to threaten with the rack in the corporate town of Cacabelos? The muleteer turned upon his toe, and protested he had not the honor of my acquaintance. As he persisted in his disavowal, I was recommitted for further examination. Patience once more! It was only reducing feasts and fasts to the level of bread and

water, and regaling the only sense I had the means of using with the sight of my tongue-tied warden. But when I reflected how little innocence would avail to extricate me from the clutches of the law, the thought was death; I panted for my subterraneous paradise. Take it for all in all, said I, there were fewer grievances than in this dungeon. I was hail fellow well met with the banditti! I bandied about my jokes with the best of them, and lived on the sweet hope of an escape; whereas my innocence here will only be a passport to the galleys.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LUCKY MEANS BY WHICH GIL BLAS ESCAPED FROM PRISON, AND HIS TRAVELS AFTERWARDS.

WHILE I passed the hours in tickling my fancy with my own gay thoughts, my adventures, word for word, as I had set my hand to them, were current about the town. The people wanted to make a show of me! One after another, there they came, peeping in at a little window of my prison, not too capacious of daylight; and when they had looked about them, off they went! This raree-show was a novelty. Since my commitment, there had not been a living creature at that window, which looked into a court where silence and horror kept guard. This gave me to understand that I was become the town-talk, and I knew not whether to divine good or evil from the omen.

One of my first visitors was the little chorister of Mondognedo, who had a fellow-feeling with me for the rack, and an equally light pair of heels. I knew him at once, and he had no qualms about acknowledging me as an acquaintance. We exchanged a kind greeting, then compared notes since our separation. I was obliged to relate my adventures in due form and order. The chorister, on his part, told me what had happened in the inn at Cacabelos, between the muleteer and the bride, after we had taken to our heels in a panic. Then, with a friendly assurance at parting, he promised to leave no stone unturned for my release. His companions, of mere curiosity, testified their pity for my misfortune; assuring me that they would lend a helping hand to the little chorister, and do their utmost to procure my freedom.

They were no worse than their word. The corregidor was applied to in my favor, who, no longer doubtful of my innocence, above all when he had heard the chorister's story, came three weeks afterwards into my cell. Gil Blas, said he, I never stand shilly-shally: begone, you are free; you may take yourself off whenever you please. But, tell me, if you were carried to the forest, could you not discover the subterraneous retreat? No, sir, replied I: as I only entered in the night, and made my escape before daybreak, it would be impossible to fix upon the spot. Thereupon the magistrate withdrew, assuring me that the gaoler should be ordered to give me free egress. In fact, the very next moment

the turnkey came into my dungeon, followed by one of his outriding establishment, with a bundle of clothes under his arm. They both of them stripped me with the utmost solemnity, and without uttering a single syllable, of my doublet and breeches, which had the honor to be made of a bettermost cloth almost new; then, having rigged me in an old frock, they shoved me out of their hospitable mansion by the shoulders.

The taking I was in to see myself so ill equipped, acted as a cooler to the usual transport of prisoners at recovering their liberty. I was tempted to escape from the town without delay, that I might withdraw from the gaze of the people, whose prying eyes I could not encounter but with pain. My gratitude however got the better of my diffidence. I went to thank the little chorister, to whom I was so much obliged. He could not help chuckling when he saw me. That is your trim, is it? said he. As far as I see, you cannot complain that your case has not been sifted to the bottom. I have nothing to say against the laws of my country, replied I; they are as just as need be. I only wish their officers would take after them. They might have spared me my suit of clothes! I have paid for them over and over again. I am quite of your mind, rejoined he; but they would tell you that these are little formalities of old standing, which cannot be dispensed with. What! you are foolish enough to suppose, for instance, that your horse has been restored to its right owner? Not a word of it, if you please: the beast

is at this present in the stables of the register, where it has been impounded as a witness to be brought into court: if the poor gentleman comes off with the crupper, he will be so much in pocket. But let us change the subject. What is your plan? What do you mean to do with yourself? I have an inclination, said I, to take the road for Burgos. I may light on my rescued lady; she will give me a little ready cash: I shall then buy a new short cassock, and betake myself to Salamanca, where I shall see what I can make of my Latin. All my trouble is, how to get to Burgos: one must live on the road. I understand you, replied he. Take my purse: it is rather thinly lined, to be sure; but you know a chorister's dividends are not like a bishop's. At the same time he drew it from his pouch, and inserted it between my hands with so good a grace, that I could not do otherwise than accept it, for want of a better. I thanked him as though he had made me a present of a gold mine, and tendered him a thousand promises of recompense, to be duly honored and punctually paid at doom's-day. With this I left him, and skulked out of the town, not paying my respects, to my other benefactors; but giving them a thousand blessings from my heart.

The little chorister had reason for speaking modestly of his purse; it was not orthodox. By good luck, I had been used for these two months to a very slender diet, and had still a little small change left when I reached Ponte de Mula, not far from Burgos. I halted there to inquire after Donna Mencia. The

hostess of the inn I put up at was a little withered, spiteful, emaciated bit of mortality. I saw at a glance, by the mouths she made at me aside, that my frock did not hit her fancy; and I thought it a proof of her taste. So I sat myself down at a table; ate bread and cheese, and drank a few glasses of execrable wine, such as innkeepers technically call cassecoquin. During this meal, which was of a piece with the outward appearance of the guest, I did my utmost to come to closer quarters with my landlady. Did she know the Marquis de la Guardia? Was his castle far out of town? Above all, what was become of my lady marchioness? You ask many questions in a breath, replied she, bridling with disdain. But I got out of her, though by hard pumping, that Don Ambrosio's castle was but a short league from Ponte de Mula.

After I had done eating and drinking, as it was night, I thought it natural to go to bed, and asked for my room. A room for you! shrieked my landlady, darting at me a glance of contempt and pride; I have no rooms for fellows who make their supper on a bit of cheese. All my beds are bespoke. There are people of fashion expected, and our accommodations are all kept for them. But I will not be unchristian: you may lie in my barn: I suppose your soft skin will not be incommoded by the feel of straw. She spoke truth without knowing it. I took it all in silence, and slunk to my roosting-place, where I fell asleep like a man, the excess of whose labors are his ready passport to the blessings of repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

DONNA MENCIA'S RECEPTION OF HIM AT BURGOS.

I WAS no sluggard, but got up the next morning betimes. I paid my bill to the landlady, who was already stirring, and seemed a little less lofty and in better humor than the evening before; a circumstance I attributed to the endeavors of three kind guardsmen belonging to the holy brotherhood. These gentlemen had slept in the inn: they were evidently on a very intimate footing with the hostess: and doubtless it was for guests of such note that all the beds were bespoke.

I inquired in the town my way to the castle where I wanted to present myself. By accident I made up to a man not unlike my landlord at Pegnaflor. He was not satisfied with answering my question to the point; but informed me that Don Ambrosio had been dead three weeks, and the marchioness his lady had taken the resolution of retiring to a convent at Burgos, which he named. I proceeded immediately towards that town, instead of taking the road to the castle, as I had first meant to do, and flew at once to the place of Donna Mencia's retreat. I besought the attendant at the turning-box to tell that lady that a young man just discharged from prison at Astorga wanted to speak with her. The nun went on the message immediately. On her return, she showed me into a parlor, where I did not wait long before

Don Ambrosio's widow appeared at the grate in deep mourning.

You are welcome, said the lady. Four days ago I wrote to a person at Astorga, to pay you a visit as from me, and to tell you to come and see me the moment you were released from prison. I had no doubt of your being discharged shortly: what I told the corregidor in your exculpation was enough for that. An answer was brought that you had been set at liberty, but that no one knew what was become of you. I was afraid of not seeing you any more, and losing the pleasure of expressing my gratitude. Never mind, added she, observing my confusion at making my appearance in so wretched a garb; your dress is of very little consequence. After the important services you have rendered me, I should be the most ungrateful of my sex, if I were to do nothing for you in return. I undertake therefore to better your condition: it is my duty, and the means are in my power. My fortune is large enough to pay my debt of obligation to you, without putting myself to inconvenience.

You know, continued she, my story up to the time when we both were committed to prison. I will now tell you what has happened to me since. When the corregidor at Astorga had sent me to Burgos, after having heard from my own lips a faithful recital of my adventures, I presented myself at the Castle of Ambrosio. My return thither excited extreme surprise: but they told me that it was too late; the marquis, as if he had been thun-

derstruck at my flight, fell sick; and the physicians despaired of his recovery. Here was a new incident in the melancholy tragedy of my fate. Yet I ordered my arrival to be announced. The next moment I ran into his chamber, and threw myself on my knees by his bedside, with a face running down with tears and a heart oppressed with the most lively sorrow. Who sent for you hither? said he as soon as he saw me; are you come to contemplate your own contrivance? Was it not enough to have deprived me of life? But was it necessary to satisfy your heart's desire, to be an eye-witness of my death? My lord, replied I, Inès must have told you that I fled with my first husband; and, had it not been for the sad accident which has taken him from me forever, you never would have seen me more. At the same time I acquainted him that Don Alvar had been killed by a banditti, whose captive I had consequently been in a subterraneous dungeon. After relating the particulars of my story to the end, Don Ambrosio held out to me his hand. It is enough, said he affectionately, I will make no more complaints. Alas! Have I in fact any right to reproach you? You were thrown once more in the way of a beloved husband; and gave me up to follow his fortunes: can I blame such an instance of your affection? No, madam, it would have been vain to resist the will of fate. For that reason I gave orders not to pursue you. In my rival himself I could not but respect the sacred rights with which he was invested, and even the impulse of your flight seemed to have been communicated

by some superior power. To close all with an act of justice, and in the spirit of reconciliation, your return hither has reëstablished you completely in my affection. Yes, my dear Mencia, your presence fills me with joy: but, alas! I shall not long be sensible to it. I feel my last hour to be at hand. No sooner are you restored to me, than I must bid you an eternal farewell. At these touching expressions, my tears flowed in torrents. I felt and expressed as much affliction as the human heart is capable of containing. I question whether Don Alvar's death, doting on him as I did, had cost me more bitter lamentations. Don Ambrosio had given way to no mistaken presage of his death, which happened on the following day; and I remained mistress of a considerable jointure, settled on me at our marriage. But I shall take care to make no unworthy use of it. The world shall not see me, young as I still am, wantoning in the arms of a third husband. Besides that such levity seems irreconcilable with the feelings of any but the profligate of our sex, I will frankly own the relish of life to be extinct in me; so that I mean to end my days in this convent, and to become a benefactress to it.

Such was Donna Mencia's discourse about her future plans. She then drew a purse from beneath her robe, and put it into my hands, with this address: Here are a hundred ducats simply to furnish out your wardrobe. That done, come and see me again. I mean not to confine my gratitude within such narrow bounds. I returned her a thousand

thanks, and promised solemnly not to quit Burgos, without taking leave of her. Having given this pledge, which I had every inclination to redeem, I went to look out for some house of entertainment. Entering the first I met with, I asked for a room. To parry the ill opinion my frock might convey of my finances, I told the landlord that, however appearances might be against me, I could pay for my night's lodging as well as a better dressed gentleman. At this speech, the landlord, whose name was Majuelo, a great banterer in a coarse way, running over me with his eyes from top to toe, answered with a cool, sarcastic grin, that there was no need of any such assurance: it was evident I should pay my way liberally, for he discovered something of nobility through my disguise, and had no doubt but I was a gentleman in very easy circumstances. I saw plainly that the rascal was laughing at me; and, to stop his humor before it became too convulsive, gave him a little insight into the state of my purse. I went so far as to count over my ducats on a table before him, and perceived my coin to have inclined him to a more respectful judgment. I begged the favor of him to send for a tailor. A broker would be better, said he; he will bring all sorts of apparel, and you will be dressed up out of hand. I approved of this advice, and determined to follow it: but, as the day was on the point of closing, I put off my purchase till the morrow, and thought only of getting a good supper, to make me amends for the miserable fare I had taken up with since my escape from the forest.

CHAPTER XV.

GIL BLAS DRESSES HIMSELF TO MORE ADVANTAGE, AND RECEIVES A SECOND PRESENT FROM THE LADY. HIS EQUIPAGE ON SETTING OUT FROM BURGOS.

THEY served me up a plentiful fricassee of sheep's trotters, almost the whole of which I demolished. My drinking kept pace with my eating: and when I could stuff no longer, I went to bed. I lay comfortably enough, and was in hopes that a sound sleep would have the kindness without delay to commit a friendly invasion on my senses. But I could not close an eye, for ruminating on the dress I should choose. What shall I do, thought I? Shall I follow my first plan? Shall I buy a short cassock, and go to Salamanca to set up for a tutor? Why should I adopt the costume of a licentiate? For the purpose of going into orders? Do I feel an inward call? No. If I have any call, it is quite the contrary way. I had rather wear a sword than an apron: and push my fortune in this world, before I think of the next.

I made up my mind to take on myself the appearance of a gentleman. Waiting for the day with the greatest impatience, its first dawn no sooner greeted my eyes, than I got up. I made such an uproar in the inn, as to wake the most inveterate sleeper, and called the servants out of bed who returned my salute with a volley of curses. But they found themselves under a necessity of stirring, and I let them have no

rest, till they had sent for a broker. The gentleman soon made his appearance, followed by two lads, each lugging in a great bundle of green cloth. He accosted me very civilly, to the following effect: Honored sir, you are a happy man to have been recommended to me rather than any one else. I do not mean to give my brethren an ill word: God forbid I should offer the slightest injury to their reputation! They have none to spare. But, between ourselves, there is not one of them that has any bowels; they are more extortionate than the Israelites. There is not a broker but myself, that has any moral sense. I keep within the bounds of a reasonable profit. I am satisfied with a pound in the penny; — no, no! — that is wrong: — with a penny in the pound. Thanks to Heaven, I get forward fair and softly in the world.

The broker, after this preface, which I, like a fool, took for chapter and verse, told his journeymen to undo their bundles. They showed me suits of every color in the rainbow, and exposed to sale a great choice of plain cloths. These I threw aside with contempt, as thinking them too undressed; but they made me try on one which fitted me as well as if I had been measured for it, and just hit my fancy, though it was a little the worse for wear. It was a doublet with slashed sleeves, with breeches and a cloak, the whole of blue velvet with gold embroidery. I felt a little hankering after this particular article, and attempted to beat down the price. The broker, who saw my inclination, told me I had

a very correct taste. By all that is sacred! exclaimed he, it is plain you are no younker. Take this with you! That dress was made for one of the first nobility in the kingdom, and has not been on his back three times. Look at the velvet; feel it: nothing can be richer or of a better color; and for the embroidery, come, now! tell truth: did you ever see better workmanship? What is the price of it? said I. Only sixty ducats, replied he. I have refused the money, or else I am a liar. The alternative could not fail in one proposition or the other. I bid five and forty: two or three and twenty would have been nearer the mark. My worthy master, said the broker coolly, I never ask too much. I have but one price. But here, added he, holding up the suits I had thrown aside; take these: I can afford to sell them a better bargain. All this only inflamed my eagerness to buy what I was cheapening; and as I had no idea that he would have made any abatement, I paid him down sixty ducats. When he saw how easily a fool and his money were parted, I verily believe that, in spite of the moral sense, he heartily repented not having taken a hint from the extortionate Israelite. But reconciling himself as well as he could to the small profit, to which he professed to confine himself, of a pound upon a penny, he retreated with his journeymen. I was not suffered to forget that they must have something for their trouble.

I had now a cloak, a doublet, and a very decent pair of breeches. The rest of my wardrobe was to

be thought of: and this took up the whole morning. I bought some linen, a hat, silk stockings, shoes, and a sword; and concluded by putting on my purchases. What pleasure was it to see myself so well accoutred! My eyes were never cloyed, as it were, with the richness of my attire. Never did peacock look at his own plumage with less philosophy. On that very day, I paid a second visit to Donna Mencia, who received me with her usual affability. She thanked me over again for the service I had rendered her. On that subject, rapid was the interchange of compliments. Then, wishing every kind of success, she bade me farewell, and withdrew, without giving me anything but a ring worth thirty pistoles, which she begged me to keep as a remembrance.

I looked very foolish with my ring! I had reckoned on a much more considerable present. Thus, little satisfied with the lady's bounty, I measured back my steps in a very musing attitude: but as I entered the inn door, a man overtook me, and throwing off his wrapping cloak, discovered a large bag under his arm. At the vision of the bag, apparently full of current coin, I stood gaping, as did most of the company present. The voice of angel or archangel could not have been sweeter, than when this messenger of earthly dross, laying the bag upon the table, said: Signor Gil Blas, the lady marchioness desires her compliments. I bowed the bearer out, with an accumulation of fine speeches; and, as soon as his back was turned,

pounced upon the bag, like a hawk upon its quarry, and bore it between my talons to my chamber. I untied it without loss of time, and the contents were; — a thousand ducats! The landlord, who had overheard the bearer, came in just as I had done counting them, to know what was in the bag. The sight of my riches displayed upon a table, struck him in a very forcible manner. What the devil! here is a sum of money! So, so! you are the man! pursued he with a waggish sort of leer, you know how to — tickle the — fancies of the ladies! Four and twenty hours only have you been in Burgos, and marchionesses, I warrant you, have surrendered at the first summons!

This discourse was not so much amiss. I was half inclined to leave Majuelo in his error; for it flattered my vanity. I do not wonder young fellows are fond of passing for men of gallantry. But as yet the purity of my morals was proof against the suggestions of my pride. I undeceived my landlord, by telling him Donna Mencia's story, to which he listened very attentively. Afterwards I let him into the state of my affairs; and, as he seemed to take an interest in them, besought him to assist me with his advice. He ruminated for some time; then said with a serious air: Master Gil Blas, I have taken a liking to you; and since you are candid enough to open your heart to me, I will tell you sincerely what I think would suit you best. You were evidently born for a court life: I recommend you to go thither, and to get about the persom of some

considerable nobleman. But make a point either of getting at his secrets, or administering to his pleasures; unless you do that, it will be all lost time in his family. I know the great: they reckon nothing upon the zeal and attachment of a real friend; but only care for pimping sycophants. You have besides another string to your bow. You are young, with an attractive person: parts out of the question, for they are not at all times necessary, it is hard if you cannot turn the head of some rich widow, or handsome wife with a broomstick for her husband. Love may ruin men of fortune; but it makes amends by feathering the nests of those who have none. My vote therefore is for Madrid: but you must not make your appearance there without an establishment. There, as elsewhere, people judge by the outside; and you will only be respected according to the figure you make. I will find you a servant, a tried domestic, a prudent lad; in a word, a fellow of my own creation. Buy a couple of mules; one for yourself, the other for him: and set off as fast as you can.

This counsel was too palatable to be refused. On the day following, I purchased two fine mules, and bargained with my new servant. He was a young man of thirty, of a very simple and godly appearance. He told me he was a native of Galicia, by name Ambrose de Lamela. Other servants are selfish, and think they never can have wages enough. This fellow assured me he was a man of few wants, and should be contented with whatever I had the

goodness to give him. I bought a pair of boots, with a portmanteau to lock up my linen and my money. Having settled with my landlord, I set out from Burgos the next morning before sunrise, on my way to Madrid.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHOWING THAT PROSPERITY WILL SLIP THROUGH A MAN'S FINGERS.

We slept at Duengnas the first night, and reached Valladolid on the following day, about four o'clock in the afternoon. We alighted at the inn of the most respectable appearance in the town. I left the care of the mules to my fellow, and went up to a room whither I ordered my portmanteau to be carried by a waiter. As I felt a little weary, I threw myself on a couch in my boots, and fell asleep involuntarily. It was almost night when I awoke. I called for Ambrose. He was not to be found in the house; but made his appearance in a short time. I asked him where he had been: he answered in his godly way, that he was just come from church, whither he went for the purpose of thanksgiving, by reason that we had been graciously preserved from all perils and dangers between Burgos and Valladolid. I commended his piety; and ordered a chicken to be roasted for supper.

At the moment when I was giving this order, my

landlord came into my room with a light in his hand. That cursed candle served to introduce a lady, handsome but not young, and very richly attired. She leaned upon an usher, none of the youngest, and a little blackamoor was her train-bearer. I was under no small surprise when this fair incognita, with a profound obeisance, begged to know if my name might happen to be Signor Gil Blas of Santillane? I had no sooner blundered out yes, than she released her sweet hand from the custody of the usher, and embraced me with a transport of joy, of which I knew less and less what to make. Heaven be praised, cried she, for all its mercies! You are he, noble sir, the very man of whom I was in quest. By this introduction, I was reminded of my friend the parasite at Pegnaflor, and was on the point of suspecting the lady to be no better than an honest woman should be: but her finale gave me a much higher opinion of her. I am, continued she, first cousin to Donna Mencia de Mosquera, whom you have so greatly befriended. It was but this morning I received a letter from her. She writes me word that having learned your intention of going to Madrid, she wished me to receive you hospitably on your journey, if you went this way. For these two hours have I been parading the town. From inn to inn have I gone to inform myself what strangers were in the house; and I gathered from the landlord's description, that you were most likely to have been my cousin's deliverer. Since then I have found you out, you shall know by experience my

gratitude to the friends of my family, and especially to my dear cousin's hero. You will take up your abode, if you please, at my house. Your accommodations will be better. I wished to excuse myself; and told the lady that I could not be so troublesome: but her importunities were more than a match for my modesty. A carriage was waiting at the door of the inn to convey us. She saw my portmanteau taken care of with her own eyes, because, as she justly observed, there were a great many light-fingered gentry about Valladolid — to be sure there were a great many light-fingered gentry about Valladolid, as she justly observed! In short, I got into the carriage with her and the old usher, and suffered myself to be carried off bodily from the inn, to the great annoyance of the landlord, who saw himself thus weaned from all the little perquisites he had reckoned on from my abode under his roof.

Our carriage, having rolled on some distance, stopped. We alighted at the door of a handsome house, and went up stairs into a well furnished apartment, illuminated by twenty or thirty wax candles. Several servants were in waiting, of whom the lady inquired whether Don Raphael was come. They answered, No. She then addressed herself to me: Signor Gil Blas, I am waiting for my brother's return from a country seat of ours, about two leagues distant. What an agreeable surprise will it be to him to find a man under his roof to whom our family is so much indebted! At the very moment she had finished this pretty speech, we heard a noise, and

were informed at the same time that it was occasioned by the arrival of Don Raphael. This spark soon made his appearance. He was a young man of portly figure and genteel manners. I am in ecstasy to see you back again, brother, said the lady; you will assist me in doing the honors to Signor Gil Blas of Santillane. We can never do enough to show our sense of his kindness to our kinswoman, Donna Mencia. Here, read this letter I have just received. Don Raphael opened the envelope, and read aloud as follows: —

"My Dear Camilla: Signor Gil Blas of Santillane, the saviour of my honor and my life, has just set out for court. He will of course pass through Valladolid. I conjure you by our family connection, and still more by our indissoluble friendship, to give him a hospitable reception, and to detain him for some time as your guest. I flatter myself that you will so far oblige me, and that my deliverer will receive every kind of polite attention from yourself, and my cousin Don Raphael.

Your affectionate cousin,

"*Burgos.* Donna Mencia."

What! cried Don Raphael, casting his eyes again over the letter, is it to this gentleman my kinswoman owes her honor and her life? Then Heaven be praised for this happy meeting. With this sort of language, he advanced towards me; and squeezing me tightly in his arms: What joy to me is it, added he, to have the honor of seeing Signor Gil Blas of

Santillane? My cousin the marchioness had no need to press the hospitality. Had she only told us simply that you were passing through Valladolid, that would have been enough. My sister Camilla and I shall be at no loss how to conduct ourselves towards a young gentleman, who has conferred an obligation, not to be repaid, on her of all our family most tenderly beloved by us. I made the best answer I could to these speeches, which were followed by many others of the same kind, and interlarded with a thousand bows and scrapes. But Lord bless me, he has his boots on! The servants were ordered in, to take them off.

We next went into another room, where the cloth was laid. Down we sat at table, the brother, sister, and myself. They paid me a hundred compliments during supper. Not a word escaped me, but they magnified it into an admirable hit! It was impossible not to observe the assiduity with which they both helped me out of every dish. Don Raphael often pledged me to Donna Mencia's health. I could not refuse the challenge; and it looked a little as if Camilla, who was a very good companion, ogled at me with no questionable meaning. I even thought I could perceive that she watched her opportunity, as if she was afraid of being detected by her brother. An oracle could not have convinced me more firmly that the lady was caught; and I looked forward to a little delicate amusement from the discovery, during the short time I was to stay at Valladolid. That hope was my tempter to comply

with the request they made me, of condescending to pass a few days with them. They thanked me kindly for indulging them with my company; and Camilla's restrained, but visible transport, confirmed me in the opinion that I was not altogether disagreeable in her eyes.

Don Raphael, finding I had made up my mind to be his guest for a few days, proposed to take me to his country house. The description of it was magnificent, and the round of amusements he meditated for me was not to be described. At one time, said he, we will take the diversion of the chase, at another that of fishing; and whenever you have a mind for a saunter, we have charming woods and gardens. In addition, we shall have agreeable society. I flatter myself you will not find the time hang heavy on your hands. I accepted the invitation, and it was agreed that we should go to this fine country house the following day. We rose from table with this pleasant scheme in our mouths. Don Raphael seemed in ecstasy. Signor Gil Blas, said he, embracing me, I leave you with my sister. I am going presently to give the necessary orders, and send invitations round to the families I wish to be of the party. With these words he sallied forth from the room where we were sitting. I went on chatting with the lady, whose topics of discourse did not belie the glances of her expressive eyes. She took me by the hand, and playing with my ring, You have a mighty pretty brilliant there, said she, but it is small. Are you a judge of jewelry? I answered, no! I am

sorry for that, resumed she, because I was in hopes you could have told me what this is worth. As she uttered these words, she showed me a large ruby on her finger; and, while I was looking at it, said — An uncle of mine, who was governor of the Spanish settlements in the Philippine Isles, gave me this ruby. The jewellers at Valladolid value it at three hundred pistoles. It cannot be worth less, said I, for it is evidently a very fine stone. Why then, since you have taken a fancy to it, replied she, an exchange is no robbery. In a twinkling she whisked off my ring, and placed her own on my little finger. After this exchange, a genteel way enough of making a present, Camilla pressed my hand and gazed at me with expressive tenderness; then, all at once breaking off the conversation, wished me good night, and retired to hide her blushes, as if she had been ready to sink at the indiscreet avowal of her sentiments.

No one hitherto had trod less in the paths of gallantry than myself! Yet I could not shut my eyes to the vista vision opened to me by this precipitate retreat. Under these circumstances, a country excursion might have its charms. Full of this flattering idea, and intoxicated with the prosperous condition of my affairs, I locked myself into my bed-room, after having told my servant to call me betimes in the morning. Instead of going to sleep, I gave myself up to the disagreeable reflections which my portmanteau, snug upon the table, and my ruby excited in my breast. Heaven be praised, thought I, though

misfortunes have been my lot, I am unfortunate no longer. A thousand ducats here, a ring of three hundred pistoles value there! I am in cash for a considerable time. Indeed Majuelo was no flatterer, I see clearly. The ladies of Madrid will take fire like touchwood, since the green sticks of Valladolid are so inflammable. Then the kind regards of the generous Camilla arrayed themselves in all their charms, and I tasted by anticipation the amusements Don Raphael was preparing for me at his villa. In the mean while, amid so many images of pleasure, Sleep was on the watch to strew his poppies on my couch. As soon as I felt myself drowsy, I undressed and went to bed.

The next morning, when I awoke, I found it rather late. It was odd enough that my servant did not make his appearance, after such particular orders. Ambrose, thought I to myself, my devout Ambrose is either at church, or abominably lazy this morning. But I soon let go this opinion of him to take up a worse; for getting out of bed, and seeing no portmanteau, I suspected him to have stolen it during the night. To clear up my suspicions, I opened my chamber door, and called the religious rascal over and over again. An old man answered, saying — What is your pleasure, sir? All your folks left my house before daybreak. Your house! How now! exclaimed I; am I not under Don Raphael's roof? I do not know the gentleman, said he. You are in a ready-furnished lodging, and I am the landlord. Yesterday evening, an hour be-

fore your arrival, the lady who supped with you came hither, and engaged this suite of apartments for a nobleman of high rank, travelling *incognito*, as she called it. She paid me beforehand. I was now in the secret. It was plain enough what sort of people Camilla and Don Raphael were; and I conjectured that my servant, having wormed himself into a complete knowledge of my concerns, had betrayed me to these impostors. Instead of blaming myself for this sad accident, and considering that it could never have happened but for my indiscretion in so unnecessarily betraying my confidence to Majuelo, I gave bad language to the poor harmless Dame Fortune, and cursed my ill star in a hundred different formularies. The master of the ready-furnished lodging, to whom I related the adventure, which perhaps was as much his as mine, showed some little outward sensibility to my affliction. He lamented over me, and protested he was deeply mortified that such a play should have been acted in his house; but I verily believe, notwithstanding his fine words, that he had an equal share in the cheat with mine host at Burgos, to whom I have never denied the merit of so ingenious an invention.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MEASURES GIL BLAS TOOK AFTER THE ADVENTURE OF THE READY-FURNISHED LODGING.

After the first transports of my grief were over, I began to consider, that instead of giving way to remorse, I ought rather to bear up against my ill fate. I summoned back my resolution, and by way of comfort, said to myself as I was dressing — I am still in luck that the knaves have not carried off my clothes and what little money I had in my pocket. I gave them some credit for being so considerate. They had even been generous enough to leave me my boots, which I parted with to the landlord for a third of their cost. At last I sallied out of the ready-furnished lodging, unencumbered, heaven be praised, with baggage or attendance. The first thing I did was to go and see if my mules were still at the inn, where we alighted the evening before. It was not to be supposed that Ambrose would have neglected a due attention to them; and it would have been well for me if I had always taken such exact measure of his character. I learned that he had not waited for the morning, but had been careful to fetch them off over-night. Under these circumstances, satisfied I should never see them again, any more than my portmanteau, I walked sulkily along the streets, musing on the future plans I should adopt. I was tempted to go back to Burgos, and once more have recourse to Donna Mencia;

but, regarding this as an abuse of that lady's goodness, and being aware, moreover, what a fool I should look like, I thought it best to forego that idea. I made a vow too for the future to be on my guard against women. I could have sent the chaste Susanna to the house of correction. From time to time my ring caught my eye; it was a present from Camilla! and I was ready to burst with anguish. Alas! thought I, I am no judge of jewelry, but I shall be, by experience of these hucksters who exchange without a robbery. I need not go to a jeweller to be told I am an ass! I can see my own face in my ruby.

Yet I did not neglect to know the truth respecting the value of my ring, and showed it to a lapidary, who rated it at three ducats. At such an estimate, though as much as I expected, I made a formal surrender to the devil, of the Philippine Isles, the governor and his niece; or rather, I only restored his own subjects to their lawful sovereign. As I was going out of the lapidary's shop, a young fellow brushed by me, and on looking round, made a full stop. I could not recollect his name at first, though his features were perfectly familiar to me. How now, Gil Blas, said he, are you ashamed of an old acquaintance? or have two years so altered the son of Nunez the barber, that you do not know him? Do not you recollect Fabricio, your townsman and schoolfellow? How often have we kept, before Doctor Godinez, upon universals and metaphysics!

These words did not flow so fast as my recollec-

tion, and we embraced with mutual good will. Well, my friend, resumed he, I am overjoyed to meet with you. Words fall short. . . . But how is this? Why, you look like — as Heaven is my judge, you are dressed like a grandee! A gentleman's sword, silk stockings, a velvet doublet and cloak, embroidered with silver! Plague take it! this is getting on in the world with a vengeance. I will lay a wager you are in with some old moneyed harridan. You reckon without your host, said I, my affairs are not so prosperous as you imagine. That will not do for me, replied he, I know better things; but you have a mind to be close. And that fine ruby on your finger, master Gil Blas, whence comes that, if I may be so bold? It comes, quoth I, from an infernal jade. Fabricio, my dear Fabricio, far from being point, quint, and quatorze with the ladies of Valladolid, you are to know, my friend, that I am their complete bubble.

I uttered these last words so ruefully, that Fabricio saw plainly that some trick had been played upon me. He was anxious to learn why I was out of humor with the lovely sex. I had no difficulty in satisfying his curiosity; but as the story was a long one, and besides we had no mind to part in a hurry, we went into a coffee-house to be a little more at ease. There I recounted to him, during breakfast, all that had happened to me since my departure from Oviedo. My adventures he thought whimsical enough; and testifying his sympathy in my present uneasy circumstances, added — We must

make the best, my good lad, of all our misfortunes in this life. Is a man of parts in distress? he waits patiently for better luck. Such a one, as Cicero truly observes, never suffers himself to be humbled so low as to forget that he is a man. For my own part, that is just my character; in or out of favor there is no sinking me; I always float on the surface of ill-luck. For example, I was in love with a girl of some family at Oviedo, and was beloved by her in return. I asked her of her father in marriage, he refused. Many a young fellow would have died of grief; but no! mark my spirit, I carried off the little baggage. She was lively, heedless, and coquettish: pleasure consequently was always uppermost to the prejudice of duty. I took her with me for six months backwards and forwards about Galicia; thence, adopting my taste for travelling, she had a mind to go to Portugal, but in other company —more food for despair. Yet I did not give in under the weight of this new affliction; but, improving on Menelaus, thought myself much obliged to the Paris who had whispered in the ear of my Helen, for ridding me of a bad bargain; I therefore determined to keep the peace. After that, not finding it convenient to return to the Asturias and balance accounts with justice, I went forward into the kingdom of Leon, spending between one town and another all the loose cash remaining from the rape of my Indian princess; for we had both of us birdlimed our fingers at our departure from Oviedo. I got to Palencia with a solitary ducat, out of which I

was obliged to buy a pair of shoes. The remainder would not go far. My situation became rather perplexing. I began already to be reduced to short allowance; something must be done. I resolved to go out to service. My first place was with a woollen-draper in a large way, whose son was a lad of wit and fashion; here was a complete antidote to fasting, but then there was a little awkwardness. The father ordered me to dog the son, the son begged my assistance in imposing on the father; it was necessary to take one side or other. Entreaties sound more musical than commands, and my taste for music got me turned out of doors. The next service I entered into was with an old painter, who undertook, as a matter of favor, to teach me the principles of his art; but he was so busy in feeding me with knowledge, that he forgot to give me any meat. This neglect of substance for shadow disgusted me with my abode at Palencia. I came to Valladolid, where, by the greatest good luck in the world, I was hired by a governor of the hospital; I am with him still, and delighted with my quarters. My master, Signor Manuel Ordonnez, is a man of profound piety. He always walks with his eyes cast downwards, and a large rosary in his hand. They say that from his early youth, having been a close inspector of the poor, he has interested himself in their affairs with unwearied zeal. Charity draws down a blessing on the charitable, every thing has prospered with him. What a favorite of Heaven! The more he does for the poor, the richer he grows.

As Fabricio was going on in this manner, I interrupted him. It is well you are satisfied with your lot; but, between ourselves, surely you might play your part better in the world. Do not you believe it, Gil Blas, replied he; be assured that for a man of my temper a more agreeable situation could not possibly have been devised. The trade of a lackey is toilsome, to be sure, for a poor creature; but for a lad of spirit it is all enchantment. A superior genius, when he gets a service, does not go about it like a lumpish simpleton. He enters into a family as viceroy over the master, not as an inferior minister. He begins by measuring the length of his employer's foot; by lending himself to his weaknesses, he gains his confidence, and ends with leading him by the nose. Such has been my plan of operation at the governor's. I knew the pilgrim at once by his staff; his wish was for an earthly canonization. I pretended to believe him to be the saint he wished to be taken for; hypocrisy costs nothing. Nay, I went further, for I took pattern by him; and playing the same part before him which he played before others, I out-cozened the cozener, and by degrees got to be *major domo*. I am in hopes some day or other, under his wing, to have the fingering of the poor's-box. It may bring a blessing upon me as well as another; for I have caught the flame from him, and already feel deeply for the interests of charity.

These are fine hopes, my dear Fabricio, replied I; and I congratulate you upon them. For my part, I

am determined on my first plan. I shall straight way convert my embroidered suit into a cassock, repair to Salamanca, and there, enlisting under the banner of the university, fulfil the sacred duties of a tutor. A fine scheme! exclaimed Fabricio, a pleasant conceit! What madness, at your age, to turn pedant. Are you aware, you stupid fellow, what you take upon yourself by that choice? As soon as you are settled, all the house will be upon the watch, your most trivial actions will be minutely sifted. You will lead a life of incessant constraint; you must set yourself off with a counterfeit outside, and affect to entertain a double set of the cardinal virtues in your bosom. You will not have a moment to bestow on pleasure. The everlasting censor of your pupil, your days will pass in teaching grammar and administering saintly reprehension, when he shall say or do any thing against decorum. After so much labor and confinement, what will be your reward? If the little gentleman is a pickle, they will lay all the blame on your bad management; and you will be kicked out of the family, it may be, without your stipend. Do not tell me then of a tutor's employment; it is worse than a cure of souls. But talk as much as you will about a lackey's occupation, that is a sinecure, and pledges you to nothing. Suppose one's master not to be immaculate? A servant of superior genius will flatter his vices, and not unfrequently turn them to account. A footman lives at his ease in a good family. After having ate and drank his fill, he goes to bed peaceably, without troubling himself who pays the bills.

I should never have done, my dear fellow, pursued he, were I to enumerate all the advantages of service. Trust me, Gil Blas, discard forever your foolish wish of being a tutor, and follow my example. So be it; but, Fabricio, replied I, governors like yours are not to be met with every day; and if resolved to go to service, I should like at least to get a good situation. O! you are in the right, said he, and that shall be my concern. I will get you a comfortable place, if it was only to snatch a fine fellow from the jaws of the university.

The near approach of poverty with which I was threatened, and Fabricio's apparent good case, having more weight with me than his arguments, I determined to wear a livery. On which we sallied forth from the tavern, and my townsman said: I am going to introduce you to a man, to whom most of the servants resort when they are on the ramble; he has eavesdroppers about him to pick up all that passes in families. He knows at once where the servants are going away, and keeps a correct register, not only of vacant places, but of vacant masters, with their good and bad properties. The fellow has been a friar in some convent or other. In short, he it was who got me my place.

While we were conversing about so singular an office of intelligence, the son of Nunez the barber took me into a street which had no thoroughfare. We went into a mean house, where we found a man about fifty writing at a table. We wished him good day, with quite as much humility as became

us: but, whether it was from natural pride, or that, from a habit of seeing none but lackeys and coachmen, he had got a trick of receiving his company with an easy freedom, without rising from his seat, he just gave a slight nod. He seemed surprised that a young man in embroidered velvet should want a place; he had rather expected me to have wanted a servant. However, he was not kept long in doubt, since Fabricio said at once: Signor Arias de Londona, give me leave to introduce one of my best friends. He is a youth of good connections, whom adverse circumstances have reduced to the necessity of going to service. Have the goodness to provide for him handsomely, and you may trust to his gratitude. Gentlemen, replied Arias cooly, this is the way with you all; before you are settled, you make the finest promises in the world: but afterwards, Lord help us! your memories are very short. The deuce! replied Fabricio, why, you do not complain of me? Have not I done the thing genteelly? You ought to have done it much better, rejoined Arias; your place is better than a clerk in a public office, and you paid me as if I had quartered you upon a poor author. Here I interfered, and told Master Arias, that to convince him I was not a shabby fellow, I would make my acknowledgments beforehand; at the same time taking out two ducats, with an assurance of not stopping there if he got me into a good birth.

He seemed to like my mode of dealing. There are, said he, some very good places vacant. I will

give you a list of them, and you shall take your choice. With these words, he put on his spectacles, opened a register on the table, turned over a few of the leaves, and began reading to this effect: Captain Torbellino wants a footman; a hasty, hairbrained, humorsome chap; scolds incessantly, swears, kicks his servants, and very often cripples them. Go on to the next, cried I, at this picture; such a captain will never do for me. My sprightliness made Arias smile, and he went on with his catalogue thus: Donna Menuela de Sandoval, a superannuated dowager, peevish and fantastical, is in want at this very time; she keeps but one, and him never for four and twenty hours. There has been a livery in the house for these ten years, which fits every new comer, whether tall or short. They only just try it on; so that it is as good as new, though it has had two thousand owners. Doctor Alvar Fanez wants a journeyman; an eminent member of the faculty! He boards his family very handsomely, has every thing comfortable about him, and gives very high wages; but he is a little too fond of experiments. When he gets a parcel of bad drugs, which happens very often, there is a pretty quick succession of new servants.

O! I do not in the least doubt it, interrupted Fabricio with a horse-laugh. Upon my word you give a fine character of your customers. Patience, said Arias de Londona; we have not yet got to the end: there is variety enough. Thereupon he continued to read on: Donna Alfonsa de Solis, an old

devotee, who lives two thirds of her time at church, and always keeps her servant at her apron string, has been in want for these three weeks. The Licentiate Sédillo, an old prebendary of the chapter here, turned away his servant yesterday evening. . . . Halt there, Signor Arias de Londona, cried Fabricio at that passage; we will stick to the church. The Licentiate Sédillo is one of my master's friends, and I am very well acquainted with him. I know he has for his housekeeper an old hypocrite, called Dame Jacintha, who is complete mistress of the family. It is one of the best houses in Valladolid. A very idle life, and plenty of excellent meat and drink. Besides, his reverence is an old, gouty, infirm man, likely soon to make his will; there is a legacy to be looked after. That is a delightful prospect for one of our cloth! Gil Blas, added he, turning round to me, let us lose no time, my friend, but go immediately to the licentiate's house. I will introduce you myself, and give you a character. At these words, for fear of missing such an opportunity, we took a hasty leave of Signor Arias, who assured me, for my money, that if I failed here, he would do something as good for me elsewhere.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

FABRICIO INTRODUCES GIL BLAS TO THE LICENTIATE SEDILLO, AND PROCURES HIM A RECEPTION. THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY OF THAT CLERGYMAN. PICTURE OF HIS HOUSEKEEPER.

We were so dreadfully afraid of offending against the regular hours of the old licentiate, that we made but a hop, skip, and jump, from the street with one outlet, to the prebendal residence. The gates were barred: but we ventured to announce our arrival. A girl of ten years old, the housekeeper's professed niece, and slander could not gainsay the relationship, opened the door to us. As we asked to speak with his reverence, Dame Jacintha made her appearance. She was a lady of ripe person and parts, but by no means past her prime; and I was particularly attracted by the clearness of her complexion. She wore a long woollen gown of the most ordinary quality, with a large leathern girdle, whence hung suspended a bunch of keys on one side, and on the other a tremendous string of beads. As soon as we got a glimpse of her, we made our obeisances with all possible reverence. She returned our salutation

with similar good breeding, but with an air of modesty, and eyes communing with the ground.

I have been told, said my fellow-servant, that the reverend the Licentiate Sédillo wants an honest lad, and I have one at his service with whom he will be well satisfied. The superintendent of the household turned up her eyes at these words, with a significant side glance at me; and, finding it difficult to reconcile my laced jacket with Fabricio's exordium, asked if it was this fine gentleman who was come after the place. Yes, said the son of Nunez, it is this interesting and engaging youth. Just as you see him, the ups and downs of this transitory life have compelled him to wear an epaulet; but fate will have made him ample amends, added he with an affected languish, if he is so happy as to be an inmate here, and to profit by the society of the virtuous Jacintha. The patriarch of the Indies might have sighed for the virtuous Jacintha at the head of his establishment. At these words, this withered branch of piety withdrew her penetrating regards from me, to contemplate this courteous spokesman. Struck with certain lines which were not new to her, in his face, I have some floating idea of having seen you before, said she; but my memory wants a lift. Holy Jacintha, replied Fabricio, it is enough for me to have been blessed with your pious notice. Twice have I been under this venerable roof with my master, Signor Manuel Ordonnez, governor of the hospital. Ah! just so, answered the lady chamberlain, I recollect! You are an old

acquaintance. Welladay now! Your very belonging to Signor Ordonnez is enough to prove you a youth of merit and strict propriety. A servant is known by his place, and this lad could not have a better sponsor. Come along with me; I will introduce you to Signor Sédillo. I am sure he will be glad to engage a lad at your recommendation.

We followed Dame Jacintha. The canon lived in the lower part of the house, in a comfortable suite of wainscoated apartments. She begged us to wait a moment in the ante-chamber, while she went into the licentiate's room. After some private parley with him, merely that he might know what he was about, she came to tell us we might walk in. We kenned the old cripple, immersed in an elbow-chair, with a pillow under his head, cushions under his arms, and his legs supported on a large stool, stuffed with down. We were no niggards of our bows as we advanced; and Fabricio, still taking the lead, not only repeated over again what he had said to the housekeeper, but set about extolling my merit, and expatiated in an especial manner on the honors I had gained in the schools under Doctor Godinez on all metaphysical questions: as if it was necessary for a prebendary's footman to be as learned as his master. However that might be, it served as a tub to the whale. Besides, Dame Jacintha did not look forbidding, and my surety received the following answer: Friend, I receive into my service the lad you recommend. I like him well enough; and as for his morals, they cannot be much amiss, since he

presents himself under the wing of a domestic belonging to Signor Ordonnez.

As soon as Fabricio saw me safe landed, he made a low bow to the prebendary, a still lower to the lady, and withdrew in high good humor, whispering in my ear that we should meet again, and that I had only to make good my footing. As soon as he had left the room, the licentiate inquired my name, why I had left my native place; and drew me on by his questions to relate my adventures before Dame Jacintha. They were both highly amused, above all by my last rencounter. Camilla and Don Raphael gave such play to their risible muscles, that I thought old chalkstone would have burst: for, as he laughed with all his might, so violent a cough laid hold of him, as went very near to have carried him off. His will was not made. What an alarm for the housekeeper! Trembling, distracted, off she flew to the good man's succor, and just like a nurse with a puking child, paddled about his forehead and tapped him on the back. Luckily it was a false alarm; the old gentleman left off coughing, and the housekeeper tormenting him. When it was over, I was for going on with my narrative; but Dame Jacintha, in awe of a second fit, set herself against it. She therefore took me with her out of the room to a wardrobe, where, among several suits, was that of my predecessor. This I was to take, and leave my own in its room, which I was not sorry to see laid up safe, in the hope it might be of further use. After this, we went together to get dinner ready.

I knew what I was about in the art of dressing meat. Dame Leonarda, with whom I had served my time, might have passed for a very decent plain cook; but a mere turnspit to dame Jacintha. The latter might almost have borne away the bell from the archbishop of Toledo's man. She was mistress of every thing; gravy soups, of the most delicious texture and relish; and, for made dishes, she could season them up, or soften them down to the most delicate or voluptuous palate. At dinner time we returned to his reverence's apartment. While I was arranging the grand concern close by his arm-chair, the lady of all work crammed a napkin under the old boy's chin, and pinned it behind his back. Without losing a moment, in marched I with a stew, fit to be set before the first gourmand in Madrid, and two courses, to have tickled the gills of a vice-roy, only that Dame Jacintha had touched the spice-box with discretion, for fear of exasperating the gout. At the first glimpse of this goodly mess, my old master, whom I conceived to have lost the use of his limbs, made me to understand that his arms were exempted from the interdict. He availed himself of their assistance, to get clear of his pillow and cushions, and proceeded gayly to the attack. His hand shook, to be sure; but some how or other it contrived to do its duty. He sent it backwards and forwards fast enough; though it brought but half its cargo to the landing-place at a lading: the table-cloth and napkin took toll. I carried off the soup when he had done, and brought in a partridge flanked

by two roast quails, which Dame Jacintha cut up for him. She took care to make him take a good draught of wine, a little lowered at proper intervals, out of a large, deep, silver cup, which she held to his mouth, as if he had been an infant. He winged the partridge, and came down slap-dash upon all the rest of the dishes. When he had done cramming, that saint of the saucepan unpinned his napkin, reinstated his pillow and cushions; then, leaving him composed in his arm-chair to the enjoyment of his usual nap after dinner, we took away, and demolished the remainder with appetites worthy of our master.

The dinner of to-day was the ordinary bill of fare. Our canon played the best knife and fork in the chapter. But the supper was a mere bawble; seldom more than a chicken and a little confectionery. I larded my inside in this house, and led a good easy life. There was but one awkward circumstance; and that was sitting up with my master, to save the expense of a nurse. Besides a strangury, which kept him on the fidget ten times in an hour, he was very much given to perspire; and in that event, I shifted him. Gil Blas, said he, on the second night, you are an active, clever fellow; I foresee that we shall jog on very well together. I only just give you a hint to keep in with Dame Jacintha; the girl has been about me for these fifteen years, and manages all my little matters; she comforts my outward man, and I cannot do too much for her. For that reason, you are to know, that she is more to me

than all my family. There is my nephew, my own sister's son; why I have turned him out of doors, only to please her. He had no regard for the poor lass; and so far from giving her credit for all her little assiduities, the saucy rascal swore she did not care a farthing for me! But nowadays, young people think virtue and gratitude all a farce. Heaven be praised, I am rid of the varlet. What claim has blood, in comparison with unquestionable attachment? I am influenced by a give-and-take principle in my connections. You are right, sir, replied I; gratitude ought to be the first thing, and natural affection the last. Ay! resumed he; and my will shall be a comment on that text. My housekeeper shall be residuary legatee; and you shall have a corner in a codicil, if you go on as well as you have begun. The footman I turned off yesterday has lost a good legacy, by not knowing where to hit the right nail on the head. If the blockhead had not obliged me, by his ill behavior, to send him packing, I would have made a man of him: but the beggar on horseback gave himself airs to Dame Jacintha! Then master lazy-bones did not like sitting up! I might pass the night as I could, provided he had no trouble with me. O! the unfeeling scoundrel! exclaimed I, in the true spirit of Fabricio, he was not a man to be about so good a master. The lad for your money should be a humble, but confidential friend; he should not make a toil of what ought to be a pleasure, but think nothing of going through fire and water for your ease.

These professions were not lost upon the licentiate. Neither were my assurances of due submission to Dame Jacintha's authority less acceptable. Puffing myself off for a servant, who was not afraid of work, I got through my business as cheerfully as I could. I never complained of my nursery. Though to be sure it was irksome enough; and if the legacy had not settled my stomach, I should have sickened at the nature of my employment. It is true I got some hours rest during the day. The housekeeper, to do her justice, was kind enough to me; owing to the insinuating manner in which I wormed myself into her good graces. Suppose me at table, with her and her niece Inésilla! I changed their plates, filled their glasses, never thought of my own dinner before they had every thing they wanted. This was the way to thrive in their esteem. One day when Dame Jacintha was gone to market, finding myself alone with Inésilla, I began to make myself agreeable. Were her father and mother alive? O! no, answered she; they have been dead this long, long time; for my good aunt says they have, and I have never seen them. I religiously believed the little innocent, though her answer was not of the clearest; and she got into such a humor of talking, as to tell me more than I wanted to know. She informed me, or rather I inferred it from her artless simplicity, that her good aunt had a good friend, who lived likewise with an old canon. The temporalities of the church were under his administration? and these lucky domestics reckoned upon entwining the spoils

of their masters round the pillars of the hymeneal temple, into whose sanctuary they had penetrated by anticipation. Dame Jacintha, as I have said before, though a little stricken in years, had still some bloom. To be sure, she spared no pains to cherish it: besides daily evacuations, she took plentiful doses of all-powerful jelly. She got her sleep in the night too, while I sat up with my master. But what perhaps contributed most to the freshness of this everlasting flower, was an issue in each leg, of which I should never have known, but for that blab Inésilla.

CHAPTER II.

THE CANON'S ILLNESS; HIS TREATMENT; THE CONSEQUENCE; THE LEGACY TO GIL BLAS.

I STAID three months with the Licentiate Sédillo, without complaining of bad nights. At the end of that time he fell sick. The distemper was a fever; and it inflamed the gout. For the first time in his life, which had been long, he called in a physician. Doctor Sangrado was sent for; the Hippocrates of Valladolid. Dame Jacintha was for sending for the lawyer first, and touched that string; but the patient thought it was time enough, and had a little will of his own upon some points. Away I went therefore for Doctor Sangrado; and brought him with me. A tall, withered, wan executioner of the sisters three,

who had done all their justice for at least these forty years. This learned forerunner of the undertaker had an aspect suited to his office: his words were weighed to a scruple; and his jargon sounded grand in the ears of the uninitiated. His arguments were mathematical demonstrations: and his opinions had the merit of originality.

After studying my master's symptoms, he began with medical solemnity. The question here is, to remedy an obstructed perspiration. Ordinary practitioners, in this case, would follow the old routine of salines, diuretics, volatile salts, sulphur, and mercury; but purges and sudorifics are a deadly practice. Chemical preparations are edged tools in the hands of the ignorant. My methods are more simple, and more efficacious. What is your usual diet? I live pretty much upon soups, replied the canon, and eat my meat with a good deal of gravy. Soups and gravy! exclaimed the petrified doctor. Upon my word, it is no wonder you are ill. High living is a poisoned bait; a trap set by sensuality, to cut short the days of wretched man. We must have done with pampering our appetites: the more insipid, the more wholesome. The human blood is not a gravy! Why, then, you must give it such a nourishment as will assimilate with the particle of which it is composed. You drink wine, I warrant you? Yes, said the licentiate, but diluted. O! finely diluted, I dare say, rejoined the physician. This is licentiousness with a vengeance! A frightful course of feeding! Why, you ought to have died

years ago. How old are you? I am in my sixty-ninth year, replied the canon. So I thought, quoth the practitioner, a premature old age is always the consequence of intemperance. If you had only drank clear water all your life, and had been contented with plain food, boiled apples for instance, you would not have been a martyr to the gout, and your limbs would have performed their functions with lubricity. But I do not despair of setting you on your legs again, provided you give yourself up to my management. The licentiate promised to be upon his good behavior.

Sangrado then sent me for a surgeon of his own choosing, and took from him six good porringers of blood, by way of a beginning, to remedy this obstinate obstruction. He then said to the surgeon; Master Martin Onez, you will take as much more three hours hence, and to-morrow you will repeat the operation. It is a mere vulgar error, that the blood is of any use in the system; the faster you draw it off, the better. A patient has nothing to do but to keep himself quiet: with him, to live is merely not to die; he has no more occasion for blood than a man in a trance; in both cases, life consists exclusively in pulsation and respiration. When the doctor had ordered these frequent and copious bleedings, he added a drench of warm water at very short intervals, maintaining that water in sufficient quantities was the grand secret in the materia medica. He then took his leave, telling Dame Jacintha and me with an air of confidence, that he would answer for

the patient's life, if his system was fairly pursued. The housekeeper, though protesting secretly against this new practice, bowed to his superior authority. In fact, we set on the kettles in a hurry; and, as the physician had desired us above all things to give him enough, we began with pouring down two or three pints at as many gulps. An hour after, we beset him again: then, returning to the attack time after time, we fairly poured a deluge into his poor stomach. The surgeon, on the other hand, taking out the blood as we put in the water, we reduced the old canon to death's door in less than two days.

This venerable ecclesiastic, able to hold it out no longer, as I pledged him in a large glass of his new cordial, said to me in a faint voice — Hold, Gil Blas, do not give me any more, my friend. It is plain death will come when he will come, in spite of water; and, though I have hardly a drop of blood in my veins, I am no better for getting rid of the enemy. The ablest physician in the world can do nothing for us, when our time is expired. Fetch a notary; I will make my will. At these last words, pleasing enough to my fancy, I affected to appear unhappy; and concealing my impatience to be gone: Sir, said I, you are not reduced so low, thank God, but you may yet recover. No, no, interrupted he, my good fellow, it is all over. I feel the gout shifting, and the hand of death is upon me. Make haste, and go where I told you. I saw, sure enough, that he changed every moment: and the case was so urgent, that I ran as fast as I could, leaving him in Dame

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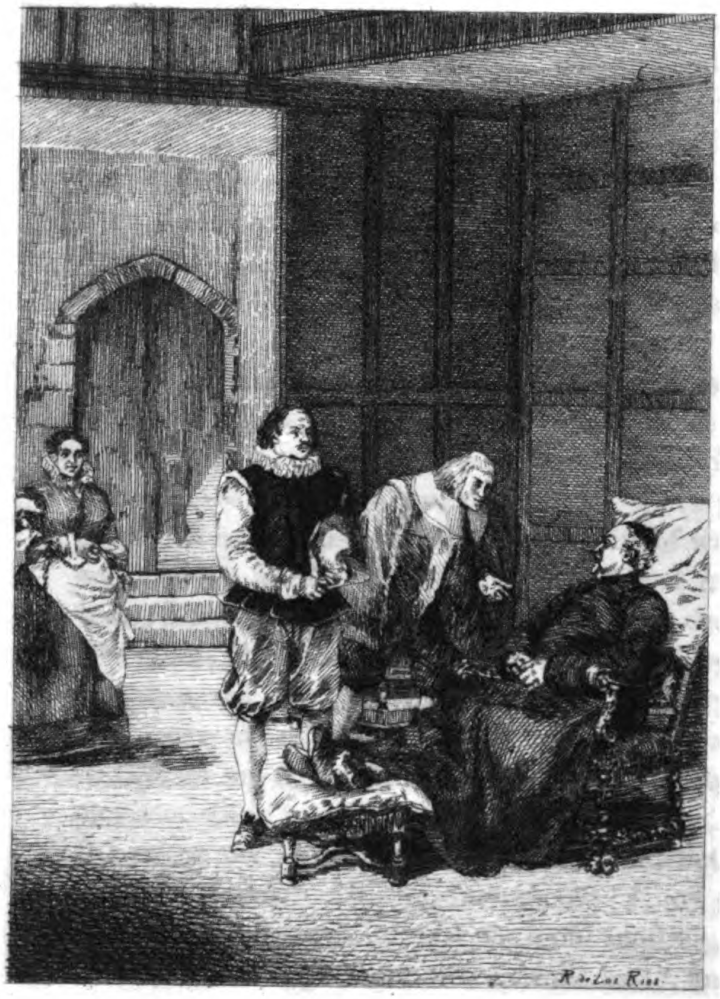


Jacintha's care, who was more afraid than myself of his dying without a will. I laid hold of the first notary I could find; Sir, said I, the Licentiate Sédillo, my master, is drawing near his end; he wants to settle his affairs: there is not a moment to be lost. The notary was a dapper little fellow, who loved his joke, and inquired who was our physician. At the name of Doctor Sangrado, hurrying on his cloak and hat: For mercy's sake, cried he, let us set off with all possible speed; for this doctor despatches business so fast, that our fraternity cannot keep pace with him. That fellow spoils half my jobs.

With this sarcasm, he set forward in good earnest, and, as we pushed on, to get the start of the grim tyrant, I said to him: Sir, you are aware that a dying testator's memory is sometimes a little short; should my master chance to forget me, be so good as to put in a word in my favor. That I will, my lad, replied the little proctor; you may rely on it. I will urge something handsome, if I have an opportunity. The licentiate, on our arrival, had still all his faculties about him. Dame Jacintha was by his bedside, laying in her tears by wholesale. She had played her game, and bespoken a handsome remembrance. We left the notary alone with my master, and went together into the ante-chamber, where we met the surgeon, sent by the physician for another and a last experiment. We laid hold of him. Stop, Master Martin, said the housekeeper, you cannot go into Signor Sédillo's room just now. He is giving his last orders; but you may bleed away when the will is made.

We were terribly afraid, this pious gentlewoman and I, lest the licentiate should go off with his will half finished; but by good luck, the important deed was executed. We saw the proctor come out, who finding me on the watch, slapped me on the shoulder, and said with a simper: Gil Blas is not forgotten. At these words, I felt the most lively joy; and was so well pleased with my master for his kind notice, that I promised myself the pleasure of praying for his soul after death, which event happened anon; for the surgeon having bled him once more, the poor old man, quite exhausted, gave up the ghost under the lancet. Just as he was breathing his last, the physician made his appearance, and looked a little foolish, notwithstanding the universality of his death-bed experience. Yet, far from imputing the accident to the new practice, he walked off, affirming with intrepidity, that it was owing to their having been too lenient with the lancet, and too chary of their warm water. The medical executioner, I mean the surgeon, seeing that his functions also were at an end, followed Doctor Sangrado.

As soon as he saw the breath out of our patron's body, Dame Jacintha, Inésilla, and myself, joined in a decent chorus of funeral lamentation, loud enough to produce a proper effect in the neighborhood. The emblem of a life to come, though she had more reason than any of us to rejoice, took the soprano part, and screamed out her afflictions in a most pathetic manner. The room in an instant was crowded with people, attracted less by compassion

than curiosity. The relations of the deceased no sooner got wind of his departure than they pounced down upon the premises, and sealed up every thing. From the housekeeper's distress, they thought there was no will; but they soon found their mistake, and that there was one without a flaw. When it was opened, and they learned the disposition of the testator's principal property, in favor of Dame Jacintha and the little girl, they pronounced his funeral oration in terms not a little disparaging to his memory. They gave a broad apostrophe at the same time to the godly legatee, and a few blessings to me in my turn. It must be owned I had earned them. The licentiate, Heaven reward him for it, to secure my remembrances through life, expressed himself thus in a paragraph of his will — *Item, as Gil Blas has already some little smattering of literature, to encourage his studious habits, I give and bequeath to him my library, all my books and my manuscripts, without any drawback or exception.*

I could not conceive where this said library might be; I had never seen any. I only knew of some papers, with five or six bound books, on two little deal shelves in my master's closet; and that was my legacy. The books too could be of no great use to me; the title of one was, The Complete Man Cook; another, A Treatise on Indigestion, with the Methods of Cure; the rest were the four parts of the breviary, half eaten up by the worms. In the article of manuscripts, the most curious consisted of documents relating to a lawsuit in which the prebendary was

once engaged for his stall. After having examined my legacy with more minuteness than it deserved, I made over my right and title to these invidious relations. I even renounced my livery, and took back my own suit, claiming my wages as my only reward. I then went to look out for another place. As for Dame Jacintha, besides her residue under the will, she had some snug little articles, which by the help of her good friend she had appropriated to her own use during the last illness of the licentiate.

CHAPTER III.

GIL BLAS ENTERS INTO DOCTOR SANGRADO'S SERVICE, AND BECOMES A FAMOUS PRACTITIONER.

I DETERMINED to throw myself in the way of Signor Arias de Londona, and to look out for a new birth in his register: but as I was on my way to No Thoroughfare, who should come across me but Doctor Sangrado, whom I had not seen since the day of my master's death. I took the liberty of touching my hat. He kenned me in a twinkling, though I had changed my dress; and with as much warmth as his temperament would allow him: Hey day! said he, the very lad I wanted to see; you have never been out of my thought. I have occasion for a clever fellow about me, and pitched upon you as the very thing, if you can read and write. Sir, replied I, if that is all you require, I am your man.

In that case, rejoined he, we need look no further. Come home with me; it will be all comfort: I shall behave to you like a brother. You will have no wages, but every thing will be found you. You shall eat and drink according to the true faith, and be taught to cure all diseases. In a word, you shall rather be my young Sangrado than my footman.

I closed in with the doctor's proposal, in the hope of becoming an Esculapius under so inspired a master. He carried me home on the spur of the occasion, to install me in my honorable employment; which honorable employment consisted in writing down the name and residence of the patients who sent for him in his absence. There had indeed been a register for this purpose, kept by an old domestic; but she had not the gift of spelling accurately, and wrote a most perplexing hand. This account I was to keep. It might truly be called a bill of mortality; for my members all went from bad to worse during the short time they continued in this system. I was a sort of bookkeeper for the other world, to take places in the stage, and to see that the first come were the first served. My pen was always in my hand, for Doctor Sangrado had more practice than any physician of his time in Valladolid. He had got into reputation with the public by a certain professional slang, humored by a medical face, and some extraordinary cases, more honored by implicit faith than scrupulous investigation.

He was in no want of patients, nor consequently of property. He did not keep the best house in the

world: we lived with some little attention to economy. The usual bill of fare consisted of peas, beans, boiled apples or cheese. He considered this food as best suited to the human stomach, that is to say, as most amenable to the grinders, whence it was to encounter the process of digestion. Nevertheless, easy as was their passage, he was not for stopping the way with too much of them: and, to be sure, he was in the right. But though he cautioned the maid and me against repletion in respect of solids, it was made up by free permission to drink as much water as we liked. Far from prescribing us any limits there, he would tell us sometimes, — Drink, my children; health consists in the pliability and moisture of the parts. Drink water by pails full, it is a universal dissolvent; water liquefies all the salts. Is the course of the blood a little sluggish? this grand principle sets it forward: too rapid? its career is checked. Our doctor was so orthodox on this head, that he drank nothing himself but water, though advanced in years. He defined old age to be a natural consumption which dries us up and wastes us away: on this principle, he deplored the ignorance of those who call wine old men's milk. He maintained that wine wears them out and corrodes them, and pleaded with all the force of eloquence against that liquor, fatal in common both to the young and old, that friend with a serpent in its bosom, that pleasure with a dagger under its girdle.

In spite of these fine arguments, at the end of a week, a looseness ensued, with some twinges, which

I was blasphemous enough to saddle on the universal dissolvent and the new-fashioned diet. I stated my symptoms to my master, in the hope he would relax the rigor of his regimen, and qualify my meals with a little wine, but his hostility to that liquor was inflexible. If you have not philosophy enough, said he, for pure water, there are innocent infusions to strengthen the stomach against the nausea of aqueous quaffings. Sage, for example, has a very pretty flavor: and if you wish to heighten it into a debauch, it is only mixing rosemary, wild poppy, and other simples, but no compounds.

In vain did he crack off his water, and teach me the secret of composing delicious messes. I was so abstemious, that, remarking my moderation, he said, — In good sooth, Gil Blas, I marvel not that you are no better than you are; you do not drink enough, my friend. Water taken in a small quantity serves only to separate the particles of bile and set them in action; but our practice is to drown them in a copious drench. Fear not, my good lad, lest a superabundance of liquid should either weaken or chill your stomach; far from thy better judgment be that silly fear of unadulterated drink. I will insure you against all consequences; and if my authority will not serve your turn, read Celsus. That oracle of the ancients makes an admirable panegyric on water; in short, he says in plain terms that those who plead an inconstant stomach in favor of wine, publish a libel on their own bowels, and make their organization a pretence for their sensuality.

As it would have been ungenteel in me to have run riot on my entrance into the career of practice, I affected thorough conviction, indeed I thought there was something in it. I therefore went on drinking water on the authority of Celsus, or to speak in scientific terms, I began to drown the bile in copious drenches of that unadulterated liquor; and though I felt myself more out of order from day to day, prejudice won the cause against experience. It is evident, therefore, that I was in the right road to the practice of physic. Yet I could not always be insensible to the qualms which increased in my frame, to that degree, as to determine me on quitting Doctor Sangrado. But he invested me with a new office which changed my tone. Hark you, my child, said he to me one day, I am not one of those hard and ungrateful masters, who leave their household to grow gray in service without a suitable reward. I am well pleased with you, I have a regard for you, and without waiting till you have served your time, I will make your fortune. Without more ado, I will initiate you in the healing art, of which I have for so many years been at the head. Other physicians make the science to consist of various unintelligible branches; but I will shorten the road for you, and dispense with the drudgery of studying natural philosophy, pharmacy, botany, and anatomy. Remember, my friend, that bleeding and drinking warm water are the two grand principles; the true secret of curing all the distempers incident to humanity. Yes, this marvellous secret which I

reveal to you, and which Nature, beyond the reach of my colleagues, has failed in rescuing from my pen, is comprehended in these two articles — namely, bleeeding and drenching. Here you have the sum total of my philosophy; you are thoroughly bottomed in medicine, and may raise yourself to the summit of fame on the shoulders of my long experience. You may enter into partnership at once, by keeping the books in the morning, and going out to visit patients in the afternoon. While I dose the nobility and clergy, you shall labor in your vocation among the lower orders; and when you have felt your ground a little, I will get you admitted into our body. You are a philosopher, Gil Blas, though you have never graduated; the common herd of them, though they have graduated in due form and order, are likely to run out the length of their tether without knowing their right hand from their left.

I thanked the doctor for having so speedily enabled me to serve as his deputy; and, by way of acknowledging his goodness, promised to follow his system to the end of my career, with a magnanimous indifference about the aphorisms of Hippocrates. But that engagement was not to be taken to the letter. This tender attachment to water went against the grain, and I had a scheme for drinking wine every day snugly among the patients. I left off wearing my own suit a second time, to take up one of my master's, and look like an inveterate practitioner. After which I brought my medical theories

into play, leaving them to look to the event whom it might concern. I began on an alguazil in a pleurisy; he was condemned to be bled with the utmost rigor of the law, at the same time that the system was to be replenished copiously with water. Next I made a lodgment in the veins of a gouty pastry cook, who roared like a lion by reason of gouty spasms. I stood on no more ceremony with his blood than with that of the alguazil, and laid no restriction on his taste for simple liquids. My prescriptions brought me in twelve rials; an incident so auspicious in my professional career, that I only wished for the plagues of Egypt on all the hale subjects of Valladolid. As I was coming out of the pastry cook's whom should I meet but Fabricio, a total stranger since the death of the licentiate Sédillo! He looked at me with astonishment for some seconds; then set up a laugh with all his might, and held his sides. He had no reason to be grave, for I had a cloak trailing on the ground, with a doublet and breeches of four times my natural dimensions. I was certainly a complete original. I suffered him to make merry as long as he liked, and could scarcely help joining in the ridicule; but I kept a guard on my muscles to preserve a becoming dignity in public, and the better to enact the physician, whose part in society is not that of a buffoon. If the absurdity of my appearance excited Fabricio's merriment, my affected gravity added zest to it; and when he had nearly exhausted his lungs, — By all the powers, Gil Blas, quoth he, thou art in complete

masquerade. Who the devil has dressed you up in this manner? Fair and softly, my friend, replied I, fair and softly, be a little on your good behavior with a modern Hippocrates. Understand me to be the substitute of Doctor Sangrado, the most eminent physician in Valladolid. I have lived with him these three weeks. He has bottomed me thoroughly in medicine; and, as he cannot perform the obsequies of all the patients who send for him, I visit a part of them to take the burden off his conscience. He does execution in great families, I among the vulgar. Vastly well, replied Fabricio; that is to say, he grants you a lease on the blood of the commonalty, but keeps to himself the fee-simple of the fashionable world. I wish you joy of your lot; it is a pleasanter line of practice among the populace than among great folk. Long live a snug connection in the suburbs! a man's mistakes are easily buried, and his murders elude all but God's revenge. Yes, my brave boy, your destiny is truly enviable; in the language of Alexander, were I not Fabricio, I could wish to be Gil Blas.

To show the son of Nunez, the barber, that he was not much out in his reckoning on my present happiness, I chinked the fees of the alguazil and the pastry cook; and this was followed by an adjournment to a tavern, to drink to their perfect recovery. The wine was very fair, and my impatience for the well-known smack made me think it better than it was. I took some good long draughts, and without gainsaying the Latin oracle, in proportion as I

poured it into its natural reservoir, I felt my accommodating entrails to owe me no grudge for the hard service into which I pressed them. As for Fabricio and myself, we sat some time in the tavern, making merry at the expense of our masters, as servants are too much accustomed to do. At last, seeing the night approach, we parted, after engaging to meet at the same place on the following day after dinner.

CHAPTER IV.

GIL BLAS GOES ON PRACTISING PHYSIC WITH EQUAL SUCCESS AND ABILITY. ADVENTURE OF THE RECOVERED RING.

I WAS no sooner at home than Doctor Sangrado came in. I talked to him about the patients I had seen, and paid into his hands eight remaining rials of the twelve I had received for my prescriptions. Eight rials! said he, as he counted them; mighty little for two visits! But we must take things as we find them. In the spirit of taking things as he found them, he laid violent hands on six, giving me the other two, — Here, Gil Blas, continued he, see what a foundation to build upon. I make over to you the fourth of all you may bring me. You will soon feather your nest, my friend; for, by the blessing of Providence, there will be a great deal of ill health this year.

I had reason to be content with my dividend;

since, having determined to keep back the third part of what I received in my rounds, and afterwards touching another fourth of the remainder, half of the whole, if the arithmetic is any thing more than a deception, would become my perquisite. This inspired me with new zeal for my profession. The next day, as soon as I had dined, I resumed my medical paraphernalia, and took the field once more. I visited several patients on the list, and treated their several complaints in one invariable routine. Hitherto things went on under the rose, and no individual, thank Heaven, had risen up in rebellion against my prescriptions. But let a physician's cures be as extraordinary as they will, some quack or other is always ready to rip up his reputation. I was called in to a grocer's son in a dropsy. Whom should I find there before me but a little black looking physician, by name Doctor Cuchillo, introduced by a relation of the family. I bowed round most profoundly, but dipped lowest to the personage whom I took to have been invited to a consultation with me. He returned my compliment with a distant air; then, having stared me in the face for a few seconds, —Signor Doctor, said he, I beg pardon for being inquisitive, I thought I had been acquainted with all my brethren in Vallodolid, but I confess your physiognomy is altogether new. You must have been settled but a short time in town. I avowed myself a young practitioner, acting as yet under the direction of Doctor Sangrado. I wish you joy, replied he politely, you are studying under

a great man. You must doubtless have seen a vast deal of sound practice, young as you appear to be. He spoke this with so easy an assurance, that I was at a loss whether he meant it seriously, or was laughing at me. While I was conning over my reply, the grocer, seizing on the opportunity, said, — Gentlemen, I am persuaded of your both being perfectly competent in your art; have the goodness without ado to take the case in hand, and devise some effectual means for the restoration of my son's health.

Thereupon the little pulse-counter set himself about reviewing the patient's situation; and after having dilated to me on all the symptoms, asked me what I thought the fittest method of treatment. I am of opinion, replied I, that he should be bled once a day, and drink as much warm water as he can swallow. At these words, our diminutive doctor said to me, with a malicious simper, — And so you think such a course will save the patient? Never doubt it, exclaimed I, in a confident tone; it must produce that effect, because it is a certain method of cure for all distempers. Ask Signor Sangrado. At that rate, retorted he, Celsus is altogether in the wrong; for he contends that the readiest way to cure a dropsical subject is to let him almost die of hunger and thirst. O! as for Celsus, interrupted I, he is no oracle of mine, as fallible as the meanest of us; I often have occasion to bless myself for going contrary to his dogmas. I discover by your language, said Cuchillo, the safe and sure method of practice

Doctor Sangrado instils into his pupils. Bleeding and drenching are the extent of his resources. No wonder so many worthy people are cut off under his direction. . . . No defamation! interrupted I, with some acrimony; a member of the faculty had better not begin throwing stones. Come, come, my learned doctor, patients can get to the other world without bleeding and warm water; and I question whether the most deadly of us has ever signed more passports than yourself. If you have any crow to pluck with Signor Sangrado, write against him, he will answer you, and we shall soon see who will have the best of the battle. By all the saints in the calendar! swore he, in a transport of passion, you little know whom you are talking to. I have a tongue and a fist, my friend; and am not afraid of Sangrado, who, with all his arrogance and affectation, is but a ninny. The size of the little death-dealer made me hold his anger cheap. I gave him a sharp retort; he sent back as good as I brought, till at last we came to cuffs. We had pulled a few handfuls of hair from each other's heads before the grocer and his kinsman could part us. When they had brought this about, they feed me for my attendance, and retained my antagonist, whom they thought the more skilful of the two.

Another adventure succeeded close on the heels of this. I went to see a huge chanter in a fever. As soon as he heard me talk of warm water, he showed himself so averse to this specific, as to fall into a fit of swearing. He abused me in all possi-

ble shapes, and threatened to throw me out at window. I was in a greater hurry to get out of his house than to get in. I did not choose to see any more patients that day, and repaired to the inn where I had agreed to meet Fabricio. He was there first. As we found ourselves in a tippling humor, we drank hard, and returned to our employers in a pretty pickle, that is to say, so-so in the upper story. Signor Sangrado was not aware of my being drunk, because he took the lively gestures which accompanied the relation of my quarrel with the little doctor, for an effect of the agitation not yet subsided after the battle. Besides, he came in for his share in my report; and feeling himself nettled by Cuchillo, — You have done well, Gil Blas, said he, to defend the character of our practice against this little abortion of the faculty. So he takes upon him to set his face against watery drenches in dropsical cases? An ignorant fellow! I maintain, I do, in my own person, that the use of them may be reconciled to the best theories. Yes, water is a cure for all sorts of dropsies, just as it is good for rheumatisms and the green sickness. It is excellent, too, in those fevers where the effect is at once to parch and to chill, and even miraculous in those disorders ascribed to cold, thin, phlegmatic, and pituitous humors. This opinion may appear strange to young practitioners like Cuchillo; but it is right orthodox in the best and soundest systems: so that if persons of that description were capable of taking a philosophical view, instead of crying me down, they would become my most zealous advocates.

In his rage, he never suspected me of drinking: for, to exasperate him still more against the little doctor, I had thrown into my recital some circumstances of my own addition. Yet, engrossed as he was by what I had told him, he could not help taking notice that I drank more water than usual that evening.

In fact, the wine had made me very thirsty. Any one but Sangrado would have distrusted my being so very dry, as to swallow down glass after glass: but as for him, he took it for granted, in the simplicity of his heart, that I began to acquire a relish for aqueous potations. Apparently Gil Blas, said he, with a gracious smile, you have no longer such a dislike to water. As Heaven is my judge! you quaff it off like nectar. It is no wonder, my friend, I was certain you would take a liking to that liquor. Sir, replied I, there is a tide in the affairs of men: with my present lights, I would give all the wine in Valladolid for a pint of water. This answer delighted the doctor, who would not lose so fine an opportunity of expatiating on the excellence of water. He undertook to ring the changes once more in its praise, not like a hireling pleader, but as an enthusiast in the cause. A thousand times, exclaimed he, a thousand and a thousand times of greater value, as being more innocent than our modern taverns, were those baths of ages past, whither the people went, not shamefully to squander their fortunes and expose their lives by swilling themselves with wine, but assembled there for the

decent and economical amusement of drinking warm water. It is difficult enough to admire the patriotic forecast of those ancient politicians, who established places of public resort, where water was dealt out gratis to all comers, and who confined wine to the shops of the apothecaries, that its use might be prohibited, but under the direction of physicians. What a stroke of wisdom! It is doubtless to preserve the seeds of that antique frugality, emblematic of the golden age, that persons are found to this day, like you and me, who drink nothing but water, and are persuaded they possess a prevention or a cure for every ailment, provided our warm water has never boiled; for I have observed that water, when it has boiled, is heavier, and sits less easily on the stomach.

While he was holding forth thus eloquently, I was in danger more than once of splitting my sides with laughing. But I contrived to keep my countenance: nay, more; to chime in with the doctor's theory. I found fault with the use of wine, and pitied mankind for having contracted an untoward relish to so pernicious a beverage. Then, finding my thirst not sufficiently allayed, I filled a large goblet with water, and after having swilled it like a horse: Come, sir, said I to my master, let us drink plentifully of this beneficial liquor. Let us make those early establishments of dilution you so much regret, to live again in your house. He clapped his hands in ecstacy at these words, and preached to me for a whole hour about suffering no

liquid but water to pass my lips. To confirm the habit, I promised to drink a large quantity every evening; and, to keep my word with less violence to my private inclinations, I went to bed with a determined purpose of going to the tavern every day.

The trouble I had got into at the grocer's did not discourage me from phlebotomizing and prescribing warm water in the usual course. Coming out of a house where I had been visiting a poet in a frenzy, I was accosted in the street by an old woman, who came up and asked me if I was a physician. I said yes. As that is the case, I entreat you with all humility to go along with me. My niece has been ill since yesterday, and I cannot conceive what is the matter with her. I followed the old lady to her house, where I was shown into a very decent room, occupied by a female who kept her bed. I went near, to consider her case. Her features struck me from the first; and I discovered beyond the possibility of a mistake, after having looked at her some little time, the she-adventurer, who had played the part of Camilla so adroitly. For her part she did not seem to recollect me at all, whether from the oppression of her disorder, or from my dress as a physician rendering me not easy to be known again. I took her by the hand, to feel her pulse; and saw my ring upon her finger. I was all in a twitter at the discovery of a valuable, on which I had a claim both in law and equity. Great was my longing to make a snatch at it; but considering that these fair

ones would set up a great scream, and that Don Raphael or some other defender of injured innocence might rush in to their rescue, I laid an embargo on my privateering. I thought it best to come by my own in an honest way, and to consult Fabricio about the means. To this last course I stuck. In the mean time the old woman urged me to inform her with what disease her niece was troubled. I was not fool enough to own my ignorance; on the contrary, I took upon myself as a man of science, and after my master's example, pronounced solemnly that the disorder accrued to the patient from the defect of natural perspiration; that consequently she must lose blood as soon as possible, because if we could not open one pore, we always open another: and I finished my prescription with warm water, to do the thing methodically.

I shortened my visit as much as possible, and ran to the son of Nunez, whom I met just as he was going out on an errand for his master. I told him my new adventure, and asked his advice about laying an information against Camilla. Pooh! Nonsense! replied he; that would not be the way to get your ring again. Those gentry think restitution double trouble. Call to mind your imprisonment at Astorga; your horse, your money, your very clothes, did not they all centre in the hands of justice? We must rather set our wits to work for the recovery of your diamond. I take on myself the charge of inventing some stratagem for that purpose. I will deliberate on it in my way to the hospital,

where I have to say but two words from my master to the purveyor. Do you wait for me at our house of call, and do not be on the fret: I will be with you shortly.

I had waited, however, more than three hours at the appointed place, when he arrived. I did not know him again at first. Besides that he had changed his dress and platted his hair, a pair of false whiskers covered half his face. He wore an immense sword with a hilt of at least three feet in circumference, and marched at the head of five men of as swaggering an air as himself, with bushy whiskers and long rapiers. Good day to you, Signor Gil Blas, said he by way of salutation; behold an alguazil upon a new construction, and marshalmen of like materials in these brave fellows my companions. We have only to be shown where the woman lodges who purloined the diamond, and we will obtain restitution, take my word for it. I hugged Fabricio at this discourse, which let me into the plot, and testified loudly my approval of the expedient. I paid my respects also to the masquerading marshalmen. They were three servants and two journeymen barbers of his acquaintance, whom he had engaged to act this farce. I ordered wine to be served round to the detachment, and we all went together at nightfall to Camilla's residence. The door was shut, and we knocked. The old woman, taking my companions to be on the scent of justice, and knowing they would not come into that neighborhood for nothing, was terribly frightened. Cheer up again,

good mother, said Fabricio; we are only come here upon a little business which will be soon settled. At these words we made our entry, and found our way to the sick chamber, under the guidance of the old dowager who walked before us, and by favor of a wax taper which she carried in a silver candlestick. I took the light, went to the bed-side, and, making Camilla take particular notice of my features, Traitress, said I, call to mind the too credulous Gil Blas whom you have deceived. Ah! thou wickedness personified, at last I have caught thee. The corregidor has taken down my deposition, and ordered this alguazil to arrest you. Come, officer, said I to Fabricio, do your duty. There is no need, replied he, swelling his voice, to inflame my severity. The face of that wretch is not new to me: she has long been marked with red letters in my pocket book. Get up, my princess, dress your royal person with all possible despatch. I will be your squire, and lodge you in durance vile, if you have no objection.

At these words, Camilla, ill as she was, observing two marshalmen with large whiskers ready to drag her out of bed by main force, sat up of herself, clasped her hands in an attitude of supplication; and looking at me ruefully, said, Signor Gil Blas, have compassion on me: I call as a witness to my entreaties the chaste mother whose virtues you inherit. Guilty as I am, my misfortunes are greater than my crimes. I will give you back your diamond, so do not be my ruin. Speaking to this effect, she drew my ring from her finger, and gave it me back.

But I told her my diamond was not enough, and that she must refund the thousand ducats they had embezzled in the ready-furnished lodging. O! as for your ducats, replied she, ask me not about them. That false-hearted deceiver, Don Raphael, whom I have not seen from that time to this, carried them off the very same night. O, ho! my little darling, said Fabricio in his turn, that will not do, you had a hand in the robbery, whether you went snacks in the profit or no. You will not come off so cheaply. Your having been accessary to Don Raphael's manœuvres is enough to render you liable to an examination. Your past life is very equivocal; and you must have a good deal upon your conscience. You will have the goodness, if you please, just to step into the town jail, and there unburden yourself by a general confession. This good old lady shall keep you company: it is hard if she cannot tell a world of curious stories, such as Mr. Corregidor will be delighted to hear.

The two women, at these words, brought every engine of pity into play to soften us. They filled the air with cries, complaints, and lamentations. While the old woman on her knees, sometimes to the alguazil and sometimes to his attendants, endeavored to melt their stubborn hearts, Camilla implored me, in the most touching terms, to save her from the hands of justice. I pretended to relent. Officer, said I to the son of Nunez, since I have got my diamond, I do not much care about any thing else. It would be no pleasure to me to be the means

of pain to that poor woman; I want not the death of a sinner. Out upon you, answered he, you set up for humanity! you would make a bad tipstaff. I must do my errand. My positive orders are to arrest these virgins of the sun; his honor the corregidor means to make an example of them. Nay! for mercy's sake, replied I, pay some little deference to my wishes, and slacken a little of your severity, on the ground of the present these ladies are on the point of offering to your acceptance. O! that is another matter, rejoined he; that is what you may call a figure of rhetoric suited to all capacities and all occasions. Well, then, let us see, what have they to give me? I have a pearl necklace, said Camilla, and drop ear-rings of considerable value. Yes; but interrupted he roughly, if these articles are the produce of the Philippine Isles, I will have none of them. You may take them in perfect safety, replied she: I warrant them real. At the same time she made the old woman bring a little box, whence she took out the necklace and ear-rings, which she put within the grasp of this incorruptible minister. Though he was much such a judge of jewelry as myself, he had no doubt of the drops being real, as well as the pearls. These trinkets, said he, after having looked at them minutely, seem to be of good quality and fashion: and if the silver candlestick is thrown into the bargain, I would not answer to my own honesty. You had better not, said I in my turn to Camilla, for a trifle, reject so moderate and fair a composition. While uttering these words, I

returned the taper to the old woman, and handed the candlestick over to Fabricio, who, stopping there because perhaps he espied nothing else that was portable in the room, said to the two women: Farewell, my dainty misses, set your hearts at rest, I will report you to his worship the corregidor, as purer than unsmutched snow. We can turn him round our finger; and never tell him the truth, but when we are not paid for our lies.

CHAPTER V.

SEQUEL OF THE FOREGOING ADVENTURE. GIL BLAS RETIRES FROM PRACTICE, AND FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF VALLADOLID.

After having thus carried Fabricio's plan into effect, we took our leave of Camilla's lodging, hugging ourselves on a success beyond our expectation: for we had only reckoned on the ring. We carried off without ceremony all we could get besides. Far from making it a point of conscience not to steal from a description of ladies whose names are commonly associated with rogues, we thought to cover some scores of other sins by so meritorious an action. Gentlemen, said Fabricio, when we were in the street, my counsel is for returning to our tavern, and devoting the night to a regale. To-morrow we will sell the candlestick, the necklace, the drop earrings, and then share the prize money like brother

adventurers, after which every man shall tramp home again, and make the best excuse he can to his master. His worship the alguazil's idea seemed equally bright and judicious. We returned rank and file to the tavern, some in the pious hope of finding a plausible excuse for having slept abroad, others in a desperate indifference about being turned out of doors without a character.

We ordered a good supper to be got ready, and sat down to table with our physical and mental powers in full vigor. The relish was heightened by a thousand pleasant anecdotes. Fabricio, of all men in the world, having the happy knack of a chairman in a company of jovial spirits, kept the table in a roar. There escaped from him I know not how many charges of true Castilian wit, worth more either in the schools of philosophy or the exchange of commerce than the drug of Attic salt. While we were in a full peal of laughter, we were made to laugh on the other side of our mouths by an unforeseen occurrence. There appeared at table a man of no contemptible prowess, followed by two other as ill-looking dogs as ever existed. After this specimen we had three others, and reckoned up to a dozen, marching in by triplets. They were armed with carbines, swords and bayonets. We could not mistake their office, and were at no loss to guess their business. At first we had a mind to be refractory; but they beset us in an instant, and kept us under, as much by their numbers as by their weapons. Gentlemen, said the captain commandant in a jeer-

ing strain, I have been informed by what ingenious artifice you have recovered a ring from the custody of a lady no better than she should be. Undoubtedly, the device was admirable, and well deserves a civic crown; the patriotism of our police will not be found wanting. Justice, with her lodgings to let for gentry of your description, will not be deficient in her acknowledgments for so brilliant a display of genius. The company to whom this introductory address was directed looked a little sheepish on the occasion. Our countenances fell; and Camilla had her full revenge. Fabricio, however, though pale and puzzled, made an attempt at a defence. Sir, said he, we did it in the innocence of our hearts, and of course we shall be forgiven this not immoral fraud? What the devil, replied the commandant in a rage, do you call this not immoral fraud? Moral or immoral, it may bring you to the gallows. Besides that the power of restitution is too sacred to be assumed by the individual, you have made away with a candlestick, a necklace, and a pair of drop earrings: and what is worse, you have committed your rascalities in the livery of the law. Scoundrels dressing themselves up like the pillars of morality to undermine its very foundation! I shall wish you much joy if you are condemned to nothing worse than mowing the salt marsh. When we had impressed it on our convictions that the affair was even more serious than our first fears, we threw ourselves on his mercy, and implored him to have pity on our tender years, but his stubborn heart was relentless.

He rejected moreover the proposal of relinquishing the necklace, ear-rings and candlestick; nay, he was deaf to the rhetoric of my ring: perhaps because I offered it before too many witnesses: in short, he was the most obdurate dog of his kennel. He ordered my companions to be handcuffed, and sent us in a body to the public prison. As we were on our way, one of the marshalmen acquainted me that Camilla's old vixen, suspecting us not to be licensed scouts of justice, had dogged us to the tavern; and having satisfied her doubts, in revenge informed against us to the patrol.

We were searched in the first instance. Away went the necklace, the ear-rings, and the candlestick. They picked my pocket of my ring, and my ruby of the Philippine Isles; without even sparing the few fees I had received in the forenoon for my prescriptions: so that it was plain, trade was carried on by the same firm at Valladolid as at Astorga, and that all these reformers held the same creed. While they rifled me of my trinkets and money, the lord in waiting of the patrol made known our adventure to the inferior agents of legal rapine. The trespass appeared so audacious that the majority voted it capital. A few kind souls were of opinion that we might come off for two hundred lashes a piece, with a few years on board the galleys. Waiting his worship's sentence, we were locked up in a cell, where we lay upon straw, spread over our stable like a litter for horses. There might we have foddered for an age, and at last have been turned out to grass in the

galleys, if on the morrow Signor Manuel Ordonnez had not got wind of our affair, and determined to release Fabricio; which he could not do without making a general gaol delivery. He was a man of the first credit in the town: his interest was exerted for us, and partly by his own influence, and partly by that of his friends, he obtained our enlargement at the end of three days. But the period of delivery is always moulting time with gaol birds; the candlestick, the necklace, the ear-rings, my ring, and the ruby, all were left behind. One could not help repeating those excellent lines of Virgil, beginning with *Sic vos non vobis.*

As soon as we were at liberty, we returned to our masters. Doctor Sangrado received me kindly. My poor Gil Blas, said he, it was but this morning I was acquainted with thy misfortune. I was just setting about an active canvass for thee. We must derive comfort from adversity, my friend, and attach ourselves more than ever to the practice of physic. I affirmed that to be my intention; and, in truth, I laid about me. Far from wanting employment, it happened by a kind providence, as my master had foretold, to be a very sickly season. The smallpox, and a very malignant fever, took alternate possession of the town and the suburbs. All the physicians in Valladolid had their share of business, and we not the least. We saw eight or ten patients a day; so that the kettle was kept on the simmer, and the blood in the action of transpiring. But things will happen cross; they died to a man, either by our

fault or their own. If their case was hopeless, we were not to blame; and if it was not hopeless, they were. Three visits to a patient was the length of our tether. About the second, we sometimes ran foul of the undertaker; or when we had been more fortunate than usual, the patient had got no further than the point of death. As I was but a young physician, not yet hardened to the trade of an assassin, I grieved over the melancholy issue of my own theory and practice. Sir, said I, one evening to Doctor Sangrado, I call Heaven to witness on the spot that I have never strayed from your infallible method; and yet I have never saved a patient: one would think they died out of spite, and were on the other side of the great medical question. This very day I came across two of them, going into the country to be buried. My good lad, replied he, my experience nearly comes to the same point. It is but seldom I have the pleasure of curing my kind and partial friends. If I had less confidence in my principles, I should think my prescriptions had set their faces against the work they were intended to perform. If you will take a hint, sir, replied I, we had better vary our system. Let us give, by way of experiment, chemical preparations to our patients: the worst they can do is to tread in the steps of our pure dilutions and our phlebotomizing evacuations. I would willingly give it a trial, rejoined he, if it were a matter of indifference, but I have published on the practice of bleeding and the use of drenches: would you have me cut the throat of my own fame as an

author! O, you are in the right, resumed I; our enemies must not gain this triumph over us; they would say that you were out of conceit with your own systems, and would ruin your reputation for inconsistency. Perish the people, perish rather our nobility and clergy! But let us go on in the old path. After all, our brethern of the faculty, with all their tenderness about bleeding, have no patent for longevity any more than ourselves; and we may set off their drugs against our specifics.

We went on working double tides, and did so much execution, that in less than six weeks we made as many widows and orphans as the siege of Troy. The plague must have got into Valladolid by the number of funerals. Day after day came some father or other to know what was become of his son, who was last seen in our hands; or else a stupid fellow of an uncle, who had a foolish hankering after a deceased nephew. With respect to the nephews and sons, on whose uncles and fathers we had equalized our system of destruction, they thought that least said was soonest mended. Husbands were altogether on their good behavior—they would not split a hair about the loss of a wife or two. The real sufferers to whose reproaches we were exposed, were sometimes quite savage in their grief; without being mealy-mouthed in their expressions, they called us blockheads and assassins. I was concerned at their bad language; but my master, who was up to every circumstance, listened to their abuse with the utmost indifference. Yet I might have grown as callous as

himself to popular reproach, if heaven, interposing its shield between the invalids of Valladolid and one of their scourges, had not providentially raised up an incident to disgust me with medicine, which from the outset had been disgusted with me.

The idle fellows about town assembled every day in our neighborhood for a game at tennis. Among the number was one of those professed bullies who set up for great Dons, and are the complete cocks of the tennis court. He was a Biscayan, and assumed the title of Don Roderic de Mondragon. His age might be about thirty. His size was somewhat above the common, but he was lean and bony. Besides two sparkling little eyes rolling about in his head, and throwing out defiance against all bystanders, a very broad nose came in between a pair of red whiskers, which turned up like a hook as high as the temples. His phraseology was so rough and uncouth that the very sound of his voice would throw a quiet man into an ague. This tyrant over both the rackets and the game was lord paramount in all disputes between the players; and there was no appeal from his decisions, but at the risk of receiving a challenge the next day. Precisely as I have drawn Signor Don Roderic, whom the Don in the foreground of his titles could never make a gentleman, Signor Don Roderic was sweet upon the mistress of the tennis-court. She was a woman of forty, in good circumstances, as charming as forty can well be, just entering on the second year of her widowhood. I know not how he made himself agreeable; certainly

not by his exterior recommendations, but probably by that within which passeth show. However that might be, she took a fancy to him, and began to turn her thoughts towards the holy state of matrimony; but while that great event was in agitation, for the punishment of her sins, she was taken with a malignant fever, and with me for a physician. Had the disorder been ever so slight, my practice would have made a serious job of it. At the expiration of four days, there was not a dry eye in the tennis-court. The mistress joined the outward-bound colony of my patients, and her family administered to her effects. Don Roderic, distracted at the loss of his mistress, or rather disappointed of a good establishment, was not satisfied with fretting and fuming at me, but swore he would run me through the body, or even frown me into a non-entity. A good-natured neighbor apprised me of this vow, with a caution to keep at home, for fear of coming across this devil of a fellow. This warning, though taken in good part, was a source of anxiety and apprehension. I was eternally fancying the enraged Biscayan laying siege to the outworks of my citadel. There was no getting a moment's respite from alarm. This circumstance weaned me from the practice of medicine, and I thought of nothing but deliverance from my horrors. On went my embroidered suit once more. Taking leave of my master, who did all he could to detain me, I got out of town with the dawn, not heedless of that terrible Don Roderic, who might waylay me on the road.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS ROUTE FROM VALLADOLID, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF HIS FELLOW-TRAVELLER.

I TRUDGED on at a great rate, and looked behind from time to time, to see if that dreadful Biscayan was not following me. My imagination was so engrossed by the fellow that he haunted me in every tree and bush; my heart was in my mouth for fear at every foot-fall. But I took courage again at the distance of about a league, and went on more gently towards Madrid, whither I proposed directing my steps. I had no attachment to Valladolid. All my regret was at tearing myself from Fabricio, my dear Pylades, of whom I had not so much as taken my leave. It was no grievance to give up physic; on the contrary, I prayed Heaven to forgive me for having tampered with it. Yet I did not count over the contents of my purse with less pleasure, because they were the wages of murder. In this I took after those ladies who retire with a fortune to lead pious lives, and think it hard if they may not fatten religiously on the hard earnings of their libertine profession. I had, in rials, somewhere about the value of five ducats, and this was the sum-total of my property. With these I designed repairing to Madrid, where I had no doubt of finding a good service. Besides, I wished above all things to be in that magnificent city, the boasted epitome of the world and all its wonders.

While I was recollecting what I had heard of it, and enjoying beforehand the pleasures it affords, I heard the voice of a man coming after me, and singing till he had scraped his throat. He had a wallet on his back, a guitar suspended from his neck, and a long sword by his side. He got on at such a rate, as soon to overtake me. Who should it be but one of the two journeymen barbers with whom I had been in gaol for the adventure of the ring. We knew one another at once, though we had shifted our dresses, and were in a thousand marvels at meeting so unexpectedly on the highway. If I testified my delight at having such a fellow-traveller, he seemed on his side to feel an excess of rapture at the renewal of our acquaintance. I told him why I had left Valladolid, and he trusted his own secret to me in return, by stating himself to have had a little brush with his master, on which they had taken an everlasting leave of one another. Had it been my pleasure, continued he, to have taken up my abode longer in Valladolid, ten shops would take me in for one that would have turned me out; since, vanity apart, I may safely say there is not a barber in all Spain better qualified to shave all sorts of beards, with the grain or against the grain, and to curl a pair of whiskers. But I could no longer fight against a hankering after my native place, whence I departed full ten years since. I wish to inhale a little of my own country air, and to learn the present situation of my family. I shall be among them the day after to-morrow, at a place called Olmédo, a populous village on this side of Segovia.

I resolved on accompanying this barber home, and going to Segovia for the chance of a cast to Madrid. We began entertaining one another with indifferent subjects as we went along. The young fellow was perfectly good-humored, with a ready wit. After an hour's conversation, he asked me if I was hungry. I referred him to the first house of call for my answer. To stop dilapidations till we get there, said he, we may renew our term by a little breakfast from my wallet. When I am on a journey I am always my own caterer. None of your woollen drapery, nor linen drapery, nor any of your frippery or trumpery. I hate ostentation. My wallet contains nothing but a little exercise for my grinders, my razors, and a wash-ball. I extolled his discretion, and agreed with all my heart to the bargain he proposed. My appetite was keen and sharp-set for a comfortable meal; after what he had said, I could expect no less. We drew aside a little from the high road, and sat down upon the grass. There my little journeyman barber laid out his provisions, consisting of five or six onions, with some scraps of bread and cheese; but the best lot in the auction was a little leathern bottle, full, as he said, of choice, delicate wine. Though the solids were not very relishing, the calls of hunger did not allow either of us to be dainty; and we emptied the bottle too, containing about two pints of a wine one could not recommend without some remorse of conscience. We then rose from table, and set out again on the tramp in high glee. The barber, who had heard some little

snatches of my story from Fabricio, entreated me to furnish him with the whole from the best authority. It was impossible to refuse so munificent an host; I therefore gave him the satisfaction he required. In my turn I called on him, as an acknowledgment of my frankness, to communicate the leading circumstances of his terrestrial peregrinations. O! as for my adventures, exclaimed he, they are scarcely worth recording —— a mere catalogue of common occurrences. Nevertheless, since we have nothing else to do, I will run over the narrative, such as it is. At the same time he entered on the recital, nearly in the following terms.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNEYMAN BARBER'S STORY.

I TAKE up my tale from the origin of things. My grandfather, Ferdinand Perez de la Fuenta, barber-general to the village of Olmédo for fifty years, died, leaving four sons. The eldest, Nicholas, succeeded to the shop, and lathered himself into the good graces of the customers. Bertrand, the next, having taken a fancy to trade, set up for a mercer; and Thomas, who was the third, turned schoolmaster. As for the fourth, by name Pedro, feeling within himself the high destinies of learning, he sold a dirty acre or two which fell to his share, and went

to settle at Madrid, where he hoped one day to distinguish himself by his genius and erudition. The other three brothers would not part; they fixed their quarters at Olmédo, marrying peasants' daughters, who brought their husbands very little dowry, except an annual present of a chopping young rustic. They had a most public-spirited emulation in child-bearing. My mother, the barber's wife, favored the world with a contribution of six within the first five years of her marriage. I was among the number. My father initiated me betimes in the mysteries of shaving; and when he saw me grown up to the age of fifteen, laid this wallet across my shoulders, presented me with a long sword, and said Go, Diego, you are now qualified to gain your own livelihood; go and travel about. You want a little acquaintance with the world to give you a polish, and improve you in your art. Off with you! and do not return to Olmédo till you have made the tour of Spain, nor let me hear of you till that is accomplished. Finishing with this injunction, he embraced me with fatherly affection, and shoved me out of doors by the shoulders.

Such were the parting benedictions of my sire. As for my mother, who had more the touch of nature in her manners, she seemed to feel somewhat at my departure. She dropped a few tears, and even slipped a ducat by stealth into my hand. Thus was I sent from Olmédo into the wide world, and took the road of Segovia. I did not go two hundred yards without stopping to examine my bag. I

had a mind to view its contents, and to know the precise amount of my possessions. There I found a case with two razors, which must have travelled post over the chins of ten generations, by the evidence of their wear and tear, with a strap to set them, and a bit of soap. In addition to this, a coarse shirt quite new, a pair of my father's shoes quite old, and what rejoiced me more than all the rest, a rouleau of twenty rials in a linen bag. Behold the sum-total of my personals. You may conclude master Nicholas, the barber, to have reckoned a good deal on my ingenuity, by his turning me adrift with so slender a provision. Yet a ducat and twenty rials, by way of fortune, was enough to turn the head of a young man unaccustomed to money concerns. I fancied my stock of cash inexhaustible; and pursued my journey in the sunshine of brilliant anticipation, looking from time to time at the hilt of my rapier, while the blade was striking against the calf of my leg at every step, or tripping up my heels.

In the evening I reached the village of Ataquinés with a very catholic stomach. I put up at the inn; and, as if I meant to spend freely, asked, in a lofty tone, what there was for supper. The landlord examined my pretensions with his eye, and finding according to what cloth my coat was cut, said with true publican's civility, Yes, yes, my worthy master, you shall have no reason to complain; we will treat you like a lord. With this assurance, he showed me into a little room, whither he brought

me, a quarter of an hour afterwards, a ragout made of a great he cat, on which I feasted with as famous an appetite as if it had been hare or rabbit. This excellent dish was washed down by so choice a wine, that the king had no better in his cellars. I found out, however, that it was pricked; but that was no hindrance to my doing it as much honor as the he cat. The last article in this entertainment for a lord was a bed better adapted to drive sleep away than to invite it. Figure it to yourself about the width of a coffin, and so short that I could not stretch my legs, though none of the longest. Besides, there was neither mattress nor feather bed, but merely a little straw sewed up in a sheet folded double, which was laid down clean for every hundreth traveller, and served the other ninety-nine, one after another, without washing. Nevertheless, in such a bed, with a stomach distended to a surfeit by fricaseed cat, and then raked by sour wine, thanks to youth and a good constitution, I slept soundly, and passed the night without being disturbed.

On the following day, when I had breakfasted, and paid the reckoning, as I had been treated like a lord, I made but one stage to Segovia. On my arrival, I had the good fortune to find a shop, where they took me in for my board and lodging; but I staid there only six months; a journeyman barber, with whom I got acquainted, was going to Madrid, and drew me in to set off with him. I had no difficulty in procuring a situation on the same footing as at Segovia. I got into a shop of the very best

custom. It is true, it was near the church of the Holy Cross, and that the neighborhood of the Prince's Theatre brought a great deal of business. My master, two stirring fellows and myself, could scarcely lather the chins of the people who came to be shaved. They were of all trades and conditions; among the rest, players and authors. One day, two persons of the last description happened to meet. They began conversing about the poets and pieces in vogue, when one of them mentioned my uncle's name: a circumstance which drew my attention more particularly to their discourse. Don Juan de Zavaleta, said one, will never do any good as an author. A man of a cold genius, without a spark of fancy! he has written himself down at a terrible rate by his last publication. And Louis Velez de Guevara, said the other, what has he done? A fine work to bring before the public! Was there ever any thing so wretched? They mentioned, I know not how many poets besides, whose names I have forgotten: I only recollect that they said no good of them. As for my uncle, they made a more honorable mention of him, agreeing that he was a personage of merit. Yes, said one, Don Pedro de la Fuenta is an excellent author; there is a sly humor in his compositions, blended with solid sense, which communicates an attic poignancy to their general effect. I am not surprised at his popularity, both in court and city, nor at the pensions settled on him by the great. For many years past, said the other, he has enjoyed a very large income.

He lives at the Duke de Medina Celi's table, and has an apartment in his house, so that he is at no expense; he must be very well in the world.

I lost not a syllable of what these poets were saying about my uncle. We had learned in the family, that he made a noise in Madrid by his works; some travellers, passing through Olmédo, had told us so; but as he took no notice of us, and seemed to have weaned himself from all natural ties, we on our side lived in a state of perfect indifference about him. Yet nature will prevail: as soon as I had heard that he was in a fair way, and had learned where he lived, I was tempted to go and call upon him. One thing staggered me a little; the literati had styled him Don Pédro. This don was an awkward circumstance: I had my doubts whether he might not be some other poet of the name, and not my uncle. Yet that apprehension did not damp my ardor. I thought he might have been ennobled for his wit, and determined to pay him a visit. For this purpose, with my master's leave, I tricked myself out one morning as well as I could, and sallied from our shop, a little proud of being nephew to a man who had gained so high a character by his genius. Barbers are not the most diffident people in the world. I began to conceive no mean opinion of myself; and riding the high horse with all the arrogance of greatness, enquired my way to the Duke de Medina Celi's palace. I rang at the gate, and said, I wanted to speak with Signor Don Pédro de la Fuenta. The porter pointed with his finger

to a narrow staircase at the fag end of the court, and answered, — Go up there, then knock at the first door on your right. I did as he directed me; and knocked at a door. It was opened by a young man, whom I asked if those were the apartments of Signor Don Pédro de la Fuenta. Yes, answered he, but you cannot speak to him at present. I should be very glad, said I, just to say, How are you? I bring him news of his family. And you brought him news of the pope, replied he, I could not introduce you just now. He is writing, and while his wits are at work, he must not be disturbed. He will not be able to receive company till noon; take a turn, and come back about that time.

I departed, and walked about town all the morning, incessantly meditating on the reception my uncle would give me. I think, said I within myself, he will be overjoyed to see me. I measured his feelings by my own, and prepared myself for a very affecting discovery. I returned punctually to the appointed hour. You are just in time, said the servant; my master was going out. Wait here a moment: I will announce you. With these words, he left me in the ante-chamber. He returned almost immediately, and showed me into his master's room. The face struck me all at once as a family likeness. To be sure he was the very image of my uncle Thomas; they might have been taken for twins. I bowed down to the ground, and introduced myself as the son of Master Nicholas de la Fuenta, the barber of Olmédo. I likewise informed him, that I

had been working at my father's trade in Madrid, for these three weeks, as a journeyman, and intended making the tour of Spain to complete my education. While I was speaking, my uncle was evidently in a brown study. He seemed to doubt whether he should disown me at once, or get rid of me with some little sacrifice to decency. The latter course he adopted. Affecting the affable: Well, my good kinsman, how are your father and your uncles? Do they get on in the world? I began thereupon by laying before him the family knack at propagation. All the children, male and female, called over by their names, with their godfathers and godmothers included in the list! He took no extravagant interest in the particulars of my tale; but, leading to his own purposes, Diego, replied he, I am quite of your mind. You should go from place to place, and see a variety of practice. I would not have you tarry longer at Madrid: it is a very dangerous residence for youth; you may get into bad habits, my sweet fellow. Other towns will suit you better; the state of society in the provinces is more patriarchal and philosophical. Determine on emigration; and when your departure is fixed, come and take your leave. I will contribute a pistole to the tour of Spain. With this kind assurance, he handed me out of the room, and sent me packing.

I had not worldly wisdom enough to find out that he wanted to get quit of me. I went back to our shop, and gave my master an account of the visit I had paid. He looked no deeper than myself into

Signor Don Pédro's motives, and observed: I cannot help differing from your worthy uncle, so far from advising you to travel the provinces, the real thing would be, in my opinion, to give you a comfortable settlement in this city. He is hand-and-glove with the first people; it is an easy matter for him to establish you in a great family; and that is a fortune at once. Struck with this lucky discovery, which seemed to settle the point without difficulty, I called on my uncle again two days afterwards, and made a modest proposal to him for a situation about some leading character at court. But the hint was not taken kindly. A proud man, living at free quarters among the great, and dining with them in a family party, did not exactly wish that, while he was sitting at my lord's table, his nephew should be a guest in the servants' hall. Little Diego might bring a scandal on Signor Don Pédro. He had no hesitation, therefore, in fairly turning me out of doors, and that with a flea in my ear. What, you little rascal! said he, in a fit of extravagance, do you mean to relinquish your calling? Begone, I consign you to the reptile whose pernicious counsels will be your ruin. Take your leave of these premises, and never set your foot on them again, or you shall have the reception you deserve! I was absolutely stunned at this language, and still more at the peremptory tone my uncle assumed. With tears in my eyes I withdrew, quite overcome by his severity. Yet, as I had always been lively and confident in my temper, I soon wiped away my

tears. My grief was even turned into resentment, and I determined to take no further notice of this unnatural relative, whose kind offices I had hitherto been contented to want.

My attention was henceforth directed to the cultivation of my professional talent; I was quite a plodding fellow at my trade. I scraped away all day; and in the evening, by way of relief to my scraping, I twanged the guitar. My master on that instrument was an old *Senor Escudero* whom I shaved. He taught me music in return; and he was an adept. To be sure he had formerly been a chorister in a cathedral. His name was Marcos de Obregon. He was a man of the world, with good natural parts and acquired knowledge, which jointly induced him to fix on me as an adopted son. He was engaged as an attendant on a physician's lady, resident within thirty yards of our house. I went to him in the evening, when shop was shut, and we two, sitting on the threshold of the door, made up a little concert not displeasing to the neighborhood. It was not that our voices were very fine; but in thrumming on the catgut, we made a pretty regular accompaniment to our duet, and filled up the harmony sufficiently for the gratification of our hearers. Our music was particularly agreeable to Donna Mergelina, the physician's wife; she came into the passage to hear us, and sometimes encored us in her favorite airs. Her husband did not interfere with her amusement. Though a Spaniard and in years, he was not possessed with jealousy; besides, his pro-

fession took up all his time; and as he came home in the evening, worn out with his numerous visits, he went to bed at an early hour, without troubling himself about his wife or our concerts. Possibly, if he thought about them at all, he might consider them as little likely to produce dangerous consequences. He had an additional security in his wife. Mergelina was young and handsome with a witness; but of so fierce a modesty, that she started at the very shadow of a man. How could he take umbrage at an amusement of so harmless and decorous a nature? He gave us leave to sing our hearts out.

One evening, as I came to the physician's door, intending to take my usual recreation, I found the old squire waiting for me. He took me by the hand: saying that he wished to take a little walk with me, before we struck up our little concert. At the same time he drew me aside into a by-street, where, finding an opportunity of opening his mind: Diego, my good lad, said he with a melancholy air, I want to give you a hint in private. I much fear, my good and amiable youth, that we shall both have reason to repent of beguiling our evenings with little musical parties at my master's door. Rely on my sincere friendship: I do not grudge your lessons in singing and on the guitar; but if I could have foreseen the storm now brewing, in the name of charity, I would have selected some other spot to communicate my instructions! This address alarmed me. I entreated the gentle squire to be more explicit, and to tell me what we had to fear; for I was no Hector,

and the tour of Spain was not yet finished. I will relate to you, replied he, what it concerns you to know, that you may take proper measure of our present danger.

When I got into the service of the physician, about a year ago, he said one morning, after having introduced me to his wife: There, Marcos, you see your mistress; that is the lady you are to accompany in all her peregrinations. I was smitten with Donna Mergelina: she was lovely in the extreme, a model for an artist, and her principal attraction was the pleasantness of her deportment. Honored sir, replied I to the physician, it is too great a happiness to be in the train of so charming a lady. My answer was taken amiss by Mergelina, who said rather crustily, A pleasant gentleman this! He is perfectly free and easy. Believe me, his fine speeches may go a begging for me! These words, dropped from such lovely lips, seemed rather inconsistent; the manners and ideas of bumpkins and dairy-maids coupled with all the graces of the most lovely woman in the world! As for her husband, he was used to her ways; and, hugging himself on the unrivalled character of his rib, Marcos, said he, my wife is a miracle of chastity. Then, observing her put on her veil, and make herself ready to go to mass, he told me to attend on her at church. We were no sooner in the street than we met, and it was no wonder, blades who, struck with Donna Mergelina's genteel carriage, told her a thousand flattering tales as they passed by. She was not backward in

her answers; but silly and ill-timed, beyond what you can conceive. They were all in amaze, and could not imagine how a woman should take it amiss to be complimented. Why really! madam, said I to her at first, you had better be silent, or shut your ears to their addresses, than reply with asperity. No, no, replied she: I will teach these coxcombs that I am not a woman to put up with impertinence. In short, her absurdity went so far, that I could not help telling her my mind, at the hazard of her displeasure. I gave her to understand, yet with the greatest possible caution, that she was unjust to nature, whose handiwork she marred by her preposterous ferocity; that a woman of mild and polished manners might inspire love without the aid of beauty; whereas the loveliest of the sex, divested of female softness, was in danger of becoming the public scorn. To this ratiocination, I added collateral arguments, always directed to the amendment of her manners. After having moralized to no purpose, I was afraid my freedom might exasperate my mistress, and draw upon me some taunting repartee. Nevertheless, she did not mutiny against my advice; but silently rendered it of no avail, and thus we went on from day to day.

I was weary of pointing out her errors to no purpose, and gave her up to the ferocious temperament of her nature. Yet, could you think it? the savage humor of that proud woman is entirely changed within these two months. She has a kind word for all the world, and manners the most accommodating.

It is no longer the same Mergelina who gave such homely answers to the compliments of her swains: she is become assailable by flattery; loves to be told she is handsome, that a man cannot look at her without paying for it: her ears itch for fine speeches, and she is become a very woman. Such a change is almost inconceivable: and the best of the joke is, that you are the worker of this unparalleled miracle. Yes, my dear Diego, it is you who have transformed Donna Mergelina; you have softened down the tigress into a domestic animal; in a word, you have made her feel. I have observed it more than once; and never trust my knowledge of the sex, if she is not desperately in love with you. Such, my dear boy, is the melancholy news I have to communicate — the awkward predicament in which we stand.

I do not see, said I in my turn to the old man, that there is any thing so melancholy in this accident, or any peculiar awkwardness in being the object of a pretty woman's partiality. Ah! Diego, replied he, you argue like a young man: you only see the bait, without guarding against the hook: pleasure is your lure; while my thoughts are directed to the unpleasant circumstances attending it. Murder will out. If you go on singing at our door, you will provoke Mergelina's passion; and she, probably, losing all command over herself, will betray her weakness to her husband, Doctor Oloroso. That wretched husband, so complying now that he thinks there is no ground for jealousy, will run wild, take signal vengeance upon her, and perhaps play some

dog's trick or other to you and me. Well, then! rejoined I, your reasons shall be conclusive with me, and your sage counsels my rule. Lay down the line of conduct I am to adopt, for the prevention of any left-handed catastrophe. We will have no more concerts, was his peremptory decree. Do not show yourself any more to my mistress: when the sight of you does not inflame her, she will recover her composure. Stay within doors: I will call in upon you, and we will torture the guitar with impunity. With all my heart, said I, and I will never set my foot again in your premises. In good truth, I was determined to serenade no longer before the physician's door, but henceforth to keep within the precints of my shop, since my attractions as a man were so formidable.

In the meantime, good Squire Marcos, with all his prudence, experienced in the course of a few days that the plan he had devised to quench Donna Mergelina's flame produced a directly opposite effect. The lady on the second night not hearing me sing, asked why we had discontinued our concerts, and the reason of my absence. He told her I was so busy as not to have a moment to spare for relaxation. She seemed satisfied with that excuse, and for three days longer bore the disappointment of all her hopes like a heroine; but at the end of that period, my martyr to the tender passion lost all patience, and said to her conductor, You are playing false with me, Marcos; Diego has not discontinued his visits without a cause. This mystery

must be unravelled. Speak, I command you; conceal nothing from me! Madam, answered he, making use of another subterfuge, since the truth must be told, it has often happened to him to find the cloth taken away at home after the concert; he cannot run the risk any longer of going to bed without his supper. What, without his supper! exclaimed she in an agony, why did not you tell me so sooner? Go to bed without his supper! O! the poor little sufferer! Go to him this instant, and let him come again this evening; he shall not go home starving any more, there shall always be a luncheon for him.

What do I hear? said the squire, affecting astonishment at this language; O, Heaven, what a reverse! Is this you, madam, and are these your sentiments? Well-a-day! Since when are you so compassionate and tender-hearted? Since, replied she significantly, since you have lived in this house, or rather since you disapproved my disdainful manners, and have labored to soften the acrimony of my temper. But, alas! added she, in a melting mood, I have gone from one extreme to the other. Proud and insensible as I was, I am become too susceptible—too tender. I am enamoured of your young friend Diego, and I cannot help myself; his absence, far from allaying my ardor, only adds fuel to the fire. Is it possible, resumed the old man, that a young fellow with neither face nor person should have inspired so strong a passion? I could make allowance for your feelings, if they had been set afloat by some nobleman of distinguished merit. . . . Ah! Marcos,

interrupted Mergelina, I am not like the rest of my sex; or, rather, spite of your long experience, your penetration is but shallow if you fancy merit to have much share in our choice. Judging by myself, we all leap before we look. Love is a mental derangement, forcibly drawing all our views and attachments into one vortex—a species of hydrophobia. Have done then with your hints that Diego is not worthy of my tenderness; that he has it is enough to invest him with a thousand perfections too ætherial for your gross sight, and perhaps too unsubstantial for any but a lover's perception. In vain you disparage his features or his stature; in my eyes he was created to undo, and encircled by the hand of Nature with the glories of the opening day. Nay, more, there is a thrilling sweetness in his voice; his touch on the guitar has the taste of an amateur, and the execution of a professor. But, madam, subjoined Marcos, do you consider who Diego is? The meanness of his station. . . . My own is very little better, interrupted she again; though were I of noble birth, it would make no difference in my sensations.

The result of that conference was that the squire, concluding he should make no impression on the mind of his mistress, gave over struggling with her obstinacy, as a skilful pilot runs before the storm, though it carries him out to sea from his intended port. He did more: to satisfy his patroness, he paid me a visit, took me aside, and, after having related what had passed between them: You see, Diego, said he, that we cannot dispense with the perform-

ance of our concerts at Mergelina's door. Absolutely, my friend, that lady must see you again; otherwise she may commit some act of desperation fatal to her good name. I was not inexorable, but answered Marcos that I would attend with my guitar early in the evening; and dispatched him to his mistress with the happy tidings. He executed his office, and the impassioned dame was out of her wits with joy, in the delicious prospect of hearing and seeing me in a few hours.

A most disagreeable circumstance, however, was very near disappointing her in that hope. I could not leave home before night, and, for my sins, it was dark as pitch. I went groping along the street, and had got, may be, half way, when down from a window came upon my head the contents of a perfuming-pan, which did not tickle my olfactory nerves very pleasantly. I may say that not a whiff was wasted, so exactly had the giver taken measure of the receiver. In this situation I was at a loss on what to resolve: to go back by the way I came, what an exhibition before my comrades! It was surrendering myself to all their nasty witticisms. Then, again, go to Mergelina in such a glorious trim, that hurt my feelings on the other side. I determined, at length, to get on towards the physician's. The old usher was waiting for me at the door. He said that Doctor Oloroso was gone to bed, and we might amuse ourselves as we liked. I answered that the first thing was to purify my drapery, at the same time relating my misfortune. He seemed to feel for me,

and showed me into a hall where his mistress was sitting. As soon as the lady got wind of my adventure, and had confirmed the testimony of her nose by the evidence of her eyes, she mourned over me as grievously as if my miseries had been mortal; then, apostrophising the absent cause of my foul array, she uttered a thousand imprecations. Well, but, Madam! said Marcos, do moderate this ecstasy of grief; consider that such casualities will happen; there is no occasion to take on so bitterly. Why! exclaimed she with vehemence, why would you debar me from the privilege of weeping over the injuries of this tender lamb, this dove without gall, who does not so much as murmur at the affront he has sustained? Alas! why am I not a man at this moment to avenge him!

She uttered numberless soothing expressions besides, to mark distinctly the excess of her devotion, and her actions corresponded with her words; for while Marcos was employed in wiping me down with a towel, she ran into her chamber and brought out a box furnished with every variety of perfumes. She burned sweet-smelling drugs, and perfumed my clothes with them, after which she drenched me in a deluge of essences. The fumigation and aspersion ended, this bountiful lady went herself and fetched, from the kitchen, bread, wine, and some good slices of roast mutton, set by on purpose for me. She forced me to eat, and, taking a pleasure in waiting on me, sometimes carved for me, and sometimes filled my glass, in spite of all that Marcos and myself

could do to anticipate her condescension. When I had done supper, the gentlemen of the orchestra struck the key-note, and tuned their sweet voices to the pitch of their guitars. We played and sung to the heart's delight of Mergelina. To be sure we took care to carol none but amorous ditties; and, as we sung, I every now and then leered at her with such a roguish meaning, as to throw oil upon the fire, for the game began to be interesting. The concert, though the acts were long, was not tedious. As for the lady, to whom hours seemed to fly like seconds, she could have been content to exhaust the night in listening, if the old squire, with whom the seconds seemed to lag like hours, had not hinted how late it was. She gave him the trouble of enforcing his moral on the lapse of time by at least ten repetitions. But she was in the hands of a man not to be turned aside from his purpose; he let her have no rest till I was gone. Sensible and provident as he was, seeing his mistress given up to a mad passion, he dreaded lest our harmony should be resolved by some discord. His fears were ominous: the physician, whether his mind misgave him of some foul play, or the spirit of jealousy, hitherto on its good behavior, had a mind to harass him gratuitously, bethought himself of quarrelling with our concerts. He did more, he put a broad negative upon them; and, without assigning his reasons for acting in this violent way, declared that he would suffer no more strangers to come about his premises.

Marcos acquainted me with this mortifying decla-

ration, particularly levelled against my rising hopes. I had begun bobbing at this dainty cherry, and did not like to lose my game. Nevertheless, to act the part of a faithful reporter and true historian, I must own my impatience did not affect my health or spirits. Not so with Mergelina, her feelings were more alive than ever. My dear Marcos, said she to her usher, it is only from you that I look for succor. Contrive, I beseech you, that I may see Diego in private. What do you require? asked the old man, with a reproachful accent. I have been but too indulgent to you. I am not a person to crown your wanton wishes at the expense of my master's honor, your good fame, and my own eternal infamy — the infamy of a man whose past life has been one continued series of faithful service and exemplary conduct. I had rather leave the family than stay in it on such scandalous conditions. Alas! Marcos, interrupted the lady, frightened out of her wits at these last words, you wring my heart by talking in this manner. Obdurate man! Can you bear the thought of sacrificing her who lays all her present agony to your account? Give me back my former pride, and that savage soul you have taken from me. Why am I no longer happy in my very imperfections? I might now have been at peace, but your rash counsels have robbed me of the repose I then enjoyed. You, the corrector of my manners, have tampered with my morals. . . . But why do I rave, unhappy wretch that I am? why upbraid you thus wrongfully? No, my guardian angel, you are not

the fatal source of all my miseries; my evil destiny had decreed these tortures to await me. Lay not to heart, I conjure you on my knees, these transports of a disordered imagination. Oh mercy! my passion drives me mad; have compassion on my weakness; you are my sole support and stay; if, then, my life is not indifferent to you, deny me not your aid.

At these words, her tears flowed in fresh torrents, and stifled her lugubrious accents. She took out her handkerchief, and, throwing it over her face, fell into a chair, like a person overcome by her affliction. Old Marcos, who was perhaps one of the most tractable go-betweens in the world, could no longer steel his heart against so touching a spectacle. Pierced to the quick, he even mingled his tears with those of his mistress, and spoke to her in a softened tone: Ah! madam, why are you thus bewitching! I cannot hold out against your sorrowful complaints; my virtue yields under the pressure of my pity. I promise you all the relief in my power. No longer do I marvel at the oblivious influence of passion over duty, since mere sympathy can mislead my footsteps from its thorny paths. Thus did this pander, whose past life had been one continued series of faithful service and exemplary conduct, sell himself to the devil to feed Mergelina's illicit flame. One morning he came and talked over the whole business with me, saying, at his departure, that he had a scheme in his head, to bring about a private interview between us. At the thought, my hopes were all re-kindled; but they glimmered tremblingly in the socket at a piece

of news I heard two hours afterwards. A journeyman apothecary in the neighborhood, one of our customers, came in to be shaved. While I was making ready to trim his bushy honors, he said, Master Diego, do you know anything about your friend, the old usher, Marcos de Obregon? Is not he going to leave Doctor Oloroso? I said, No. But he is, though, replied he; he will get his dismission this very day. His master and mine were talking about it just now in my hearing, and their conversation was to the following effect: Signor Apuntador, said the physician, I have a favor to beg of you. I am not easy about an old usher of mine, and should like to place my wife under the eye of a trusty, strict, and vigilant duenna. I understand you, interrupted my master. You want Dame Melancia, my wife's directress, and indeed mine for the last six weeks, since I have been a widower. Though she would be very useful to me in housewifery, I give her up to you, from a paramount regard to your honor. You may rely upon her for the security of your brow; she is the phœnix of the duenna tribe — a spring-gun and a man-trap set in the purlieus of female chastity. During twelve whole years that she was about my wife, whose youth and beauty, you know, were not without their attractions, I never saw the least semblance of manhood within my doors. No, no! By all the powers! That game was not so easily played. And yet I must let you know that the departed saint, Heaven rest her soul! had in the outset a great hankering after the delights

of the flesh; but Dame Melancia cast her in a new mould, and regenerated her to virtue and self-denial. In short, such a guardian of the weaker sex is a treasure, and you will never have done thanking me for my precious gift. Hereupon the doctor expressed his rapture at the issue of the conference; and they agreed, Signor Apuntador and he, on the duenna's succeeding the old usher on this very day.

This news, which I thought probable, and turned out to be true, disturbed the pleasurable ideas, just beginning to flow afresh, and renovate my soul. After dinner, Marcos completed the convulsion, by confirming the young drug-pounder's story: My dear Diego, said the good squire, I am heartily glad that Doctor Oloroso has turned me off; it spares me a world of trouble. Besides that it hurt my feelings to be invested with the office of a spy, endless must have been the shifts and subterfuges to bring you and Mergelina together in private. We should have been rarely gravelled! Thanks to Heaven, I am set free from all such perplexing cares, to say nothing of their attendant danger. On your part, my dear boy, you ought to be comforted for the loss of a few soft moments, which must have been dogged at the heels by a thousand fears and vexations. I relished Marcos' sermon well enough, because my hopes were at an end—the game was lost. I was not, it must be confessed, among the number of those stubborn lovers who bear up against every impediment; but though I had been so, Dame Melancia would have made me let go my hold. The established character

of that duenna would have daunted the adventurous spirit of a knight-errant. Yet, in whatever colors this phœnix of the duenna tribe might have been painted, I had reason to know, two or three days afterwards, that the physician's lady had unset the man-trap and spring-gun, and given a stop to this watch-dog of lubricity. As I was going out to shave one of our neighbors, a civil old gentlewoman stopped me in the street, and asked me if my name was Diego de la Fuenta. I said, Yes. That being the case, replied she, I have a little business with you. Place yourself this evening at Donna Mergelina's door; and when you are there, give a signal, and you shall be let in. Vastly well! said I, what must the signal be! I can take off a cat to the life: suppose I was to mew a certain number of times! The very thing, replied this Iris of intrigue; I will carry back your answer. Your most obedient, Signor Diego! Heaven protect the sweet youth! Ah! you are a pretty one! By St. Angès, I wish I was but sweet fifteen, I would not go to market for other folks! With this hint, the old procuress waddled out of sight.

You may be sure this message put me in no small flutter. Where now was the morality of Marcos? I waited for night with impatience, and, calculating the time of Doctor Oloroso's going to bed, took my station at his door. There I set up my caterwauling, till you might hear me ever so far off, to the eternal honor of the master who instructed me in that imitative art. A moment after, Mergelina

opened the door softly with her own dear hands, and shut it again with me on the inside. We went into the hall, where our last concert had been performed. It was dimly lighted by a small lamp, which twinkled in the chimney. We sat down side by side, and began our tender parley, each of us overcome by our emotions, but with this difference, that hers were all inspired by pleasure, while mine were somewhat tainted by fear. In vain did the divinity of my adorations assure me that we had nothing to fear from her husband. I felt the access of an ague, which unmanned my vigor. Madam, said I, how have you eluded the vigilance of your directress? After what I have heard of Dame Melancia, I could not have conceived it possible for you to contrive the means of sending me any intelligence, much less of seeing me in private. Donna Mergelina smiled at this remark, and answered: You will no longer be surprised at our being together to-night, when I tell you what has passed between my duenna and me. As soon as she came to her place, my husband paid her a thousand compliments, and said to me: Mergelina, I consign you to the guidance of this wary lady, herself an abstract of all the virtues: in this glass you may look without a blush, and array yourself in habits of wisdom. This extraordinary personage has for these twelve years been a light to the ways of an apothecary's wife of my acquaintance; but how has she been a light to them? . . . why, as ways never were enlightened before: she turned a very slippery piece of mortal flesh into a downright nun.

This panegyric, not belied by the austere mien of Dame Melancia, cost me a flood of tears, and reduced me to despair. I fancied the din of eternal lectures from morning till night, and daily rebukes too harsh to be endured. In short, I laid my account in a life of wretchedness, beyond the patience of a woman. Keeping no measures in the expectation of such cruel sufferings, I said bluntly to the duenna, the moment I was alone with her: You mean, no doubt, to exercise your tyranny most wantonly on my poor person; but I cannot bear much severity, I warn you beforehand. I give you, moreover, fair notice, that I shall be as savage as you can be. My heart cherishes a passion, which not all your remonstrances shall tear from it: so you may act accordingly. Watch me as closely as you please; it is hard if I cannot outwit such an old thing as you. At these taunting words, I thought this saracen in petticoats was going to give me a specimen of her discipline. But, so far from it, she smoothed her brow, relaxed her surly features, and, primming up her mouth into a smile, promulgated this comfortable doctrine: Your temper charms me, and your frankness calls for a return. We must have been made for one another. Ah! lovely Mergelina, little do you fathom my character, to be deceived by the fine compliments of your husband the Doctor, or by my Tartar contour! There was never a creature more fortified against moral prejudices! My inducement for getting into the service of jealous husbands is to lend myself to the enjoyments of their pretty

wives. Long have I trodden the stage of life in masquerade; and I may call myself doubly happy, in the spiritual rewards of virtue, and the temporal indulgences of the opposite side. Between ourselves, mine is the system of all mankind in the long run. Real virtue is a very expensive article: plated goods look just as well, and are within the reach of all purchasers.

Put yourself under my direction. We will make Doctor Oloroso pay the piper to our dancing, or I am no duenna. By my troth, he shall go the way of Signor Apuntador and all mankind. There is no reason why the forehead of a physician should be smoother than the brow of an apothecary. Poor dear Apuntador! What fun have we had with him, his wife and I! A charming woman, that wife of his! A dear little creature, open to all mankind, and prejudiced by none! Well! she is at peace, and has not left her fellow behind her! Take my word, short as her time was, she made the most of it. Let me see how many rampant chaps have been brought to their bearings in that house, without the dear, deluded husband being waked out of his evening's nap! Now, madam, you may see me in my true light; and assure yourself, whatever might be the abilities of your old usher, you will not fare the worse for going further. If he was a benefit to you, I shall be a blessing.

You may judge for yourself, Diego, continued Mergelina, how well I took it of the duenna, that she laid herself open so frankly. I had taken her

virtue to be of the impenetrable cast. Look you, now, how much women are liable to be scandalized. But her character of plain dealing won my heart at once. I threw my arms about her neck in a rapture, which bespoke my warm and tender feelings at the thoughts of such a mother-abbess. I gave her carte blanche of all my private thoughts, and put in for a speedy tête-à-tête with your own dear self. She met me on my own ground. This very morning she engaged the old woman who spoke to you to take the field: she is an old stager — a veteran in the service of the apothecary's wife. But the best of the joke in this comedy, added she, in a paroxysm of laughter, is that Melancia, on my assurance that my husband's habit is to pass the night without stirring, is gone to bed by his side, and drones out my useless office at this moment. So much the worse, madam, said I then to Mergelina; your device is more plausible than profitable. Your husband is very likely to wake, and discover the fraud. He will not discover anything about it, replied she with no little urgency; set your heart at rest about that, and let not an empty fear poison the fountains of a pleasure which ought to drown every vulgar and earthly consideration in the arms of a young lady who is yours forever and ever.

The old doctor's help-mate, finding that her assurances had little effect upon my courage, left no stone unturned to put me in heart again; and she had so many encouraging ways with her, that a very coward must have plucked up a little. My thoughts were all with Jupiter and Alcmena; but at the very mo-

ment that the urchin Cupid, with his train of smiles and antics, was weaving a garland to compliment the crisis of our endeavors, we were stopped in our career by an importunate knocking at the street door. In a moment, away flew love, and all his covey, like game at the report of a fowling-piece. Mergelina popped me, like an article of household furniture, under the hall table, blew out the lamp, and, by previous agreement with her governess, in the event of so unlucky an accident, placed herself at the door of her husband's bedchamber. In the meantime, the knocking continued with reiterated violence, till the whole house resounded. The physician awoke suddenly, and called Melancia. The duenna flung herself out of bed, though the doctor, taking her for his wife, begged of her not to disturb herself. She ran to her mistress, who, catching hold of her in the dark, began calling Melancia! and told her to go and see who was at the door. Madam, answered the directress, here I am at your service, go to bed again if you please; we shall soon know who it is. During this parley, Mergelina, having undressed, got into bed to the doctor, who had not the least suspicion of the farce that was playing. To be sure the stage was darkened, and the actresses had very little occasion for a prompter; one of them was familiar with the boards, and the other only wanted a rehearsal or two to be perfect in her part.

The duenna, in her night gown, made her appearance soon after, with a candle in her hand. Good doctor, said she to her master, have the goodness to

get up. Our neighbor Fernandez de Buendia, the bookseller, is in an apoplectic fit: you are sent for; time presses. The physician got on his clothes as fast as he could, and went out. His wife, in her bed gown, came into the hall with the duenna. They dragged me from under the table more dead than alive. You have nothing to fear, Diego, said Mergelina; put yourself in proper order. At the same time she told me how things were in two words. She had half a mind to renew our amorous intercourse; but the directress knew better. Madam, said she, your husband may possibly be too late to help the bookseller to the other world, and then he will return immediately. Besides, added she, observing me benumbed with fright, it would be all lost labor upon this poor youth! He is not in a condition to answer your demands. You had better send him home, and defer the debate till to-morrow evening. Donna Mergelina was sorry for the delay, as well knowing that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush; and I flatter myself she was disappointed at not putting a cuckold's nightcap on the doctor's head.

As for me, less grieved at having drawn a blank in the lottery of love, than rejoiced at getting my neck out of an halter, I returned to my master's, where I passed the remainder of the night in moralizing on the scene I had left. For some time, I was in doubt whether to keep my appointment on the following evening. I thought it was a foolish business from first to last; but the devil, who is always lurking for his prey, or rather taking possession of

us as his lawful property, whispered in my ear that I should be a great fool to pack up my alls when the prize was falling into my hands. Mergelina, too, with opening and unfathomable charms! The exquisite pleasures that awaited me! I determined to stick to my text; and promising myself a larger share of self-possession, took my station the next evening, at the doctor's door, between eleven and twelve, in a most spirit-stirring humor. The heavens were completely darkened — not a star to prate of my whereabout. I mewed twice or thrice to give warning of my being in the street; and, as no one answered my signal, I was not satisfied with going over the old ground, but ran up and down the cat's gamut from bass to treble, and from treble to bass, just as I used to sol-fa with a shepherd of Olmédo. I tuned my fundamental bass so musically, that a neighbor on his return home, taking me for one of those animals whose mewings I counterfeited, picked up an unlucky flint lying at his feet, and threw it at me with all his force, saying, The devil fetch that tom cat! I received the blow on my head, and was so stunned for the moment, that I was very near falling backwards. I found the skin was broken. This was enough in all conscience, to give me a surfeit of gallantry; so that, my passion oozing out with my blood, I made the best of my way homewards, where I rendered night hideous by my howling, and knocked all the family up. My master probed my wound, and played the true surgeon on it; he pronounced the consequences to be

uncertain. He did all he could to make them certain; but flesh will heal in spite of the faculty; and there was not a scar remaining in three weeks. During all this time, I heard not a word from Mergelina. The probability is that Dame Melancia, to wean her impure thoughts from me, engaged her in some better sport. However, I did not concern myself about the matter; but left Madrid, to continue my tour of Spain, as soon as I found myself perfectly recovered.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MEETING OF GIL BLAS AND HIS COMPANION WITH A MAN SOAKING CRUSTS OF BREAD AT A SPRING, AND THE PARTICULARS OF THEIR CONVERSATION.

Signor Diego de la Fuenta related some other adventures which had since happened to him; but they were so little worthy of preservation, that I shall pass them by in silence. Yet there was no getting rid of the recital, which was tedious enough: it lasted as far as Ponte de Duero. We halted in that town the remainder of the day. Our commons at the inn consisted of a vegetable soup, and a roast hare, whose genus and species we took especial pains to verify. At daybreak on the following morning we resumed our journey, after having replenished our flask with some very tolerable wine, and our wallet with some pieces of bread, and half the hare

we had left for supper. When we had gone about two leagues, we waxed hungry; and, espying, at about two hundred yards from the high road, some spreading trees which threw an agreeable shade over the plain, we made up to the spot, and rested on our arms. There we met with a man from seven to eight and twenty, who was dipping crusts of bread into a spring. He had a long sword lying by him on the grass, with a soldier's knapsack, of which he had eased his shoulders. We thought his air and person better than his attire. We accosted him with civility, and he returned our salutation. He then offered us his crusts, and asked, with a smile, if we would take pot-luck with him. We answered in the affirmative, provided he had no objection to our clubbing our own breakfast, by way of making the meal more substantial. He agreed to it with the utmost readiness, and we immediately produced our provisions, which were not unacceptable to the stranger. What is all this, gentlemen, exclaimed he, in a transport of joy; here is ammunition for an army! By your forecast, you must be commissaries or quartermasters. I do not travel with so much contrivance, for my part; but depend a good deal on the chances of the road. At the same time, though appearances may be against me, I can say, without vanity, that I sometimes make a very brilliant figure in the world. Would you believe that princely honors are commonly bestowed on me, and that I have guards in attendance? I comprehend you, said Diego; you mean to tell us, you are

a player. You guess right, replied the other; I have been an actor for these fifteen years at least. From my very infancy, I was sent on the boards in children's parts. To deal freely, rejoined the barber, shaking his head, I do not believe a word of it. I know the players; those gentry do not travel on foot, like you, nor do they mess with St. Anthony. I doubt whether you are anything better than a candle-snuffer. You may, quoth the son of Thespis, think of me as you please; but my parts, for all that, are in the first line: I play the lovers. If that be the case, said my companion, I wish you much joy, and am delighted that Signor Gil Blas and myself have the honor of breakfasting with so eminent a character.

We then began to pick up our crumbs, and to gnaw the precious relics of the hare, bestowing such hearty smacks upon the bottle, as to empty it very shortly. We were all three so deeply engaged in the great affair of eating, that we said very little till we had finished, when we resumed our conversation. I wonder, said the barber to the player, that you should be so much out at elbows. For a theatrical hero, you have but a needy exterior! I beg pardon if I speak rather freely. Rather freely! exclaimed the actor; ah! by my troth, you are not yet acquainted with Melchior Zapata. Heaven be praised! I have no mind to see things in a wrong light. You do me a pleasure by speaking so confidently, for I love to unbosom myself without reserve. I honestly own I am not rich. Here, pursued he, showing us

his doublet lined with playbills, this is the common stuff which serves me for linings; and if you are curious to see my wardrobe, you shall not be disappointed. At the same time he took out of his knapsack a dress, laced with tarnished frippery; a shabby head-dress for a hero, with an old plume of feathers; silk stockings full of holes; and red morocco shoes, a great deal the worse for wear. You see, said he again, that I am very little better than a beggar. That is astonishing, replied Diego; then you have neither wife nor daughter? I have a very handsome young wife, rejoined Zapata, and yet I might just as well be without her. Look with awe on the lowering aspect of my horoscope. I married a personable actress, in the hope that she would not let me die of hunger; and, to my cost, she is cursed with incorruptible chastity. Who the devil would not have been taken in as well as myself? There was but one virtuous princess in a whole strolling company, and she, plague take her! fell into my hands. It was throwing with bad luck most undoubtedly, said the barber. But then, why did not you look out for an actress in the regular theatre at Madrid? You would have been sure of your mark. You are perfectly in the right, replied the stroller; but the mischief is, we underlings dare not raise our thoughts to those illustrious heroines. It is as much as an actor of the prince's company can venture on; nay, some of them are obliged to match with citizens' daughters. Happily for our fraternity, citizens' daughters, nowadays, contract theatrical notions;

and you may often meet with characters among them, to the full as eccentric as any bona roba of the green-room.

Well! but have you never thought, said my fellow traveller, of getting an engagement in that company? Is it necessary to be a Roscius for that purpose? That is very well of you! replied Melchior, you are a wag, with your Roscius! There are twenty performers. Ask the town what it thinks of them, and you will hear a pretty character of their acting. More than half of them deserve to carry a porter's knot. Yet, for all that, it is no easy matter to get upon the boards. Bribery or interest must make up for the defect of talent. I ought to know what I say, since my debut at Madrid, where I was hissed and cat-called as if the devil had got among the grimalkins, though I ought to have been received with thunders of applause; for I whined, ranted, and offered all sorts of violence to nature's modesty: nay, I went so far as to clench my fist at the heroine of the piece; in a word, I adopted the conceptions of all the great performers; and yet that same audience condemned, by bell, book, and candle, in me, what was thought to be the first style of playing in them. Such is the force of prejudice! So that, being no favorite with the pit, and not having wherewithal to insinuate myself into the good graces of the manager, I am on my return to Zamora. There we shall all huddle together again, my wife and my fellow-comedians, who are making but little of the business. I wish we may not be obliged to beg our

way out of town — a catastrophe of too frequent occurrence!

At these words, up rose the stage-struck hero, slung across him his knapsack and his sword, and made his exit with due theatric pomp: Farewell, gentlemen; may all the gods shower all their bounties on your heads! And you, answered Diego with corresponding emphasis, may you find your wife at Zamora, softened down in her relentless virtue, and in comfortable keeping. No sooner had Signor Zapata turned upon his heel, than he began gesticulating and spouting as he went along. The barber and myself immediately began hissing, to remind him of his first appearance at Madrid. The goose grated harsh upon his tympanum; he took it for a repetition of signals from his old friends. But, looking behind him, and seeing that we were diverting ourselves at his expense, far from taking offence at this merry conceit of ours, he joined with good humor in the joke, and went his way, laughing as hard as he could. On our part, we returned the compliment in kind. After this, we got again into the high road, and pursued our journey.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MEETING OF DIEGO WITH HIS FAMILY; THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIFE; GREAT REJOICING ON THE OCCASION; THE PARTING SCENE BETWEEN HIM AND GIL BLAS.

We stopped for the night at a little village between Moyados and Valpuesta; I have forgotten the name: and the next morning, about eleven, we reached the plain of Olmédo. Signor Gil Blas, said my companion, behold my native place. So natural are these local attachments, that I can hardly contain myself at the sight of it. Signor Diego, answered I, a man of so patriotic a soul as you profess to be, might, methinks, have been a little more florid in his descriptions. Olmédo looks like a city at this distance, and you called it a village; it cannot be any thing less than a corporate town. I beg its township's pardon, replied the barber; but you are to know that after Madrid, Toledo, Saragossa, and all the other large cities I have passed through in my tour of Spain, these little ones are mere villages to me. As we got further on the plain, there appeared to be a great concourse of people about Olmédo: so that, when we were near enough to distinguish objects, we were in no want of food for speculation.

There were three tents pitched at some distance from each other; and, hard-by, a bevy of cooks and scullions preparing an entertainment. Here, a party

was laying covers on long tables set out under the tents; there, a detachment was crowning the pitchers of Tellus with the gifts of Bacchus. The right wing was making the pots boil, the left was turning the spits and basting the meat. But what caught my attention more than all the rest, was a temporary stage of respectable dimensions. It was furnished with pasteboard scenes, painted in a tawdry style, and the proscenium was decorated with Greek and Latin mottoes. No sooner did the barber spy out these inscriptions, than he said to me: All these Greek words smell strongly of my uncle Thomas's lamp. I would lay a wager he has a hand in them, for, between ourselves, he is a man of parts and learning. He knows all the classics by heart. If he would keep them to himself it would be very well, but he is always quoting them in company, and that people do not like. But then, to be sure, he has a right, because this uncle of mine has translated ever so many of the Latin poets and hard Greek authors with his own hand and pen. He has got all antiquity at his finger's ends, as you may know by his ingenious and profound criticisms. If it had not been for him, we might never have learned that the Athenian schoolboys cried when they were flogged; we owe that fact in the history of education to his fundamental knowledge of the subject.

After my fellow-traveller and myself had looked about us, we had a mind to inquire what these preparations were for. Going about on the hunt, Diego recognized in the manager, Signor Thomas de la

Fuenta, to whom we made up with great eagerness. The schoolmaster did not recollect the young barber at first, such a difference had ten years made. But when convinced of his being his own flesh and blood, he gave him a cordial embrace, and said, with much appearance of kindness, Ah! here you are, Diego, my dear nephew, here you are, restored after your wanderings to your native land. You come to revisit your household gods, your Penates; and heaven delivers you back, safe and sound, into the bosom of your family. O, happy day! happy in all the proportions of arithmetic! A day worthy to be marked with a white stone, and inserted among the Fasti! We have annals in abundance for you, my friend; your uncle Pedro, the poetaster, has fallen a sacrifice at the shrine of Pluto: to speak to the comprehension of the vulgar, he has been dead these three months. That miser, in his lifetime, was afraid of wanting necessaries — *Argenti pallebat amore.* Though the great were heaping wealth upon his head, his annual expenditure did not amount to ten pistoles. He had but one miserable attendant, and him he starved. This crazy fellow, more wrong-headed than the Grecian Aristippus, who ordered his slaves to leave all their costly baggage in the heart of Lybia, as an incumbrance on their march, heaped up all the gold and silver he could scrape together. And to what end? for those very heirs whom he refused to acknowledge. He died worth thirty thousand ducats, shared between your father, your uncle Bertrand, and myself. We shall be able

to do very well for our children. My brother Nicholas has already married off your sister Theresa to the son of a magistrate in this place — *Connubio junxit stabili propriamque dicavit.* These very hymeneals, greeted auspiciously by all the nuptial powers, have we been celebrating for these two days with all this pomp and luxury. These tents in the plain are of our pitching. Pedro's three heirs have each a booth of his own, and we defray the expenses of the day alternately. I wish you had come sooner, you might have seen the whole progress of our festivities. The day before yesterday — the wedding-day — your father gave his treat. It was a superb entertainment, succeeded by running at the ring. Your uncle, the mercer, regaled us, yesterday, with a fête champêtre, and paid the piper handsomely. There were ten of the best grown boys, and ten young girls, dressed out in pastoral weeds; all the frippery in his shop was brought out to prank them up. This assemblage of Ganymedes and Houris ran through all the mazes of the dance, and warbled forth a thousand tender and spirit-stirring lays. And yet, though nothing was ever more genteel, the effect was not thought striking; but that must be owing to the bad taste of the spectators— the simplicity of pastoral is lost upon the present age.

To-day, the wheels are greased by your humble servant, and I mean to present the burgesses of Olmédo with a pageant of my own invention — *Finis coronabit opus.* I have got a stage erected, on which, God willing, shall be represented by my

scholars a piece of my own composing, entitled and called, *The Amusements of Muley Bugentuf, King of Morocco.* It will be played to perfection, for my pupils declaim like the players of Madrid. They are lads of family at Penafiel and Segovia, boarders with me. They know how to touch the passions! To be sure they have rehearsed under my tuition; their emphasis will seem as if struck in the mint of their master — *ut ita dicam.* With respect to the piece I shall not say a word about it — you shall be taken by surprise. I shall simply state that it must produce a deep impression on the audience. It is one of those tragic subjects which harrow up the soul, by images of death presented to the senses in all their fearful forms. I am of Aristotle's mind, terror is a principal engine. O! if I had written for the stage, I would have introduced none but bloody tyrants, and death-dispensing heroes. Not all the perfumes of Arabia should have sweetened this blood-polluted hand; I would have been up to my elbows in gore. There would have been tragedy with a vengeance; principal characters! ay, guards and attendants should all have been sprawling together. I would have butchered every man of them, and the prompter into the bargain. In a word, I refine upon Aristotle, and border on the horrible — that is my taste. These plays to tear a cat in, are the only things for popularity; the actors live merrily on their own dying speeches, and the authors roll in luxury on the devastation of mankind.

Just as this harangue was over, we saw a great crowd of both sexes coming out of town into the plain. Who should it be, but the new-married couple, attended by their families and friends, with ten or twelve musicians in the van, producing a most obstreperous din of harmony. We went up to them, and Diego introduced himself. Peals of congratulation were immediately rung through the assembly, and every one was eager to shake him by the hand. He had enough upon his shoulders to receive all their fraternal embraces. Relations and strangers, all were for having a pull at him. At length his father said, You are welcome, Diego. You find your kinsmen living upon the fat of the land, my friend. I shall say no more at present: a nod is as good as a wink. Meanwhile the company went forward upon the plain, took their stations under the tents, and sat down to table. I kept close to my companion, and we both dined with the happy couple, who appeared to be suitably matched. The meal was not soon over, for the schoolmaster had the vanity to give three courses, for the purpose of cutting out his brothers, who had not been so magnificent in their hospitalities.

After the banquet, all the guests expressed their longings to see Signor Thomas's play, not doubting but the performance of so extraordinary a genius would deserve all their ears. We came in front of the stage; the musicians had taken possession of the orchestra, for the overture and act-tunes. While every one was waiting in profound silence for the

rising of the curtain, the actors appeared on the boards; and the author, with the piece in his hand, sat down at the wing, in the prompter's place. Well might he call it a tragedy; for, in the first act, the King of Morocco, by way of diversion, shot an hundred Moorish slaves with arrows; in the second, he beheaded thirty Portuguese officers, taken prisoners by one of his captains; and, in the third and last, this monarch, surfeited with long-indulged libertinism, set fire with his own hands to the seraglio where his wives were confined, and reduced it to ashes with its inhabitants. The Moorish slaves, as well as the Portuguese officers, were puppets on a very curious construction; and the palace, built of pasteboard, looked very naturally in flames by means of an artificial firework. This conflagration, accompanied by a thousand piercing cries, issuing from the ruins, concluded the piece, and the curtain dropped upon this amiable entertainment. The whole plain resounded with the applause of this fine tragedy; which spoke for the good taste of the poet, and proved that he knew where to look out for a subject.

I did not suppose there was any thing more to be seen after *The Amusements of Muley Bugentuf;* but I was mistaken. Kettle-drums and trumpets announced a new exhibition — the distribution of prizes — for Thomas de la Fuenta, to give additional solemnity to his olympics, had made all his boys, as well day-scholars as boarders, write exercises; and on this occasion he was to give to those who had

succeeded best, books bought at Segovia out of his own pocket. All at once were brought upon the stage two long forms out of the school, with a press, full of old, worm-eaten books, in fine, new bindings. At this signal, all the actors returned upon the stage, and took their places round Signor Thomas, who looked as big as the head of a college. He had a sheet of paper in his hand, with the names of the successful candidates. This he gave to the King of Morocco, who began calling over the list with an authoritative voice. Each scholar, answering to his name, went humbly to receive a book from the hands of the bum-jerker; after this, he was crowned with laurel, and seated on one of the two benches, to be exposed to the gaze of the admiring company. Yet, desirous as the schoolmaster might be to send the spectators away in good humor, he brought his eggs to a bad market; for, having distributed almost all the prizes to the boarders, according to the usual etiquette of pedagogues, that those who pay most must necessarily be the cleverest fellows, the mammas of certain day-scholars caught fire at this instance of partiality, and fell foul of the disciplinarian thereupon: so that the festival, hitherto so much to the glory of the donor, seemed likely to have ended to the same tune as the carousal of the Lapithæ.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL OF GIL BLAS AT MADRID. HIS FIRST PLACE THERE.

I MADE some stay with the young barber. At my departure, I met with a traveller of Segovia passing through Olmédo. He was returning with four mules from a trading expedition to Valladolid, and took me by way of back carriage. We got acquainted on the road, and he took such a fancy to me that nothing would serve him but I must be his guest at Segovia. He gave me free quarters for two days, and, when he found me determined to leave him for Madrid under convoy of a muleteer, he troubled me with a letter, begging me to deliver it in person according to the superscription, without hinting that it was a letter of recommendation. I was punctual in calling on Signor Matheo Melendez. He was a woollen-draper, living at the gate of the Sun, at the corner of Trunkmaker street. No sooner had he broken the cover and read the contents, than he said, with an air of complacency, Signor Gil Blas, my correspondent, Pedro Palacio, has written to me so pressingly in your favor, that I cannot do otherwise

than offer you a bed at my house; moreover, he desires me to find you a good master, and I undertake the commission with pleasure. I have no doubt of suiting you to a hair.

I embraced the offer of Melendez the more gratefully because my funds were getting much below par; but I was not long a burden on his hospitality. At the week's end, he told me that he had mentioned my name to a gentleman of his acquaintance, who wanted a valet-de-chambre, and, according to present appearances, the place would not be long vacant. In fact, this gentleman happened to make his appearance in the very nick. Sir, said Melendez, pushing me forward, you see before you the young man as by former advice. He is a pupil of honor and integrity. I can answer for him as if he was one of my own family. The gentleman looked at me with attention, said that my face was in my favor, and hired me at once. He has nothing to do but to follow me, added he; I will put him into the routine of his employment. At these words, he wished the tradesman good morning, and took me into the High-street, directly over against St. Philip's church. We went into a very handsome house, of which he occupied one wing; then going up five or six steps, he took me into a room secured by strong double doors, with an iron grate between. From this room we went into another, with a bed and other furniture, rather neat than gaudy.

If my new master had examined me closely, I had all my wits about me as well as he. He was a man

on the wrong side of fifty, with a saturnine and serious air. His temper seemed to be even, and I thought no harm of him. He asked me several questions about my family; and, liking my answers, Gil Blas, said he, I take you to be a very sensible lad, and am well pleased to have you in my service. On your part you shall have no reason to complain. I will give you six rials a day board wages, besides vails. Then I require no great attendance, for I keep no table, but always dine out. You will only have to brush my clothes, and be your own master for the rest of the day. Only take care to be at home early in the evening, and to be in waiting at the door—that is your chief duty. After this lecture, he took six rials out of his purse, and gave them to me as earnest. We then went out, he locked the doors after him, and, taking care of the keys, My friend, said he, you need not go with me, follow the devices of your own heart; but on my return this evening, let me find you on that staircase. With this injunction, he left me to dispose of myself as seemed best in my own eyes.

In good sooth, Gil Blas, said I in a soliloquy, you have got a jewel of a master. What! fall in with an employer to give you six rials a day for wiping off the dust from his clothes, and putting his room to rights in the morning, with the liberty of walking about and taking your pleasure like a schoolboy in the holidays! By my troth! it is a place of ten thousand. No wonder I was in a hurry to get to Madrid, it was doubtless some mysterious boding of

good fortune prepared for me. I spent the day in the streets, diverting myself with gaping at novelties — a busy occupation. In the evening, after supping at an ordinary not far from our house, I squatted myself down in the corner pointed out by my master. He came three quarters of an hour after me, and seemed pleased with my punctuality. Very well, said he, this is right, I like attentive servants. At these words, he opened the doors of his apartment, and closed them upon us again as soon as we got in. As we had no candle, he took his tinder-box, and struck a light. I then helped him to undress. When he was in bed, I lighted, by his order, a lamp in his chimney, and carried the wax-light into the antechamber, where I lay in a press-bed without curtains. He got up the next day between nine and ten o'clock; I brushed his clothes. He paid me my six rials, and sent me packing till the evening. My mysterious master went out himself, too, not without great caution in fastening the doors, and we parted for the remainder of the day.

Such was the course of life, very agreeable to me. The best of the joke was, that I did not know my master's name. Melendez did not know it himself. The gentleman came to his shop now and then, and bought a piece of cloth. My neighbors were as much at a loss as myself; they all assured me that my master was a perfect stranger, though he had lived two years in the ward. He visited no soul in the neighborhood, and some of them, a little given to scandal, concluded him to be no better than he

should be. Suspicions got to be more rife; he was suspected of being a spy of Portugal, and it was thought but fair play to give a hint for my own good. This intimation troubled me. Thought I to myself, should this turn out to be a fact, I stand a chance for seeing the inside of a prison at Madrid. My innocence will be no security; my past ill-usage makes me look on justice with antipathy. Twice have I experienced that if the innocent are not condemned in a lump with the guilty, at least the rights of hospitality are too little regarded in their persons to make it pleasant to pass a summer in the purlieus of the law.

I consulted Melendez in so delicate a conjuncture. He was at a loss how to advise me. Though he could not bring himself to believe that my master was a spy, he had no reason to be confident on the other side of the question. I determined to watch my employer, and to leave him if he turned out to be an enemy of the state; but then prudence and personal comfort required me to be certain of my fact. I began, therefore, to pry into his actions; and, to sound him, Sir, said I one evening while he was undressing, I do not know how one ought to live so as to be secure from reflections. The world is very scurrilous! We, among others, have neighbors not worth a curse. Sad dogs! You have no notion how they talk of us. Do they indeed, Gil Blas, quoth he. Be it so! but what can they say of us, my friend? Ah! truly, replied I, evil tongues never want a whet. Virtue herself furnishes weapons for

her own martyrdom. Our neighbors say that we are dangerous people, that we ought to be looked after by government; in a word, you are taken for a spy of Portugal. In throwing out this hint, I looked hard at my master, just as Alexander squinted at his physician, and pursed up all my penetration to remark upon the effect of my intelligence. There seemed to be a hitch in the muscles of my mysterious lord, altogether in unison with the suspicions of the neighborhood, and he fell into a brown study, which bore no very auspicious interpretation. However, he put a better face on the matter, and said, with sufficient composure: Gil Blas, leave our neighbors to discourse as they please, but let not our repose depend on their judgments. Never mind what they think of us, provided our own consciences do not wince.

Hereupon he went to bed, and I did the like, without knowing what course to take. The next day, just as we were on the point of going out in the morning, we heard a violent knocking at the outer door on the staircase. My master opened the inner, and looked through the grate. A well-dressed man said to him: Please your honor, I am an alguazil, come to inform you that Mr. Corregidor wishes to speak a word with you. What does he want? answered my pattern of secrecy. That is more than I know, sir, replied the alguazil; but you have only to go and wait on him; you will soon be informed. I am his most obedient, quoth my master; I have no business with him. At the tail of this speech, he

banged the inner door; then, after walking up and down a little while, like one who pondered on the discourse of the alguazil, he put my six rials into my hand, and said: Gil Blas, you may go out, my friend; for my part, I shall stay at home a little longer, but have no occasion for you. He made an impression on my mind, by these words, that he was afraid of being taken up, and was, therefore, obliged to remain in his apartments. I left him there; and, to see how far my suspicions were founded, hid myself in a place whence I could see if he went out. I should have had patience to have staid there all the morning, if he had not saved me the trouble. But an hour after, I saw him walk the street with an ease and confidence which dumb-founded my sagacity. Yet far from yielding to these appearances, I mistrusted them; for my verdict went to condemnation. I considered his easy carriage as put on, and his staying at home as a finesse to secure his gold and jewels, when probably he was going to consult his safety by speedy flight. I had no idea of seeing him again, and doubted whether I should attend at his door in the evening; so persuaded was I, that the day would see him on the outside of the city, as his only refuge from impending danger. Yet I kept my appointment; when, to my extreme surprise, my master returned as usual. He went to bed without betraying the least uneasiness, and got up the next morning with the same composure.

Just as he had finished dressing, another knock at the door! My master looked through the grate.

His friend the alguazil was there again, and he asked him what he wanted. Open the door, answered the alguazil; here is Mr. Corregidor. At this dreadful name, my blood froze in my veins. I had a devilish loathing of those gentry since I had passed through their hands, and could have wished myself at that moment an hundred leagues from Madrid. As for my employer, less startled than myself, he opened the door, and received the magistrate respectfully. You see, said the corregidor, that I do not break in upon you with a whole posse: my maxim is to do business in a quiet way. In spite of the ugly reports circulated about you in the city, I think you deserve some little attention. What is your name, and business at Madrid? Sir, answered my master, I am from New Castile, and my title is Don Bernard de Castil Blazo. With respect to my way of life, I lounge about, frequent public places, and take my daily pleasure in a select circle of polite company. Of course you have a handsome fortune! replied the judge. No, sir, interrupted my Mecenas; I have neither annuities, nor lands, nor houses. How do you live then? rejoined the corregidor. I will show you, replied Don Bernard. At the same time he lifted up a part of the hangings, before a door I had not observed, opened that and one beyond, then took the magistrate into a closet containing a large chest chuck-full of gold.

Sir, said he, again, you know that the Spaniards are proverbially indolent; yet, whatever may be their general dislike to labor, I may compliment myself on

bettering the example. I have a stock of laziness, which disqualifies me for all exertion. If I had a mind to puff my vices into virtues, I might call this sloth of mine a philosophical indifference, the work of a mind weaned from all that worldlings court with so much ardor; but I will frankly own myself constitutionally lazy, and so lazy, that, rather than work for my subsistence, I would lay myself down and starve. Therefore, to lead a life befitting my fancy, not to have the trouble of looking after my affairs, and, above all, to do without a steward, I have converted all my patrimony, consisting of several considerable estates, into ready money. In this chest there are fifty thousand ducats; more than enough for the remainder of my days, should I live to be an hundred! For I do not spend a thousand a year, and am already more than fifty years old. I have no fears, therefore, for futurity, since I am not addicted, Heaven be praised! to any one of the three things which usually ruin men. I care little for the pleasures of the table; I only play for my amusement; and I have given up women. There is no chance of my being reckoned, in my old age, among those libidinous gray birds to whom jilts sell their favors by troy weight,

You are a happy man! said the corregidor. They are in the wrong to suspect you of being a spy; that office is quite out of character for a man like you. Take your own course, Don Bernard: continue to live as you like. Far from disturbing your peace, I declare myself your protector; I request your friendship, and pledge my own. Ah! sir, ex-

claimed my master, thrilled with these kind expressions, I accept, with equal joy and gratitude, your precious offer. In giving me your friendship, you augment my wealth, and carry my happiness to its height. After this conversation, which the alguazil and myself heard from the closet-door, the corregidor took his leave of Don Bernard, who could not do enough to express his sense of the obligation. On my part, mimicking my master in doing the honors of the house, I overburdened the alguazil with civilities. I made him a thousand low bows, though I felt for him in my sleeve the contempt and hatred which every honest man naturally entertains for an alguazil.

CHAPTER II.

THE ASTONISHMENT OF GIL BLAS AT MEETING CAPTAIN ROLANDO IN MADRID, AND THAT ROBBER'S CURIOUS NARRATIVE.

Don Bernard de Castil Blazo, having attended the corregidor to the street, returned in a hurry to fasten his strong-box, and all the doors which secured it. We then went out, both of us well satisfied; he at having acquired a friend in power, and myself at finding my six rials a day secured to me. The desire of relating this adventure to Melendez made me bend my steps towards his house; but, near my journey's end, whom should I meet but Captain

Rolando! My surprise was extreme, and I could not help quaking at the sight of him. He recollected me at once, accosted me gravely, and, still keeping up his tone of superiority, ordered me to follow him. I tremblingly obeyed, saying inwardly, Alas! he means, doubtless, to make me pay my debts! Whither will he lead me? There may perhaps be some subterraneous retreat in this city. Plague take it! If I thought so, I would soon show him I have not got the gout. I walked therefore behind him, carefully looking out where he might stop, with the pious design of putting my best leg foremost, if there was anything in the shape of a trap-door.

Rolando soon dispersed my alarms. He went into a well-frequented tavern; I followed him. He called for the best wine, and ordered dinner. While it was getting ready, we went into a private room, where the captain addressed me as follows: You may well be astonished, Gil Blas, to renew your acquaintance with your old commander; and you will be still more so, when you have heard my tale. The day I left you in the cave, and went with my troop to Mansilla, for the purpose of selling the mules and horses we had taken the evening before, we met the son of the corregidor of Leon, attended by four men on horseback, well armed, following his carriage. Two of his people we made to bite the dust, and the other two ran away. On this, the coachman, alarmed for his master, cried out to us in a tone of supplication, Alas! my dear gentlemen,

in God's name, do not kill the only son of his worship, the corregidor of Leon. These words were far from softening my comrades; on the contrary, their fury knew no bounds. Good folks, said one of them, let not the son of a mortal enemy to men like us escape our vengeance. How many ornaments of our profession has his father cut off in their prime! Let us repay his cruelty with interest, and sacrifice this victim to their offended ghosts. The whole troop applauded the fineness of this feeling, and my lieutenant himself was preparing to act as high priest at this unhallowed altar, when I interdicted the rites. Stop! said I; why shed blood without occasion? Let us rest contented with the youth's purse. As he makes no resistance, it would be against the laws of war to cut his throat. Besides, he is not answerable for his father's misdeeds; nay, his father only does his duty in condemning us to death, as we do ours in rifling travellers.

Thus did I plead for the corregidor's son, and my intercession was not unavailing. We only took every farthing of his money, and carried off with us the horses of the two men whom we had slain. These we sold with the rest at Mansilla. Thence we returned to the cavern, where we arrived the following morning, a little before daybreak. We were not a little surprised to find the trap open, and still more so, when we found Leonarda hand-cuffed in the kitchen. She unravelled the mystery in two words. We wondered how you could have overreached us; no one could have thought you capable

of serving us such a trick, and we forgave the effect for the merit of the invention. As soon as we had released our kitchen wench, I gave orders for a good luncheon. In the mean time we went to look after our horses in the stable, where the old negro, who had been left to himself for four and twenty hours, was at the last gasp. We did all we could for his relief, but he was too far gone; indeed, so much reduced, that, in spite of our endeavors, we left the poor devil on the threshold of another world. It was very sad; but it did not spoil our appetites; and, after an abundant breakfast, we retired to our chambers, and slept away the whole day. On our awaking, Leonarda apprized us that Domingo had paid the debt of nature. We carried him to the charnel-house, where you may recollect to have lodged, and there performed his obsequies, just as if he had been one of our own order.

Five or six days afterwards, it fell out that, one morning on a sally, we encountered three companies of the Holy Brotherhood, on the outskirts of the wood. They seemed waiting to attack us. We perceived but one troop at first. These we despised, though superior in number to our party, and rushed forward to the onset. But, while we were at loggerheads with the first, the two others in ambuscade came thundering down upon us; so that our valor was of no use. There was no withstanding such a host of enemies. Our lieutenant and two of our gang gave up the ghost on this occasion. As for the two others and myself, we were so closely

pressed and hemmed in, as to be taken prisoners; and, while two detachments convoyed us to Leon, the third went to destroy our retreat. How it was discovered, I will briefly tell you. A peasant of Luceno, crossing the forest, on his way home, by chance espied the trap-door of our subterraneous residence, which a certain young runaway had not shut down after him, for it was precisely the day when you took yourself off with the lady. He had a violent suspicion of its being our abode, without having the courage to go in. It was enough to mark the adjacent parts, by lightly peeling, with his knife, bark from the nearest trees, and so on from distance to distance, till he was quite out of the wood. He then betook himself to Leon, with this grand discovery for the corregidor, who was so much the better pleased, as his son had been robbed by our gang. This magistrate collected together three companies, to lay hold of us, and the peasant showed them the way.

My arrival in the town of Leon was as good as that of a wild beast to the inhabitants. Even though I had been a Portuguese general, made prisoner of war, the people could not have been more anxious to see me. There he goes! was the cry: that is he, the famous captain, the terror of these parts! It would serve him right to tear him, piecemeal, with pincers, and make his comrades join in the chorus. To the corregidor! was the universal cry; and his worship began insulting me. So, so! said he, scoundrel as you are, the powers of

justice, worn to a thread with your past irregularities, hand over the task of punishment to me, as their delegate. Sir, answered I, great as my crimes may have been, at least, the death of your only son is not to be laid at my door. His life was saved by me; you owe me some acknowledgment on that score. O! wretch, exclaimed he, there are no measures to be kept with people of your description. And, though it were my wish to save you, my sacred office would not allow me to indulge my feelings. Having spoken to this effect, he committed us to a dungeon, where my companions had no time to lament their hard fate. They got out of confinement, at the end of three days, to expatiate, with tragic energy, at the place of execution. For my part, I took up my quarters in limbo, for three complete weeks. My punishment, seemingly, was deferred, only to render it more terrible; and I was looking out for some refinement on the ordinary course of criminal justice, when the corregidor, having summoned me before him, said, Give ear to your sentence. You are free. Had it not been for you, my only son would have been assassinated on the highway. As a father, my gratitude was due for this service; but not being competent to acquit you in my capacity of a magistrate, I have written up to court in your favor; have solicited your pardon, and have obtained it. Go, then, whithersoever it may seem good to you. But take my advice; profit by this lucky escape. Look to your paths, and give up the trade of a highwayman for good and all.

I was deeply impressed by this advice, and took my departure for Madrid, in the firm determination of mending my ways, and living quietly in that city. There I found my father and mother dead, and what they left behind them in the hands of an old kinsman, who administered duly and truly, as all trustees of course do. I saved three thousand ducats out of the fire — scarcely a quarter of what I was entitled to. But where was the remedy? There was no standing to the quirks and evasions of the law. Just to be doing something, I have purchased an alguazil's place. My colleagues would have set their faces against my admission, for the honor of the cloth, had they known my history. Luckily they did not, or at least affected not to know it, which was just as good as the reality; for, in that illustrious body, it is the bounden duty and interest of every member to wear a mask. The pot cannot call the kettle hard names, thank heaven. The devil would have no great catch in the best of us. And yet, my friend, I could willingly unbosom myself to you without disguise. My present occupation is much against the grain; it requires too circumspect and too mysterious a conduct; there is nothing to be done but by underhand dealings, gravity, and cunning. O! for my first trade! The new one is safer, to be sure; but there is more fun in the other, and liberty is my motto. I feel disposed to get rid of my office, and to set out, some sunshiny morning, for the mountains at the source of the Tagus. I know of a retreat thereabouts, inhabited by a numerous gang,

composed chiefly of Catalonians; when I have said that, I need say no more. If you will go along with me, we will swell the number of those heroes. I shall be second in command. To make your footing respectable at once, I will swear that you have fought ten times by my side. Your valor shall mount to the very skies. I will tell more good of you than a commander-in-chief of a favorite officer. I will not say a word about the runaway trick; that would render you suspected of turning—nose therefore, mum is the word. What say you to it? Are you ready to set off? I am impatient to know your mind.

Every one to his own fancy, said I, then, to Rolando; you were born for bold exploits, and your friend for a serene and quiet life. I understand you, interrupted he; the lady whom love induced you to carry off, still preserves her influence over your heart, and you doubtless lead with her that serene life of which you are enamoured. Own the truth, Master Gil Blas; she is become a thing of your own, and you are both living on the pistoles carried off from the subterraneous retreat. I told him he was mistaken; and, to set him right, related the lady's adventures and my own, while we sat at dinner. When our meal was finished, he led back to the subject of the Catalonians, and attempted once more to engage me in his project. But finding me inflexible, he looked at me with a terrific frown, and said seriously, Since you are dastard enough to prefer your servile condition to the honor of enlisting in a

troop of brave fellows, I turn you adrift to your own grovelling inclinations. But mark me well: a lapse may be fatal. Forget our meeting of to-day, and never prate about me to any living soul; for if I catch you bandying about my name in your idle talk . . . . you know my ways, I need say no more. With these words, he called for the landlord, paid the reckoning, and we rose from the table to go away.

CHAPTER III.

GIL BLAS IS DISMISSED BY DON BERNARD DE CASTIL BLAZO, AND ENTERS INTO THE SERVICE OF A BEAU.

As we were coming out of the tavern, and taking our leave, my master was passing along the street. He saw me, and I observed him look more than once at the captain. I had no doubt but he was surprised at meeting me in such company. It is certain that Rolando's physiognomy and air were not much in favor of moral qualities. He was a gigantic fellow, with a long face, a parrot's beak, and a very rascally contour, without being absolutely ugly.

I was not mistaken in my guess. In the evening, I found Don Bernard harping on the captain's figure, and charmingly disposed to believe all the fine things I could have said of him, if my tongue had not been tied. Gil Blas, said he, who is that great shark I saw with you awhile ago? I told him it was an

alguazil, and thought to have got off with that answer; but he returned to the charge; and observing my confusion, from the remembrance of the threats used by Rolando, broke off the conversation abruptly, and went to bed. The next morning, when I had performed my ordinary duties, he counted me over six ducats instead of six rials, and said, Here, my friend, this is what I give you for your services up to this day. Go and look out for another place. A servant keeping such high company is too much for me. I bethought myself of saying, in my own defence, that I had known that alguazil, by having prescribed for him at Valladolid, while I was practising medicine. Very good, replied my master; the shift is ingenious enough; you might have thought of it last night, and not have looked so foolish. Sir, rejoined I, in good truth, prudence kept me silent, and gave to my reserve the aspect of guilt. Undoubtedly, resumed he, tapping me softly on the shoulder, it was carrying prudence very far, even to the confines of cunning. Go, lad; I have no farther occasion for your services.

I went immediately to acquaint Melendez with the bad news, who told me, for my comfort, that he would engage to procure me a better berth. Indeed, some days after, he said, Gil Blas, my friend, you have no notion of the good luck in store for you. You will have the most agreeable post in the world. I am going to settle you with Don Matthias de Silva. He is a man of the first fashion—one of those

young noblemen commonly distinguished by the appellation of beaus. I have the honor of his custom. He takes up goods of me, on tick, indeed; but these great men are good pay in the long run: they often marry rich heiresses and then old scores are wiped off; or, should that fail, a tradesman who understands his business, puts such a price upon his articles, that if three fourths of his debts are bad, he is no loser. Don Matthias's steward is my intimate friend. Let us go and look for him. It will be for him to present you to his master; and you may rely upon it, that, for my sake, he will treat you with high consideration.

As we were on our way to Don Matthias's house, this honest shopkeeper said, It is fit, methinks, that you should be let into the steward's character. His name is Gregorio Rodriguez. Between ourselves, he is a man of low birth, with a talent for intrigue, in which vocation he has labored, till a stewardship in two distressed families completed their ruin, and made his fortune. I give you notice, that his vanity is excessive; he loves to see the under-servants creeping and crawling at his feet. It is with him they must make interest, if they have any favor to beg of their master; for, should they happen to obtain it without his interference, he has always some shift or other at hand to get the boon revoked, or, at least, render it of no avail. Regulate your conduct on this hint, Gil Blas; pay court to Signor Rodriguez in preference to your master himself, and leave no stone unturned to get into his good graces.

His friendship will be of material service to you. He will pay your wages to the day; and, if you have management enough to worm yourself into his confidence, you may chance to pick up some of the fragments which fall from his table. There are enough for a hungrier dog than you! Don Matthias is a young nobleman, with no thought to throw away but on his pleasures, nor the slightest suspicion how his own affairs are going on. What a house for a steward who knows how to be a steward!

When we get to our journey's end, we asked to speak with Signor Rodriguez. We were told that we should find him in his own apartment. There he was, sure enough, and with him a clownish sort of fellow, holding a blue bag, full of money. The steward, looking more wan and yellow than a girl in a hurry for a husband, ran up to Melendez with open arms; the draper was not behind-hand with him, and they each hugged the other, with a show of friendship, at least, as much indebted to art, as to nature, for its plausible effect. After this, the next question was about me. Rodriguez examined me from top to toe; saying, very civilly at the same time, that I was just such an one as Don Matthias wanted, and that he would with pleasure, take upon himself to present me to that nobleman. Thereupon, Melendez gave him to understand how deeply he was interested in my behalf. He begged the steward to take me under his protection; and, leaving me with him, after plenty of compliments,

withdrew. As soon as he was gone out, Rodriguez said, I will introduce you to my master the moment I have dispatched this honest husbandman. He called the countryman to him forthwith, and, taking his bag, Talego, said he, let us see if the five hundred pistoles are all right. He counted over the money himself. As the sum was found to be exact, the countryman took a receipt, and went away. The cash was put back again into the bag. It was my turn next to be attended to. We may now, said my new patron, go to my master's levee. He usually gets up about noon; it is now near one o'clock, and must be daylight in his apartment.

Don Matthias had, indeed, just risen. He was still in his morning-gown, kicking his heels in a great chair, with a leg tossed over one of the elbows, swinging backwards and forwards, and manufacturing his own snuff. His conversation was addressed to a footman in waiting, who officiated as a temporary valet-de-chambre. My lord, said the steward, here is a young man, whom I take the liberty of presenting to your lordship, in the place of him you discharged the day before yesterday. Your draper, Melendez, has given him a character; he undertakes for his qualifications, and I believe you will be very well pleased with him. That is enough, answered the young nobleman, since he has your recommendation. I adopt him blindfold into my retinue. He is my valet-de-chambre at once; that business is settled. Let us talk of other matters, Rodriguez. You are come just in time. I was going to send for

you. I have a budget of bad news, my dear Rodriguez. I played with ill luck last night: an hundred pistoles in my pocket lost, and two hundred more on credit. You know how indispensable it is for persons of high rank to pay their debts of honor. As for any other, it is no matter when they are paid. Punctuality is all very well between one tradesman and another, but they cannot expect it from one of us. These two hundred pistoles must be raised forthwith, and sent to the Countess de Pedrosa. Sir, quoth the steward, that is sooner said than done. Where, prythee, am I to get such a sum? Threaten as I will, I never touch a maravedi from your tenants. And yet your establishment is to be kept up in style, and I am wearing myself to a thread, in furnishing the ways and means. It is true, that hitherto, Heaven be praised! we have rubbed on; but what witch to conjure for a wind now, I know not; the case is desperate. All this prosing is extremely impertinent, interrupted Don Matthias; this counting-house talk makes me hideously nervous. So, then, Rodriguez, you really think to undertake my reform, and metamorphose me into a plodding manager of my own estate? A very elegant sort of pastime for a man in my station of life; a man of rank and fashion! Grant me patience, replied the steward; at the rate we are driving now, it is easily calculated how soon you will be released from all those cares. You are a very great bore, resumed the young nobleman, rather peevishly; this brutal importunity is downright murder to one's

feelings. I hate loud music; be so good as to let me be ruined *pianissimo*. I tell you I want two hundred pistoles, and I must have them. Why then, said Rodriguez, we must have recourse to the old rascal who has lent you so much already on usurious terms. Have recourse to the devil, if he will do you any good, answered Don Matthias; only let me have two hundred pistoles, and it is the same thing to me how you manage to get them.

While he was uttering these words in a hasty and fretful tone, the steward went out, and Don Antonio Centellés, a young man of quality, came in. What is the matter, my friend? said this last to my master: your atmosphere is overcast; I trace passion in the lines of your countenance. Who can have ruffled that sweet temper? I would lay a wager, it was that booby just gone out. Yes, answered Don Matthias, he is my steward. Every time he comes to speak to me, I am in an agony for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. He rings the changes on the state of my affairs, and tells me that I am spending principal and interest. . . . A beast! He will say next, that I have ruined him into the bargain! My dear fellow, replied Don Antonio, I am exactly in the same situation. My man of business is just such another scarecrow as your steward. When the sneaking scoundrel, after repeated demands, brings me some niggardly supply, it is just as if he was lending me his own. He expostulates most barbarously. Sir, says he, you are going to rack and ruin; there is an execution out

against you. I am obliged to cut him short, and beg him to remonstrate in epitome. The worst of it is, said Don Matthias, that there is no doing without these fellows; they are the penance attached to our elegant indiscretions. Just so, replied Centellés. . . . But listen, pursued he, bursting into a fit of laughter; a pleasant idea has just struck me. Nothing was ever more farcically fancied. We may introduce a *buffo caricato* into our serious opera, and relieve the knell of our departed goods and chattels with a humorous divertisement. The plot is thus: let me try to borrow from your steward whatever you want. You shall do the same with my man of business. Then let them both preach as they please; we shall hearken with the utmost composure. Your steward will come and open his case to me; my man of business will plead the poverty of the land to you. I shall hear of nothing but your extravagance; and you will see your own in mine as in a glass. It will be vastly entertaining.

A thousand brilliant conceits followed this flight of genius, and put the young patricians into high spirits, so that they kept up the ball with vivacity, if not with wit. Their conversation was interrupted by Gregorio Rodriguez, who brought back with him a little, old man, with a bald head. Don Antonio was for moving off. Farewell, Don Matthias, said he, we shall meet again anon. I leave you with these gentlemen; you have, doubtless, some state affairs to discuss in council. O! no, no, answered my master, you had better stop; you will not inter-

rupt us. This warm old gentleman has the moderation to lend me money at twenty per cent. What, at twenty per cent. ! exclaimed Centellés, in a tone of astonishment. In good truth, I wish you joy on being in such hands. I do not come off so cheaply, for my part : I pay through the nose for every farthing I get. My loans are generally raised at double that per cent. There is usury, said the father of the usurious tribe; unconscionable dogs! Where do they expect to go when they die? I do not wonder there is so strong a prejudice against money-lenders. It is the exorbitant profit which some of them derive from their discounts, that brings reproach and ill-will upon us all. If all my brethren of the blue balls were like me, we should not be treated so scurvily; for my part, I only lend, to do my duty towards my neighbor. Ah ! if times were as good now as in my early days, my purse should be at your service as a friend; and even now, in the present distress of the money-market, it goes against the grain to take a poor twenty per cent. But one would think the money was all gone back to the mines whence it came: there is no such thing to be had, and the scarcity compels me to depart a little from the disinterested severity of my benevolence. How much do you want? pursued he, addressing my master. Two hundred pistoles, answered Don Matthias. I have four hundred here in a bag, replied the usurer; it is only to give you half of them. At the same time he drew, from underneath his cloak, a blue bag, looking just like that in which farmer Talego had left five

hundred pistoles with Rodriguez. I was not long in forming my judgment of the matter, and saw plainly that Melendez had not bragged, without reason, of the steward's aptness in the ways of the world. The old man emptied the bag, displayed the cash on a table, and set about counting it. The sight set all my master's extravagant passions in a flame; the sum total proved very striking to his comprehension. Signor Descomulgado, said he to the usurer, I have just made a very sensible reflection: I am a great fool. I only borrow enough to redeem my credit, without thinking of my empty pockets. I should be obliged to give you the trouble of coming again to-morrow. I think, therefore, it will be best to spare your age and infirmities, and ease you of the four hundred at once. My lord, answered the old man, I had destined half of this money to a good licentiate, who lays out the income of his large preferments in those pious and charitable uses for which they were originally given to the clergy, as stewards of the poor, and guides to the young and unwary. In pursuance of this end, it is his great delight to wean young girls from the seductions of a wicked world, and place them in a snug, well-furnished little box of his own, where they may be obnoxious to his ghostly admonitions by day and by night. But, since you have occasion for the whole sum, it is at your disposal. Something by way of security. . . . O! as for security, interrupted Rodriguez, taking a paper out of his pocket, you shall have as good as the bank. Here is a note

which Signor Don Matthias has only just to sign. He makes over five hundred pistoles, due from one of his tenants, Talego, a wealthy yeoman of Mondejar. That is enough, replied the usurer, I never split hairs, but deal upon the square. The steward insinuated a pen between his master's fingers, who signed his name at the bottom of the note, without reading it; and whistled as he signed, for want of thought.

That business settled, the old man took his leave of my noble employer, who shook him cordially by the hand, saying: Till I have the pleasure of seeing you again, good master pounds, shillings, and pence, I am your most devoted, humble servant. I do not know why you should all be lumped together for a set of blood-suckers; you seem to me a necessary link in the chain of well-ordered society. You are as good as a physician to us pecuniary invalids of quality, and keep us alive by artificial restoratives in the last stage of a consumptive purse. You are in the right, exclaimed Centellés. Usurers are a very gentlemanly order in society, and I must not be denied the privilege of paying my compliments to this illustrious specimen, for the sake of his twenty per cent. With this banter, he came up and threw his arms about the old man's neck: and these two overgrown children, for their amusement, began sending him backward and forward between them like a shuttlecock. After they had tossed him about from pillar to post, they suffered him to depart with the steward, who ought to have come in for his share of the game, and for something a little more serious.

When Rodriguez and his stalking-horse had left the room, Don Matthias sent, by the lackey in waiting, half his pistoles to the Countess de Pedrosa, and deposited the other half in a long purse worked with gold and silk, which he usually wore in his pocket. Very well pleased to find himself in cash, he said to Don Antonio, with an air of gayety: What shall we do with ourselves to-day? Let us call a council. That is talking like a statesman, answered Centellés: I am your man; let us ponder gravely. While they were collecting their deliberative wisdom on the course they were to pursue for the day, two other noblemen came in: Don Alexo Segiar and Don Ferdinand de Gamboa; both nearly about my master's age, that is, from eight and twenty to thirty. These four jolly blades began with such hearty salutations, as if they had not met for these ten years. After that, Don Ferdinand, a professed bacchanalian, made his proposals to Don Matthias and Don Antonio: Gentlemen, said he, where do you dine to-day? If you are not engaged, I will take you to a tavern, where you shall quaff celestial liquor. I supped there last night, and did not come away till between five and six this morning. Would to Heaven! exclaimed my master, I had done the same; I should not have lost my money.

For my part, said Centellés, I treated myself yesterday evening with a new amusement, for variety has always its charms for me. Nothing but a change of pleasure can make the dull round of

human life supportable. One of my friends introduced me, neck and heels, to one of those gentry ycleped tax-gatherers, who do the government business and their own at the same time. There was no want of magnificence, good taste, or a well-designed set out table, but I found, in the family itself, a highly seasoned relish of absurdity. The farmer of the revenues, though the most meanly extracted of the whole party, must set up for a great man; and his wife, though hideously ugly, was a goddess in her own estimation, and made a thousand silly speeches, the zest of which was heightened by a Biscayan accent. Add to this, that there were four or five children with their tutor at table. Judge if it must not have been an amusing family party.

As for me, gentlemen, said Don Alexo Segiar, I supped with Arsenia the actress. We were six at table: Arsenia, Florimonde, a coquette of her acquaintance, the Marquis de Zenette, Don Juan de Moncade, and your humble servant. We passed the night in drinking and talking bawdy. What a flow of soul! To be sure, Arsenia and Florimonde are not strong in their upper works; but then they have a facility in their vocation which is more than all the wit in the world. They are the dearest madcaps, gay, romping, and rampant: they are a hundred times better than your modest women of sense and discretion.

CHAPTER IV.

GIL BLAS GETS INTO COMPANY WITH HIS FELLOWS; THEY SHOW HIM A READY ROAD TO THE REPUTATION OF WIT. AND IMPOSE ON HIM A SINGULAR OATH.

THOSE noblemen pursued this strain of conversation, till Don Matthias, about whose person I was fiddling all the while, was ready to go out. He then told me to follow him; and this bevy of fashionables set sail together for the tavern, whither Don Ferdinand de Gamboa proposed to conduct them. I began my march in the rear rank with three other valets; for each of the gentlemen had his own. I remarked, with astonishment, that these three servants copied their masters, and assumed the same follies. I introduced myself as a new comer. They returned my salute in form; and one of them, after having taken measure of me very accurately, said: Brother, I perceive, by your gait, that you have never yet lived with a young nobleman. Alas! no, answered I, neither have I been long in Madrid. So it appears, replied he, you smell strong of the country. You seem timid and embarrassed; there is a hitch in your deportment. But no matter, we will soon wear off all stiffness, take my word for it. Perhaps you think better of me than I deserve, said I. No, resumed he, no; there is no such cub as we cannot lick into shape; assure yourself of that.

This specimen was enough to convince me that I had hearty fellows for my comrades, and that I

could not be in better hands to initiate me into high life below stairs. On our arrival at the tavern, we found an entertainment ready, which Signor Don Ferdinand had been so provident as to order in the morning. Our masters sat down to table, and we arranged ourselves behind their chairs. The conversation was spirited and lively. My ears tingled to hear them. Their humor, their way of thinking, their mode of expression, diverted me. What fire! what sallies of imagination! They appeared like a new order of beings. With the dessert, we sat before them a great choice of the best wines in Spain, and left the room, to go to dinner in a little parlor, where our cloth was laid.

I was not long in discovering that the combatants in our lists had more to recommend them than appeared at first sight. They were not satisfied with aping the manners of their masters, but even copied their phrases; and these varlets gave such a facsimile, that, bating a little vulgarity, they might have passed themselves off very well. I admired their free-and-easy carriage; still more was I charmed with their wit, but despaired of ever coming up to them in my own person. Don Ferdinand's servant, on the score of his master treating ours, did the honors; and, determined to do the thing genteelly, he called the landlord, and said to him: Master tapster, give us ten bottles of your very best wine; and, as you have a happy knack of doing, make the gentlemen up stairs believe that they have drank them. With all my heart, answered the land-

lord; but, Master Gaspard, you know that Signor Don Ferdinand owes me for a good many dinners already. If through your kind intervention I could get some little matter on account . . . O, interrupted the valet, do not be at all uneasy about your debt: I will take it upon myself; put it down to me. It is true, that some unmannerly creditors have preferred legal measures to a reliance on our honor; but we shall take the first opportunity of obtaining a replevy, and will pay you without looking at your bill. To have my master on your books is like so many ingots of gold. The landlord brought us the wine, in spite of unmanly creditors; and we drank to a speedy replevy. It was as good as a comedy to see us drinking each other's healths every minute, under our masters' titles. Don Antonio's servant called Don Ferdinand's plain Gamboa, and Don Ferdinand's servant called Don Antonio's Centellés: they dubbed me Silva; and we kept pace in drunkenness, under these borrowed names, with the noblemen to whom they properly belonged.

Though my wit was less conspicuous than that of the other guests, they lost no opportunity of testifying their pleasure in my acquaintance. Silva, said one of our merriest soakers, we shall make something of you, my friend. I perceive that you have wit at will, if you did but know how to draw upon it. The fear of talking absurdly prevents you from throwing out at all; and yet it is only by a bold push, that a thousand people nowadays set

themselves up for good companions. Do you wish to be bright? You have only to give the reins to your loquacity, and to venture indiscriminately on whatever comes uppermost: your blunders will pass for the eccentricities of genius. Though you should utter a hundred extravagances, let but a single good joke be packed up in the bundle, the nonsense shall be all forgotten, the witticism bandied about, and your talent be puffed into high repute. This is the happy method our masters have devised, and it ought to be adopted by all new candidates. Besides that, I had but too strong a wish to pass for a clever fellow, the trick they taught me appeared so easy in the performance, that it ought not to be buried in obscurity. I tried it at once, and the fumes of the wine contributed to my success; that is to say, I talked at random, and had the good luck to strike out of much absurdity some flashes of merriment, very acceptable to my audience. This first essay inspired me with confidence. I redoubled my sprightliness, to sparkle in rapartee; and chance gave a successful issue to my endeavors.

Well done! said my fellow-servant who had addressed me in the street, do not you begin to shake off your rustic manners? You have not been two hours in our company, and you are quite another creature: your improvement will be visible every day. This it is to wait on people of quality. It causes an elevation, which the mind can never attain under a plebeian roof. Doubtless, answered I, and for that reason I shall henceforth dedicate my little

talents to the nobility. That is bravely said, roared out Don Ferdinand's servant, half seas over; commoners are not entitled to possess such a fund of superior genius as exists in us. Come, gentlemen, let us make a vow never to colleague with any such beggarly fellows; let us swear to that by Styx. We laughed heartily at Gaspard's conceit; the proposal was received with applause, and we took this mock oath with our glasses in our hands.

Thus sat we at table till our masters were pleased to get up from it. This was at midnight; an outrageous instance of sobriety, in the opinion of my colleagues. To be sure, these noble lords left the tavern so early only to visit a celebrated wanton, lodging in the purlieus of the court, and keeping open house night and day for the votaries of pleasure. She was a woman from five and thirty to forty, still in the height of her charms, entertaining in her discourse, and so perfect a mistress in the art of pleasure, that she sold the waste and refuse of her beauty at a higher price than the first sample of the unadulterated article. She had always two or three other pieces of damaged goods in the house, who contributed not a little to the great concourse of nobility resorting thither. The afternoon was spent in play; then supper, and the night passed in drinking and making merry. Our masters staid till morning, and so did we, without thinking the time long; for, while they were toying with the mistresses, we attacked the maids. At length, we all parted when daylight peeped in on our festivities, and went to bed each of us at our separate homes.

My master getting up at his usual time, about noon, dressed himself. He went out. I followed him, and we paid a visit to Don Antonio Centellés, with whom we found one Don Alvaro de Acuna. He was an old gentleman, who gave lectures on the science of debauchery. The rising generation, if they wanted to qualify themselves for fine gentlemen, put themselves under his tuition. He moulded their ductile habits to pleasure, taught them to make a distinguished figure in the world, and to squander their substance: he had no qualms as to running out his own, for the deed was done. After these three blades had exchanged the compliments of the morning, Centellés said to my master: In good faith, Don Matthias, you could not have come at a more lucky time. Don Alvaro is come to take me with him to a dinner, given by a citizen to the Marquis de Zenette and Don Juan de Moncade, and you shall be of the party. And what is the citizen's name? said Don Matthias. Gregorio de Noriega, said Don Alvaro, and I will describe the young man in two words. His father, a rich jeweller, is gone abroad to attend the foreign markets, and left his son, at his departure, in the enjoyment of a large income. Gregorio is a blockhead, with a turn for every sort of extravagance, and an awkward hankering after the reputation of wit and fashion, in despite of nature. He has begged of me to give him a few instructions. I manage him completely; and can assure you, gentlemen, that I lead him a rare dance. His estate is rather deeply dipped already. I do not

doubt it, exclaimed Centellés; I see the vulgar dog in an almshouse. Come, Don Matthias, let us honor the fellow with our acquaintance, and be in at the death of him. Willingly, answered my master, for I delight in seeing the fortune of these plebeian upstarts kicked over, when they affect to mix among us. Nothing, for instance, ever entertained me so much as the downfall of the toll-gatherer's son, whom play, and the vanity of figuring among the great, have stripped, till he has not a house over his head. O! as for that, replied Don Alvaro, he deserves no pity; he is as great a coxcomb in his poverty as he was in his prosperity.

Centellés and my master accompanied Don Alvaro to Gregorio de Noriega's party. We went there also, that is Mogicon and myself, both in ecstasy at having an opportunity of spunging on a citizen, and pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of being in at the death of him. At our entrance, we observed several men employed in preparing dinner; and there issued from the ragouts they were taking up, a vapor which conciliated the palate through the medium of the nostrils. The Marquis de Zenette and Don Juan de Moncade were just come. The founder of the feast seemed a great simpleton. He aped the man of fashion with a most clumsy grace; a wretched copy of admirable originals, or, more properly, an idiot in the chair of wisdom and taste. Figure to yourself a man of this character in the centre of five bantering fellows, all intent on making a jest of him, and drawing him into ridiculous ex-

penses. Gentlemen, said Don Alvaro, after the first interchange of civilities, give me leave to introduce you to Signor Gregorio de Noriega, a most brilliant star in the hemisphere of fashion. He owns a thousand amiable qualities. Do you know that he has a highly cultivated understanding? Choose your own subject, he is equally at home in every branch, from the subtilty and closeness of logic, to the elementary science of the criss-cross-row. O! this is really too flattering, interrupted the scot-and-lot gentleman with a very uncouth laugh. I might, Signor Alvaro, put you to the blush as you have put me; for you may truly be termed a reservoir as it were, a common sewer of erudition. I had no intention, replied Don Alvaro, to draw upon myself so savory an encomium; but truly, gentlemen, Signor Gregorio cannot fail of establishing a name in the world. As for me, said Don Antonio, what is so delightful in my eyes, far above the honors of logic or the criss-cross-row, is the tasteful selection of his company. Instead of demeaning himself to the level of tradesmen, he associates only with the young nobility, and sets the expense at nought. There is an elevation of sentiment in this conduct which enchants me: and this is what you may truly call disbursing with taste and judgment.

These ironical speeches were only the preludes to a continual strain of banter. Poor Gregorio was attacked on all hands. The wits shot their bolts by turns, but they made no impression on the fool; on the contrary, he took all they said literally, and

seemed highly pleased with his guests, as if they did him a favor by making him their laughing-stock. In short, he served them for a butt while they sat at table, which they did not quit during the afternoon, nor till late at night. We, as well as our masters, drank as we liked, so that the servants' hall and the dining-room were in equally high order when we took our leave of the young jeweller.

CHAPTER V.

GIL BLAS BECOMES THE DARLING OF THE FAIR SEX, AND MAKES AN INTERESTING ACQUAINTANCE.

After some hours' sleep, I got up in fine spirits; and calling the advice of Melendez to mind, went, till my master was stirring, to pay my court to our steward, whose vanity was rather flattered by this attention. He received me with a gracious air, and enquired how I was reconciled to the habits and manners of the young nobility. I answered, that they were strange to me as yet, but that use and good example might work wonders in the end.

Use and good example did work wonders, and that right soon. My temper and conduct were quite altered. From a discreet, sober lad, I got to be a lively, heedless merry-andrew. Don Antonio's servant paid me a compliment on my transformation,

and told me that there wanted nothing but a tender interest in the lovely part of the creation to shine like a new star dropped from the heavens. He pointed out to me that it was an indispensable requisite in the character of a pretty fellow, that all our set were well with some fine woman or other; and that he himself, to his own share, engrossed the favors of two beauties in high life. I was of opinion that the rascal lied. Master Mogicon, said I, you are doubtless a very dapper, lively little fellow, with a modest assurance; but still I do not comprehend how women of quality, not having your sweet person on their own private establishments, should run the risk of being detected in an intrigue with a footman out of doors. O! as for that, answered he, they do not know my condition. To my master's wardrobe, and even to his name, am I indebted for these conquests. I will tell you how it is. I dress myself up as a young nobleman, and assume the manners of one. I go to public places, and tip the wink first to one woman and then to another, till I meet with one who returns the signal. Her I follow, and find means to speak with her. I take the name of Don Antonio Centellés. I plead for an assignation, the lady is squeamish about it; I am pressing, she is kind, *et cætera*. Thus it is, my fine fellow, that I contrive to carry on my intrigues, and I would have you profit by the hint.

I was too ambitious of shining like a new star dropped from the heavens, to turn a deaf ear to such counsel; besides, there was about me no aversion to

an amour. I therefore laid a plan to disguise myself as a young nobleman, and look out for adventures of gallantry. There was a risk in assuming my masquerade dress at home, lest it might be observed. I took a complete suit from my master's wardrobe, and made it up into a bundle, which I carried to a barber's, where I thought I could dress and undress conveniently. There I tricked myself out to the best advantage. The barber, too, lent a helping hand to my attire. When we thought it adjusted to a nicety, I sauntered towards Saint Jerome's meadow, whence I felt morally certain that I should not return without making an impression. But I could not even get thither, without a proof of my own attractions.

As I was crossing a bye-street, a lady of genteel figure, elegantly dressed, came out of a small house, and got into a hired carriage standing at the door. I stopped short to look at her, and bowed significantly, so as to convey an intimation that my heart was not insensible. On her part, to show me that her face was not less lovely than her person, she lifted up her veil for a moment. In the meantime the coach set off, and I stood stock still in the street, not a little stiffened at this vision. A vastly pretty woman, said I to myself; bless us! this is just what is wanting to make me perfectly accomplished. If the two ladies who share Mogicon between them are equally handsome, the scoundrel is in luck! I should be delighted with her for a mistress. Ruminating on these things, I looked, by chance, towards the house

whence that lovely creature had glided, and saw, at a window on the ground floor, an old woman beckoning me to come in.

I flew like lightning into the house, and found, in a very neat parlor, this venerable and wary matron, who, taking me for a marquis at least, dropped a low courtesy, and said: I douot not, my lord, but you must have a bad opinion of a woman who, without the slightest acquaintance, beckons you out of the street; but you will, perhaps, judge more favorably of me, when you shall know that I do not pay that compliment promiscuously. You look like a man of fashion! You are perfectly in the right, my old girl, interrupted I, stretching out my right leg, and throwing the weight of my body on my left hip; mine is, vanity apart, one of the best families in Spain. It must be so by your looks, replied she, and I will fairly own that I delight in doing a kindness to people of quality, that is my weak side. I watched you through my window. You looked very earnestly at a lady who has just left me. Perhaps you may have taken a fancy to her? tell me so plainly. By the honor of my house, answered I, she has shot me through the heart. I never saw anything so tempting; a most divine creature! Do bring us acquainted, my dear, and rely on my gratitude. It is worth while to do these little offices for us of the beau monde; they are better paid than our bills.

I have told you once for all, replied the old woman, I am entirely devoted to people of condition;

it is my passion to be useful to them: I receive here, for example, a certain class of ladies, whom appearances prevent from seeing their favorites at home. I lend them my house, and thus the warmth of their constitutions is indulged, without risk to their characters. Vastly well, quoth I, and you have just done that kindness to the lady in question? No, answered she, this is a young widow of quality, in want of an admirer; but so difficult in her choice, that I do not know whether you will do for her, however great your requisites may be. I have already introduced to her three well-furnished gallants, but she turned up her nose at them. O! egad, my life, exclaimed I confidently, you have only to stick me in her skirts, I will give you a good account of her, take my word for it. I long to have a grapple with a beauty of such peremptory demands; they have not yet fallen in my way. Well then, said the old woman, you have only to come hither to-morrow at the same hour: your curiosity shall be satisfied. I will not fail, rejoined I; we shall see whether a young nobleman can miss a conquest.

I returned to the little barber's without looking for other adventures, but deeply interested in the event of this. Therefore, on the following day, I went in splendid attire, to the old woman's an hour sooner than the time. My lord, said she, you are punctual, and I take it kindly. To be sure the game is worth the chase. I have seen our young widow, and we have had a good deal of talk about you. Not a word was to be said; but I have taken

such a liking to you that I cannot hold my tongue. You have made yourself agreeable, and will soon be a happy man. Between ourselves, the lady is a relishing morsel, her husband did not live long with her; he glided away like a shadow: she has all the merit of an absolute girl. The good old lady, no doubt, meant one of those clever girls who contrive not to live single, though they live unmarried.

The heroine of the assignation came soon in a hired carriage, as on the day before, dressed very magnificently. As soon as she came into the room, I led off with five or six coxcombical bows, accompanied by the most fashionable grimaces. After this, I went up to her with a very familiar air, and said: My adored angel, you behold a gentleman of no mean rank, whom your charms have undone. Your image, since yesterday, has taken complete possession of my fancy; you have turned a duchess neck and heels out of my heart, who was beginning to establish a footing there. The triumph is too glorious for me, answered she, throwing off her veil, but still my transports are not without alloy. Young men of fashion love variety, and their hearts are, they say, bandied about from one to the other like a piece of base money. Ah! my sovereign mistress, replied I, let us leave the future to shift for itself, and think only of the present. You are lovely: I am in love. If my passion is not hateful to you, let it take its course at random. We will embark like true sailors, set the storms and shipwreck of a long voyage at defiance, and only take

the fair weather of the time present into the account.

In finishing this speech, I threw myself in raptures at the feet of my nymph; and the better to hit off my assumed character, pressed her with some little peevishness not to delay my bliss. She seemed a little touched by my remonstrances, but thought it too soon to yield, and, giving me a gentle rebuff: Hold, said she, you are too importunate; this is like a rake. I fear you are but a loose young fellow. For shame, madam! exclaimed I; can you set your face against what women of the first taste and condition encourage? A prejudice against what is vulgarly called vice may be all very well for citizens' wives. That is decisive, replied she; there is no resisting so forcible a plea. I see plainly that with men of your order dissimulation is to no purpose; a woman must meet you half way. Learn then your victory, added she with an appearance of disorder, as if her modesty suffered by the avowal; you have inspired me with sentiments such as are new to my heart, and I only wait to know who you are, that I may take you for my acknowledged lover. I believe you a young lord and a gentleman, yet there is no trusting to appearances; and, however prepossessed I may be in your favor, I would not give away my affections to a stranger.

I recollected at the moment how Don Antonio's servant had got out of a similar perplexity, and determining, after his example, to pass for my master: Madam, said I to my dainty widow, I will

not excuse myself from telling you my name; it is one that will not disparage its owner. Have you ever heard of Don Matthias de Silva? Yes, replied she; indeed I have seen him with a lady of my acquaintance. Though considerably improved in impudence, I was a little troubled by this discovery. Yet I rallied my forces in an instant, and extricated myself with a happy presence of mind. Well then, my fair one, retorted I, the lady of your acquaintance . . . knows a lord . . . of my acquaintance . . . and I am of his acquaintance; of his own family, since you must know it. His grandfather married the sister-in-law of my father's uncle. You see we are very near relations. My name is Don Cæsar. I am the only son of the great Don Ferdinand de Ribera, slain fifteen years ago, in a battle on the frontiers of Portugal. I could give you all the particulars of the action; it was a devilish sharp one . . . but to fight it over again would be losing the precious moments of mutual love.

After this discourse I got to be importunate and impassioned, but without bringing matters at all forwarder. The favors which my goddess winked at my snatching, tended only to make me languish for which she was more chary of. The tyrant got back to her coach, which was waiting at the door. Nevertheless, I withdrew, well enough pleased with my success, though it still fell short of the only perfect issue. If, said I to myself, I have obtained indulgences but by halves, it is because this lady, forsooth, is a high-born dame, and thinks it beneath her

quality to play the very woman at the first interview. The pride of pedigree stands in the way of my advancement just now, but in a few days we shall be better acquainted. To be sure, it did not once come into my head that she might be one of those cunning gypsies always on the catch. Yet I liked better to look at things on the right side than on the wrong, and thus maintained a favorable opinion of my widow. We had agreed at parting to meet again on the day after the morrow; and the hope of arriving at the summit of my wishes gave me a foretaste of the pleasures with which I tickled my fancy.

With my brain full of joyous traces, I returned to my barber. Having changed my dress, I went to attend my master at the tennis-court. I found him at play, and saw that he won; for he was not one of those impenetrable gamesters who make or mar a fortune without moving a muscle. In prosperity he was flippant and overbearing, but quite peevish on the losing side. He left the tennis-court in high spirits, and went for the *Prince's Theatre*. I followed him to the box-door, then putting a ducat into my hand: Here, Gil Blas, said he, as I have been a winner to-day, you shall not be the worse for it; go, divert yourself with your friends, and come to me about midnight at Arsenia's, where I am to sup with Don Alexo Segiar. He then went in, and I stood debating with whom I should disburse my ducat, according to the pious will of the founder. I did not muse long. Clarin, Don Alexo's servant, just then

came in my way. I took him to the next tavern, and we amused ourselves there till midnight. Thence we repaired to Arsenia's house, where Clarin had orders to attend. A little footboy opened the door, and showed us into a room down stairs, where Arsenia's waiting-woman, and the lady who held the same office about Florimonde, were laughing ready to split their sides, while their mistresses were above stairs with our masters.

The addition of two jolly fellows just come from a good supper, could not be unwelcome to abigails, and to the abigails of actresses too; but what was my astonishment when in one of these lowly ladies I discovered my widow — my adorable widow — whom I took for a countess or a marchioness! She appeared equally amazed to see her dear Don Cæsar de Ribera metamorphosed into the valet of a beau. However, we looked at one another without being out of countenance; indeed, such a tingling sensation of laughter came over us both, as we could not help indulging in. After which Laura, for that was her name, drawing me aside while Clarin was speaking to her fellow-servant, held out her hand to me very kindly, and said in a low voice: Accept this pledge, Signor Don Cæsar; mutual congratulations are more to the purpose than mutual reproaches, my friend. You topped your part to perfection, and I was not quite contemptible in mine. What say you? confess now, did not you take me for one of those precious peeresses who are fond of a little smuggled amusement? It is even so, answered I, but whoever you are, my empress,

I have not changed my sentiments with my paraphernalia. Accept my services in good part, and let the valet-de-chamber of Don Matthias consummate what Don Cæsar has so happily begun. Get you gone, replied she, I like you ten times better in your natural than in your artificial character. You are as a man what I am as a woman, and that is the greatest compliment I can pay you. You are admitted into the number of my adorers. We have no longer any need of the old woman as a blind, you may come and see me whenever you like. We theatrical ladies are no slaves to form, but live higgledy piggledy with the men. I allow that the effects are sometimes visible, but the public wink hard at our irregularities; the drama's patrons, as you well know, give the drama's laws, and absolve us from all others.

We went no further, because there were bystanders. The conversation became general, lively, jovial, inclining to loose jokes, not very carefully wrapped up. We all of us bore a bob. Arsenia's attendant above all, my amiable Laura, was very conspicuous; but her wit was so extremely nimble, that her virtue could never overtake it. Our masters and the actresses on the floor above, raised incessant peals of laughter, which reached us in the regions below; and probably the entertainment was much alike with the celestials and the infernals. If all the knowing remarks had been written down, which escaped from the philosophers that night assembled at Arsenia's, I really think it would have been a manual for the rising generation. Yet we could not arrest the chaste

moon in her progress; the rising of that blab, the sun, parted us. Clarin followed the heels of Don Alexo, and I went home with Don Matthias.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE'S COMPANY OF COMEDIANS.

My master getting up the next day, received a note from Don Alexo Segiar, desiring his company immediately. We went, and found there the Marquis de Zenette, and another young nobleman of prepossessing manners, whom I had never seen. Don Matthias, said Segiar to my protector, introducing the stranger, give me leave to present Don Pompeyo de Castro, a relation of mine. He has been at the court of Portugal almost from his childhood. He reached Madrid last night, and returns to Lisbon to-morrow. He can allow me only one day. I wish to make the most of the precious moments, and thought of asking you and the Marquis de Zenette to make out the time agreeably. Thereupon, my master and Don Alexo's relation embraced heartily, and complimented one another in the most extravagant manner. I was much pleased with Don Pompeyo's conversation, it showed both acuteness and solidity.

They dined with Segiar; and the gentlemen, after the dessert, amused themselves at play till the theatre

opened. Then they went all together to the *Prince's House*, to see a new tragedy, called *The Queen of Carthage*. At the end of the piece they returned to supper, and their conversation ran first on the composition, then upon the actors. As for the work, cried Don Matthias, I think very lightly of it. Eneas is a more pious blockhead there than in the Eneid. But it must be owned that the piece was played divinely. What does Signor Don Pompeyo think of it? He does not seem to agree with me. Gentlemen, said the illustrious stranger with a smile, you are so enraptured with your actors, and still more with your actresses, that I scarcely dare avow my dissent. That is very prudent, interrupted Don Alexo with a sneer; your criticisms would be ill received. You should be tender of our actresses before the trumpeters of their fame. We carouse with them every day, we warrant them sound in their conceptions: we would give vouchers for the justness of their expression if it were necessary. No doubt of it, answered his kinsman, you would do the same kind office by their lives and their manners, from the same motives of companionable feeling.

Your ladies of the sock and buskin at Lisbon, said the Marquis de Zenette, are doubtless far superior? They certainly are, replied Don Pompeyo. They are some of them at least perfect in their cast. And these, resumed the Marquis, would be warranted by you in their conceptions and expressions? I have no personal acquaintance with them, rejoined Don Pompeyo. I am not of their revels, and can judge

of their merit without partiality. Do you, in good earnest, think your company first-rate? No, really, said the Marquis, I think no such thing, and only plead the cause of a few individuals. I give up all the rest. Will you not allow extraordinary powers to the actress who played Dido? Did she not personate that queen with the dignity, and at the same time with all the bewitching charms, calculated to realize our idea of the character? Could you help admiring the skill with which she seizes on the passions of the spectator, and harmonizes their tone to the vibrations she purposes to produce? She may be called perfect in the exquisite art of declaiming. I agree with you, said Don Pompeyo, that she can touch the string either of terror or of pity: never did any actress come closer to the heart, and the performance is altogether fine; but still she is not without her defects. Two or three things disgusted me in her playing. Would she denote surprise? she glances her eyes to and fro in a most extravagant manner, altogether unbecoming her supposed majesty as a princess. Add to this, that in swelling her voice, which is of itself sound and mellifluous, she goes out of her natural key, and assumes a harsh, ranting tone. Besides, it should seem as if she might be suspected, in more than one passage, of not very clearly comprehending her author. Yet I would in candor rather suppose her wanting in diligence than capacity.

As far as I see, said Don Matthias to the critic, you will never write complimentary odes to our

actresses! Pardon me, answered Don Pompeyo. I can discover high talent through all their imperfections. I must say that I was enchanted with the chambermaid in the interlude. What fine natural parts! With what grace she treads the stage! Has she anything pointed to deliver? she heightens it by an arch smile, with a keen glance and sarcastic emphasis, which convey more to the understanding than the words to the ear. It might be objected that she sometimes gives too much scope to her animal spirits, and exceeds the limits of allowable freedom, but that would be hypercritical. There is one bad habit I should strongly advise her to correct. Sometimes in the very crisis of the action, and in an affecting passage, she bursts in all at once upon the interest with some misplaced jest, to curry favor with the mob of barren spectators. The pit, you will say, is caught by her artifice; that may be well for her popularity, but not for their taste.

And what do you think of the men? interrupted the Marquis; you must give them no quarter, since you have handled the women so roughly. Not so, said Don Pompeyo. There are some promising young actors, and I am particularly well pleased with that corpulent performer who played the part of Dido's prime minister. His recitation is unaffected, and he declaims just as they do in Portugal. If you can bear such a fellow as that, said Segiar, you must be charmed with the representative of Eneas. Did not you think him a great, an original performer! Very original, indeed, answered the critic; his inflections

are quite his own, they are as shrill as a hautboy. Almost always out of nature, he rattles the impressive words of the sentence off his tongue, while he labors and lingers on the expletives; the poor conjunctions are frightened at their own report as they go off. He entertained me excessively, and especially when he was expressing in confidence his distress at abandoning the princess: never was grief more ludicrously depicted. Fair and softly, cousin, replied Don Alexo; you will make us believe at last that good taste is not greatly cultivated at the court of Portugal. Do you know that the actor of whom we are speaking is esteemed a phenomenon? Did you not observe what thunders of applause he called down? He cannot therefore be contemptible. That therefore does not prove the proposition, replied Don Pompeyo. But, gentlemen, let us lay aside, I beseech you, the injudicious suffrages of the pit; they are often given to performers very unseasonably. Indeed, their boisterous tokens of approbation are more frequently bestowed on paltry copies than an original merit, as Phedrus teaches us by an ingenious fable. Allow me to repeat it as follows: —

The whole population of a city was assembled in a large square to see a pantomime played. Among the performers there was one whose feats were applauded every instant. This buffoon, at the end of the entertainment, wished to close the scene with a new device. He came alone upon the stage, stooping down, covering his head with his mantle, and began counterfeiting the squeak of a pig. He ac-

quitted himself so naturally as to be suspected of having the animal itself concealed within the folds of his drapery. He stripped, but there was no pig. The assembly rang with more furious applause than ever. A peasant, among the spectators, was disgusted at this misplaced admiration. Gentlemen, exclaimed he, you are in the wrong to be so delighted with this buffoon; he is not so good a mimic as you take him for. I can enact the pig better; if you doubt it, only attend here this time to-morrow. The people, prejudiced in the cause of their favorite, collected in greater numbers on the next day, rather to hiss the countryman than to see what he could do. The rivals appeared on the stage. The buffoon began, and was more applauded than the day before. Then the farmer, stooping down in his turn, with his head wrapped up in his cloak, pulled the ear of a real pig under his arm, and made it squeal most horribly. Yet this enlightened audience persisted in giving the preference to their favorite, and hooted the countryman off the boards; who, producing the pig before he went, said, Gentlemen, you are not hissing me, but the original pig. So much for your judgment.

Cousin, said Don Alexo, your fable is rather satirical. Nevertheless, in spite of your pig, we will not bate an inch of our opinion. But let us change the subject, this is grown threadbare. Then you set off to-morrow, do what we can to keep you with us longer? I should like, answered his kinsman, to protract my stay with you, but it is not in my power.

I have told you already that I am come to the court of Spain on an affair of state. Yesterday, on my arrival, I had a conference with the prime minister; I am to see him to-morrow morning, and shall set out immediately afterwards on my return to Lisbon. You are become quite a Portuguese, observed Segiar, and to all appearance, we shall lose you entirely from Madrid. I think otherwise, replied Don Pompeyo, I have the honor to stand well with the King of Portugal, and have many motives of attachment to that court; yet with all the kindness that sovereign has testified towards me, would you believe that I have been on the point of quitting his dominions forever. Indeed! by what strange accident? said the marquis. Give us the history, I beseech you. Very readily, answered Don Pompeyo, and at the same time my own, for it is closely interwoven with the recital for which you have called.

CHAPTER VII.

HISTORY OF DON POMPEYO DE CASTRO.

Don Alexo knows, that from my boyish days, my passion was for a military life. Our own country being at peace, I went into Portugal; thence to Africa with the Duke of Braganza, who gave me a commission. I was a younger brother, with as slender a provision as most in Spain; so that my

only chance was in attracting the notice of the commander-in-chief by my bravery. I was so far from deficient in my duty, that the duke promoted me, step by step, to one of the most honorable posts in the service. After a long war, of which you all know the issue, I devoted myself to the court; and the king, on strong testimonials from the general officers, rewarded me with a considerable pension. Alive to that sovereign's generosity, I lost no opportunity of proving my gratitude by my diligence. I was in attendance as often as etiquette would allow me to offer myself to his notice. By this conduct I gained insensibly the love of that prince, and received new favors from his hands.

One day, when I distinguished myself in running at the ring, and in a bull-fight preceding it, all the court extolled my strength and dexterity. On my return home, with my honors thick upon me, I found there a note, informing me that a lady, my conquest over whom ought to flatter me more than all the glory I had gained that day, wished to have the pleasure of my company; and that I had only to attend in the evening, at a place marked out in the letter. This was more than all my public triumphs, and I concluded the writer to be a woman of the first quality. You may guess that I did not loiter by the way. An old woman in waiting, as my guide, conducted me by a little garden-gate into a large house, and left me in an elegant closet, saying, Stay here, I will acquaint my mistress with your arrival. I observed a great many articles of value

in the closet, which was magnificently illuminated; but this splendor only caught my attention as confirming me in my previous opinion of the lady's high rank. If appearances strengthened that conjecture, her noble and majestic air on her entrance left no doubt on my mind. Yet I was a little out in my calculation.

Noble sir, said she, after the step I have taken in your favor it were impertinent to disown my partiality. Your brilliant actions of to-day, in presence of the court, were not the inspirers of my sentiments; they only urge forward this avowal. I have seen you more than once, have inquired into your character, and the result has determined me to follow the impulse of my heart. But do not suppose that you are well with a duchess. I am but the widow of a captain in the King's Guards; yet there is something to throw a radiance round your victory . . . . the preference you have gained over one of the first noblemen in the kingdom. The Duke d'Almeyda loves me, and presses his suit with ardor, yet without success. My vanity only induces me to bear his importunities.

Though I saw plainly, by this address, that I had got in with a coquette, my presiding star was not a whit out of my good graces for involving me in this adventure. Donna Hortensia, for that was the lady's name, was just in the ripeness and luxuriance of youth and dazzling beauty. Nay, more, she had refused the possession of her heart to the earnest entreaties of a duke, and offered it unsolicited to me.

What a feather in the cap of a Spanish cavalier! I prostrated myself at Hortensia's feet, to thank her for her favors. I talked just as a man of gallantry always does talk, and she had reason to be satisfied with the extravagance of my acknowledgments. Thus we parted the best friends in the world, on the terms of meeting every evening when the Duke d'Almeyda was prevented from coming; and she promised to give me due notice of his absence. The bargain was exactly fulfilled, and I was turned into the Adonis of this new Venus.

But the pleasures of this life are transitory. With all the lady's precautions to conceal our private treaty of commerce from my rival, he found means of gaining a knowledge, of which it concerned us greatly to keep him ignorant: a disloyal chamber-maid divulged the state secret. This nobleman, naturally generous, but proud, self-sufficient, and violent, was exasperated at my presumption. Anger and jealousy set him beside himself. Taking counsel only with his rage, he resolved on an infamous revenge. One night when I was with Hortensia, he waylaid me at the little garden gate, with all his servants provided with cudgels. As soon as I came out, he ordered me to be seized, and beat to death by these wretches. Lay on, said he, let the rash intruder give up the ghost under your chastisement; thus shall his insolence be punished. No sooner had he finished these words, than his myrmidons assaulted me in a body, and gave me such a beating, as to stretch me senseless on the ground: after which they hurried off

with their master, to whom this butchery had been a delicious pastime. I lay the remainder of the night, just as they had left me. At day-break, some people passed by, who, finding that life was still in me, had the humanity to carry me to a surgeon. Fortunately my wounds were not mortal; and, falling into skilful hands, I was perfectly cured in two months. At the end of that period I made my appearance again at court, and resumed my former way of life, except that I steered clear of Hortensia, who on her part made no further attempt to renew the acquaintance, because the duke, on that condition, had pardoned her infidelity.

As my adventure was the town talk, and I was known to be no coward, people were astonished to see me as quiet as if I had received no affront; for I kept my thoughts to myself, and seemed to have no quarrel with any man living. No one knew what to think of my counterfeited insensibility. Some imagined that, in spite of my courage, the rank of the aggressor overawed me, and occasioned my tacit submission. Others, with more reason, mistrusted my silence, and considered my offensive demeanor as a cover to my revenge. The king was of opinion with these last, that I was not a man to put up with an insult, and that I should not be wanting to myself at a convenient opportunity. To discover my real intentions, he sent for me one day into his closet, where he said: Don Pompeyo, I know what accident has befallen you, and am surprised, I own, at your forbearance. You are certainly acting a

part. Sire, answered I, how can I know whom to challenge? I was attacked in the night by persons unknown: it is a misfortune of which I must make the best. No, no, replied the king, I am not to be duped by these evasive answers. The whole story has reached my ears. The Duke d'Almeyda has touched your honor to the quick. You are nobly born, and a Castilian: I know what that double character requires. You cherish hostile designs. Admit me a party to your purposes; it must be so. Never fear the consequences of making me your confidant.

Since your majesty commands it, resumed I, my sentiments shall be laid open without reserve. Yes, sir, I meditate a severe retribution. Every man, wearing such a name as mine, must account for its untarnished lustre with his family. You know the unworthy treatment I have experienced; and I purpose assassinating the Duke d'Almeyda, as a mode of revenge corresponding to the injury. I shall plunge a dagger in his bosom, or shoot him through the head, and escape, if I can, into Spain. This is my design.

It is violent, said the king: and yet I have little to say against it, after the provocation which the Duke d'Almeyda has given you. He is worthy of the punishment you destine for him. But do not be in a hurry with your project. Leave me to devise a method of bringing you together again as friends. O! sir, exclaimed I with vexation, why did you extort my secret from me? What expedient

can . . . If mine is not to your satisfaction, interrupted he, you may execute your first intention. I do not mean to abuse your confidence. I shall not implicate your honor; so rest contented on that head.

I was greatly puzzled to guess by what means the king designed to terminate this affair amicably: but thus it was. He sent to speak with the Duke d'Almeyda in private. Duke, said he, you have insulted Don Pompeyo de Castro. You are not ignorant that he is a man of noble birth, a soldier who has served with credit, and stands high in my favor. You owe him reparation. I am not of a temper to refuse it, answered the Duke. If he complains of my outrageous behavior, I am ready to justify it by the law of arms. Something very different must be done, replied the king: a Spanish gentleman understands the point of honor too well, to fight on equal terms with a cowardly assassin. I can use no milder term; and you can only atone for the heinousness of your conduct, by presenting a cane in person to your antagonist, and offering to submit yourself to its discipline. O Heaven! exclaimed the duke: what! sir, would you have a man of my rank degrade, debase, himself before a simple gentleman, and submit to be caned! No, replied the monarch, I will oblige Don Pompeyo to promise not to touch you. Only offer him the cane, and ask his pardon: that is all I require from you. And that is too much, sir, interrupted the Duke d'Almeyda warmly: I had rather remain exposed to all the secret machinations of his resentment. Your life

is dear to me, said the king; and I should wish this affair to have no bad consequences. To terminate it with less disgust to yourself, I will be the only witness of the satisfaction which I order you to offer to the Spaniard.

The king was obliged to stretch his influence over the duke to the utmost, before he could induce him to so mortifying a step. However, the peremptory monarch effected his purpose, and then sent for me. He related the particulars of his conversation with my enemy, and enquired if I should be content with the stipulated reparation. I answered, Yes; and gave my word that, far from striking the offender, I would not even accept the cane when he presented it. With this understanding, the duke and myself at a certain hour attended the king, who took us into his closet. Come, said he to the duke, acknowledge your fault, and deserve to be forgiven by the humility of your contrition. Then my antagonist made his apology, and offered me the cane in his hand. Don Pompeyo, said the monarch unexpectedly, take the cane, and let not my presence prevent you from doing justice to your outraged honor. I release you from your promise not to strike the duke. No, sir, answered I, it is enough that he has submitted to the indignity of the offer: an offended Spaniard asks no more. Well then, replied the king, since you are content with this satisfaction, you may both of you at once assume the privilege of a gentlemanly quarrel. Measure your swords, and discuss the question honorably. It is

what I most ardently desire, exclaimed the Duke d'Almeyda in a menacing tone; for that only is competent to make me amends for the disgraceful step I have taken.

With these words, he went away, full of rage and shame; and sent to tell me two hours after, that he was waiting for me in a retired place. I kept the appointment, and found this nobleman ready to fight lustily. He was not five and forty; deficient, neither in courage nor in skill: so that the match was fair and equal. Come on, Don Pompeyo! said he; let us terminate our difference here. Our hostility ought to be reciprocally mortal; yours, for my aggression, and mine, for having asked your pardon. These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than he drew upon me so suddenly that I had no time to reply. He pressed very closely upon me at first, but I had the good fortune to put by all his thrusts. I acted on the offensive, in my turn: the encounter was evidently with a man equally skilled in defence or in attack; and there is no knowing what might have been the issue, if he had not made a false step in retiring, and fallen backwards. I stood still immediately, and said to the duke, Recover yourself. Why give me any quarter? he answered. Your forbearance only aggravates my disgrace. I will not take advantage of an accident, replied I; it would only tarnish my glory. Once more recover yourself, and let us fight it out.

Don Pompeyo, said he, rising, after this act of

generosity, honor allows me not to renew the attack upon you. What would the world say of me, were I to wound you mortally? I should be branded as a coward for having murdered a man, at whose mercy I had just before lain prostrate. I cannot, therefore, again lift my arm against your life, and I feel my resentful passions subsiding into the sweet emotions of gratitude. Don Pompeyo, let us mutually lay aside our hatred. Let us go still further; let us be friends. Ah! my lord, exclaimed I, so flattering a proposal I joyfully accept. I proffer you my sincere friendship; and, as an earnest, promise never more to approach Donna Hortensia, though she herself should invite me. It is my duty, said he, to yield that lady to you. Justice requires me to give her up, since her affections are yours already. No, no, interrupted I: you love her. Her partiality in my favor would give you uneasiness; I sacrifice my own pleasure to your peace. Ah! too generous Castilian, replied the duke, embracing me; your sentiments are truly noble. With what remorse do they strike me! Grieved and ashamed, I look back on the outrage you have sustained. The reparation in the king's chamber seems now too trifling. A better recompense awaits you. To obliterate all remembrance of your shame, take one of my nieces, whose hand is at my disposal. She is a rich heiress, not fifteen, with beauty beyond the attractions of mere youth.

I made my acknowledgements to the duke in terms such as the high honor of his alliance might

suggest, and married his niece a few days afterwards. All the court complimented this nobleman on having made such generous amends to an insulted rival; and my friends took part in my joy at the happy issue of an adventure which might have led to the most melancholy consequences. From this time, gentlemen, I have lived happily at Lisbon. I am the idol of my wife, and have not sunk the lover in the husband. The Duke d'Almeyda gives me new proofs of friendship every day; and I may venture to boast of standing high in the King of Portugal's good graces. The importance of my errand hither sufficiently assures me of his confidence.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ACCIDENT, IN CONSEQUENCE OF WHICH GIL BLAS WAS OBLIGED TO LOOK OUT FOR ANOTHER PLACE.

Such was Don Pompeyo's story, which Don Alexo's servant and myself overheard, though we were prudently sent away before he began his recital. Instead of withdrawing, we skulked behind the door, which we had left half open, and from that station we did not miss a word. After this, the company went on drinking; but they did not prolong their carousals till the morning, because Don Pompeyo, who was to speak with the prime minister, wished for a little rest beforehand. The

Marquis de Zenette, and my master took a cordial leave of the stranger, and left him with his kinsman.

We went to bed, for once, before daybreak; and Don Matthias, when he awoke, invested me with a new office. Gil Blas, said he, take pen, ink, and paper, and write two or three letters, as I shall dictate: you shall, henceforth, be my secretary. Well and good! said I to myself — a plurality of functions. As footman, I follow my master's heels; as valet-de-chambre, I help him to dress; and write for him, as his secretary. Heaven be praised, for my apotheosis! Like the triple Hecate of the Pantheon, I am to enact three different characters at the same time. Can you guess my intention? continued he. Thus it is: but take care what you are about; your life may depend on it. As I am continually meeting with fellows who boast of their success among the women, I mean by way of getting the upper hand, to fill my pockets with fictitious love-letters, and read them in company. It will be amusing enough. Happier than my competitors, who make conquests only for the pleasure of the boast, I shall take the credit of intrigue, and spare myself the labor. But vary your writing, so that the manufacture may not be detected by the sameness of the hand.

I then sat down, to comply with the command of Don Matthias, who first dictated a tender epistle to this tune: *You did not keep your promise to-night. Ah! Don Matthias, how will you exculpate your-*

self? My error was a cruel one! But you punish me deservedly for my vanity, in fancying that business and amusement were all to give way before the pleasure of seeing Donna Clara de Mendoza! After this pretty note, he made me write another, as if from a lady, who sacrificed a prince to him; and then a third, whose fair writer offered, if she could rely on his discretion, to embark with him for the shores of Cytherean enchantment. It was not enough to dictate these love-sick strains; he forced me to subscribe them, with the most high-flying names in Madrid. I could not forbear hinting at some little hazard in all this, but he begged me to keep my sage counsels, till they were called for. I was obliged to hold my tongue, and dispatch his orders out of hand. That done, he got up and dressed, with my assistance. The letters were put into his pocket, and out he went. I followed him to dinner, with Don Juan de Moncade, who entertained five or six gentlemen of his acquaintance that day.

There was a grand set-out, and mirth, the best relish, was not wanting to the banquet. All the guests contributed to enliven the conversation, some by wit and humor, others by anecdotes, of which the relaters were the heroes. My master would not lose so fine an opportunity of bringing our joint performances to bear. He read them audibly, and with so much assurance, that probably the whole party with the exception of his secretary, was taken in by the device. Among the company, before

whom this trick was impudently played off, there was one person, by name Don Lope de Velasco. This person, a very grave don, instead of making himself merry, like the rest, with the fictitious triumphs of the reader, asked him coolly if the conquest of Donna Clara had been achieved with any great difficulty? Less than the least, answered Don Matthias; the advances were all on her side. She saw me in public, and took a fancy to my person. A scout was commissioned to follow me, and thus she got at my name and condition. She wrote to me, and gave me an appointment, at an hour of the night, when the house was sure to be quiet. I was true as the needle to the pole; her bed-chamber was the place . . . . But prudence and delicacy forbid my describing what passed there.

At this instance of tender regard for the lady's character, Signor de Velasco betrayed some very passionate workings, in his countenance. It was easy to see the interest he took in the subject. All these letters, said he to my master, looking at him with an eye of indignation and contempt, are infamous forgeries; and, above all, that which you boast of having received from Donna Clara de Mendoza. There is not, in all Spain, a more modest young creature than herself. For these two years, a gentleman, at least your equal in birth and personal merit, has been trying every method of insinuating himself into her heart. Scarcely have his assiduities extorted the slightest encouragement; but yet he may flatter himself that, if anything

beyond common civility had been granted at all, it would have been to him only. Well, who says to the contrary? interrupted Don Matthias, in a bantering way. I agree with you, that the lady is a very pretty-behaved young lady. On my part, I am a very pretty-behaved young gentleman. Ergo, you may rest assured that nothing took place between us but what was pretty and well-behaved. Indeed! This is too much, interrupted Don Lope, in his turn; let us lay aside this unseasonable jesting. You are an impostor. Donna Clara never gave you an appointment by night. Her reputation shall not be blackened by your ribaldry. But prudence and delicacy forbid my describing what must pass between you and me. With this retort on his lips, he looked contemptuously round, and withdrew with a menacing aspect, which anticipated serious consequences, to my judgment. My master, whose courage was better than his cause, held the threats of Don Lope in derision. A blockhead! exclaimed he, bursting into a loud fit of laughter. Our knights-errant used to tilt for the beauty of their mistresses; this fellow would engage in the lists, for the forlorn hope of virtue in his; he is more ridiculous than his prototypes.

Velasco's retiring, in vain opposed by Moncade, occasioned no interruption to the merriment. The party, without thinking further about it, kept the ball up briskly, and did not part till they had made free with the next day. We went to bed, that is, my master and myself, about five o'clock in the

morning. Sleep sat heavy on my eyelids, and, as I thought, was taking permanent possession thereof; but I reckoned without my host, or rather without our porter, who came and waked me in an hour, to say that there was a lad inquiring for me at the door. O, thou infernal porter! muttered I, indistinctly, through the interstices of a long yawn; do you consider that I have but now got to bed? Tell the little rascal that I am just asleep; he must come again, by-and-by. He insists, replied Cerberus, on speaking with you instantly; his business cannot wait. As that was the case, I got up, put on nothing but my breeches and doublet, and went down stairs, swearing and gaping. My friend, said I, be so good as to let me know what urgent affair procures me the honor of seeing you so early? I have a letter, answered he, to deliver personally into the hands of Signor Don Matthias, to be read by him without loss of time; it is of the last consequence to him; pray, show me into his room. As I thought the matter looked serious, I took the liberty of disturbing my master. Excuse me, said I, for waking you, but the pressing nature .... What do you want? interrupted he, just in my style, with the porter. Sir, said the lad, who was at my elbow, here is a letter from Don Lope de Velasco. Don Matthias looked at the cover, broke it, and, after reading the contents, said to the messenger of Don Lope, My good fellow, I never get up before noon, let the party be ever so agreeable; judge whether I can be expected to be stirring by six in

the morning for a small-sword recreation. You may tell your master, that, if he chooses to kick his heels at the spot till half past twelve, we will come and see how he looks there; carry him that answer. With this flippant speech, he plunged down snugly under the bed-clothes, and fell fast asleep again, as if nothing had happened.

Between eleven and twelve, he got up and dressed himself, with the utmost composure, and went out, telling me that there was no occasion for my attendance; but I was too much on the tenterhooks about the result to mind his orders. I sneaked after him, to Saint Jerome's meadow, where I saw Don Lope de Velasco waiting for him. I took my station to watch them; and was an eye-witness to all the circumstances of their rencounter. They saluted, and began their fierce debate without delay. The engagement lasted long. They exchanged thrusts alternately, with equal skill and mettle. The victory, however, was on the side of Don Lope; he ran my master through, laid him helpless on the ground, and made his escape, with apparent satisfaction at the severe reprisal. I ran up to the unfortunate Don Matthias, and found him in a most desperate situation. The sight melted me. I could not help weeping at a catastrophe to which I had been an involuntary contributor. Nevertheless, with all sympathy, I had still my little wits about me. Home went I, in a hurry, without saying a word. I made up a bundle of my own goods and chattels, inadvertently slipping in some odd articles, belong-

R. de Los Ríos.

ing to my master: and when I had deposited this with the barber, where my dress, as a fine gentleman, was still lodged, I published the news of the fatal accident. Any gaper might have it for the trouble of listening; and, above all, I took care to make Rodriguez acquainted with it. He would have been extremely afflicted, but that his own proceedings in this delicate case required all his attention. He called the servants together, ordered them to follow him, and we went all together, to Saint Jerome's meadow. Don Matthias was taken up alive, but he died three hours after he was brought home. Thus ended the life of Signor Don Matthias de Silva, only for having taken a fancy to reading supposititious love-letters unseasonably.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW SERVICE AFTER THE DEATH OF DON MATTHIAS DE SILVA.

Some days after the funeral, the establishment was paid up and discharged. I fixed my headquarters with the little barber, in a very close connection, with whom I began to live. It seemed to promise more pleasure than with Melendez. As I was in no want of money, it was time enough to think of another place; besides, I had got to be rather nice on that head. I would not go into ser-

vice any more, but in families above the vulgar. In short, I was determined to inquire, very strictly, into the character of a new place. The best would not be too good; such high pretensions did the late valet of a young nobleman think himself entitled to assume above the common herd of servants.

Waiting till fortune should throw a situation in my way, worthy to be honored by my acceptance, I thought I could not do better than to devote my leisure to my charming Laura, whom I had not seen since the pleasant occurrence of our double discovery. I could not venture on dressing as Don Cæsar de Ribera; it would have been an act of madness to have assumed that style but as a disguise. Besides that, my own suit was not much out of condition; all smaller articles had propagated miraculously in the aforesaid bundle. I made myself up, therefore, with the barber's aid, as a sort of middle man, between Don Cæsar and Gil Blas. In this demi-character, I knocked at Arsenia's door. Laura was alone in the parlor where we had met last. Ah! is it you, cried she, as soon as she saw me; I thought you were lost. You have had leave to come and see me for this week; but it seems you are modest, and do not presume too much on your license.

I made my apology on the score of my master's death, with my own engagements consequent thereupon; and I added, in the spirit of gallantry, that in my greatest perplexities my lovely Laura had always been foremost in my thoughts. That being

so, said she, I have no more reproaches to make; and I will frankly own that I have thought of you. As soon as I was acquainted with the untimely end of Don Matthias, a plan occurred to me, probably not quite displeasing to you. I have heard my mistress say, some time ago, that she wanted a sort of man of business—a good arithmetician—to keep an exact account of our outgoings. I fixed my affections on your lordship; you seem exactly calculated for such an office. I feel myself, answered I, a steward by inspiration. I have read all that Aristotle has written on finance; and, as for reducing it to the modern system of book-keeping . . . . But, my dear girl, there is one impediment in the way. What impediment? said Laura. I have sworn, replied I, never again to live with a commoner; I have sworn by Styx, or something else as binding. If Jupiter could not burst the links of such an oath, judge whether a poor servant ought not to be bound by it. What do you mean by a commoner? rejoined the impetuous abigail; for what do you take us actresses? Do you take us for the ribs of the limbs of the law! for attorney's wives? I would have you to know, my friend, that actresses rank with the first nobility; being only common to the uncommon, and, therefore, though common, uncommonly illustrious.

On that footing, my uncommon commoner, said I, the post you have destined for me is mine; I shall not lower my dignity by accepting it. No; to be sure, said she; backwards and forwards between a puppy of fashion, and a she-wolf of the stage;

why, it is exactly preserving an equilibrium of rank in the creation. We are sympathetic animals, just on a level with the people of quality. We have our equipages in the same style; we give our little suppers on the same scale; and, on the broad ground, we are just of as much use in civil society. In fact, to draw a parallel between a marquis and a player through the space of four and twenty hours, they are just on a par. The marquis, for three fourths of the time, ranks above the player by political courtesy and sufferance; the player, during his hour on the stage, overtops the marquis in the part of an emperor or a king, which he better knows how to enact. Thus, there seems to be a balance between natural and political nobility, which places us at least on a level with the live lumber of the court. Yes, truly, replied I, you are a match for one another, there is no gainsaying it. Bless their dear hearts! the players are not men of straw, as I foolishly believed, and you have made my mouth water to serve such a worshipful fraternity. Well, then, resumed she, you have only to come back again in two days. That time will be sufficient to incline my mistress in your favor; I will speak up for you. She is a little under my influence; I do not fear bringing you under this roof.

I thanked Laura for her good dispositions. My gratitude took the readiest way to prove itself to her comprehension; and my tender thrillings expressed more than words. We had a pretty long conversation together, and it might have lasted till this time,

if a little skipping fellow had not come to tell my nymph of the side scenes, that Arsenia was inquiring for her. We parted. I left the house, in the sweet hope of soon living there scot-free; and my face was shown up again at the door in two days. I was looking out for you, said my accomplished scout, to assure you, that you are a messmate at this house. Come, follow me; I will introduce you to my mistress. At these words, she led me into a suite of five or six rooms on a floor, in a regular gradation of costly furniture and tasteful equipment.

What luxury! What magnificence! I thought myself in presence of a vice-queen, or, to mend the poverty of the comparison, in a fairy palace, where all the riches of the earth were collected. In fact, there were the productions of many people and of many countries, so that one might describe this residence as the temple of a goddess, whither every traveller brought some rare product of his native land, as a votive offering. The divinity was reclining on a voluptuous, satin sofa: she was lovely in my eyes, and pampered with the fumes of daily sacrifices. She was in a tempting dishabille, and her polished hands were elegantly busy about a new head-dress for her appearance that evening. Madam, said the abigail, here is that said steward; take my word for it you will never get one more to your liking. Arsenia looked at me very inquisitively, and did not find me disagreeable. Why, this is something, Laura! cried she; a very smart youth, truly; I foresee that we shall do very well together. Then

directing her discourse to me, Young man, added she, you suit me to a hair, and I have only one observation to make: you will be pleased with me, if I am so with you. I answered, that I should do my utmost to serve her to her heart's content. As I found that the bargain was struck, I went immediately to fetch in my own little accommodations, and returned to take formal possession.

CHAPTER X.

MUCH SUCH ANOTHER AS THE FOREGOING.

It was near the time of the doors opening. My mistress told me to attend her to the theatre with Laura. We went into her dressing-room, where she threw off her ordinary attire, and assumed a more splendid costume for the stage. When the performance began, Laura showed me the way, and seated herself by my side, where I could see and hear the actors to advantage. They disgusted me for the most part, doubtless because Don Pompeyo had prejudiced me against them. Several of them were loudly applauded, but the fable of the pig would now and then come across my mind.

Laura told me the names of the actors and actresses as they made their entrances. Nor did she stop there, for the hussey gave some highly-seasoned anecdotes into the bargain. Her characters were,

crack-brain for this, impertinent fellow for that. That delicate sample of sin, who depends on her wantonness for her attractions, goes by the name of Rosarda: a bad speculation for the company! She ought to be sent with the next cargo to New Spain, she may answer the purpose of a viceroy. Take particular notice of that brilliant star now coming forward; that magnificent setting sun, increasing in bulk as its fires become less livid. That is Casilda. If from that distant day when she first laid herself open to her lovers, she had required from each of them a brick to build a pyramid, like an ancient Egyptian princess, the edifice by this time would have mounted to the third heaven. In short, Laura tore all character to pieces by her scandal. Heaven forgive her wicked tongue! She blasphemed her own mistress.

And yet I must own my weakness. I was in love with the wench, though her morals were not strictly pure. She scandalized with so winning a malignity that one liked her the better for it. Off went the jill-flirt between the acts, to see if Arsenia wanted her; but instead of coming straight back to her place, she amused herself behind the scenes, in laying herself out for the little flatteries of all the wheedling fellows. I dogged her once, and found that she had a very large acquaintance. No less than three players did I reckon up, who stopped to chat with her one after the other, and they seemed to be on a very improvable footing. This was not quite so well; and, for the first time in my life, I felt

what jealousy was. I returned to my seat so absent and out of spirits, that Laura remarked it as soon as she came back to me. What is the matter, Gil Blas? said she with astonishment; what blue devil has perched upon your shoulder in my absence? You look gloomy and out of temper. My fairy queen, answered I, it is not without reason; you have an ugly kick in your gallop. I have observed you with the players . . . So, so! An admirable subject for a long face, interrupted she with a laugh. What! That is your trouble is it? Why really! You are a very silly swain; but you will get better notions among us. You will fall by degress into our easy manners. No jealousy, my dear creature; you will be completely laughed out of it in the theatrical world. The passion is scarcely known there. Fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, and cousins, are all upon a liberal plan of community, and often make a strange jumble of relationships.

After having warned me to take no umbrage, but to look at everything like a philosophical spectator, she vowed that I was the happy mortal who had found the way to her heart. She then declared that she should love me always, and only me. On this assurance, which a man might have doubted without criminal scepticism, I promised her not to be alarmed any more, and kept my word. I saw her, on that very evening, whisper and giggle with more men than one. At the end of the play we returned home with our mistress, whither Florimonde came soon after to supper, with three old noblemen and a

player. Besides Laura and myself, the establishment consisted of a cook-maid, a coachman, and a little footboy. We all labored in our respective vocations. The lady of the frying-pan, no less an adept than dame Jacintha, was assisted in her cookery by the coachman. The waiting-woman and the little footboy laid the cloth, and I set out the sideboard, magnificently furnished with plate, offered up at the shrine of our green-room goddess. There was every variety of wines, and I played the cup-bearer, to show my mistress the versatility of my talents. I sweated at the impudence of the actresses during supper; they gave themselves quality airs, and affected the tone of high life. Far from giving their guests all their style and titles, they did not even vouchsafe a simple "Your lordship," but called them familiarly by their proper names. To be sure, the old fools encouraged their vanity by forgetting their own distance. The player, for his part, in the habits of the heroic cast, lived on equal terms with them; he challenged them to drink, and in every respect took the upper hand. In good truth, said I to myself, while Laura was demonstrating the equality of the marquis and the comedian during the day, she might have drawn a still stronger inference for the night, since they pass it so merrily in drinking together.

Arsenia and Florimonde were naturally frolicsome. A thousand broad hints escaped them, intermingled with small favors, and then a coquettish revolt at their own freedom, which were all seasoned exactly

to the taste of these old sinners. While my mistress was entertaining one of them with a little harmless toying, her friend, between the other elders, had not taken the cue of Susanna. While I was contemplating this picture, which had but too many attractions for a knowing youth like me, the dessert was brought in. Then I set the bottles and glasses on the table, and made my escape to sup with Laura, who was waiting for me. How now, Gil Blas, said she, what do you think of those noblemen above stairs? Doubtless, answered I, they are deeply smitten with Arsenia and Florimonde. No, replied she, they are old sensualists, who hang about our sex without any particular attachment. All they ask is some little frivolous compliance, and they are generous enough to pay well for the least trifle of amorous endearment. Heaven be praised! Florimonde and my mistress are at present without any serious engagements; I mean that they have no husband-like lovers, who expect to engross all the pleasures of a house, because they stand to the expenses. For my part, I am very glad of it: and maintain that a sensible woman of the world ought to refuse all such monopolies. Why take a master? It is better to support an establishment by retail trade, than to confine one's self to chamber practice on such terms.

When Laura's tongue was wound up,—and it was seldom down,—words seemed to cost her nothing. What a glorious volubility! She told a thousand stories of the actresses belonging to the prince's com-

pany; and I gathered from her whole drift that I could not be better situated to take a scientific view of the cardinal vices. Unfortunately, I was at an age when they inspire but little horror; and this abigail had the art of coloring her corruptions so lusciously, as to hide their deformities, and heighten their meretricious lure. She had not time to open the tenth part of her theatrical budget, for she did not talk more than three hours. The senators and the player went away with Florimonde, whom they saw safe home.

When they were gone, my mistress said to me: Here, Gil Blas, are ten pistoles to go to market to-morrow. Five or six of our gentlemen and ladies are to dine here, take care that we are well served. Madam, answered I, with this sum there shall be a banquet for the whole troop. My friend, replied Arsenia, correct your phraseology; you must say company, not troop. A troop of robbers, a troop of beggars, a troop of authors; but a *company* of comedians, especially when you have to mention the actors of Madrid. I begged my mistress's pardon for having used so disrespectful a term, and entreated her to excuse my ignorance. I protested that henceforward, when I spoke collectively of so august a body, I would always say the "company."

CHAPTER XI.

A THEATRICAL LIFE AND AN AUTHOR'S LIFE.

I TOOK the field the next morning, to open my campaign as steward. It was a fish day, for which reason I bought some good fat chickens, rabbits, partridges, and every variety of game. As the gentlemen of the sock and buskin are not on the best possible terms with the church, they are not over scrupulous in their observance of the rubric. I brought home provisions more than enough for a dozen portly gentlemen to have fasted on during a whole Lent. The cook had a good morning's work. While she was getting dinner ready, Arsenia got up and spent the early part of the day at her toilet. At noon came two of the players, Signor Rosimiro and Signor Ricardo. Afterwards, two actresses, Constance and Celinaura; then entered Florimonde, attended by a man who had all the appearance of a most spruce cavalier. He had his hair dressed in the most elegant manner, his hat set off with a fashionable plume, very tight breeches, and a shirt with a laced frill. His gloves and his handkerchief were in the hilt of his sword, and he wore his cloak with a grace altogether peculiar to himself.

With a prepossessing physiognomy, and a good person, there was something extraordinary in the first blush of him. This gentleman, said I to myself, must be an original. I was not mistaken; his

singularities were striking. On his entrance, he ran, with open arms, and embraced the company, male and female, one after another. His grimaces were more extravagant than any I had yet seen in this region of foppery. My prediction was not falsified by his discourse. He dwelt with fondness on every syllable he uttered, and pronounced his words in an emphatic tone, with gestures and glances artfully adapted to the subject. I had the curiosity to ask Laura who this strange figure might be. I forgive you, said she, this instance of an inquisitive disposition. It is impossible to see and to hear Signor Carlos Alonso de la Ventoleria for the first time, without having such a natural longing. I will paint him to the life. In the first place, he was originally a player. He left the stage through caprice, and has since repented in sober sadness of the step. Did you notice his dark hair? Every thread of it is penciled, as well as his eyebrows and his whiskers. He was born in the reign of Saturn's father, in the age before the golden; but as there were no parish registers at that time, he avails himself of the primitive barbarism, and dates at least twenty centuries below the true epoch. Moreover, his self-sufficiency keeps pace with his antiquity. He passed the olympiads of his youth in the grossest ignorance; but taking a fancy to become learned about the Christian era, he engaged a private tutor, who taught him to spell in Greek and Latin. Nay, more, he knows by heart an infinite number of good stories, which he has given so often as genuine, that he

actually begins to believe them himself. They are eternally pressed into the service, and it may truly be said that his wit shines at the expense of his memory. He is thought to be a great actor. I am willing to believe it implicitly, but I must own he is not to my taste. He declaims here sometimes; and I have observed, among other defects, an affectation in his delivery, with a tremulousness of voice bordering on the antiquated and ridiculous.

Such was the portrait, drawn by my abigail of this honorary spouter; and never was mortal of a more stately carriage. He prided himself, too, on being an agreeable companion. He never was at a loss for a commodity of trite remarks, which he delivered with an air of authority. On the other hand, the Thespian fraternity were not much addicted to silence. They began canvassing their absent colleagues in a manner little consistent with charity, it must be owned; but this is a failing pardonable in players as well as in authors. The fire grew brisk and the satire personal. You have not heard, ladies, said Rosimiro, a new stroke of our dear brother Cesarino. This very morning he bought silk stockings, ribbons, and laces, and sent them to rehearsal by a little page, as a present from a countess. What a knavish trick! said Signor de la Ventoleria, with a smile made up of fatuity and conceit. In my time there was more honesty: we never thought of descending to such impositions. To be sure, women of fashion were tender of our inventive faculties, nor did they leave such purchases

to be made out of our own pockets; it was their whim. By the honor of our house, said Ricardo, in the same strain, that whim of theirs is lasting, and if it were allowable to kiss and tell . . . But one must be secret on these occasions; above all when persons of a certain rank are concerned.

Gentlemen, interrupted Florimonde, a truce, if you please, with your conquests and successes, they are known over the whole earth. Apropos of Ismene. It is said that the nobleman who has fooled away so much money upon her, has at length recovered his senses. Yes indeed, exclaimed Constance; and I can tell you besides that she has lost, by the same stroke, a snug little hero of the counting-house, whose ruin would otherwise have been signed and sealed. I have the thing from the first hand. Her Mercury made an unfortunate mistake, for he carried a tender invitation to each, and delivered them wrong. These were great losses, my darling, quoth Florimonde. O! as for that of the lord, replied Constance, it is a very trifling matter. The man of blood had almost run through his estate, but the little fellow with the pen behind his ear was but just coming into play. He had never been fleeced before, it is a pity he should have escaped so easily.

Such was the tenor of the conversation before dinner, and it was not much mended in its morality at table. As I should never have done with the recital of all their ribaldry and nonsense, the reader will excuse the omission, and pass on to the entrance of a poor devil, yclept an author, who called just before the cloth was taken away.

Our little footboy came, and said to my mistress in an audible voice, Madam, a man in a dirty shirt, splashed up to his middle, with very much the look of a poet, saving your presence, wants to speak to you. Let him walk up, answered Arsenia. Keep your seats, gentlemen, it is only an author. To be sure so it was, one whose tragedy had been accepted, and he was bringing my mistress her part. His name was Pedro de Moya. On coming into the room he made five or six low bows to the company, who neither rose nor took the least notice of him. Arsenia just returned his superabundant civilities with a slight inclination of the head. He came forward with tremor and embarrassment. He dropped his gloves and let his hat fall. He ventured to pick them up again, then advanced towards my mistress, and presenting to her a paper with more ceremony than a defendant an affidavit to the judge of the court: Madam, said he, have the goodness to receive under your protection the part I take the liberty of offering you. She stretched out her hand for it with cold and contemptuous indifference; nor did she condescend even to notice the compliment by a look.

But our author was not disheartened. Seizing this opportunity to distribute the cast, he gave one character to Rosimiro and another to Florimonde, who treated him just as genteelly as Arsenia had done. On the contrary, the low comedian, a very pleasant fellow, as those gentlemen for the most part affect to be, insulted him with the most cutting sar-

casms. Pedro de Moya was not made of stone. Yet he dared not take up the aggressor, lest his piece should suffer for it. He withdrew without saying a word, but stung to the quick, as it seemed to me, by his reception. He could not fail, in the transports of his anger, mentally to apostrophize the players as they deserved: and the players, when he was gone, began to talk of authors in return with infinite deference and kindness. It should seem, said Florimonde, as if Signor de Moya did not go away very well pleased.

Well! madam, cried Rosimiro, and why should you trouble yourself about that? Are we to study the feelings of authors? If we were to admit them upon equal terms, it would only be the way to spoil them. I know that contemptible squad; I know them of old: they would soon forget their distance. There is no dealing with them but as slaves; and as for tiring their patience, never fear that. Though they may take themselves off in a pet sometimes, the itch of writing brings them back again; and they are raised to the third heaven, if we will but condescend to support their pieces. You are right, said Arsenia; we never lose an author till we have made his fortune. When that is done, as soon as we have provided for the ungrateful devils, they get to be in good case, and then they run restive. Luckily, the manager does not break his heart after them, and one is just as good as another to the public.

These liberal and sagacious remarks met with their

full share of approbation. It was carried unanimously that authors, though treated rather too scurvily behind the scenes, were on the whole the obliged persons. These fretters of an hour upon the stage ranked the inhabitant of Parnassus below themselves; and malice could not degrade him lower.

CHAPTER XII.

GIL BLAS ACQUIRES A RELISH FOR THE THEATRE, AND TAKES A FULL SWING OF ITS PLEASURES, BUT SOON BECOMES DISGUSTED.

THE party sat at the table till it was time to go to the theatre. I went after them, and saw the play again that evening. I took such delight in it, that I was for attending every day. I never missed, and by degrees got accustomed to the actors. Such is the force of habit. I was particularly delighted with those who were most artificial and unnatural; nor was I singular in my taste.

The beauties of composition affected me much on the same principle as the excellence of representation. There were some pieces with which I was enraptured. I liked, among others, those which brought all the cardinals or the twelve peers of France upon the stage. I got hold of striking passages in these incomparable performances. I recollect that in two days I learned by heart a whole play, called *The Queen of Flowers*. The Rose, who was the

queen, had the Violet for her maid of honor, and the Jessamine for her prime minister. I could conceive nothing more elegant or refined: such productions seemed to be the triumph of our Spanish wit and invention.

I was not content to store my memory and discipline my mind with the choicest selections from these dramatic masterpieces: but I was bent on polishing my taste to the highest perfection. To secure this grand object, I listened with greedy ears to every word which fell from the lips of the players. If they commended a piece, I was ravished by it: but suppose they pronounced it bad? why then I maintained that it was infernal stuff. I conceived that they must determine the merits of a play, as a jeweller the water of a diamond. And yet the tragedy by Pedro de Moya was eminently successful, though they had predicted its entire miscarriage. This, however, was no disparagement of their critical skill in my estimation; and I had rather believe the audience to be divested of common sense, than doubt the infallibility of the company. But they assured me on all hands, that their judgments were usually confirmed by the rule of contraries. It seemed to be a maxim with them, to set their faces point-blank against the taste of the public; and as a proof of this, there were a thousand cases in point of unexpected successes and failures. All these testimonies were scarcely sufficient to undeceive me.

I shall never forget what happened one day at the first representation of a new comedy. The perform-

ers had pronounced it uninteresting and tedious; they had even prophesied that it would not be heard to the end. Under this impression, they got through the first act, which was loudly applauded. This was very astonishing! They played the second act; the audience liked it still better than the first. The actors were confounded. What the devil, said Rosimiro, this comedy succeeds! At last they went on in the third act, which rose as a third act ought to rise. I am quite thrown upon my back, said Ricardo; we thought this piece would not be relished; and all the world are mad after it. Gentlemen, said one of the players archly, it is because we happened accidentally to overlook all the wit.

From this time I held my opinion no longer of the players as competent judges, and began to appreciate their merit more truly than they had estimated that of the authors. All the lampoons which were current about them were fully justified. The actors and actresses ran riot on the applause of the town, and stood so high in their own conceit, as to think that they conferred a favor by appearing on the boards. I was shocked at their public misconduct; but unfortunately reconciled myself too easily to their private manners, and plunged into debauchery. How could I do otherwise? Every word they uttered was poison in the ears of youth, and every scene that was presented, an alluring picture of corruption. Had I been a stranger to what passed with Casilda, with Constance, and with the other actresses, Arsenia's house alone would have been sufficient for my ruin.

Besides the old noblemen of whom I have spoken, there came thither young debauchees of fashion, who forestalled their inheritances by the disinterested mediation of money-lenders: and sometimes we had officers under government, who were so far from receiving fees, as at their public boards, that they paid most exorbitant ones for the privilege of mixing with such worshipful society.

Florimonde, who lived at next door, dined and supped with Arsenia every day. Their long intimacy surprised every one. Coquettes were not thought usually to maintain so good an understanding with each other. It was concluded that they would quarrel, sooner or later, about some paramour; but such reasoners could not see into the hearts of these exemplary friends. They were united in the bonds of indissoluble love. Instead of harboring jealousy, like other women, they had everything in common. They had rather divide the plunder of mankind, than childishly fall out, and contend for trumpery, as hearts and affections.

Laura, after the example of these two illustrious partners, turned the fresh season of youth to the best advantage. She had told me that I should see strange doings. And yet I did not take up the jealous part. I had promised to adopt the principles of the company on that score. For some days I kept my thoughts to myself. I only just took the liberty of asking her the names of the men whom she favored with her private ear. She always told me that they were uncles or cousins. From what a prolific

family was she sprung! King Priam had no luck in propagation, compared with her ancestors. Nor did this precious abigail confine herself to her uncles and cousins: she went now and then to lay a trap for unwary aliens, and personate the widow of quality under the auspices of the discreet old dowager above mentioned. In short, Laura, to hit off her character exactly, was just as young, just as pretty, and just as loose as her mistress, who had no other advantage over her than that of figuring in a more public capacity.

I was borne down by the torrent for three weeks, and ran the career of dissipation in my turn. But I must at the same time say for myself, that in the midst of pleasure I frequently felt the still small voice of conscience, arising from the impression of a serious education, which mixed gall in the Circean cup. Riot could not altogether get the better of remorse: on the contrary, the pangs of the last grew keener with the more shameful indulgence of the first; and, by a happy effect of my temperament, the disorders of a theatrical life began to make me shudder. Ah! wretch, said I to myself, is it thus that you make good the hopes of your family? Is it not enough to have thwarted their pious intentions, by not following your destined course of life as an instructor of youth? Need your condition of a servant hinder you from living decently and soberly? Are such monsters of iniquity fit companions for you? Envy, hatred, and avarice are predominant here; intemperance and idleness have purchased

the fee-simple there; the pride of some is aggravated into the most barefaced impudence, and modesty is turned out of doors, by the common consent of all. The business is settled: I will not live any longer with the seven deadly sins.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

GIL BLAS, NOT BEING ABLE TO RECONCILE HIMSELF TO THE MORALS OF THE ACTRESSES, QUITS ARSENIA, AND GETS INTO A MORE REPUTABLE SERVICE.

A SURVIVING spark of honor and of religion, in the midst of so general depravity, made me resolve not only to leave Arsenia, but even to abjure all commerce with Laura, whom yet I could not cease to love, though I was well aware of her daily inconstancy. Happy the man who can thus profit by those appeals, which occasionally interrupt the headlong course of his pleasures! One fine morning, I made up my bundle, and, without reckoning with Arsenia, who indeed owed me next to nothing, without taking leave of my dear Laura, I burst from that mansion, which smelt of brimstone and fire reserved for the wicked. I had no sooner taken so virtuous a step, than providence interfered in my behalf. I met the steward of my late master, Don Matthias, and greeted him; he knew me again at once, and stopped to enquire where I lived. I answered that I had just left my place; that after staying near a month with Arsenia, whose manners did not at all suit me, I was come away by a sudden

impulse of virtue, to save my innocence. The steward, just as if he had been himself of a religious cast, commended my scruples, and offered me a place much to my advantage, since I was so chaste and honest a youth. He kept his word, and introduced me, on that very day, into the family of Don Vincent de Gusman, with whose agent he was acquainted.

I could not have got into a better service; nor did I repent in the sequel of having accepted the situation. Don Vincent was a very rich old nobleman, who had lived many years unincumbered with lawsuits or with a wife. The physicians had removed the last plague out of the way, in their attempts to rid her of a cough, which might have lasted a great while longer, if the remedies had not been more fatal than the disease. Far from thinking of the holy state a second time, he gave himself up entirely to the education of his only daughter Aurora, who was then entering her twenty-sixth year, and might pass for an accomplished person. With beauty above the common, she had an excellent and highly-cultivated understanding. Her father was a poor creature as to intellect, but he possessed the happy talent of looking well after his affairs. One fault he had, of a kind excusable in old men: he was an incessant talker, especially about war and fighting. If that string was unfortunately touched in his presence, in a moment he blew his heroic trumpet, and his hearers might think themselves lucky if they compounded for a gazette extraordinary of two sieges and three

battles. As he had spent two thirds of his life in the service, his memory was an inexhaustible depot of various facts; but the patience of the listeners did not always keep pace with the perseverance of the relater. The stories, sufficiently prolix themselves, were still further spun out by stuttering, so that the manner was still less happy than the matter. In all other respects, I never met with a nobleman of a more amiable character: his temper was even; he was neither obstinate nor capricious; the general alternative of men in the higher ranks of life. Though a good economist, he lived like a gentleman. His establishment was composed of several men servants, and three women in waiting on Aurora. I soon discovered that the steward of Don Matthias had procured me a good post, and my only anxiety was to establish myself firmly in it. I took all possible pains to feel the ground under my feet, and to study the characters of the whole household: then regulating my conduct by my discoveries, I was not long in ingratiating myself with my master and all the servants.

I had been with Don Vincent above a month, when it struck me that his daughter was very particular in her notice of me above all the servants in the family. Whenever her eyes happened accidently to meet mine, they seemed to be suffused with a certain partial complacency, which did not enter into her silent communications with the vulgar. Had it not been for my haunts among the coxcombs of the theatrical tribe and their hangers-on, it would never

have entered into my head that Aurora should throw away a thought on me: but my brain had been a little turned among those gentry, from whose libertine suspicions of ladies of the noblest birth are not always held sacred. If, said I, those chronicles of the age are to be believed, fancy and high blood lead women of quality a dance, in which they sometimes join hands with unequal partners: how do I know but my young mistress may caper to a tune of my piping? But no; it cannot be so, neither. This is not one of your Messalinas, who, derogating from the loftiness of ancestry, unworthily let down their regards to the dust, and sully their pure honor without a blush: but rather one of those virtuously apprehensive, yet tender-hearted girls, who encircle their softness within the insurmountable pale of delicacy; yet think it no tampering with chastity, to inspire and cherish a sentimental flame, interesting to the heart without being dangerous to the morals.

Such were my ideas of my mistress, without knowing exactly whether they were right or wrong. And yet, when we met, she was continually caught with a smile of satisfaction on her countenance. Without passing for a fop, a man might give in to such flattering appearances; and a philosophical apathy was not to be expected from me. I conceived Aurora to have been deeply smitten with my irresistible attractions, and looked on myself henceforth in the light of a favored attendant, whose servitude was to be sweetened by the balmy infusion of love. To appear in some measure less unworthy of the bless-

ings, which propitious fortune had kept in store for me, I began to take better care of my person than I had done heretofore. I laid out my slender stock of money in linen, pomatums, and essences. The first thing in the morning was to prank up and perfume myself, so as not to be in an undress in case of being sent for into the presence of my mistress. With these attentions to personal elegance and other dexterous strokes in the art of pleasing, I flattered myself that the moment of my bliss was not very distant.

Among Aurora's women there was one who went by the name of Ortiz. This was an old dowager, who had been a fixture in Don Vincent's family for more than twenty years. She had been about his daughter from her childhood, and still held the office of duenna; but she no longer performed the invidious part of the duty. On the contrary, instead of blazoning, as formerly, Aurora's little indiscretions, her skill was now employed in throwing them into shade. One evening, Dame Ortiz, having watched her opportunity of speaking to me without observation, said, in a low voice, that if I was close and trustworthy, I had only to be in the garden at midnight, when a scene would be laid open in which I should not be sorry to be an actor. I answered the duenna, pressing her hand significantly, that I would not fail, and we parted in a hurry for fear of surprise. How the hours lagged from this moment till supper time, though we supped very early. Then again, from supper to my master's bed time! It should

seem as if the march of the whole family was timed to a *largo* movement. By way of helping forward the fidgets, when Don Vincent withdrew to his chamber, the army was put on the war establishment, and we were obliged to fight the campaigns in Portugal over again, though my ears had not recovered from the din of the last cannonade. But a favor from which I had hitherto made my escape, was reserved for this eventful evening. He repeated the army list from beginning to end, with copious digressions on the exploits of those officers who had distinguished themselves in his time. O, my poor tympanum! It was almost cracked before we got to the end. Time, however, will wear out even an old man's story, and he went to bed. I immediately went to my own little chamber, whence there was a way into the garden by a private staircase. I depended on my purchase of perfumery for overcoming the effluvia of the day's drudgery, and put on a clean shirt highly scented. When every invention had been pressed into the service to render my person worthy of its destiny, and cherish the fondness of my mistress, I went to the appointment.

Ortiz was not there. I concluded that, tired of waiting for me, she had gone back to her chamber, and that the happy moments of philandering was over. I laid all the blame on Don Vincent; but just as I was singing Te Deum backwards for his campaigns, I heard the clock strike ten. To be sure it must be wrong! It could not be less than one o'clock. Yet I was so egregiously out in my reckon-

ing, that full a quarter of an hour afterwards, I counted ten upon my fingers by the clock at next door. Vastly well, thought I to myself, I have only two complete hours to ventilate my passion here *al fresco*. At least they shall not complain of me for want of punctuality. What shall I do with myself till twelve? Suppose we take a turn about this garden and settle our cues in the delicious drama just going to be brought on the stage; it is my first appearance in so principal a character. I am not yet sufficiently well read in the crotchets of your quality dames. I know how to tickle a girl in a stuff gown, or an actress: You swagger up to them with an easy, impudent assurance, and pop the question without making any bones of it. But one must take a female of condition on a very different tack. It seems to me, that in this case the happy swain must be well bred, attentive, tender, respectful, without degenerating into bashfulness. Instead of taking his happiness by storm, he must plant his amorous desires in ambuscade, and wait till the garrison is asleep, and the outworks defenceless.

Thus it was that I argued, and such were the preconcerted plans of my campaign with Aurora. After a few tedious minutes, according to my calculation, I was to experience the ecstasy of finding myself at the feet of that lovely creature, and pouring forth a torrent of impassioned nonsense. I scraped together in my memory all the clap-traps in our stock-plays, which were most successful with the audience, and might best set off my pretensions to spirit and gal-

lantry. I trusted to my own adroitness for the application, and hoped, after the example of some players in the list of my acquaintance, bringing only a stock of memory into the trade, to deal upon credit for my wit. While my imagination was engrossed by these thoughts, which kept my impatience at bay much more successfully than the commentaries of my modern Cæsar, I heard the clock strike eleven. This was some encouragement, and I fell back to my meditations, sometimes sauntering carelessly about, and sometimes throwing myself at my length on the turf, in a bower at the bottom of the garden. At length it struck twelve, the long-expected hour, big with my high destiny. Some seconds after, Ortiz, as punctual as myself, though less impatient, made her appearance. Signor Gil Blas, said she accosting me, how long have you been here? Two hours, answered I. Indeed! Truly, replied she, laughing, you are very exact; there is a pleasure in making nocturnal assignations with you. Yet you may assure yourself, continued she more gravely, that you cannot pay too dear for such good fortune as that of which I am the messenger. My mistress wants to have some private talk with you. I shall not anticipate what may be the subject: that is a secret which you must learn from no lips but her own. Follow me; I will show you into her chamber. With these words the duenna took me by the hand, and led me mysteriously into her lady's apartment through a little door, of which she had the key.

CHAPTER II.

AURORA'S RECEPTION OF GIL BLAS. THEIR CONVERSATION.

I FOUND Aurora in an undress. I saluted her in the most respectful manner, and threw as much elegance into my attitude as I had to throw. She received me with the most winning affability, made me sit down by her against all my remonstrances, and told her ambassadors to go into another room. After this opening, which seemed highly encouraging to my cause, she entered upon the business. Gil Blas, said she, you must have perceived how favorably I have regarded and distinguished you from all the rest of my father's servants; and, though my looks had not betrayed my partial dispositions towards you, my proceeding of this night would leave you no room to doubt them.

I did not give her time to say a word more. It struck me that, as a man of feeling, I ought to spare her trembling diffidence the cruel necessity of explaining her sentiments in more direct terms. I rose from my chair in a transport, and, throwing myself at Aurora's feet, like a tragedy hero of the Grecian stage, when he supplicates the heroine "by her knees," exclaimed in a declamatory tone, Ah! madam, could it be possible that Gil Blas, hitherto the whirligig of fortune, and football of embattled nature, should have called down upon his head the exquisite felicity of inspiring sentiments. . . . Do

not speak so loud, interrupted my mistress with a laugh of mingled apprehension and ridicule, you will wake my women who sleep in the adjoining chamber. Get up, take your seat, and hear me out without putting in a word. Yes, Gil Blas, pursued she resuming her gravity, you have my best wishes; and to show you how deep you are in my good graces, I will confide to you a secret on which depends the repose of my life. I am in love with a young gentleman, possessing every charm of person and face, and noble by birth. His name is Don Lewis Pacheco. I have seen him occasionally in the public walks and at the theatre, but I have never conversed with him. I do not even know what his private character may be, or what bad qualities he may have. It is on this subject that I wish to be informed. I stand in need of a person to enquire diligently into his morals, and give me a true and particular account. I make choice of you. Surely I run no risk in entrusting you with this commission. I hope that you will acquit yourself with dexterity and prudence, and that I shall never repent of giving you my confidence.

My mistress concluded thus, and waited for my answer to her proposal. I had been disconcerted in the first instance at so disagreeable a mistake; but I soon recovered my scattered senses, and surmounting the confusion which rashness always occasions when it is unlucky, I exposed to sale such a cargo of zeal for the lady's interests, I devoted myself with so martyr-like an enthusiasm to her service, that if she did not absolutely forget my silly vanity in the

thought of having pleased her, at least she had reason to believe that I knew how to make amends for a piece of folly. I asked only two days to bring her a satisfactory account of Don Lewis. After which Dame Ortiz, answering the bell, showed me the way back into the garden, and said, on taking leave, Good night, Gil Blas. I need not caution you to be in time at the next appointment. I have sufficient experience of your punctuality on these occasions.

I returned to my chamber, not without some little mortification at finding my voluptuous anticipations all divested of even their ideal sweetness. I was nevertheless sufficiently in my senses to reflect soberly that it was more in my element to be the trusty scout of my mistress than her lover. I even thought that this adventure might lead to something further; that the middle men in the trade of love usually pocket a tolerable per centage; and went to bed with the resolution of doing whatever Aurora required of me. For this purpose I went abroad the next morning. The residence of so distinguished a personage as Don Lewis was not difficult to find out. I made my enquiries about him in the neighborhood, but the people who came in my way could not satisfy my curiosity to the full, so that it was necessary to resume my search diligently on the following day. I was in better luck. I met a lad of my acquaintance by chance in the street; we stopped for a little gossip. There passed by in the very nick one of his friends, who came up and told him that he was just

turned away from the family of Don Joseph Pacheco, Don Lewis's father, about a paltry remnant of wine, which he had been accused of drinking. I would not lose so fair an occasion of learning all I wanted to know, and plied my questions so successfully as to go home with much self-complacency at my punctual performance of my engagements with my mistress. It was on the coming night that I was to see her again at the same hour, and in the same manner as the first time. I was not in such a confounded hurry this evening. Far from writhing with impatience under the prolixity of my old commander, I led him on to the charge. I waited for midnight with the greatest indifference in the world, and it was not till all the clocks within ear-shot had struck that I crept down into the garden, without any nonsense of pomatum and perfumery. That foppery was completely cured.

At the place of meeting I found the very faithful duenna, who sneeringly reproached me with a defalcation in my zeal. I made her no answer, but suffered myself to be conducted into Aurora's chamber. She asked me, as soon as I made my appearance, whether I had gained any intelligence of Don Lewis. Yes, madam, said I, and you shall have the sum total in two words. I must first tell you, that he will soon set out for Salamanca, to finish his studies. The young gentleman is brimful of honor and probity. As for the valor, he cannot be deficient there, since he is a man of birth and a Castilian. Besides this, he has an infinite deal of wit, and is very agree-

able in his manners; but there is one thing which can scarcely be to your liking. He is pretty much in the fashion of our young nobility here at court — exemplarily catholic in his devotions to the fair. Have you not heard that at his age he has already been tenant-at-will to two actresses? What is it you tell me? replied Aurora. What shocking conduct! But do you know for certain, Gil Blas, that he leads so dissolute a life? O! there is no doubt of it, madam, rejoined I. A servant, turned off this morning, told me so, and servants are very plain dealers when the failings of their masters are the topic. Besides, he keeps company with Don Alexo Segiar, Don Antonio Centellés, and Don Fernando de Gamboa; that single circumstance proves his libertinism with all the force of demonstration. It is enough, Gil Blas, said my mistress with a sigh; on your report I am determined to struggle with my unworthy passion. Though it has already struck deep root in my heart, I do not despair of tearing it forcibly from its bed. Go, added she, putting into my hands a small purse, none of the lightest, take this for your pains. Beware of betraying my secret. Consider it as entrusted to your silence.

I assured my mistress that she might be perfectly easy on that score, for I was the Harpocrates of confidential servants. After this compliment to myself, I withdrew with no small eagerness to investigate the contents of the purse. There were twenty pistoles. It struck me all at once that Aurora would surely have given me more had I been the bearer of

pleasant tidings, since she paid so handsomely for a blank in the lottery. I was sorry not to have adopted the policy of the pleaders in the courts, who sometimes paint the cheek of truth when her natural complexion is inclined to be cadaverous. It was a pity to have stifled an amour in the birth which might in its growth have been so profitable. Yet I had the comfort of finding myself reimbursed the expense so unseasonably incurred in perfumery and washes.

CHAPTER III.

A GREAT CHANGE AT DON VINCENT'S. AURORA'S STRANGE RESOLUTION.

It happened soon after this adventure that Signor Don Vincent fell sick. Independent of his very advanced age, the symptoms of his disorder appeared in so formidable a shape that a fatal termination was but too probable. From the beginning of his illness he was attended by two of the most eminent physicians in Madrid. One was Doctor Andros, and the other Doctor Oquetos. They considered the case with due solemnity; and both agreed, after a strict investigation, that the humors were in a state of mutiny, but this was the only thing about which they did agree. The proper practice, said Andros, is to purge the humors, though raw, with all possible expedition, while they are in a violent agitation of flux

and reflux, for fear of their fixing upon some noble part. Oquetos maintained, on the contrary, that we must wait till the humors were ripened before it would be safe to go upon purgatives. But your method, replied the first speaker, is directly in the teeth of the rules laid down by the prince of medicine. Hippocrates recommends purging in the most burning fever from the very first attack, and says in plain terms that no time is to be lost in purging when the humors are in οργασμος, that is to say, in a state of fermentation. Ay! there is your mistake, replied Oquetos. Hippocrates by the word οργασμος does not mean the fermentation, he means rather the concoction of the humors.

Thereupon our doctors got heated. One quotes the Geeek text, and cites all the authors who have explained it in his sense; the other, trusting to a Latin translation, takes up the controversy in a still more positive tone. Which of the two to believe? Don Vincent was not the man to decide that question. In the meantime, finding himself obliged to choose, he gave his confidence to the party who had despatched the greatest number of patients—I mean the elder of the two. Andros, the younger, immediately withdrew, not without flinging out a few satirical taunts at his senior on the οργασμος. Here then was Oquetos triumphant. As he was a professor of the Sangrado school, he began by bleeding copiously, waiting till the humors were ripened before he went upon purgatives. But death, fearing, no doubt, lest this reserve of purgatives should turn the

fortunes of the day, got the start of the concoction, and secured his victory over my master by a coup-de-main. Such was the final close of Signor Don Vincent, who lost his life because his physician did not know Greek.

Aurora, having buried her father with a pomp suited to the dignity of his birth, administered to his effects. Having the whole arrangement of everything in her own breast, she discharged some of the servants with rewards proportioned to their services, and soon retired to her castle on the Tagus, between Sacedon and Buendia. I was among the number of those whom she kept, and who made part of her country establishment. I had even the good fortune to become a principal agent in the plot. In spite of my faithful report on the subject of Don Lewis, she still harbored a partiality for that bewitching young fellow; or rather, for want of spirit to combat her passion in the first instance, she surrendered at discretion. There was no longer any need of taking precautions to speak with me in private. Gil Blas, said she, with a sigh, I can never forget Don Lewis. Let me make what effort I will to banish him from my thoughts, he is present to them without intermission, not as you have described him, plunged in every variety of licentious riot, but just what my fancy would paint him, — tender, loving, constant. She betrayed considerable emotion in uttering these words, and could not help shedding tears. My fountains were very near playing from mere sympathy. There was no better way of paying my court than by

appearing sensibly touched at her distress. My friend, continued she, after having wiped her loving eyes, your nature is evidently cast in a benevolent mould; and I am so well satisfied with your zeal that it shall not go unrewarded. Your assistance, my dear Gil Blas, is more necessary to me than ever. You must be made acquainted with a plan which engrosses all my thoughts, though it will appear strangely eccentric. You are to know that I mean to set out for Salamanca as soon as possible. There, my design is to assume the disguise of a fashionable young fellow, and to make acquaintance with Pacheco under the name of Don Felix. I shall endeavor to gain his confidence and friendship, and lead the conversation incidentally to the subject of Aurora de Guzman, for whose cousin I shall pass. He may perhaps express a wish to see her, and there is the point on which I expect the interest to turn. We will have two apartments in Salamanca. In one I shall be Don Felix, in the other, Aurora; and I flatter myself that by presenting my person before Don Lewis, sometimes under the semblance of a man, sometimes in all the natural and artificial attractions of my own sex, I may bring him by little and little to the proposed end of my stratagem. I am perfectly aware that my project is extravagant in the highest degree, but my passion drives me headlong; and the innocence of my intentions renders me insensible to all compunctious feelings of virgin apprehension respecting so hazardous a step.

I was exactly in the same mind with Aurora re-

specting the extravagance of her scheme. Yet, unreasonable as it might seem to reflecting persons like myself, there was no occasion for me to play the schoolmaster. On the contrary, I began to practice all the arts of a thorough-bred special pleader, and undertook to magnify this hair-brained pursuit into a piece of incomparable wit and spirit, without the least tincture of imprudence. This was highly gratifying to my mistress. Lovers like to have their rampant fancies tickled. We no longer considered this rash enterprise in any other light than as a play, of which the characters were to be properly cast, and the business dramatically arranged. The actors were chosen out of our own domestic establishment, and the parts distributed without secret jealousy or open rupture, but then we were not players by profession. It was determined that Dame Ortiz should personate Aurora's aunt, under the name of Donna Kimena de Guzman, with a valet and waiting-maid by way of attendance; and that Aurora, with the swashing outside of a gay spark, was to take me for her valet-de-chambre, with one of her women disguised as a page, to be more immediately about her person. The drama thus filled up, we returned to Madrid, where we understood Don Lewis still to be, though it was not likely to be long till his departure for Salamanca. We got up with all possible haste the dresses and decorations of our wild comedy. When they were in complete order, my mistress had them packed up carefully, that they might come out in all

their gloss and newness on the rising of the curtain. Then, leaving the care of her family to her steward, she began her journey in a coach, drawn by four mules, and travelled towards the kingdom of Leon with those of her household who had some part to play in the piece.

We had already crossed Old Castille, when the axletree of the coach gave way. The accident happened between Avila and Villaflor, at the distance of three or four hundred yards from a castle near the foot of a mountain. Night was coming on, and the measure of our troubles seemed to be heaped up and overflowing. But there passed accidentally by us a countryman, by whose assistance we were relieved from our difficulties. He acquainted us that the castle yonder belonged to Donna Elvira, widow of Don Pedro de Penarés; at the same time giving so favorable a character of that lady, that my mistress sent me to the castle with a request of a night's lodging. Elvira did not disgrace the good word of the countryman. She received me with an air of hospitality, and returned such an answer to my compliment as I wished to carry back. We all went to the castle, whither the mules dragged the carriage with considerable difficulty. At the gate we met the widow of Don Pedro, who came out to meet my mistress. I shall pass over in silence the reciprocal civilities which were exchanged on this occasion, in compliance with the usage of the polite world. I shall only say that Elvira was a lady rather advanced in years, but

remarkably well-bred, with an address superior to that of most women in doing the honors of her house. She led Aurora into a sumptuous apartment, where, leaving her to rest herself for a short time, she looked after everything herself, and left nothing undone which could in the least contribute to our comfort. Afterwards, when supper was ready, she ordered it to be served up in Aurora's chamber, where they sat down to table together. Don Pedro's widow was not of a description to cast a slur on her own hospitalities, by assuming an air of abstraction or sullenness. Her temper was gay, and her conversation lively without levity; for her ideas were dignified, and her expressions select. Nothing could exceed her wit, accompanied by a peculiarly fine turn of thought. Aurora appeared as much to be delighted as myself. They became sworn friends, and mutually engaged in a regular correspondence. As our carriage could not be repaired till the following day, and we should have encountered some perils by setting out late at night, it was determined that we should take up our abode at the castle till the damage was made good. All the arrangements were in the first style of elegance, and our lodgings were correspondent to the magnificence of the establishment in other respects.

The day after, my mistress discovered new charms in Elvira's conversation. They dined in a large hall, where there were several pictures. One among the rest was distinguished for its admirable execution, but the subject was highly tragic. A princi-

pal figure was a man of superior mien, lying lifeless on his back, and bathed in his own blood; yet in the very embraces of death he wore a menacing aspect. At a little distance from him you might see a young lady in different posture, though stretched likewise on the ground. She had a sword plunged in her bosom, and was giving up her last sighs, at the same time casting her dying glances at a young man who seemed to suffer a mortal pang at losing her. The painter had besides charged his picture with a figure which did not escape my notice. It was an old man of a venerable physiognomy, sensibly touched with the objects which struck his sight, and equally alive with the young man to the impressions of the melancholy scene. It might be said that these images of blood and desolation affected both the spectators with the same astonishment and grief, but that the outward demonstrations of their inward sentiments were different. The old man, sunk in a profound melancholy, looked as if he was bowed down to the ground; while the youth mingled something like the extravagance of despair with the tears of affliction. All these circumstances were depicted with touches so characteristic and affecting, that we could not take our eyes off the performance. My mistress desired to know the subject of the piece. Madam, said Elvira, it is a faithful delineation of the misfortunes sustained by my family. This answer excited Aurora's curiosity, and she testified so strong a desire to learn the particulars, that the widow of Don Pedro could do no otherwise than prom-

ise her the satisfaction she desired. This promise, made before Ortiz, her two fellow-servants, and myself, rooted us to the spot on which we were listening to their former conversation. My mistress would have sent us away; but Elvira, who saw plainly that we were dying with eagerness to be present at the explanation of the picture, had the goodness to desire us to stay, alleging at the same time that the story she had to relate was not of a nature to enjoin secrecy. After a moment's recollection, she began her recital to the following effect.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATAL MARRIAGE: A NOVEL.

ROGER, king of Sicily, had a brother and a sister. His brother, by name Mainfroi, rebelled against him, and kindled a war in the kingdom, bloody in its immediate effects, and portentous in its future consequences. But it was his fate to lose two battles, and to fall into the kings's hands. The punishment of his revolt extended no farther than the loss of liberty. This act of clemency served only to make Roger pass for a barbarian in the estimation of the disaffected party among his subjects. They contended that he had saved his brother's life only to wreak his vengeance on him by tortures the more merciless because protracted. People in general,

on better grounds, transferred the blame of Mainfroi's harsh treatment while in prison to his sister Matilda. That princess had, in fact, cherished a long-rooted hatred against this prince, and was indefatigable in her persecutions during his whole life. She died in a very short time after him, and her premature fate was considered as the retribution of a just providence, for her disregard of those sentiments implanted by nature for the best purposes.

Mainfroi left behind him two sons. They were yet in their childhood. Roger had a kind of lurking desire to get rid of them, under the apprehension lest, when arrived at a more advanced age, the wish of avenging their father might hurry them to the revival of a faction which was not so entirely overthrown as to be incapable of originating new intrigues in the state. He communicated his purpose to the senator Leontio Siffredi, his minister, who diverted him from his bloody thoughts by undertaking the education of Prince Enriquez, the eldest, and recommending the care of the younger, by name Don Pedro, to the constable of Sicily, as a trusty counsellor and loyal servant. Roger, assured that his nephews would be trained up by these two men in principles of due submission to the royal authority, gave up the reins of guardianship to their control, and himself took charge of his niece Constance. She was of the same age with Enriquez, and only daughter of the princess Matilda. He allowed her an establishment of female attendants, and of masters in every branch of the politer studies,

so that nothing was wanting, either to her instruction or her state.

Leontio Siffredi had a castle at the distance of less than two leagues from Palermo, in a spot named Belmonte. There it was that this minister exerted all his talents and diligence, to render Enriquez worthy of one day ascending the throne of Sicily. From the first, he discovered dispositions so amiable in that prince, that his attachment became as strong as if he had no child of his own. He had, however, two daughters — Blanche, the first-born, one year younger than the prince, was armed at all points with the weapons of a most perfect beauty. Her sister Portia was still in her cradle. The mother had died in child-bed of this youngest. Blanche and Prince Enriquez conceived a reciprocal affection as soon as they were alive to the influence of love: but they were not allowed to improve their acquaintance into familiar intercourse. The prince, nevertheless, found the means of occasionally eluding the prudential vigilance of his guardian. He knew sufficiently well how to avail himself of those precious moments, and prevailed so far with Siffredi's daughter, as to gain her consent to the execution of a project which he meditated. It happened precisely at this time that Leontio was obliged by the king's order to take a journey into one of the most remote provinces in the island. During his absence, Enriquez got an opening made in the wall of his apartment, which led into Blanche's chamber. This opening was concealed by a sliding shutter, so exactly corresponding

with the wainscot, and so closely fitting in with the ceiling and the floor, that the most suspicious eye could not have detected the contrivance. A skilful workman, whom the prince had gained over to his interests, helped him to this private communication with equal speed and secrecy.

The enamoured Enriquez having obtained this inlet into his mistress's chamber, sometimes availed himself of his privilege; but he never took advantage of her partiality. Imprudent as it may well be thought, to admit of a secret entrance into her apartment, it was only on the express and reiterated assurance that none but the most innocent favors should be requested at her hands. One night he found her in a state of unusual perturbation. She had been informed that Roger was drawing near his end, and had sent for Siffredi as lord high chancellor of the kingdom, and the legal depositary of his last will and testament. Already did she figure to herself her dear Enriquez elevated to royal honors. She was afraid of losing her lover in her sovereign, and that fear had strangely affected her spirits. The tears were standing in her eyes, when the unconscious cause of them appeared before her. You weep, madam, said he; what am I to think of this overwhelming grief? My lord, answered Blanche, it were vain for me to hide my apprehensions. The king, your uncle, is at the point of death, and you will soon be called to supply his place. When I measure the distance placed between us by your approaching greatness, I will own to you that my mind

misgives me. The monarch and the lover estimate objects through a far different medium. What constituted the fondest wish of the individual, while his aspiring thoughts were checked by the control of a superior, fades into insignificance before the tumultuous cares or brilliant destinies of royalty. Be it the misgiving of an anxious heart, or the whisper of a well-founded opinion, I feel distracting emotions succeed one another in my breast, which not all my just confidence in your goodness can allay. The source of my mistrust is not in the suspected steadiness of your attachment, but in a diffidence of my own happy fate. Lovely and beloved Blanche, replied the prince, your fears but bind me the more firmly in your fetters, and warrant my devotion to your charms. Yet this excessive indulgence of a fond jealousy borders on disloyalty to love, and, if I may venture to say so, trenches on the esteem to which my constancy has hitherto entitled me. No, no, never entertain a doubt that my destiny can ever be sundered from yours, but rather indulge the pleasing anticipation, that you, and you alone, will be the arbitress of my fate, and the source of all my bliss. Away then with these vain alarms. Why must they disturb an intercourse so charming? Ah! my lord, rejoined the daughter of Leontio, your subjects, when they place the crown upon your head, may ask of you a princess-queen, descended from a long line of kings, whose glittering alliance shall join new realms to your hereditary estates. Perhaps, alas! you will meet their ambitious aims, even at

the expense of your softest vows. Nay, why, resumed Enriquez, with rising passion, why too ready a self-tormentor, do you raise up so afflicting a phantom of futurity? Should heaven take the king, my uncle, to itself, and place Sicily under my dominion, I swear to unite myself with you at Palermo, in presence of my whole court. To this I call to witness all which is held sacred and inviolable among men.

The protestations of Enriquez removed the fears of Siffredi's daughter. The rest of their discourse turned on the king's illness. Enriquez displayed the goodness of his natural disposition, for he pitied his uncle's lot, though he had no reason to be greatly affected by it; but the force of blood extorted from him sentiments of regret for a prince whose death held out an immediate prospect of the crown. Blanche did not yet know all the misfortunes which hung over her. The constable of Sicily, who had met her coming out of her father's apartment one day when he was at the castle of Belmonte on some business of importance, was struck with admiration. The very next day, he made proposals to Siffredi, who entertained his offer favorably; but the illness of Roger taking place unexpectedly about that time, the marriage was put off for the present, and the subject had not been hinted at in the most distant manner to Blanche.

One morning, as Enriquez had just finished dressing, he was surprised to see Leontio enter his apartment, followed by Blanche. Sir, said this minister,

the news I have to announce will in some degree afflict your excellent heart, but it is counteracted by consoling circumstances which ought to moderate your grief. The king, your uncle, has departed this life, and by his death, left you the heir of his sceptre. Sicily is at your feet. The nobility of the kingdom wait your orders at Palermo. They have commissioned me to receive them in person, and I come, my liege, with my daughter, to pay you the earliest and sincerest homage of your new subjects. The prince, who was well aware that Roger had been for two months sinking under a complaint gradual in its progress, but fatal in its nature, was not astonished at this news. And yet, struck with his sudden exaltation, he felt a thousand confused emotions rising up by turns in his heart. He mused for some time, then breaking silence, addressed these words to Leontio: Wise Siffredi, I have always considered you as my father. I shall make it my glory to be governed by your counsels, and you shall reign in Sicily with a sway paramount to my own. With these words, advancing to the standish and taking a blank sheet of paper, he wrote his name at the bottom. What are you doing, sir, said Siffredi. Proving my gratitude and my esteem, answered Enriquez. Then the prince presented the paper to Blanche, and said: Accept, madam, this pledge of my faith, and of the empire with which I invest you over my thoughts and actions. Blanche received it with a blush, and made this answer to the prince: I acknowledge, with all humility, the condescensions

of my sovereign, but my destiny is in the hands of a father, and you must not consider me as ungrateful if I deposit this flattering token in his custody, to be used according to the dictates of his sage discretion.

In compliance with these sentiments of filial duty, she gave the sign manual of Enriquez to her father. Then Siffredi saw at once what, till that moment, had eluded his penetration. He entered clearly into the prince's sentiments, and said: Your majesty shall have no reproaches to make me. I shall not act unworthily of the confidence . . . My dear Leontio, interrupted Enriquez, you and unworthiness never can be allied. Make what use you please of my signature. I shall confirm your determination. But go, return to Palermo, prescribe the ceremonies for my coronation there, and tell my subjects that I shall follow you in person immediately, to receive their oaths of allegiance, and assure them of my protection in return. The minister obeyed the commands of his new master, and set out for Palermo with his daughter.

Some hours after their departure, the prince also left Belmonte, with his thoughts more intent on his passion, than on the high rank to which he was called. Immediately on his arrival in the city, the air was rent with a thousand cries of joy. He made his entry into the palace amid the acclamations of the people, and everything was ready for the august formalities. The Princess Constance was waiting to receive him, in a magnificent mourning dress. She appeared deeply affected by Roger's death. The

customs of society required from them a reciprocal compliment of condolence on the late event, and they each of them acquitted themselves with good breeding and propriety. But there was somewhat more coldness on the part of Enriquez than on that of Constance, who could not enter into family quarrels, and resolved on hating the young prince. He placed himself on the throne, and the princess sat beside him in a chair of state a little less elevated. The great officers of the realm fell into their places, each according to his rank. The ceremony began; and Leontio, as lord high chancellor of the kingdom, holding in his possession the will of the late king, opened it, and read the contents aloud. This instrument contained in substance that Roger, in default of issue, nominated the eldest son of Mainfroi his successor, on condition of his marrying the Princess Constance; and in the event of his refusing her hand, the crown of Sicily was to devolve, to his exclusion, on the head of the infant Don Pedro, his brother, on the like condition.

These words were a thunderstroke to Enriquez. His senses were all bewildered even to distraction, and his agonies became still more acute, when Leontio, having finished the reading of the will, addressed the assembly at large to the following effect: My lords, the last injunction of the late king having been made known to our new monarch, that pious and excellent prince consents to honor his cousin, the Princess Constance, with his hand. At these words Enriquez interrupted the chancellor. Leontio,

said he, remember the writing; Blanche . . . Sire, interrupted Siffredi in his turn with precipitation, lest the prince should find an opportunity of making himself understood, here it is. The nobility of the kingdom, added he, exhibiting the blank paper to the assembly, will see by your majesty's august subscription, the esteem in which you hold the princess, and your implicit deference to the last will of the late king your uncle.

Having finished these words, he forthwith began reading the instrument in such terms he had himself inserted. According to the contents, the new king gave a promise to his people, with formalities the most binding and authentic, that he would marry Constance, in conformity with the intention of Roger. The hall reëchoed with pealing shouts of satisfaction. Long live our high and mighty King Enriquez! exclaimed all those who were present. As the marked aversion of the prince for the princess had never been any secret, it was apprehended, not without reason, that he might revolt against the condition of the will, and light up the flame of civil discord in the kingdom; but the public enunciation of this solemn act, quieting the fears of the nobility and the people on that head, excited these universal applauses, which went to the monarch's heart like the stab of an assassin. Constance, who had a nearer interest than any human being in the result, from the double motive of glory and personal affection, laid hold of this opportunity for expressing her gratitude. The prince had much ado to keep his

feelings within bounds. He received the compliment of the princess with so constrained an air, and evinced so unusual a disorder in his behavior, as scarcely to reply in a manner suited to the common forms of good-breeding. At last, no longer master of his violent passions, he went up to Siffredi, whom the formalities of his office detained near the royal person, and said to him in a low tone of voice, What is the meaning of all this, Leontio? The signature which I deposited in your daughter's hands was not meant for such a use as this. You are guilty of . . .

My liege, interrupted Siffredi again with a tone of firmness, look to your own glory. If you refuse to comply with the injunctions of the king your uncle, you lose the crown of Sicily. No sooner had he thrown in this salutary hint, than he got away from the king, to prevent all possibility of a reply. Enriquez was left in a most embarrassing situation. A thousand opposite emotions agitated him at once. He was exasperated against Siffredi. To give up Blanche, was more than he could endure: so that, balancing his private feelings and the calls of public honor, he was doubtful to which side he should incline. At length his doubts were resolved, under the idea of having found the means to secure Siffredi's daughter, without giving up his claim to the throne. He affected, therefore, an entire submission to the will of Roger, in the hope, while a dispensation from his marriage with his cousin was soliciting at Rome, of gaining the leading nobility by his

largesses, and thus establishing his power so firmly, as not to be under the necessity of fulfilling the conditions of the obnoxious instrument.

After forming this design, he got to be more composed; and turning towards Constance, confirmed to her what the lord high chancellor had read in presence of the whole assembly. But at the very moment when he had so far betrayed himself as to pledge his faith, Blanche arrived in the hall of council. She came thither, by her father's command, to pay her duty to the princess; and her ears, on entering, were startled at the expressions of Enriquez. In addition to this shock, Leontio determined, not to leave her in doubt of her misfortune, accompanied her presentation to Constance with these words: Daughter, make your homage acceptable to your queen; call down upon her the blessings of a prosperous reign and a happy marriage. This terrible blow overwhelmed the unfortunate Blanche. Vain were all her attempts to suppress her anguish; her countenance changed successively from the deepest blush to a deadly paleness, and she trembled from head to foot. And yet the princess had no suspicion how the matter really stood; but attributed the confused style of her compliment to the awkwardness of a young person brought up in a state of rustication, and totally unacquainted with the manners of a court. But the young king was more in the secret. The sight of Blanche put him out of countenance; and the despair, too legible in her eyes, was enough to drive him out of his senses. Her feelings were

not to be misunderstood; and they pointed at him as the most faithless of men. Could he have spoken to her, it might have tranquilized his agitation: but how to lay hold of the happy moment, when all Sicily, at least the illustrious part of it, was fixed in anxious expectation on his proceedings? Besides, the stern and inflexible Siffredi extinguished at once every ray of hope. This minister, who was at no loss to decipher the hearts of the two lovers, and was firmly resolved, if possible, to prevent the evil consequences impending over the state from the violence of this imprudent attachment, got his daughter out of the assembly with the dexterity of a practised courtier, and regained the road to Belmonte with her in his possession, determined, for more reasons than one, to marry her as soon as possible.

When they reached home, he gave her to understand all the horror of her destiny, by announcing his promise to the constable. Just Heaven! exclaimed she, transported into a paroxysm of despair, which her father's presence could not restrain; what unparalleled suffering have you the cruelty to lay up in store for the ill-fated Blanche? Her agony went to such a degree of violence, as to suspend every power of her soul. Her limbs seemed as if stiffened under the icy grasp of death. Cold and pale, she fell senseless into her father's arms. Neither was he insensible to her melancholy condition. Yet, feeling as he did all the alarm and anxiety of a parent, the stern inflexibility of the statesman remained unshaken. Blanche, after a time, was re-

called to life and feeling, rather by the keenness of her mental pangs than by the means which Siffredi used for her recovery. Languishingly did she raise her scarcely conscious eyes: when, glancing on the author of her misery, as he was anxiously employed about her person: My lord, said she, with inarticulate and convulsive accents, I am ashamed to let you see my weakness: but death, which cannot be long in finishing my torments, will soon rid you of a wretched daughter, who has ventured to dispose of her heart without consulting you. No, my dear Blanche, answered Leontio, your death would be too dear a sacrifice: Virtue will resume her empire over your actions. The constable's proposals do you honor; it is one of the most considerable alliances in the state. . . . . I esteem his person and am sensible of his merit, interrupted Blanche; but, my lord, the king had given me encouragement to indulge. . . . Daughter, vociferated Siffredi, breaking in upon her discourse, I anticipate all you have to say on that subject. Your partiality for the prince is no secret to me, nor would it meet my disapprobation under other circumstances. You should even see me active and ardent to secure for you the hand of Enriquez, if the cause of glory and the welfare of the realm demanded it not indispensably for Constance. It is on the sole condition of marrying that princess, that the late king has nominated him his successor. Would you have him prefer you to the crown of Sicily? Believe me, my heart bleeds at the mortal blow which impends over you. Yet,

since we cannot contend with the fates, make a magnanimous effort. Your fame is concerned, not to let the whole nation see that you have nursed up a delusive hope. Your sensibility towards the person of the king might even give birth to ignominious rumors. The only method of preserving yourself from their poison, is, to marry the constable. In short, Blanche, there is no time left for irresolution. The king has decided between a throne, and the possession of your charms. He has fixed his choice on Constance. The constable holds my word in pledge: enable me to redeem it, I beseech you. Or, if nothing but a paramount necessity can fix your wavering resolution, I must make an unwilling use of my parental authority: know then, I command you.

Ending with this threat, he left her to make her own reflections on what had passed. He was in hopes that after having weighed the reasons he had urged to support her virtue against the bias of her feelings, she would determine of herself to admit the constable's addresses. He was not mistaken in his conjecture: but at what an expense did the wretched Blanche rise to this height of virtuous resolution! Her condition was that in the whole world the most deserving of pity. The affliction of finding her fears realized, respecting the infidelity of Enriquez, and of being compelled, besides losing the man of her choice, to sacrifice herself to another whom she could never love, occasioned her such storms of passion and alternate tossings of frantic desperation, as to

bring with each successive moment a variety of vindictive torture. If my sad fate is fixed, exclaimed she, how can I triumph over it but by death? Merciless powers, who preside over our wayward fortunes, why feed and tantalize me with the most flattering hopes, only to plunge me headlong into a gulf of miseries? And thou too, perfidious lover! to rush into the arms of another, when all those vows of eternal fidelity were mine. So soon then is that plighted faith void and forgotten? To punish thee for so cruel a deception, may it please heaven, in its retribution, to make the conscious couch of conjugal endearment, polluted as it must be by perjury, less the scene of pleasure than the dungeon of remorse! May the fond caresses of Constance distil poison through thy faithless heart? Let us rival one another in the horrors of our nuptials! Yes, traitor, I mean to wed the constable, though shrinking from his ardent touch, to avenge me on myself! to be my own scourge and tormentor, for having selected so fatally the object of my frantic passion. Since deep-rooted obedience to the will of God forbids to entertain the thought of a premature death, whatever days may be allotted me to drag on shall be but a lengthened chain of heaviness and torment. If a sentiment of love lurks about your heart, it will be revenge enough for me to cast myself into your presence, the devoted bride or victim of another: but if you have thrown off my remembrance with your own vows, Sicily at least shall glory in the distinction of reckoning among its natives a woman

who knew how to punish herself for having disposed of her heart too lightly.

In such a state of mind did this wretched martyr to love and duty pass the night preceding her marriage with the constable. Siffredi, finding her the next morning ready to comply with his wishes, hastened to avail himself of this favorable disposition. He sent for the constable to Belmonte on that very day, and the marriage ceremony was performed privately in the chapel of the castle. What a crisis for Blanche! It was not enough to renounce a crown, to lose a lover endeared to her by every tie, and to yield herself up to the object of her hatred. In addition to all this, she must put a constraint on her sentiments before a husband, naturally jealous, and long occupied with the most ardent admiration of her charms. The bridegroom, delighted in the possession of her, was all day long in her presence. He did not leave her to the miserable consolation of pouring out her sorrows in secret. When night arrived, Leontio's daughter felt all her disgust and terror redoubled. But what seemed likely to become of her when her women, after having undressed her, left her alone with the constable? He enquired respectfully into the cause of her apparent faintness and discomposure. The question was sufficiently embarrassing to Blanche, who affected to be ill. Her husband was at first deceived by her pretences; but he did not long remain in such an error. Being, as he was, sincerely concerned at the condition in which he saw her, but still pressing her to go to bed,

his urgent solicitations, falsely construed by her, offered to her wounded mind an image so cruel and indelicate, that she could no longer dissemble what was passing within, but gave a free course to her sighs and tears. What a discovery for a man who thought himself at the summit of his wishes! He no longer doubted but the distressed state of his wife was fraught with some sinister omen to his love. And yet, though this knowledge reduced him to a situation almost as deplorable as that of Blanche, he had sufficient command over himself to keep his suspicions within his own breast. He redoubled his assiduities, and went on pressing his bride to lay herself down, assuring her that the repose of which she stood in need should be undisturbed by his interruption. He offered of his own accord even to call her women, if she was of opinion that their attendance could afford any relief to her indisposition. Blanche, reviving at that proposal, told him that sleep was the best remedy for the debility under which she labored. He affected to think so too. They accordingly partook of the same bed, but with a conduct altogether different from what the laws of love, sanctioned by the rites of marriage, might authorize in a pair mutually delighted and delighting.

While Siffredi's daughter was giving way to her grief, the constable was hunting in his own mind for the causes which might render the nuptial office so contemptible a sinecure in his hands. He could not be long in conjecturing that he had a rival, but when he attempted to discover him he was lost in the

labyrinth of his own ideas. All he knew with certainty was the peculiar severity of his own fate. He had already passed two thirds of the night in this perplexity of thought, when an undistinguishable noise grew gradually on his sense of hearing. Great was his surprise when a footstep seemed audibly to pace about the room. He fancied himself mistaken, for he recollected shutting the door himself after Blanche's women had retired. He drew back the curtain to satisfy his senses on the occasion of this extraordinary noise. But the light in the chimney corner had gone out, and he soon heard a feeble and melancholy voice calling Blanche with anxious and importunate repetitions. Then did the suggestions of his jealousy transport him into rage. His insulted honor obliging him to rush from the bed to which he had so long aspired, and either to prevent a meditated injury, or take vengeance for its perpetration, he caught up his sword and flew forward in the direction whence the voice seemed to proceed. He felt a naked blade opposed to his own. As he advanced, his antagonist retired. The pursuit became more eager, the retreat more precipitate. His search was vigilant, and every corner of the room seemed to contain its object but that which he momentarily occupied. The darkness, however, favored the unknown invader, and he was nowhere to be found. The pursuer halted. He listened, but heard no sound. It seemed like enchantment! He made for the door, under the idea that this was the outlet to the secret assassin of his honor, yet the bolt

was shut as fast as before. Unable to comprehend this strange occurrence, he called those of his retinue who were most within reach of his voice. As he opened the door for this purpose, he placed himself so as to prevent all egress, and stood upon his guard, lest the devoted victim of his search should escape.

At his redoubled cries, some servants ran with lights. He laid hold of a taper, and renewed his search in the chamber with his sword still drawn. Yet he found no one there, nor any apparent sign of any person having been in the room. He was not aware of any private door, nor could he discover any practicable mode of escape; yet, for all this, he could not shut his eyes against the nature and circumstance of his misfortune. His thoughts were all thrown into inextricable confusion. To ask any questions of Blanche was in vain, for she had too deep an interest in perplexing the truth, to furnish any clew whatever to its discovery. He, therefore, adopted the measure of unbosoming his griefs to Leontio; but previously sent away his attendants with the excuse that he thought he had heard some noise in the room, but was mistaken. His father-in-law, having left his chamber in consequence of this strange disturbance, met him, and heard from his lips the particulars of this unaccountable adventure. The narrative was accompanied with every indication of extreme agony, produced by deep and tender feeling, as well as by a sense of insulted honor.

Siffredi was surprised at the occurrence. Though

it did not appear to him at all probable, that was no reason for being easy about its reality. The king's passion might accomplish anything; and that idea alone justified the most cruel apprehensions. But it could do no good to foster either the natural jealousy of his son-in-law, or his particular suspicions arising out of circumstances. He, therefore, endeavored to persuade him, with an air of confidence, that this imaginary voice, and airy sword opposed to his substantial one, were, and could possibly be, but the gratuitous creations of a fancy, under the influence of amorous distrust. It was morally impossible that any person should have made his way into his daughter's chamber. With regard to the melancholy so visible in his wife's deportment, it might very naturally be attributed to precarious health and delicacy of constitution. The honor of a husband need not be so tremblingly alive to all the qualms of maiden fear and inexperience. Change of condition, in the case of a girl habituated to live almost without human society, and abruptly consigned to the embraces of a man in whom love and previous acquaintance had not inspired confidence, might innocently be the cause of these tears, of these sighs, and of this lively affliction so irksome to his feelings. But it was to be considered that tenderness, especially in the hearts of young ladies, fortified by the pride of blood against the excesses of love-sick abandonment, was only to be cherished into a flame by time and assiduity. He, therefore, exhorted him to tranquillize his disturbed mind; to be ardently

officious in redoubling every instance of affection; to create a soft and seducing interest in the sensibility of Blanche. In short, he besought him earnestly to return to her apartment, and labored to persuade him that his distrust and confusion would only set her on an unconjugal and litigious defence of her insulted virtue.

The constable returned no answer to the arguments of his father-in-law, whether because he began to think in good earnest that his senses were imposed on by the disorder of his mind, or because he thought it more to the purpose to dissemble than to undertake ineffectually to convince the old man of an event so devoid of all likelihood. He returned to his wife's chamber, laid himself down by her side, and endeavored to obtain from sleep some relief from his extreme uneasiness. Blanche, on her part, the unhappy Blanche, was not a whit more at her ease. Her ears had been but too open to the same alarming sounds which had assailed her husband's peace; nor could she construe into illusion an adventure of which she well knew the secret and the motives. She was surprised that Enriquez should attempt to find his way into her apartment, after having pledged his faith so solemnly to the Princess Constance. Instead of feeding her soul with vanity, or deriving any flattering omens from a proceeding fraught with personal tenderness, but destructive to self-approbation, she considered it as a new insult, and her heart was only so much the more exasperated with resentment against the author.

While Siffredi's daughter, with all her prejudices excited against the young king, believed him the most guilty of men, that unhappy prince, more than ever ensnared by Blanche, was anxious for an interview, to satisfy her mind on a subject which seemed to make so much against him. For that purpose he would have visited Belmonte sooner, but for a press of business too urgent to be neglected; nor could he withdraw himself from the court before that night. He was perfectly at home in all the turnings of a place where he had been brought up, and, therefore, was at no loss to slip into the castle of Siffredi. Nay, he was still in possession of the key to a secret door communicating with the gardens. By this inlet did he gain his former apartment, and there found his way into Blanche's chamber. Only conceive what must have been the astonishment of that prince to find a man in possession, and to feel a sword opposed to his guard! He was just on the point of betraying all, and of punishing the rebel on the very spot, whose sacrilegious hand had dared to lift itself against the person of its lawful sovereign. But then the delicacy due to the daughter of Leontio held his indignation in check. He retreated in the same direction as he had advanced, and regained the Palermo road, in more distress and perplexity than ever. Getting home some little time before daybreak, his apartment afforded him the most quiet retreat. But his thoughts were all on the road back to Belmonte, the resting-place of his affections. A sense of honor; in a word, love with all its pretensions and surmises,

would never allow him to delay an explanation, involving all the circumstances of so strange and melancholy an adventure.

As soon as it was daylight he gave out that he was going on a hunting expedition. Under cover of sporting, his huntsmen and a chosen party of his courtiers penetrated into the forest of Belmonte under his direction. The chase was followed for some time, as a blind to his real design. When he saw the whole party eagerly driving on, and wholly engrossed by the sport, he galloped off in a different direction, and struck, without any attendants, into the road towards Leontio's castle. The various tracks of the forest were too well known to him to admit of his losing his way. His impatience, too, would not allow him to take any thought of his horse, so that the moments scarcely flitted faster than his expedition in leaving behind him the distance which separated him from the object of his love. His very soul was on the rack for some plausible excuse to plead for a private interview with Siffredi's daughter, when, crossing a narrow path just at the park gate, he observed two women sitting close by him, in earnest conversation, under the shelter of a tree. It might well be supposed that these females belonged to the castle; and even that probability was sufficient to rouse an interest in him. But his emotion was heightened into a feeling beyond his reason to control, for these ladies happened to look round on hearing the trot of a horse advancing in that direction, when at once he recognized his dear Blanche.

The fact was, she had made her escape from the castle with Nisa, the person of all others among her women most in her confidence, that she might at least have the satisfaction of weeping over her misfortunes without intrusion or restraint.

He flew, and seemed rather to throw himself headlong than to fall at her feet. But when he beheld in the expression of her countenance every mark of the deepest affliction, his heart was softened. Lovely Blanche, said he, do not, let me entreat you, give way to the emotions of your grief. Appearances, I own, must represent me as guilty in your eyes, but when you shall be made acquainted with my project in your behalf, what you consider as a crime, will be transformed in your thoughts into a proof of my innocence, and an evidence of my unparalleled affection. These words, calculated, according to the views of Enriquez, to allay the grief of Blanche, served only to redouble her affliction. Fain would she have answered, but her sobs stifled her utterance. The prince, thunderstruck at the death-like agitation of her frame, addressed her thus: What, madam, is there no possibility of tranquillizing your agitation? By what sad mischance have I lost your confidence, at the very moment when my crown and even my life are at stake, in consequence of my resolution to hold myself engaged to you? At this suggestion the daughter of Leontio, doing violence to her own feelings, but thinking it necessary to explain herself, said to him: My liege, your assurances are no longer admissible. My destiny

and yours are henceforward as far asunder as the poles. Ah! Blanche, interrupted Enriquez with impatience, what cutting words are these, too painful for my sense of hearing? Who dares step in between our loves? Who would venture to stand forward against the headlong rage of a king who would kindle all Sicily into a conflagration, rather than suffer you to be ravished from his long-cherished hopes? All your power, my liege, great as it is, replied the daughter of Siffredi in a tone of melancholy, becomes inefficient against the obstacles in the way of our union. I know not how to tell it you, but . . . I am married to the constable.

Married to the constable! exclaimed the prince, starting back to some distance from her. He could proceed no further in his discourse, so completely was he thunderstruck at the intelligence. Overwhelmed by this unexpected blow, he felt his strength forsake him. His unconscious limbs *laid* themselves without his guidance against the trunk of a tree just behind him. His countenance was pallid, his whole frame in a tremor, his mind bewildered, and his spirits depressed. With no sense or faculty at liberty but that of gazing, and there every power of his soul was suspended on Blanche, he made her feel most poignantly how he himself was agonized by the fatal event she had announced. The expression of countenance on her part was such as to show him that her emotions were not uncongenial with his own. Thus did these two distressed lovers for a time preserve a silence towards each

other, which portended something of terror in its calmness. At length the prince, recovering a little from his disorder by an effort of courage, resumed the discourse, and said to Blanche with a sigh, Madam, what have you done? You have destroyed me, and involved yourself in the same ruin by your credulity.

Blanche was offended at the seeming reproaches of the king, when the strongest grounds of complaint were apparently on her side. What! my lord, answered she, do you add dissimulation to infidelity? Would you have me reject the evidence of my own eyes and ears, so as to believe you innocent in spite of their report? No, my lord, I will own to you such an effort of abstraction is not in my power. And yet, madam, replied the king, these witnesses by whose testimony you have been so fully convinced, are but impostors. They have been in a conspiracy to betray you. It is no less the fact that I am innocent and faithful, than it is true that you are married to the constable. What is it you say, my lord? replied she. Did I not overhear you confirming the pledge of your hand and heart to Constance? Have you not bound yourself to the nobility of the realm, and undertaken to comply with the will of the late king? Has not the princess received the homage of your new subjects as their queen, and in quality of bride to Prince Enriquez? Were my eyes then fascinated? Tell me, tell me rather, traitor, that Blanche was weighed as dust in the balance of your heart, when compared with the attractions of a

throne. Without lowering yourself so far as to assume what you no longer feel, and what perhaps you never felt, own at once that the crown of Sicily appeared a more tenable possession with Constance than with the daughter of Leontio. You are in the right, my lord. My title to an illustrious throne, and to the heart of a prince like you, stands on an equally precarious footing. It was vanity in the extreme to prefer a claim to either; but you ought not to have drawn me on into error. You will recollect what alarms were my portion at the very thought of losing you, of which I had almost a supernatural foreboding. Why did you lull my apprehensions to sleep! To what purpose was that delusive mockery? I might else have accused Fate rather than yourself, and you would at least have retained an interest in my heart, though unaccompanied by a hand which no other suitor could ever have obtained. As we are now circumstanced, your justification is out of season. I am married to the constable. To relieve me from the continuance of an interview which casts a shade over my purity hitherto unsullied, permit me, my lord, without failing in due respect, to withdraw from the presence of a prince to whose addresses I am even no longer at liberty to listen.

With these words, she darted away from Enriquez in as hurried a step as the agitation of her spirits would allow. Stop, madam, exclaimed he; drive not to despair a prince inclined to overturn a throne which you reproach him for having preferred

to yourself, rather than yield to the importunities of his new subjects. That sacrifice is under present circumstances superfluous, rejoined Blanche. The bond must be broken between the constable and me, before any effect can be produced by these generous transports. Since I am not my own mistress, little would it avail that Sicily should be embroiled, nor does it concern me to whom you give your hand. If I had betrayed my own weakness, and suffered my heart to be surprised, at least shall I muster fortitude enough to suppress every soft emotion, and prove to the new king of Sicily, that the wife of the constable is no longer the mistress of Prince Enriquez. While this conversation was passing, they reached the park gate. With a sudden spring she and Nisa got within the walls. As they took care to fasten the wicket after them, the prince was left in a state of melancholy and stupefaction. He could not recover from the stunning sensation occasioned by the intelligence of Blanche's marriage. Unjust may I well call you! exclaimed he. You have buried all remembrance of our solemn engagement! Spite of my protestations and your own, our fates are rent asunder! The long-cherished hope of possessing those charms was an empty phantom! Ah! cruel as you are, how dearly have I purchased the distinction of compelling you to acknowledge the constancy of my love!

At that moment his rival's happiness, heightened by the coloring of jealousy, presented itself to his mind in all the horrors of that frantic passion. So

arbitrary was its sway over him for some moments, that he was on the point of sacrificing the constable, and even Siffredi, to his blind vengeance. Reason, however, calmed by little and little the violence of his transports. And yet the obvious impossibility of effacing from the mind of Blanche her natural conviction of his infidelity, reduced him to despair. He flattered himself with weaning her from her prejudices, could he but converse with her secure from interruption. To attain this end, it seemed the most feasible plan to get rid of the constable. He, therefore, determined to have him arrested, as a person suspected of treasonable designs in the then unsettled state of public affairs. The commission was given to the captain of his guard, who went immediately to Belmonte, secured the person of his prisoner just as the evening was closing in, and carried him to the castle of Palermo.

This occurrence spread an alarm at Belmonte. Siffredi took his departure forthwith, to offer his own responsibility to the king for the innocence of his son-in-law, and to represent in their true colors the unpleasant consequences attending such arbitrary exertions of power. The prince, who had anticipated such a proceeding on the part of his minister, and was determined at least to secure himself a free interview with Blanche before the release of the constable, had expressly forbidden any one to address him till the next day. But Leontio, setting this prohibition at defiance, contrived so well as to make his way into the king's chamber. My liege, said he, with

an air of humility tempered with firmness, if it is allowable for a subject full of respect and loyalty to complain of his master, I have to arraign you before the tribunal of your own conscience. What crime has my son-in-law committed? Has your majesty sufficiently reflected what an everlasting reproach is entailed on my family? Are the consequences of an imprisonment calculated to disgust all the most important officers of the state with the service, a matter of indifference? I have undoubted information, answered the king, that the constable holds a criminal correspondence with the Infant Don Pedro. A criminal correspondence! interrupted Leontio, with surprise. Ah! my liege, give no ear to the surmise. Your majesty is played upon. Treason never gained a footing in the family of Siffredi. It is sufficient security for the constable that he is my son-in-law, to place him above all suspicion. The constable is innocent; but private motives have been the occasion of your arresting him.

Since you speak to me so openly, replied the king, I will adopt the same sincerity with you. You complain of the constable's imprisonment! Be it so. And have I no reason to complain of your cruelty? It is you, barbarous Siffredi, who have wrested my tranquillity from me, and reduced your sovereign, by your officious cares, to envy the lowliest of the human race. For do not so far deceive yourself as to believe that I shall ever enter into your views. My marriage with Constance is quite out of the question. . . . . What, my liege, inter-

rupted Leontio, with an expression of horror, is there any doubt about your marrying the princess, after having flattered her with that hope in the face of your whole people? If their wishes are disappointed, replied the king, take the credit to yourself. Wherefore did you reduce me to the necessity of giving them a promise my heart would not allow me to make good? Where was the occasion to fill up with the name of Constance an instrument designed for the elevation of your own daughter? You could not be a stranger to my design; need *you* have completed your tyranny by devoting Blanche to the arms of a man to whom she could not *give* her heart? And what authority have you over mine to dispose of it in favor of a princess whom I *detest?* Have you forgotten that she is the daughter of that cruel Matilda, who, trampling the rights of *consanguinity* and human nature under foot, caused my father to breathe his last under all the rigors of a hard captivity? And should I marry her! No. Siffredi, throw away that hope. Before the lurid torch of such an hymeneal shall be kindled in your presence, you shall behold all Sicily in flames, and the expiring embers quenched in blood.

Do not my ears deceive me? exclaimed Leontio. Ah! Sovereign, what a scene do you present me with! Who can hear such menaces without shuddering? But I am too forward to take alarm, continued he, in an altered voice. You are in too close a union with your subjects to be the instrument of a catastrophe so melancholy. You will not suffer

passion to triumph over your reason. Virtues like yours shall never lose their lustre by the tarnish of human and ordinary weakness. If I have given my daughter into the arms of the constable, it was with the design, my liege, of securing to your majesty a powerful subject, able by his own valor, and the army under his command, to maintain your party against that of the Prince Don Pedro. It appeared to me that by connecting him with my family in so close a bond . . . . Yes, yes! This bond, exclaimed Prince Enriquez, this fatal bond has been my ruin. Unfeeling friend, to aim a wound at my vital part! What commission had you to take care of my interests at the expense of my affections? Why did you not leave me to support my pretensions by my own arm? Was there any question about my courage, that I should be thought incompetent to reduce my rebellious subjects to their obedience? Means might have been found to punish the constable had he dared to have fallen off from his allegiance! I am well aware of the difference between a lawful king and an arbitrary tyrant. The happiness of our people is our first duty. But are we, on the other hand, to be the slaves of our subjects? From the moment when we are selected by Heaven for our high office, do we lose the common privilege of nature, the birthright of the human race, to dispose of our affections in whatsoever current they flow? Well, then! If we are less our own masters than the lowest of the human race, take back, Siffredi, that sovereign

authority you affect to have secured to me by the wreck of my personal happiness.

You cannot but be acquainted, my liege, replied the minister, that it was on your marriage with the princess, the late king, your uncle, made the succession of the crown to depend. And by what right, rejoined Enriquez, did even he assume to himself so arbitrary a disposition? Was it on such unworthy terms that he succeeded his brother, King Charles? How came you yourself to be so besotted as to allow of a stipulation so unjust! For a high chancellor, you are not too well versed in our laws and constitutions. To cut the matter short, though I have promised my hand to Constance, the engagement was not voluntary. I do not, therefore, think myself bound to keep my word; and if Don Pedro founds on my refusal any hope of succeeding to the throne without involving the nation in a bloody and destructive contest, his error will be too soon visible. The sword shall decide between us to whom the prize of empire may more worthily fall. Leontio could not venture to press him further, and confined himself to supplicating on his knees for the liberty of his son-in-law. That boon he obtained. Go, said the king to him, return to Belmonte, the constable shall follow you thither without delay. The minister departed, and made the best of his way to Belmonte, under the persuasion that his son-in-law would overtake him on the road. In this he was mistaken. Enriquez was determined to visit Blanche that night, and with such views he deferred the enlargement of her husband till the next morning.

During this time the feelings of the constable were of the most agonizing nature. His imprisonment had opened his eyes to the real cause of his misfortune. He gave himself up to jealousy without restraint or remorse, and belieing the good faith which had hitherto rendered his character so valuable, his thoughts were all bent on his revenge. As he conjectured rightly that the king would not fail to reconnoitre Blanche's apartment during the night, it was his object to surprise them together. He, therefore, besought the governor of the castle at Palermo to allow of his absence from the prison, on the assurance of his return before daybreak. The governor, who was devoted to his interest, gave his permission so much the more easily, as being already advertised that Siffredi had procured his liberty. Indeed he even went so far as to supply him with a horse for his journey to Belmonte. The constable on his arrival there fastened his horse to a tree. He then got into the park by a little gate of which he had the key, and was lucky enough to slip into the castle without being recognized by any one. On reaching his wife's apartment, he concealed himself in the ante-chamber, behind a screen placed as if expressly for his use. His intention was to observe narrowly what was going forward, and to present himself on the sudden in Blanche's chamber at the sound of any footstep he should hear. The first object he beheld was Nisa, taking leave of her mistress for the night, and withdrawing to a closet where she slept.

Siffredi's daughter, who had been at no loss to fathom the meaning of her husband's imprisonment, was fully convinced that he would not return to Belmonte that night, although she had heard from her father of the king's assurance that the constable should set out immediately after him. As little could she doubt but Enriquez would avail himself of the interval to see and converse with her at his pleasure. With this expectation she awaited the prince's arrival, to reproach him for a line of conduct so pregnant with fatal consequences to herself. As she had anticipated, a very short time after Nisa had retired, the sliding panel opened, and the king threw himself at the feet of his beloved. Madam, said he, condemn me not without a hearing. It is true I have occasioned the constable's imprisonment, but then consider that it was the only method left me for my justification. Attribute, therefore, that desperate stratagem to yourself alone. Why did you refuse to listen to my explanation this morning? Alas! to-morrow your husband will be liberated, and I shall no longer have an opportunity of addressing you. Hearken to me then for the last time. If the loss of you has embittered the remainder of my days, vouchsafe me at least the melancholy satisfaction of convincing you that I have not called down this misfortune on myself by my own inconstancy. I did indeed confirm the pledge of my hand to Constance, but then it was unavoidable in the situation to which your father's policy had reduced us. It was necessary to put this imposition on the princess for your

interest and for my own; to secure to you your crown, and with it the hand and heart of your devoted lover. I had flattered myself with the prospect of success. Measures were already taken to supersede that engagement, but you have destroyed the bright illusions of my fancy; and, by disposing of yourself too precipitately, have antedated an eternity of torment for two hearts, whom a mutual and perfect love might have conducted to perpetual bliss.

He concluded this explanation with such evident marks of unfeigned agony, that Blanche was affected by his words. She had no longer any hesitation about his innocence. At first her joy was unbounded at the conviction; but then again a sense of their cruel circumstances gained the ascendant over her mind. Ah! my honored lord, said she to the prince, after such a determination of our destinies, you only inflict a new pang by informing me that you were not to blame. What have I done, wretched as I am? My keen resentment has betrayed me into error. I fancied myself cast off; and in the moment of my anger, accepted the hand of the constable, whose addresses my father promoted. But the crime is all my own, though the woes are mutual. Alas! In the very conjuncture when I accused you of deceiving me, it was my own act, too credulously impassioned as I was, that the ties were broken, which I had sworn for ever to make indissoluble. Take your revenge, my lord, in your turn. Indulge your hatred against the ungrateful Blanche . . . .

Forget . . . . What! and is it in my power then, madam? interrupted Enriquez with a dejected air: how is it possible to tear a passion from my heart, which even your injustice had not the power of extinguishing? Yet it becomes necessary for you to make that effort, my liege, replied the daughter of Siffredi, with a deep sigh . . . . And shall you be equal to that effort yourself? replied the king. I am not confident with myself for my success, answered she: but I shall spare no pains in the attainment of my object. Ah! unfeeling fair one, said the prince, you will easily banish Enriquez from your remembrance, since you can contemplate such a purpose so steadfastly. Whither, then, does your imagination lead? said Blanche, in a more decisive tone. Do you flatter yourself that I can permit the continuance of your tender assiduities? No, my lord; banish that hope for ever from your thoughts. If I was not born for royalty, neither has Heaven formed me to be degraded by illicit addresses. My husband, like yourself, my liege, is allied to the noble house of Anjou. Though the call of duty were less peremptory, in opposing an insurmountable obstacle to your insidious proposals, a sense of pride would hinder me from admitting them. I conjure you to withdraw; we must meet no more. What a barbarous sentence! exclaimed the king. Ah! Blanche, is it possible that you should treat me with so much severity? Is it not enough, then, to weigh me down, that the constable should be in possession of your charms? And yet you would cut me off from the bare sight of you,

the only comfort which remains to me! For that very reason avoid my presence, answered Siffredi's daughter, not without some tears of tenderness. The contemplation of what we have dearly loved is no longer a blessing, when we have lost all hope of the possession. Adieu, my lord! Shun my very image. You owe that exertion to your own honor and to my good name. I claim it also for my own peace of mind: for to deal sincerely, though my virtue should be steady enough to combat with the suggestions of my heart, the very remembrance of your affection stirs up so cruel a conflict, that it is almost too much for my frail nature to support the shock.

Her utterance of these words was attended with so energetic an action, as to overset the light placed on a table behind her, and its fall left the room in darkness. Blanche picked it up. She then opened the door of the antechamber, and went to Nisa's closet, who was not yet gone to bed, for the purpose of lighting it again. She was now returning, after having accomplished her errand. The king, who was waiting for her impatiently, no sooner saw her approach, than he resumed his ardent plea with her, to allow of his attentions. At the prince's voice, the constable rushed impetuously, sword in hand, into the room, almost at the same moment with his bride. Advancing up to Enriquez with all the indignation which his fury kindled within him: This is too much, tyrant! cried he; flatter not yourself that I am cowardly enough to bear with this affront

which you have offered to my honor. Ay! traitor, answered the king, standing on his guard, lay aside the vain imagination of being able to compass your purpose with impunity. With these mutual taunts, they entered on a conflict, too violent to be long undecided. The constable, fearing lest Siffredi and his attendants should be roused too soon by the piercing shrieks of Blanche, and should interpose between him and his revenge, took no care of himself. His frenzy robbed him of all skill. He fenced so heedlessly, as to run headlong on his adversary's sword. The weapon entered his body up to the hilt. He fell; and the king instantaneously checked his hand.

The daughter of Leontio, touched at her husband's condition, and rising superior to her natural repugnance, threw herself on the ground, and was anxious to afford him every assistance. But that ill-fated bridegroom was too deeply prejudiced against her, to allow himself to be softened by the evidences she gave of her sorrow and her pity. Death, whose hand he felt upon him, could not trifle the transports of his jealousy. In these his last moments, no image presented itself to his mind but his rival's success. So insufferable was that idea to him, that, collecting together the little strength he had left, he raised his sword, which he still grasped convulsively, and plunged it deep in Blanche's bosom. Die, said he, as he inflicted the fatal wound; die, faithless bride, since the ties of wedlock were not strong enough to preserve to me the vow which you had sworn upon the altar! And as for you, Enriquez,

pursued he, triumph not too loudly on your destinies. You are prevented from taking advantage of my froward fortune; and I die content. Scarcely did these words quiver on his lips, when he breathed his last. His countenance, overcast as it was with the shades of death, had still something in it of fierceness and of terror. That of Blanche presented a quite different aspect. The wound she had received was mortal. She fell on the scarcely breathing body of her husband; and the blood of the innocent victim flowed in the same stream with that of her murderer, who had executed his cruel purpose so suddenly that the king could not prevent it from taking effect.

This ill-fated prince uttered a cry at the sight of Blanche as she fell. Pierced deeper than herself by the stab which deprived her of life, he did his utmost to afford the same relief to her as she had offered, though at so fatal an expense, to one who might have rewarded her better. But she addressed him in these words, while the last breath quivered on her lips: My lord, your assiduities are fruitless; I am the victim. Merciless Fate demands me, and I resign myself to death. May the anger of Heaven be appeased by the sacrifice, and the prosperity of your reign be confirmed. As she was with difficulty uttering these last words, Leontio, drawn thither by the reverberation of her shrieks, came into the room, and, thunderstruck at the dreadful scene before him, remained fixed to the spot where he stood. Blanche, without noticing his presence, went on ad-

dressing herself to the king. Farewell, prince, said she; cherish my memory with the tenderness it deserves. My affection and my misfortunes entitle me at least to that. Harbor no aversion to my father; he is innocent. Be a comfort to his remaining days; assuage his grief; acknowledge his fidelity. Above all, convince him of my spotless virtue. With this I charge you, before every other consideration. Farewell, my dear Enriquez . . . I am dying . . . Receive my last sigh.

Here her words were intercepted by the approach of death. For some time, the king maintained a sullen silence. At length he said to Siffredi, whose senses seemed to be locked up in a mortal trance: Behold, Leontio; feed on the contemplation of your own work. In this tragical event, you may ruminate on the issues of your officious cares, and your overweening zeal for my service. The old man returned no answer, so deeply was he penetrated by his affliction. But wherefore dwell on the description of circumstances, when the powers of language must sink under the weight of such a catastrophe? Suffice it to say, that they mutually poured forth their sorrows in the most affecting terms, as soon as their grief allowed them to give vent to its effusions in speech.

Through the whole course of his life, the king cherished a tender recollection of his mistress. He could not bring himself to marry Constance. The Infant Don Pedro combined with that princess, and, by their joint efforts, an obstinate attempt was made

to carry the will of Roger into execution; but they were compelled in the end to give way to Prince Enriquez, who gained the ascendancy over all his enemies. As for Siffredi, the melancholy he contracted from having been the cause of destruction to his dearest friends, gave him a disgust to the world, and made a longer abode in his native country insupportable. He turned his back on Sicily for ever; and, coming over into Spain with Portia, his surviving daughter, purchased this mansion. He lived nearly fifteen years after the death of Blanche, and had the consolation, before his own death, of establishing Portia in the world. She married Don Jerome de Silva, and I am the only issue of that marriage. Such, pursued the widow of Don Pedro de Pinares, is the story of my family: a faithful recital of the melancholy events, represented in that picture, which was painted by order of my grandfather Leontio, as a record to his posterity of the fatal adventure I have related.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEHAVIOR OF AURORA DE GUZMAN ON HER ARRIVAL AT SALAMANCA.

ORTIZ, her companions, and myself, after having heard this tale, withdrew together from the hall, where we left Aurora with Elvira. There they

lengthened out the remainder of the day in a mutual intercourse of confidence. They were not likely to be weary of each other, and on the following morning, when we took our leave, there was as much to do to part them, as if they had been two friends brought up in the closest habits of confidence and affection.

In due time we reached Salamanca without any impediment. There we immediately engaged a ready-furnished house, and Dame Ortiz, as it had been before agreed, assumed the name of Donna Kimena de Guzman. She had played the part of a duenna too long not to be able to shift her character according to circumstances. One morning she went out with Aurora, a waiting-maid, and a man-servant, and betook herself to a lodging-house, where we had been informed that Pacheco most commonly took up his abode. She asked if there was any lodging to be let there. The answer was in the affirmative, and they showed her into a room in very neat condition, which she hired. She paid down earnest to the landlady, telling her that it was for one of her nephews who was coming from Toledo to finish his studies at Salamanca, and might be expected on that very day.

The duenna and my mistress, after having made sure of this apartment, went back the way they came, and the lovely Aurora, without the loss of time, metamorphosed herself into a spruce young spark. She concealed her black ringlets under a braid of light-colored hair, the better to disguise

herself; . . . manufactured her eyebrows to correspond, and dressed herself up in such a costume as to look for all the world as if her sex were of a piece with her appearance. Her deportment was free and easy; so that, with the exception of her face, which was somewhat more delicate than became the manly character, there was nothing to lead to a discovery of her masquerading. The waiting-woman who was to officiate as page, got into her paraphernalia at the same time, and we had no apprehension respecting her competency to perform her part. There was no danger of her beauty telling any tales; and, besides, she could put on as brazen-faced a swagger as the most impudent dog in town. After dinner, our two actresses, finding themselves in cue to make their first appearance on the stage, where the scene was laid in the ready-furnished lodging, took me along with them. We all three placed ourselves in the coach, and carried with us all the baggage we were likely to have occasion for.

The landlady, Bernarda Ramirez by name, welcomed us with a glut of civility, and led the way to our room, where we began to make our arrangements with her. We concluded a bargain for our board by the month, which she undertook should be suitable to our condition. Then we asked if she had her compliment of boarders. I have none at all at present, answered she. Not that there would be any want of enough, if I was of the mind to take in all sorts of people; but young men of fashion are the

thing for me. I expect one of that description this morning: he is coming hither from Madrid to complete his education. Don Lewis Pacheco! But you must have heard of him before now. No, said Aurora, I have no acquaintance whatever with the gentleman; and since we are to be inmates together, you will do me a kindness by letting me a little into his character. Please your honor, replied the landlady, leering at this outside of a man, his figure is as taking as your own; just the same sort of make, and about the same size. O! how well you will do together! By St. James, though I say it who should not say it, I shall have about me two of the prettiest young fellows in all Spain. Well, but about Don Lewis! for my mistress was in a fidget to ask the grand question. Of course; . . . he is well with the ladies in your parts! Enough of . . . of love affairs . . . on his hands! O! do not you be afraid of that, rejoined the old lady; it is a forward sprig of gallantry, take my word for it. He has but to show himself before the works, and the citadel sends to capitulate. Among the number of his conquests, he has got into the good graces of a lady, with as much youth and beauty as he will know what to do with. Her name is Isabella. Her father is an old doctor of laws. She is over head and ears in love with him; absolutely out of her wits! Well, but do tell me now, my dear little woman, interrupted Aurora, as if she was ready to burst, is he out of his wits too? He used to be very fond of her, answered Bernarda Ramirez, before he

went last to Madrid, but whether he holds in the same mind still, I will not venture to say; because on these points he is not altogether to be trusted. He is apt to flirt, first with one woman, and then with another, just as all you young deceivers take pleasure in doing. You are all alike!

The bonny widow had scarcely got to the end of her harangue, before we heard a noise in the court. On looking out at the window, behold! there appeared two young men dismounting from their steeds. Who should it be, but the identical Don Lewis Pacheco, just arrived from Madrid, with a servant behind him. The old lady brushed off to go and usher him in; while my mistress was putting herself in order, not without some palpitation of heart, to enact Don Felix to the best of her conceptions. Without waiting for any formalities, in marched Don Lewis to our apartment in his travelling dress. I have just been informed, said he, paying his respects to Aurora, that a young nobleman of Toledo takes up his abode in this house. May I take the liberty of expressing my joy in the circumstance, and hoping that we may be better acquainted? During my mistress's reply to this compliment, it seemed to me as if Pacheco did not know what to make of so smock-faced a young spark. Indeed he could not refrain from declaring a more than ordinary admiration of an air and figure so attractive. After abundance of discourse, with every demonstration of reciprocal good breeding, Don Lewis withdrew to the apartment provided for him.

While he was getting his boots off, and changing his dress and linen, a sort of a page, on the look-out after him to deliver a letter, met Aurora by chance on the staircase. Her he mistook for Don Lewis. Thinking he had found the right owner for this tender message, of which he was the Mercury, Softly! my honored lord and master, said he, though I have not the honor of knowing Signor Pacheco, there can be no occasion for asking whether you are the man. It is impossible to be mistaken in the guess. No, my friend, answered my mistress with a most happy presence of mind, assuredly you are not mistaken. You acquit yourself of your embassies to a marvel. I am Don Lewis Pacheco. You may retire! I will find an opportunity of sending an answer. The page vanished, and Aurora, shutting herself up with her waiting-maid and me, opened the letter, and read to us as follows: — "I have just heard of your being at Salamanca. With what joy did I receive the news! I thought I should have gone out of my senses. But do you love Isabella as well as ever? Lose no time in assuring her that you are still the same. In good truth, she will almost expire with pleasure when once she is assured of your constancy."

This is a mighty passionate epistle, said Aurora. The heart that indited it has been caught in a trap. This lady is a rival of no mean capacity. No pains must be spared to wean Don Lewis from her, and even to prevent any future interview. The undertaking is difficult, I acknowledge, and yet there

seems no reason to despair of the result. My mistress, taking her own hint, fell into a fit of musing; from which, having recovered as soon as she fell into it, she added: I will lay a wager they are at daggers drawn in less than twenty-four hours. It so happened that Pacheco, after a short repose in his apartment, came to look after us in ours, and entered once more into conversation with Aurora before supper. My dapper little knight, said he with a rakish air, I fancy the poor devils of husbands and lovers will have no reason to hug themselves on your arrival at Salamanca. You will make their hearts ache for them. As for myself, I tremble for all my snug arrangements. I tell you what! answered my mistress with congenial spirit, your fears are not without their foundation. Don Felix de Mendoza is rather formidable, so take care what you are about. This is not my first visit in this country; the ladies hereabouts, to my knowledge, are made of penetrable materials. About a month ago my way happened to lie through this city. I halted for eight days, and you are to know . . . but you must not mention it . . . that I set fire to the daughter of an old doctor of laws.

It was evident enough that Don Lewis was disturbed by this declaration. Might one without impropriety, replied he, just ask the lady's name? What do you mean by impropriety? exclaimed the pretended Don Felix. Why make any secret about such a matter as that? Do you think me more of a Joseph than other young noblemen of my standing?

Have a better opinion of my spirit. Besides, the object, between ourselves, is unworthy of any great reserve, she is but a little mushroom of the lower ranks. A man of fashion never quarrels with his conscience about such obscure gallantries, and even thinks it an honor conferred on a tradesman's wife or daughter when he leaves her without any. I shall, therefore, acquaint you in plain terms, that the name of the doctor's daughter is Isabella. And the doctor himself, interrupted Pacheco impatiently . . . . he possibly may be Signor Murcia de la Llana? Precisely so, replied my mistress. Here is a letter sent me just now. Read it, and then you will see how deeply your humble servant has dipped into her good graces. Don Lewis just cast his eye upon the note, and recognizing the handwriting, was struck dumb with astonishment and vexation. What is the matter? cried Aurora, with an air of surprise, keeping up the spirit of her assumed character. You change color! God forgive me, but you are a party concerned in this young lady. Ah! plague take my officious tongue for having opened my affairs to you with so much frankness.

I am very much obliged to you for it for my own part, said Don Lewis, in a transport made up of spite and rage. Traitress! Jilt! My dear Don Felix, how shall I ever requite you! You have restored me to my senses when they were just on the wing for an eternal flight. I was tickling myself into a fool's paradise of credulous love. But love is too cold a term to express my extravagances.

I fancied myself adored by Isabella. The creature had wormed herself into my heart by feigning to give me her own. But now I know her clearly for a coquette, and as such despise her as she deserves. Your feelings on the occasion do you infinite credit, said Aurora, testifying a friendly sympathy in his resentment. A plodding pettifogger's worthless brood might have gorged to surfeit on the love of a young nobleman so captivating as yourself. Her fickleness is inexcusable. So far from taking her sacrifice of you in good part, it is my determination to punish her by the keenest contempt. As for me, rejoined Pacheco, I shall never set eyes on her again; and if that is not revenge, the devil is in it. You are in the right, exclaimed our masquerading Mendoza. At the same time, that she may fully understand how ineffably we both disdain her, I vote for sitting down, each of us, and writing her a sarcastic farewell. They shall be enclosed in one cover, and serve as an answer to her own letter. But do not let us proceed to this extremity till you have examined your heart; it may be you will repent hereafter of having broken off with Isabella. No, no, interrupted Don Lewis, I am not such a fool as that comes to; let it be a bargain, and we will mortify the ungrateful wretch as you propose.

I immediately sent for pen, ink, and paper, when they sat themselves down at opposite corners of the table, and drew up a most tender bill of indictment against Doctor Murcia de la Llana's daughter. Pacheco, in particular, was at a loss for language

forcible enough to convey his sentiments in all their acrimony; away went exordium after exordium, to the tearing and maiming of five or six fair sheets, before the words looked crooked enough to please his jealous eyes. At length, however, he produced an epistle which came up with his most tragical conceptions. It ran thus: "Self-knowledge is a leading branch of wisdom, my little philosopher. As a candidate for a professor's chair, lay aside the vanity of fancying yourself amiable. It requires merit of a far different compass to fix my affections. You have not enough of the woman about you to afford me even a temporary amusement. Yet do not despair; you have a sphere of your own; the beggarly servitors in our university have a keen appetite, but no very distinguishing palate." So much for this elegant epistle! When Aurora had finished hers, which rang the changes on similar topics, she sealed them, wrapped them up together, and giving me the packet: There, Gil Blas, said she, take care that comes to Isabella's hands this very evening. You comprehend me! added she, with a glance from the corner of her eye, which admitted of no doubtful construction. Yes, my lord, answered I, your commands shall be executed to a tittle.

I lost no time in taking my departure; no sooner in the street than I said to myself, So ho! Master Gil Blas, your part then is that of the intriguing footman in this comedy. Well! so be it, my friend! show that you have wit and sense enough to top it over the favorite actor of the day. Signor Don

Felix thinks a wink as good as a nod. A high compliment to the quickness of your apprehension! Is he then in an error? No! His hint is as clear as daylight. Don Lewis's letter is to drop its companion by the way. A lucid exposition of a dark hieroglyphic, enough to shame the dulness of the commentators. The sacredness of a seal could never stand against this bright discovery. Out came the single letter of Pacheco, and away went I to hunt after Doctor Murcia's abode. At the very threshold, whom should I meet but the little page who had been at our lodging. Comrade, said I, do not you happen to live with the great lawyer's daughter? His answer was in the affirmative. I see by your countenance, resumed I, that you know the ways of the world. May I beg the favor of you to slip this little memorandum into your mistress's hand?

The little page asked me on whose behalf I was a messenger. The name of Don Lewis Pacheco had no sooner escaped my lips, than he told me, Since that is the case, follow me; I have orders to show you up; Isabella wants to confer with you. I was introduced at once into a private apartment, where it was not long before the lady herself made her appearance. The beauty of her face was inexpressibly striking; I do not recollect to have seen more lovely features. Her manner was somewhat mincing and infantine, and yet for all that it had been thirty good years at least since she had mewled and puked in her nurse's arms. My friend, said she with an encouraging smile, are you on Don Lewis Pacheco's estab-

lishment? I told her I had been in office for these three weeks. With this I fired off my paper popgun against her peace. She read it over two or three times, but if she had rubbed her eyes till doomsday she would have seen no clearer. In point of fact, nothing could be more unexpected than so cavalier an answer. Up went her eyes towards the heavens, appealing to their rival luminaries. The ivory* fences of her pretty mouth committed alternate trespass on her soft and suffering lips, and her whole physiognomy bore witness to the pangs of her distressed and disappointed heart. Then coming to herself a little, and recovering her speech, My friend, said she, has Don Lewis taken leave of his senses? Tell me, if you can, his motive for so heroic an epistle. If he is tired of me, well and good, but he might have taken his leave like a gentleman.

Madam, said I, my master most assuredly has not acted as I should have acted in his place. But he has in some sort been compelled to do as he has done. If you would give me your word to keep the secret, I could unravel the whole mystery. You have it at once, interrupted she with eagerness; depend on it you shall be brought into no

* Should this phrase appear far-fetched in the person of Gil Blas, it may be recollected, that though not much of a student himself, he had waited on students; and might have sucked in, while standing behind their chairs, along with "fates and destinies, and such old sayings, the sisters three, and such branches of learning," that exquisitely characteristic Greek metaphor, "a hedge of teeth."—TRANSLATOR.

scrape by me, therefore explain yourself without reserve. Well then! replied I, the fact is, without paraphrase, circumlocution, loss of time, or perplexity of understanding, as I shall distinctly state in two short words: Not half a minute after the receipt of your letter, there came into our house a lady, under a veil as impenetrable as her purpose was dark. She enquired for Signor Pacheco, and talked with him in private for some time. At the close of the conversation, I overheard her saying, You swear to me never to see her more; but we must not stop there: to set my heart completely at rest, you must instantly write her a farewell letter of my dictating. You know my terms. Don Lewis did as she desired; then, giving the result into my custody, Acquaint yourself, said he, where Doctor Murcia de la Llana lives, and contrive to administer this love potion to his daughter Isabella.

You see plainly, madam, pursued I, that this uncivil epistle is a rival's handiwork, and that, consequently, my master is not so much to blame as he appears. O Heaven! exclaimed she, he is more so than I was aware of. His words might have been the error of his hand, but his infidelity is the offence of his heart. Faithless man! Now he is held by other ties! . . . . But, added she, assuming an air of disdain, let him devote himself unconstrained to his new passion; I shall never cross him. Tell him, however, that he need not have insulted me. I should have left the course open to my rival, without his warning me from the field: for so fickle a

lover has not soul enough about him to pay for the degradation of soliciting his return. With this sentiment she gave me my dismissal, and retired in a whirlwind of passion against Don Lewis.

My exit was conducted entirely to my own satisfaction, for I conceived that with due cultivation of my talent I might in time become a consummate hypocrite and most successful cheat. I returned home on the strength of it, where I found my worthy master Mendoza and Pacheco supping together, and rattling away as if they had been playfellows from their cradles. Aurora saw at once, by my self-sufficient air, that her commission had not been neglected in my hands. Here you are again then, Gil Blas, said she; give us an account of your embassy. Wit and invention was all I had to trust to, so I told them I had delivered the packet into Isabella's own hands; who, after having glanced over the contents of the two letters, so far from seeming disconcerted, burst into a fit of laughter, as if she had been mad, and said, Upon my word, our young men of fashion write in a pretty style. It must be owned they are much more entertaining than scribes of plebeian rank. It was a very good way of getting out of the scrape, exclaimed my mistress; she must be an arrant coquette. For my part, said Don Lewis, I cannot trace a feature of Isabella in this conduct. Her character must have been completely metamorphosed in my absence. She struck me, too, in a very different light, replied Aurora. It must be allowed some women can assume all modes and

fashions at will. I was once in love with one of that description, and a fine dance she led me. Gil Blas, can you tell the whole story? She had an air of propriety about her which might have imposed upon a whole synod of old maids. It is true, said I, putting in my oar; it was a face to play the devil with a sworn bachelor: I could scarcely have been proof against it myself.

The personated Mendoza and Pacheco shouted with laughter at my manner of expressing myself; the one for the false witness I bore against a culprit of my own creation; the other laughed simply at the phrase in which my anathema was couched. We went on talking about the versatility of women; and the verdict, after hearing the evidence, all on one side, was given against Isabella. A convicted coquette! and sentence passed on her accordingly. Don Lewis made a fresh vow never to see her more, and Don Felix, after his example, swore to hold her in eternal abhorrence. By dint of these mutual protestations, a sort of friendship was established on the spur of the occasion, and they promised on both sides to keep no secrets from each other. The time after supper passed in ingratiating intercourse, and the time seemed short till they retired to their separate apartments. I followed Aurora to hers, where I gave her a faithful account of my conversation with the doctor's daughter, not forgetting the most trivial circumstance. She had much ado to help kissing me for joy. My dear Gil Blas, said she, I am delighted with your spirit. When one has

the misfortune to be engaged in a passion not to be gratified but by stratagems, what an advantage is it to secure on the right side a lad of so enterprising a genius as yourself. Courage, my friend! we have thrown a rival into the back ground, whose presence in the scene might have marred our comedy. So far, all is well. But as lovers are subject to strange vagaries, it seems to me that we must make short work of it, and bring Aurora de Guzman on the stage to-morrow. The idea met with my entire approbation; so, leaving Signor Don Felix with his page, I withdrew to bed in an adjoining closet.

CHAPTER VI.

AURORA'S DEVICES TO SECURE DON LEWIS PACHECO'S AFFECTIONS.

THE two new friends met as soon as they came down in the morning. The ceremonies of the day began with reciprocal embraces, about which it was impossible for Aurora to be squeamish, for then Don Felix must have dropped the mask altogether. They went out and walked about town arm in arm, attended by Chilindron, Don Lewis's footman, and myself. We loitered about the gates of the university, looking at some posting-bills and advertisements of new publications. There were a good many people amusing themselves, like us, with read-

ing over the contents of these placards. Among the rest, my eye was caught by a little fellow who was giving his opinion very learnedly on the works exposed for sale. I observed him to be heard with profound attention, and could not help remarking how amply he deserved it in his own opinion. He was evidently a complete coxcomb, of an arrogant and dictatorial stamp, the common curse of your gentry under size. This new translation of Horace, said he, announced here to the public in letters of a yard long, is a prose work, executed by an old college author. The students have taken a great fancy to the book, so as to carry off four editions; but not a copy has been bought by any man of taste! His criticisms were scarcely more candid on any of the other books: he mauled them every one without mercy. It was easy enough to see he was an author! I should not have been sorry to have staid out his harangue, but Don Lewis and Don Felix were not to be left in the lurch. Now, they took as little pleasure in this gentleman's remarks as they felt interest in the books which he was Scaligerizing, so that they took a quiet leave of him and the university.

We returned home at dinner-time. My mistress sat down at table with Pacheco, and dexterously turned the conversation on her private concerns. My father, said she, is a younger branch of the Mendoza family, settled at Toledo, and my mother is own sister to Donna Kimena de Guzman, who came to Salamanca some days ago on an affair of business,

with her niece Aurora, only daughter of Don Vincent de Guzman, whom possibly you might be acqainted with. No, answered Don Lewis; but I have often heard of him, as well as of your cousin Aurora. Is it true what they say of her? Her wit and beauty are reported to be unrivalled. As for wit, replied Don Felix, she certainly is not wanting, for she has taken great pains to cultivate her mind; but her beauty is by no means to be boasted of — indeed we are thought to be very much alike. If that is the case, exclaimed Pacheco, she cannot be behindhand with her reputation. Your features are regular, your complexion almost too fine for a man: your cousin must be an absolute enchantress. I should like to see and converse with her. That you shall, if I have any interest in the family, and this very day, too, replied the little Proteus of a Mendoza. We will go and see my aunt after dinner.

My mistress took the first opportunity of changing the topic and conversing on indifferent subjects. In the afternoon, while the two friends were getting ready to go and call on Donna Kimena, I played the scout, and ran before to prepare the duenna for her visitors. But there was no time to be lost on my return, for Don Felix was waiting for me to attend Don Lewis and him on their way to his aunt's. No sooner had they stepped over the threshold than they were encountered by the adroit old lady, making signs to them to walk as softly as possible. Hush! hush! said she, in a low voice; you will waken my niece. Ever since yesterday; she

has had a dreadful headache, but is just now a little better; and the poor girl has been taking a little sleep for the last quarter of an hour. I am sorry for this unlucky accident, said Mendoza; I was in hopes we should have seen my cousin; besides, I meant to have introduced my friend Pacheco. There is no such great hurry on that account, answered Ortiz, with a significant smile; and if that is all, you may defer it till to-morrow. The gentlemen did not trouble the old lady with a long visit, but took their leave as soon as they decently could.

Don Lewis took us to see a young gentleman of his acquaintance, by name Don Gabriel de Pedros. There we staid the remainder of the day, and took our suppers. About two o'clock in the morning we sallied forth on our return home. We had got about half way, when we stumbled against something on the ground, and discovered two men stretched at their length in the street. We concluded they had fallen under the knife of the assassin, and stopped to assist them, if yet within reach of assistance. As we were looking about to inform ourselves of their condition as nearly as the darkness of the night would allow, the patrol came up. The officer took us at first for the murderers, and ordered his people to surround us; but he mended his opinion of us on the sound of our voices, and by favor of a dark lantern held up to the face of Mendoza and Pacheco. His myrmidons, by his direction, examined the two men, whom our fancies had painted as in the agonies of death; but it turned out

to be a fat licenciate with his servant, both of them overtaken in their cups, and not dead, but dead drunk. Gentlemen, exclaimed one of the posse, this jolly fellow is an acquaintance of mine. What! do you not know Signor Guyomer the licentiate, head of our university? With all his imperfections he is a great character — a man of superior genius. He is as staunch as a hound at a philosophical dispute, and his words flow like a gutter after a hail-storm. He has but three foibles in which he indulges: intoxication, litigation, and fornication. He is now returning from supper at his Isabella's, whence, the more is the pity, the drunk was leading the drunk, and they both fell into the kennel. Before the good licentiate came to the headship this happened continually. Though manners make the man, honors, you perceive, do not always mend the manners. We left these drunkards in custody of the patrol, who carried them safe home, and betook ourselves to our lodging and our beds.

Don Felix and Don Lewis were stirring about mid-day. Aurora de Guzman was the first topic of their conversation. Gil Blas, said my mistress to me, run to my aunt, Donna Kimena, and ask if there is any admission for Signor Pacheco and me to-day, we want to see my cousin. Off I went to acquit myself of this commission, or rather to concert the plan of the campaign with the duenna. We had no sooner laid our heads together to the purpose intended, than I was once more at the elbow of the false Mendoza. Sir, quoth I, your cousin Aurora

has got about wonderfully. She enjoined me from her own lips to acquaint you that your visit could not be otherwise than highly acceptable, and Donna Kimena desired me to assure Signor Pacheco that any friend of yours would always meet with a hospitable reception.

These last words evidently tickled Don Lewis's fancy. My mistress saw that the bait was swallowed, and prepared herself to haul the prey to shore. Just before dinner, a servant made his appearance from Signora Kimena, and said to Don Felix, My lord, a man from Toledo has been inquiring after you, and has left this note at your aunt's house. The pretended Mendoza opened it, and read the contents aloud to the following effect: "If your father and family still live in your remembrance, and you wish to hear of their concerns, do not fail, on the receipt of this, to call at the Black Horse, near the university." I am too much interested, said he, in these proffered communications, not to satisfy my curiosity at once. Without ceremony, Pacheco, you must excuse me for the present; if I am not back again here within two hours, you may find your way by yourself to my aunt's; I will join the party in the evening. You recollect Gil Blas' message from Donna Kimena; the visit is no more than what will be expected from you. After having thrown out this hint, he left the room, and ordered me to follow him.

It can scarcely be necessary to apprise the reader, that instead of marching down to the Black Horse,

we filed off to our other quarters. The moment that we got within doors, Aurora tore off her artificial hair, washed the charcoal from her eyebrows, resumed her female attire, and shone in all her natural charms, a lovely, dark-complexioned girl. So complete, indeed, had been her disguise that Aurora and Don Felix could never have been suspected of identity. The lady seemed to have the advantage of the gentleman even in stature, thanks to a good high pair of heels, to which she was not a little indebted. It was her first business to heighten her personal graces with all the embellishments of art; after which she looked out for Don Lewis, in a state of agitation, compounded of fear and hope. One instant she felt confident in her wit and beauty; the next, she anticipated the failure of her attempt. Ortiz, on her part, set her best foot foremost, and was determined to play up to my mistress. As for me, Pacheco was not to see my knave's face till the last act of the farce, for which the great actors are always reserved, to unravel the intricacy of the plot; so I went out immediately after dinner.

In short, the puppet-show was all adjusted against Don Lewis's arrival. He experienced a very gracious reception from the old lady, in amends for whose tediousness he was blessed with two or three hours of Aurora's delightful conversation. When they had been together long enough, in popped I, with a message to the enamoured spark. My lord, my master Don Felix begs you ten thousand pardons, but he cannot have the pleasure of waiting on you

here this evening. He is with three men of Toledo, from whom he cannot possibly get away. O! the wicked little rogue, exclaimed Donna Kimena; as sure as a gun, then, he is going to make a night of it. No, madam, replied I, they are deeply engaged in very serious business. He is really distressed that he cannot pay his respects, and commissioned me to say everything proper to your ladyship and Donna Aurora. O! I will have none of his excuses, pouted out my mistress; he knows very well that I have been indisposed, and might show some slight degree of feeling for so near a relation. As a punishment, he shall not come near me for this fortnight. Nay, madam, interposed Don Lewis, such a sentence is too severe. Don Felix's fate is but too pitiable, in having been deprived of your society this evening.

They bandied about their fine speeches on these little topics of gallantry for some time, and then Pacheco withdrew. The lovely Aurora metamorphosed herself in a twinkling, and resumed her swashing outside. The grass did not grow under her feet while she was running to the other lodging. I have a million of apologies to make, my dear friend, said she to Don Lewis, for not giving you the meeting at my aunt's; but there was no getting rid of the tiresome people I was with. However, there is one comfort, you have had so much the more leisure to look about you, and criticise my cousin's beauty. Well, and how do you like her? She is a most lovely creature, answered Pacheco. You were

in the right to claim a resemblance to her. I never saw more correspondent features: the very same cast of countenance, the eyes exactly alike, the mouth evidently a family feature, and the tone of voice scarcely to be distinguished. The likeness, however, goes no further, for Aurora is taller than you, she is brown and you are fair, you are a jolly fellow, she has a little touch of the demure; so that you are not altogether the male and female Sosias. As for good sense, continued he, if an angel from heaven were to whisper wisdom in one ear, and your cousin her mortal chit-chat in the other, I am afraid the angel might whistle for an audience. In a word, Aurora is all-accomplished.

Signor Pacheco uttered these last words with so earnest an expression, that Don Felix said with a smile: My friend, I advise you to stay away from Donna Kimena's; it will be more for your peace of mind. Aurora de Guzman may set your wits a wandering, and inspire a passion . . .

I have no need of seeing her again, interrupted he, to become distractedly enamoured of her. I am sorry for you, replied the pretended Mendoza, for you are not a man to be seriously caught, and my cousin is not to be made a fool of, take my word for it. She would never encourage a lover whose designs were otherwise than honorable. Otherwise than honorable! retorted Don Lewis; who could have the audacity to form such on a lady of her rank and character? As for me, I should esteem myself the happiest of mankind, could she be prevailed on to favor my addresses, and link her fate with mine.

Since those are your sentiments, rejoined Don Felix, you may command my services. Yes, I will go heart and hand with you in the business. All my interest in Aurora shall be yours, and by to-morrow morning I will commence an attack on my aunt, whose good word has more influence than you may think. Pacheco returned his thanks with the best air possible to this young go-between, and we were all agog at the promising appearance of our stratagem. On the following day we found the means of heightening the dramatic effect by entangling the plot a little more. My mistress, after having waited on Donna Kimena, as if to speak a good word in favor of the suitor, came back with the result of the interview. I have spoken to my aunt, said she, but it was as much as I could do to make her hear your proposal with patience. She was primed and loaded against you. Some good-natured friend in the dark has painted you out for a reprobate; but I took your part with some little quickness, and at length succeeded in vindicating your moral character from the attack it had sustained.

This is not all, continued Aurora. You had better enter on the subject with my aunt in my presence; we shall be able to make something of her between us. Pacheco was all impatience to insinuate himself into the good graces of Donna Kimena; nor was the opportunity deferred beyond the next morning. Our amphibious Mendoza escorted him into the presence of Dame Ortiz, where such a conversa-

tion passed between the trio as put fire and tow to the combustible heart of Don Lewis. Kimena, a veteran performer, took the cue of sympathy at every expression of tenderness, and promised the enamoured youth that it should not be her fault if his plea with her niece was urged in vain. Pacheco threw himself at the feet of so good an aunt, and thanked her for all her favors. In this stage of the business Don Felix asked if his cousin was up. No, replied the Duenna, she is still in bed, and is not likely to be down stairs while you stay; but call again after dinner, and you shall have a tête-à-tête with her to your heart's content. It is easy to imagine that so coming on a proposal from the dragon which was to guard this inaccessible treasure, produced its full complement of joy in the heart of Don Lewis. The remainder of the long morning had nothing to do but to be sworn at! He went back to his own lodging with Mendoza, who was not a little enraptured to observe, with the scrutinizing eye of a mistress under the disguise of a friend, all the symptoms of an incurable amorous infirmity.

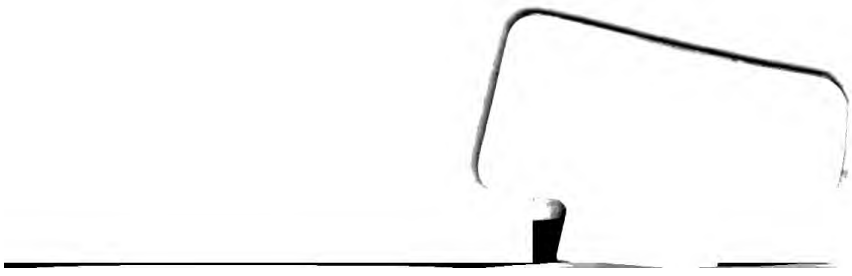
Their tongues run on no earthly subject but Aurora. When they had done dinner, Don Felix said to Pacheco: A thought has just struck me. It would not be amiss for me to go to my aunt's a few minutes before you; I will get to speak to my cousin in private, and pry, if it be possible, into every fold and winding of her heart, as far as your interests are concerned. Don Lewis just chimed in with this idea, so that he suffered his friend to set

out first, and did not follow him till an hour afterwards. My mistress availed herself so diligently of the interval, that she was tricked out as a lady from heel to point before the arrival of her lover. I beg pardon, said the poor abused inamorato, after having paid his compliments to Aurora and the duenna, I took it for granted Don Felix would be here. You will see him in a few seconds, answered Donna Kimena; he is writing in my closet. Pacheco was easily put off with the excuse, and found his time pass cheerfully in conversation with the ladies. And yet, notwithstanding the presence of all his soul held dear, it seemed very strange that hour after hour glided away but no Mendoza stepped forth from the closet! He could not help remarking, that the gentleman's correspondence must be unusually voluminous, when Aurora's features all at once assumed the broader contour of a laugh, with a delightfully provoking question to Don Lewis: Is it possible that love can be so blind as not to detect the glaring imposition by which it has been deluded? Has my real self made so faint an impression on your senses, that a flaxen peruke and a pencilled eyebrow could carry the farce to such a height as this? But the masquerade is over now, Pacheco, continued she, resuming an air of gravity; you are to learn that Don Felix de Mendoza and Aurora de Guzman are but one and the same person.

It was not enough to discover to him all the springs and contrivances by which he had been duped; she confessed the motives of tender partiality

that led her to the attempt, and detailed the progress of the plot to the winding up of the catastrophe. Don Lewis scarcely knew whether to be most astonished or delighted at the recital; at my mistress's feet he thus uttered the transports of his fond applause: Ah! lovely Aurora, can I believe myself indeed the happy mortal on whom your favors have been so lavished? What can I do to make you amends for them? My affection, were this life eternal, could scarcely pay the price. These pretty speeches were followed by a thousand others of the same quality and texture; after which, the lovers descended a little nearer to common sense, and began planning the rational and human means of arriving at the accomplishment of their wishes. It was resolved that we should set out without loss of time for Madrid, where marriage was to drop the curtain on the last act of our comedy. This purpose was executed in the spirit of impatience which conceived it, so that Don Lewis was united to my mistress in a fortnight, and the nuptial ceremonies were graced with the usual accompaniments of music, feasting, balls, and rejoicings, without either end or respite.

END OF VOL. I.

BALLANTYNE AND HANSON, EDINBURGH
CHANDOS STREET, LONDON

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