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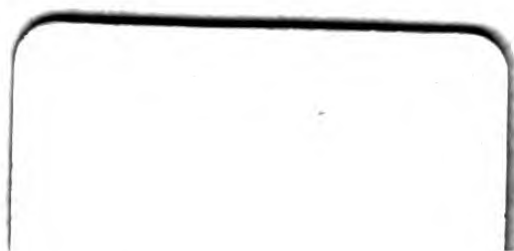
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I.
TWO
LOVE STORIES
BY
"WATERS"

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROPRIETOR
BY W. KENT & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW



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TWO LOVE STORIES ;

An Anglo-Spanish Romance.

Novels

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“A SKELETON IN EVERY HOUSE.”

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROPRIETOR, BY
W. KENT AND CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

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TWO LOVE STORIES;

AN ANGLO-SPANISH ROMANCE.



CHAPTER I.

“WHICH ROAD?”

It is surprising that in this age of romance-writing a shaft is so rarely sunk into the rich mine of veritable family history, abounding, as it does, beyond the resources of the wildest fiction, in varied scenes of human life, combined with the supreme charm of reality. Acting upon this conviction, I have, in these pages, ventured to paraphrase a few leaves of that prolific record, the greater part of which—my chief claim to the reader’s attention—it has been my fortune to read line by line as Time inscribed them.

The poet’s saying “that coming events cast their shadows before,” is an elegant fancy, not an inspired truth: an opinion which no one present in the drawing-room of Belle-Vue House, county of Lancashire, on the evening of the 20th of December, 1835, would,

I think, have for a moment hesitated to endorse. It were difficult to imagine a scene more joyous in its present aspect, more suggestive of a cloudless, brilliant future. Let me sketch it in brief outline. The setting of the picture—the noble, brilliantly-illuminated apartment, the splendid furniture, etc.—is a gorgeous one; and there is a considerable number of well-dressed persons present, but few of whom, however, require especial notice in this place. These are Mr. John Lambert, master, or supposedly so, of the establishment; Mrs. Lambert; her son, Cyril Mervyn; Juliet Arden, Mr. Lambert's grand-niece, and wife-elect of his stepson, Cyril Mervyn; and the Reverend James Arden, the young lady's father.

John Lambert is a lately-retired merchant, worth, it is presumed, and rightly presumed, over a quarter of a million sterling. The snows of seventy winters have silvered the fringe of hair which circles his shining bald head, but his frame is unbowed, his eyes just now sparkle with vigorous life, and his voice has not a quaver of age in it. Mrs. Lambert, his lady-wife, is not more than twenty years younger than he, but is so well preserved, the colours and fashion of her dress are chosen with such nice taste, and she takes care to sit in so favourable a light, that a close observer would not guess her to be more than forty. Cyril Mervyn, her son by a former marriage, is a masculine type of what his mother must have been in her youth; the same large dark eyes, finely

cut patrician features, the same expression at times of haughty wilfulness with which Mrs. Lambert has become habitual: a fine young man withal, of fervid generous impulses—impulses, not principles—and deeply in love with his affianced bride, Juliet Arden, the charming girl seated by his side, whose soft, hazel eyes—we can perceive, downcast though they be—are suffused with a tender, tremulous light, whilst the rich colour fades and glows upon her cheek with almost the rapidity of the quick pulsations of her beating heart. When I further say that Juliet Arden’s was of the finest, most graceful of female forms, her complexion pure as a lily, and every feature of her face exquisitely chiselled, I convey no idea of the peculiar loveliness made up of sweetness, gentleness, goodness—in one word, the beauty of the soul, which seemed to radiate from her, as it were, making a sunshine in the shadiest place, and constituting a claim which mere physical beauty, however exquisite, never possessed. In this style, at all events, I have frequently heard the young man, standing near a table at the further end of the apartment, speak of Juliet Arden. That young man’s name is Henry Denvir, and he appears not to consider himself upon an equality with the rest of the gay company. He is right; in a conventional sense he is *not* upon an equality with them; but Mr. Lambert loves and respects him, and the lady of the house, seeing that he is a sufficiently presentable

person, that his manners are unobjectionable, tolerates his presence. He affects to be reading the book, the leaves of which he turns over, though his unquiet glances WILL stray, when he believes himself unobserved, towards the contracted lovers; and how nervously he starts if either of them looks up or around, and hastily reverts to his book, not one word of which can he distinguish, so confoundingly do the lines undulate and swim before his eyes. As ordinarily interpreted these are signs of Love, of Jealousy, Despair! Yet, would Henry Denvir indignantly, and with entire sincerity, deny that in this instance there was the slightest truth in that interpretation! *He* admire, love Juliet Arden? Why yes, as an abstraction, as he admires and loves all beautiful things—the golden dawn of day, its purple setting, the light of stars, the breath of flowers; but as a woman—and his eyes lighten, his frame quivers, at the bare suggestion of a thought so monstrous—how could a sane mind for one moment entertain such a proposition? As to Jealousy, that could hardly be felt by one whose heart made no pretension; nor Despair by him that had never hoped! Something like this, I say, would have been Henry Denvir's quite sincere reply to such an accusation, as he would have considered it, and of him I can speak with confidence. Others I can only present to the reader in their world-masks and wrappings, but the beatings of Henry Denvir's heart

were known to me—its tones, its various bias ! The Reverend James Arden is the only other person present whom I need particularize : he is a widower, and his only source of income being a not over prosperous classical seminary, near Sidmouth, Devonshire, the betrothal of his child with the acknowledged heir to Mr. Lambert’s immense riches may well gladden the heart and brighten the brow, as we see it does, of an affectionate and still anxious father.

Thus much for the principal figures in the scene which I wish to place as vividly as possible before the reader. Their occupation, and that of all present, had been, till within the last ten minutes, to hear long, verbose marriage settlements read, in which thousands after thousands ran off the glib tongues of lawyers with a glittering velocity, perfectly dazzling. The reading, signing, sealing done, Mr. Lambert brought forth for general admiration or envy, the magnificent diamond set,—necklace, armlets, ear-drops, and I know not what jewellery besides,—which he had purchased for his grand-niece the bride. The exclamations of delight were enthusiastic, rapturous ; and Mr. Lambert but gave expression to the general hilarity by proposing a dance. “ A dance ! a dance ! ” echoed a dozen glad voices ; Mrs. Lambert acquiesced ; the tables, chairs were thrust aside out of the way ; a “ country ” dance was unanimously decided upon, and at the request of Mr.

Lambert, who insisted upon having Juliet for his partner, Henry Denvir, though neither a professed musician nor a very artistic performer, seated himself at the piano, and struck off with Sir Roger de Coverley. Whether from the player's sympathy with the general exultation, or from unacknowledged irritation,—impatience, the air quickened, its volume swelled, dilated beneath his touch; there was a whirl of flying feet, a maze of floating, undulating figures, a resonance of joyous mirth, when in one flashing moment thunder fell! arresting the musician's fingers upon the keys, the dancers' feet upon the floor, as Mr. Lambert, with a loud cry, staggered wildly to and fro for a few seconds, and then fell into the outstretched arms of the Reverend James Arden—a corpse. Apoplexy, paralysis of the brain, was the verdict of the doctors; “Visitation of God!” that of the Coroner's Inquisition—a distinction without a difference.

Well, death is the common lot, and that of a man seventy years old, however apparently hale and full of life, was felt upon reflection to be scarcely more a subject for grief than of wonder in a world full of untimely graves. Belle-Vue House had one inmate the less; there was no other change; the vast wealth of the deceased having been settled, at her marriage, upon Mrs. Lambert, with contingent remainder to her son, and as she was entirely well-disposed towards Juliet Arden, the nuptials of the young couple were

but delayed, not frustrated ; a few more months of the most blissful phase of human life, that of recognized, cloudless courtship added to their span of joyous days ! These considerations so quickly vindicated their natural influence, that Mrs. Lambert was sufficiently composed on the day after the catastrophe to hold a long and anxious conference with her dress-maker, and finally decide upon the style of mourning, which upon her reappearance in the world was so justly admired for its becoming simplicity and elegance. Even Juliet Arden, the only blood-relative of Mr. Lambert present at his death, looked, Henry Denvir thought, far from inconsolably wretched when he met her on Christmas morning, hanging on Cyril Mervyn's arm, as they strolled with pensive pace through the gardens of Belle-Vue House. Nay, so completely, as well as rapidly, was the equanimity of the bereaved family restored, that by the morrow of the splendid funeral Henry Denvir had satisfied himself that the widow was quite equal to a few minutes' conversation with him upon business-matters deeply affecting himself, and for a favourable issue to which he was, in consequence of the suddenness of his benefactor's decease, entirely dependent upon that lady's generosity, or rather her just feeling. The required interview was readily granted, and he had had no reason whatever to complain of the reception by Mrs. Lambert, either of himself or of the proposition he was submitting and explaining to her, when

Fate again unexpectedly knocked at the door of the stately mansion; not, indeed, this time in the shape of the grisly king of terrors, yet in one by many degrees more terrible, judging from the thoroughly unaffected consternation it produced; albeit in visible shape nothing more formidable than a stoutish, pleasant-spoken solicitor, who prefaced the communication it was, he said, his painful duty to make, with many courteous phrases; and ran over the heads of some document, a copy of which he held in his hand, as if he felt quite ashamed of himself for giving pain to the already cruelly-afflicted and admirable lady whom that document so greatly concerned.

And the effect of the bland gentleman's visitation was lasting as it was terrific; the consternation it excited, so far from having calmed down on the morrow when Henry Denvir returned to Belle-View House, becoming more intense, overwhelming, the longer and more closely its full consequences were examined and discussed. It was long past mid-day when he entered the library where Mrs. Lambert was impatiently awaiting the arrival of visitors—gentlemen of the law; yet was her dress uncared-for, her hair disordered, her cheeks unrouged, causing her to look sixty years old at least. Cyril Mervyn was equally disturbed; and the family attorneys at last making their appearance, a long agitating conference ensued, resulting in a determination to adopt vigorous defensive measures; the preliminary step

wherein was to lay the whole case before eminent counsel, for which purpose the elder of the lawyers agreed to start for London by that evening's mail.

Whilst Mr. Sharp, urged into activity by the magnitude of the stake at issue, is speeding to the metropolis, a distance of some two hundred miles, at the rate, in those good old coaching times, of nearly ten miles per hour, we shall have leisure to cast a retrospective glance over the leading incidents in the deceased John Lambert's instructive career, and be then quite in time to witness the unfolding of Mr. Sharp's case for counsel, and to hear the opinion pronounced thereupon by the selected oracle.

This will take us back to the autumn of the year 1790, when, if it had been asked in one of the largest commercial cities of Great Britain, of men qualified to give an opinion, which, amongst their younger merchants, was most surely on the road to eminent fortune, the name of John Lambert would probably have been pronounced by a large majority of the persons so addressed; and if the reasons for that selection had been pressed for, they would have pointed to the unflagging industry, the quick intelligence, the perfect probity for which he had been remarked since about twelve years previously he entered the counting-house of his bachelor relative, Reuben Watkins, and the boldness and sagacity, always crowned with success, with which he had pushed and enlarged the business since his accession

to it at his relative's death. That this favourable opinion was very generally entertained, no one could have doubted that saw John Lambert upon 'Change one day in November of the aforesaid year, some hours after a foreign post had brought him letters, which, had the contents been known, would have greatly modified that favourable opinion; and every item whereof was floating, as in a fiery mist before his eyes; cool, self-poised, self-assured as he appeared to be. In truth, that day upon 'Change was the turning point in John Lambert's life, and he himself had an instinctive presentiment that it would be so. He had come out after long cogitation over those letters, to look the section of the busy world, whose good opinion, praise, flatteries, had, till then, been as the breath of his nostrils, fully in the face, and finally determine whether he could brave, not its righteous censure, that he had not to fear, but its pity, its sneering disdain, its civilly-veiled contemptuous commiseration. As the father of evil, always busy, it is said, in such places, and with such moods of mind, would have it, the homage paid to the rising young merchant—hand-shakings, wordy felicitations, his opinions deferentially listened to by men as old again as himself, and of far higher actual commercial status—was on that day superabundantly lavish; and when he took his way homeward, John Lambert was strengthened, hardened in his partially-shaken resolve to hold fast by wealth and the consi-

deration which wealth brings, regardless, or more correctly, in defiance of the pain, however bitter to himself and others—to one other—which that resolution involved. No easy task; for it was not till the cold leaden dawn was struggling through his office windows, that he could finally subdue his scruples, and take the first irrevocable step upon the hard, unresting road, strewn profusely with riches, social honours, still more profusely with thorns, at the end of which, as we have seen, lay an unwept, un-reverenced grave.

CHAPTER II.

“THE WRONG TURNING.”

JOHN LAMBERT was not insolvent, nor in any danger of becoming so. The cruel alternative was not before him of deciding as he did, or of going into the “Gazette.” The case which he had been all night arguing with himself, was, plainly, this:—Reuben Watkins, his relative, and predecessor in the business, had formed a connection with certain houses at Barcelona, in the north-east of Spain, whom he supplied with cotton and woollen manufactures, stamped with the names of the Spanish firms, which, after reaching their destination by the agency of organized bands of Catalan contrabandists, were sold as the genuine productions of Spanish industry, which a patriotic government was bound to support and foster by prohibitive duties and a *cordon militaire*: a commerce, by the way, as rife now (1856) as at the period I am writing of. This very profitable trade, John Lambert, relying upon the good faith and perfect solvency of his Spanish correspondents, had pushed to a great extent; his risks amounting in October 1790, to

nearly twenty thousand pounds; about one half of which was represented by the acceptances of those foreign firms, and the remainder by goods in their actual or proximate possession, not as yet drawn against. Of the acceptances, discounted by Lambert at his bankers in the usual course of business, the major part would fall due in about six weeks; and the letters spoken of, one from his confidential agent, another from an intimate acquaintance temporarily residing in Barcelona, apprised him that not one of those acceptances would be paid when at maturity, and moreover, that the probability, almost certainty, was—partly owing to the paralyzing effect upon commerce and credit, of the relations between Spain and revolutionary France, that his loss, with both the Barcelona firms, would be almost total. Directly the agitation caused by this intelligence had sufficiently subsided to permit of his doing so, Lambert, who, albeit, weak as infancy in many important respects, was not one to palter with the truth in matters of account, addressed himself to the task of thoroughly probing the state of his affairs, as now disclosed, so as to clearly ascertain how he should stand with the world, were the sinister predictions of his agent and friend realised to the fullest extent. This he did, and the conclusion was, that, reckoning the heavy sacrifices necessary to enable him to face such a loss—such a mass, too, of dishonoured bills—and leaving a sufficiently wide margin for any adverse contin-

gencies that might follow the loss of credit, certain to ensue from the fact—the unconcealable fact—that he had been compelled to make those heavy sacrifices, he would still be worth between nine and ten thousand pounds. Sufficient, abundantly sufficient this, to enable him to fight his way upward again ; but, in the meantime, how bear up against the loss of the flattering consideration he enjoyed ; endure to hear it said, as it surely would be, that the reputedly astute, far-seeing John Lambert, had, after all, proved to be little better than a rash, brainless speculator—a reckless, feather-headed, commercial gamester, destitute alike of prudence and of skill ! That were humiliation unspeakable, insupportable, he had felt, after again inhaling the intoxicating incense which the world is ever ready to burn before its idol—success, or its semblance : and he again heedfully scanned his balance-sheet with the hope of finding that he would not be so well off as he had calculated, in the adverse contingency supposed, and which he could not doubt was near at hand, and inevitable. He did so, vainly ; the inexorable figures denied his conscience that miserable palliative. Still, there would be a heavy downcome, though not to the ground, nor near it, and to that he had not the courage, or the folly, as he termed it, to submit.

It was easy enough, in a certain sense, to carry out his resolution. He knew by more than hints, from a Miss Caulfield's trustee, that the offer of his

hand would be accepted by that lady, and that he should obtain with his bride, a spinster of about his own age, of spotless character, and considerable intelligence, though plain, *very* plain (I have seen her portrait, admittedly a flattering one), over thirty thousand pounds invested in Consols. Louisa Caulfield, moreover, came of a good stock, prudent, painstaking, methodic people, and those who knew her best, affirmed that she inherited with her parent's wealth, the virtues that had acquired it. She had, in fact, been for several years her father's managing clerk; the alliance was therefore an eligible one, in several respects. As to imprudent love-matches—I am quoting John Lambert's self-deceptions—as to imprudent love-matches, what but bitter unavailing remorse resulted in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred from them, when the poor fools found that of the straw on fire of hot, inconstant passion, consumed in its own flame, there remained only its dust and ashes! Had he not severely reproved his only sister for daring to contract such a marriage; refused to acknowledge her letter of apology or explanation; and should he be justified in committing the folly he had denounced in others? Certainly not! The question answered itself!

Moral like physical surgery is, however, much more easily prescribed than submitted to; and, as previously intimated, Mr. John Lambert's stern resolves were sorely perplexed and troubled by the soft eyes and sunny smiles of the damsel that had been

the dream of his boyhood, and was now his chosen, contracted bride. Lucy Grantham had chanced to meet her former shy and silent sweetheart during the only visit—no longer ago than the previous summer—he had paid his native Devonshire since leaving it, and surprised him into a fervent declaration, which, received with sympathy and acceptance, was, it had been arranged, to be consummated by marriage in the ensuing Christmas week—a season of the year when the bridegroom could be best spared for a few days from business. And with Lucy's image was provokingly associated the perfume of the summer woods through which they had last strolled together—the melody of the songs she had sung to him by the brookside. Pshaw! all that was childish! absurd! Sentimental fancies would not help to meet ten thousand pounds' worth of returned acceptances—to bridge over and conceal from prying, envious eyes the frightful gap in his fortunes caused by a loss altogether of double that amount! His future life should *not* be embittered by yielding to such weakness: he would write to Lucy Grantham, acquaint her frankly with the disastrous change in his position and prospects, and the consequent necessity he was under of withdrawing from their mutually rash engagement. He did so, after spoiling a score sheets of paper in the attempt, and instantly dispatched the letter to the post-office, lest, peradventure, his firmness should not hold. The answer which came by return of post was brief and

bitter, this: “I agree to cancel our engagement. Could I have before read your heart as plainly as I do in the letter just received, it would never have been made. I return your bank-note.”

On that very day fortnight Louisa Caulfield bestowed her hand and fortune upon John Lambert. She proved to be an inestimable partner; by which I mean that it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to calculate her true value. Inexorably watchful, of an industry unparalleled, and thoroughly versed in the routine of a merchant’s counting-house, the honeymoon had not passed, if ever it began, before Mrs. Lambert had threaded every winding of her husband’s business, and mastered its minutest details. The excessive development of the illicit trade with Spain she severely blamed, and insisted upon the expediency of bringing it as speedily as possible within safer limits. A quite superfluous recommendation, thought poor Lambert, as he glanced nervously at the bill-book, as a few days hence will very clearly appear. Error! The agent at Barcelona, himself deceived, had fatally misled his principal! The acceptances of the Barcelona firms were all regularly honoured, and their solvency was now admitted by the same gentleman to be unquestionable!

“Has this man ever led you to suppose that the Herrera and Gompertz firms were *not* solvent?” asked Mrs. Lambert of her spouse, after reading the agent’s letter for at least the fiftieth time.

“No, no, not exactly that,” replied the spouse, with rueful embarrassment; “but—but he hinted, stated I should say, that there were rumours, evil rumours afloat concerning them.”

“That letter is not upon the Spanish file,” observed Mrs. Lambert.

“No; I have unaccountably mislaid or burnt it,” said the husband.

“Indeed! The world would scarcely suspect John Lambert of anything so negligent and unbusiness-like,” retorted the lady.

“D—n the world!” exclaimed John Lambert.

Mrs. Lambert looked up from the letter she was still studying, and her keen glance rested for a few moments inquiringly, reflectingly, upon her husband’s face. “I never heard you swear before,” she presently remarked; “but, doubtless, there is a cause;” and this said, she left the private counting-house.

“Cause enough!” murmured Lambert, as the door closed after his indefatigable helpmate. “I only wish——” He did not conclude the sentence, which, for the sake of conjugal decorum, was, perhaps, as well. By and by his meditations took a more practical direction. “I wonder,” said he, under his breath, “where I can have put that confounded letter! Burnt it can hardly be; and if my lady were once to light upon it, wh-e-e-e-w!” A long subdued whistle concluded the happy man’s soliloquy.

My lady *did* light upon it; and I should like to

know what she would *not* have lit upon that existed in this visible diurnal sphere if she were determined to do so. It was placed the next morning before him, together with a bundle of Lucy Grantham's letters with which it had been inadvertently tied up, and deposited in what had once been a secret drawer in Mr. John Lambert's private *écritoire*.

“Here is the missing letter,” said Mrs. Lambert, “and some others, which I have taken the liberty to glance over, the most interesting, in my opinion, being this singularly short one”—Lucy Grantham's curt note, already given—“which contains, you perceive, a one hundred pound Bank of England note left therein by inadvertence, or perhaps through preoccupation, the day upon which it reached you, being precisely that whereon I had the honour of first receiving a written communication from Mr. John Lambert.”

With this, the lady left her husband to his breakfast and reflections. Ah! John Lambert, were the past redeemable by money, how blithely would you have filled up a cheque for the heavy balance at your bankers, but to cancel so much thereof as would take you back to the moment when you penned the letter to Lucy Grantham, the “interesting” reply to which has just been placed before you by your wife! Alas! my poor, weak friend, there is no such redemption; and it is sinful in you to so much as dream of its possibility, or desirableness!

From this time the intercourse of the husband and

wife was marked, save before company, when they acted a model married couple with great success, by mutual coolness, reserve—disgust would be hardly too strong a word, which the birth of a boy within the first year of marriage was powerless to check or soften. The wife soon became wholly absorbed in the mother; to heap up riches for her darling son the sole aim and business of her life. She succeeded in that aim beyond her wildest hopes, with the help, of course, more or less grudgingly afforded, of her husband—himself one of the most fortunate, enviable men in England; a splendid example, everybody said, of the reward which, in this great country, ever waits upon well-directed industry, high intelligence, and Christian integrity. His career, from the day he left Devonshire with a small bundle in his hand and sixpence in his pocket—a common stereotyped fiction—to the memorable one that witnessed his elevation to the mayoralty of his adopted city, furnished wood-cuts to illustrate serials, and an always telling “case in point” to platform rhetoricians. This was how it came to pass that he conceived such a strong distaste for literature and oratory, which I have heard him many times repeat, affected him like sea-sickness. Poor fellow! It is true, nevertheless, that in 1811, his twenty-first year of wedded bliss, he was worth two hundred thousand pounds, and that she who had so efficiently assisted in scraping together that immense mass of wealth, died in the

early spring of the same year of a broken heart, if ever woman died of one. Her son, her idolized son—petted from childhood with every indulgence—thwarted in none of his humours or caprices—Mr. Lambert was not permitted the slightest control over him—grew, as all children so nurtured must grow, to be a pest and curse to all about him. As he approached manhood, and his passions acquired virility, he became utterly unmanageable, broke through all bounds, and upon some hesitation being shown, as a servant reported, to comply with his demand of money to continue a debauch, the already maddening effect of which was but too apparent in his frenzied speech and gestures, felled his mother to the ground with a blow of his fist! Mrs. Lambert never held up her head after that evening; and gradually drooped, dwindled, withered away, till she sank into the grave. The son, in a fit of drunken remorse, ran away from home, enlisted in the 20th Regiment of Foot, and, before his father could or would interfere, was embarked for Spain; and, as the nominal return of killed, published in the “Gazette,” and a letter from the office of the Secretary-at-War, in reply to an application from Mr. Lambert, testified, fell gloriously at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo, in January, 1812.

The news of his son’s death, thus officially certified, reached Mr. Lambert at a critical moment. He had, by that time, been about ten months a widower, and had fully determined, that if he did marry again, it

should be, not to a business woman, but to a lady of birth, if possible, and at all events distinguished for beauty, and all the feminine graces, though she had not a penny-piece to call her own. An enormously rich, hale, good-looking man, in his forty-eighth year, was pretty sure to find himself suited in the matrimonial market, difficult as he might be to please; and yielding, after a faint struggle, to fate and the fascinations of the really beautiful and elegant Mrs. Mervyn, the widow of a Captain of Dragoons, subsisting with her little boy Cyril upon a captain's widow's pension, he proposed, was graciously accepted, and referred to the lady's solicitors. Those gentlemen suggested an ante-nuptial contract, securing whatever property he might die possessed of to his wife, should she survive him, with remainder to any children he might have by the marriage, and Cyril Mervyn, in equal proportions. Now it would have been impossible to agree to this were his son alive, a similar contract having been signed and sealed previous to his union with Louisa Caulfield. That obstacle was now removed; Mr. Lambert, who was desperately smitten with the young and charming widow, yielded willing ascent, and Mrs. Mervyn became Mrs. Lambert the second.

Belle-View House had been previously purchased and splendidly furnished, a carriage was immediately set up, and it was reported that Mr. Lambert intended to at once retire from business. This did not turn

out to be correct ; either there had been no such understanding between the happy pair, or one, or both, changed their minds upon the subject. Mr. Lambert's taste, moreover, for commercial occupation appeared to revive in a remarkable degree after five or six weeks of renewed matrimonial experience, and so grew upon him that first he would sleep one night in the week at the old place of business, and by and by two, soon three, till at last he rarely passed more than the Sunday night at Belle-Vue House !

Mr. Lambert had not been long settled back into practical bachelorhood, *plus* a fashionable wife, delightful stepson, and splendid establishment in the western suburb, when he was once more lifted off his feet by a letter from Spain—from that fatal Barcelona ! His scapegrace of a son, officially reported to be lying in the bed or *fosse* of honour, before Ciudad Rodrigo, was, and had for some time been, merrily alive in the Catalan capital ; in proof whereof Señor Herrera referred to an important item in the *per contra* column of the account transmitted of goods received, and with which the Spanish firm had duly debited themselves. An active and very angry correspondence, scrupulously concealed from the imperious mistress of Belle-Vue House, immediately ensued between the father and son, ending as unexpectedly as it began, from which the following extraordinary facts appeared to result :—

John Lambert, junior, upon finding himself told

off, not, indeed, for the forlorn hope, which is, I believe, usually composed of volunteers, but for the next most glorious share in the assault upon Ciudad Rodrigo, that awarded to the "stormers," led upon that occasion by Captain Charles James Napier, suddenly bethought him that, being in Spain, he might turn that precious head of his to a more profitable use than trying to stop a French twenty-four pounder cannon-ball with it; and this conviction growing rapidly upon him, as night fell and the troops began to silently muster for their dreadful work, he hit upon the expedient of falling, he trusted quite voluntary, at the first discharge from the enemy's batteries, crawling away in the darkness and confusion, and, with the help of a sum of money he had about him, effecting his escape to Oporto, disguised as a Spanish or Portuguese peasant. This ingenious scheme succeeded, it appeared, to admiration. The captain of his company saw him knocked over, as he thought, at the first cannon-volley; hence the insertion of his name in the glory-giving columns of the "Gazette," amongst the fallen heroes of that memorable night, many of whom, one readily understands, must have been so disfigured as to render their identification impossible, had pains been taken to do so, which, as regards private soldiers, could hardly be the case.

Young Lambert had not been touched, and having reached Oporto in safety, he purchased more suitable

attire, obtained a passage in a merchant vessel to Barcelona, where he presented, not himself alone, with a cleverly-concocted story, to Señor José Herrera, but a bill at sight for one thousand pounds, purporting to be drawn in favour of his son upon that firm, by Lambert, senior. This audacious fraud was the more easily successful, forasmuch that Juan Herrera, the nephew of Señor José, had been in England, where he was introduced to young Lambert. The draft was honoured, and constituted the important *per contra* item in the account transmitted by Señor José Herrera, of which mention has been already made. Mr. Lambert was forced to acknowledge it, or consign his son to the galleys; and he did *tacitly* admit it to be genuine. But this was not the worst—young Lambert, having obtained the thousand pounds, plunged madly into the dissipations of the northern Spanish metropolis, and crowned his reckless career by marrying one Térésa Delmar, a principal actress of the *Téatro Réal*—a young person of great personal attractions, and, for her profession, it was added, excellent character.

The extreme irritation and perplexity all this caused poor Mr. Lambert may be imagined, but especially was he haunted by the fear that his lady, of whom he stood in great awe, might by some mischance discover that his son was still above ground. All apprehension upon that point was, however, set at rest by a letter from Señor Herrera, announcing

the death of young Lambert in a street brawl with some Spanish gallants, who insulted his wife as she was leaving the theatre with her English husband. There was no doubt this time of the young man's death, nor that he had left his widow *enceinte*; and Madame Delmar, as she continued to call herself, retaining, according to the custom of comedians, her maiden name, gave birth in due time to a daughter, who was baptized Luisa, after her grandmother. Mr. Lambert was subsequently induced to allow the mother one hundred pounds a year during her life, upon condition that she did not herself come nor send the child to England. "Madame Delmar must distinctly understand," added Mr. Lambert, addressing Señor Herrera, who was the lady's negotiator in the affair, "that this act is one of pure compassion on my part, and that I have not been in the slightest degree influenced by consideration of any claim, real or pretended, of relationship, which claim I altogether repudiate, supposing it to have a legal or quasi legal existence." The widow acquiesced, the annuity was regularly paid, and the subject passed, apparently, from Mr. Lambert's thoughts.

Ten years after this, in the autumn of 1823, Mr. Lambert paid a visit to the Reverend James Arden, the recently-widowed husband of his niece, a daughter of Catherine Lambert, the sister spoken of as having offended her merchant brother by an injudi-

cious marriage. Mr. Arden, an unbeneficed clergyman of the Church of England, and the father of a family of six children, the eldest of whom, his daughter Juliet, was then about eight years of age, had lately opened a classical seminary not far from Sidmouth, Devonshire, and after much hesitation had ventured to appeal for pecuniary assistance—very much needed—to the wealthy uncle of his deceased wife. That appeal was promptly responded to, and Mr. Lambert was himself the bearer of the aid required; his reason for doing so being to earnestly impress upon the recipient of his bounty the absolute necessity there was of keeping secret from the whole world that they were or had been in communication with each other; all the world meaning, in the subjugated merchant’s vocabulary, the fine lady at Belle-Vue House. This, by no means hard condition, was of course cheerfully complied with, and after dinner the two gentlemen took a stroll through the not very extensive grounds, where amongst other interesting objects Mr. Lambert was struck with the nascent and already touching beauty of Juliet Arden, and much more powerfully it seemed, though from a different case, by the features of a boy about two years her senior, one of Mr. Arden’s pupils, who had climbed a large nut tree, and was busy casting the spoil into Juliet’s lap, when the approach of the master brought him down in a hurry.

“One moment!” exclaimed Mr. Lambert, detain-

ing the blushing boy who was hurrying away. "What is your name, my lad?"

"Denvir, sir, Henry Denvir."

"Denvir!" echoed Mr. Lambert, "Denvir! Yes; but, what was your mother's name—your grandmother's, I mean, before—before she married?"

"Grantham, sir. Lucy Grantham."

It seemed to the boy that that name struck the grayhaired man like a sharp blow. He turned away, asking no more questions, and at a sign from the Rev. John Arden, the boy and girl ran off towards the house.

"Did you, sir, know Lucy Grantham?" asked the reverend gentleman.

"Yes; in my boyhood days. We were born in the same neighbourhood—near Exeter."

"To be sure. I remember her very well, though I only saw her twice or thrice shortly before her death."

"Her death!"

"Yes: it must be at least four-and-twenty years since that took place. The story of her life was, I have heard, a sad one. My poor wife knew all about it; more, I think, than she chose to communicate, even to me. Lucy Grantham—who, as you no doubt remember, was quite a beautiful girl, sweet-tempered, and affectionate as beautiful—had been, she said, at the point of marriage with a very rich lover, so nearly so, that the day was fixed, and great preparation made by her exultant parents—worthy

people, but in humble circumstances—in the way of dresses chiefly, which they ran in debt for upon the strength of their daughter’s fortunate marriage. Lucy’s brother, too, who was in a small way of business, obtained larger credit than he could otherwise have done, for the same reason; when suddenly, and without, I believe, assigning any motive for his conduct, the faithless suiter declared off!

“Lucy Grantham fell ill in consequence, and upon recovering, found that her father and brother were in imminent danger of being sent to prison for the debts that had been so heedlessly contracted. Overborne by this pressure, she accepted reluctantly the renewed offer of a discarded sweetheart, one Elmsley, a young nurseryman and florist in a fair way of business, who covenanted to pay those debts. They were married, and Elmsley made her an excellent husband; but she never thoroughly rallied from the effect of the cruel deception that had been practised upon her; and when her only child, the present Mrs. Denvir, was about four years old, her for a long time faint, fluttering life passed unresistingly, tranquilly away before the attack of a slight cold;—God bless me, Mr. Lambert! what is the matter? you are ill—fainting!”

“It is nothing, nothing,” said Mr. Lambert, with a strong and partly-successful effort at self-mastery. “A slight spasm, that is all. Suppose we return to the house.”

At evening fall of the same day, Mr. Lambert paid a visit to the Denvirs, and had a long conference with the husband and wife, at which it was settled that he, Mr. Lambert, would forthwith take upon himself the charge of young Henry Denvir's education, receive him, as soon as he reached the ripe age of fourteen, into his counting-house, and assure him, as far as human providence could assure him, a prosperous career in life. Mr. Denvir, a nurseryman like his father-in-law, to whom he had been apprenticed, was not in robust health, and had a young family, eight in number, upon his failing hands. Mr. Lambert's offer was therefore gratefully accepted by both the husband and wife; and in 1827, Henry Denvir was introduced to that gentleman's private counting-house, where he remained till 1833, when the business was, at the peremptory instance of Mrs. Lambert, finally disposed of. It had been Mr. Lambert's intention to purchase a junior partnership for his protégé in some well-established house, with a sum of money he had secretly set apart for that purpose; and not long before his death negotiations had been entered into with a firm to whom Henry Denvir's intimate knowledge of the Spanish language—he having been for several years especially charged with the Barcelona part of Mr. Lambert's business—would have been of signal advantage. Yet, although there could be no doubt that Mr. Lambert had Henry Denvir's welfare strongly at heart, delay arose, prin-

cipally because the well-meaning, facile-minded merchant, never having been, except furtively, and by fits and starts, his own master—an appendage rather to the world than his wives—went about the affair as if engaged in some felonious plot to rob his lady-wife and magnificent stepson of some portion of their rightful heritage. Another cause of fatal procrastination was the occurrence of an event which, for a couple of months previous to his decease, absorbed all his thoughts and energies. This was his introduction, as if undesignedly, by chance, of Cyril Mervyn to Juliet Arden, with the hope that her beauty might attract and fix his affections. It fell out as he had hoped and prayed. Cyril Mervyn at once conceived an ardent passion for the charming girl; and as his mother could refuse nothing to her incomparable son, that lady’s consent to the alliance was obtained without much difficulty; and Mr. Lambert congratulated himself that the injustice he had done his relatives by the ante-nuptial disposition of his wealth was to a considerable extent remedied. The preparations seemed to quite rejuvenate him; and he had not for many, many a long year felt so light of heart, in such jocund spirits, as on the evening when the bolt fell, which, by destroying him, gave the signal for a strife which, as will be seen, evoked and brought into active play the stronger instincts—passions of our nature—hate, revenge, ambition, dissembling, avarice, fierce cunning, and love, stronger than all, stronger than death!

CHAPTER III.

IN CHANCERY.

THE smooth-spoken solicitor, whose communication excited such consternation at Belle-Vue House, was the bearer of a copy of the marriage settlement entered into between John Lambert, bachelor, and Louisa Caulfield, spinster, by which, as legally interpreted, the succession to whatever property Lambert and his wife, or either of them, might die possessed of, did not lapse by the death of their son, before he had come into the actual possession of that property, but was continued to his heir or heirs, and consequently, that the daughter of T eresa Delmar and John Lambert the younger, if still alive—and it was certain she was, less than six months previously, and residing with her mother, now Madame Herrera, she having married Juan Herrera, at Vich, a small town situate in the heart of the Catalonian mountains—was the heiress to her English grandfather's wealth. The reason that no claim of the kind had been hinted at during Mr. Lambert's life was obvious enough, forasmuch that it was always in his power to virtually

defeat the provisions of the deed of settlement by deeds of gift to his wife, stepson, or others, whilst he lived. The marriage of T eresa Delmar or Lambert with Juan Herrera, which had greatly surprised Mr. Lambert, was now accounted for, and it was plain that a long, wary, patient game had been played, of which the solicitor's appearance at Belle-Vue House was the first *overt* move. Whether Mr. Lambert misunderstood the technical phraseology of the deed of settlement, believed that no valid marriage had taken place between his son and T eresa Delmar, or wilfully shut his eyes to the possible consequences, can never be known; but I incline to the opinion that he thought the death of his son *before* his own, barred the son's child from the succession.

The eminent counsel consulted by Mr. Sharp as quickly as possible after he reached London, were clearly of opinion that the granddaughter's right under the first marriage settlement was indefeasible, unquestionable! But, as Mrs. Lambert was not disposed to surrender nearly three hundred thousand pounds without a struggle, it was determined, after many anxious consultations, to fight the battle under the pleas, first, that no valid marriage had taken place between T eresa Delmar and John Lambert, junior; next, that if there had been a valid marriage, the young woman now claiming to be the heiress was not the daughter born of that marriage; *supposing* T eresa Delmar had been delivered of a posthumous child

within the time after her husband's death necessary to establish its legitimacy.

The opposite side had meanwhile gone resolutely to work; and, upon petition to the Vice-Chancellor, obtained an order for the sequestration *pendente lite* of the whole of the property, real and personal, in dispute; the jewels purchased for Juliet Arden, but not actually given to her, not excepted; and, although Mrs. Lambert was left in possession of Belle-Vue House, an inventory was taken of everything there, and she was informed that to dispose of, or remove any portion thereof, would subject her to the penalties attaching to contempt of the High Court of Chancery. Mrs. Lambert would in fact have been deprived of the means of fighting this battle *à l'outrance*, except by the sacrifice of her own jewels, but for the lucky chance, not suspected till long afterwards, of finding the large sum, five thousand pounds, which her husband had put secretly apart for the use of Henry Denvir, before the Chancery messengers arrived at Belle-Vue House. There was no lack, consequently, on her part of the sinews of war.

Things remained in this state, there being apparently some hitch on the other side; something which delayed the coming over of the reputed heiress to England till the end of June, when the long vacation having begun nothing further could be done till November.

To fill up and improve that long interval of time

Mrs. Lambert hit upon a notable expedient, that of dispatching her son to Spain for the purpose of fishing up evidence to sustain the bold averments, pleaded in bar of the claim of the intrusive heiress. And as Cyril Mervyn could not speak a word of the Spanish language, she decided, in her peremptory way, that Henry Denvir should accompany him as interpreter and aid. To this nomination her lawyers strongly objected. If Mr. Mervyn went to Spain, he should be accompanied, they urged, by some one versed in the rules and value of evidence, by a man of mature and legal mind, not a youth whose sole experience of the world had been obtained in a commercial counting-house! The lady was, however, resolute that Henry Denvir, and no one else, should accompany her son. All the legal guidance and advice required, Señor Silva, the notary of Barcelona, would supply, and Henry Denvir, moreover, besides being a young man of high principle, disciplined ability, and methodic habits, was himself largely interested in defeating the claim of the pretended heiress, inasmuch that should that claim be established Mrs. Lambert would be unable to carry out, as she had fully purposed to carry out, her deceased husband's intentions in his favour. The objection of the lawyers yielded as a matter of course to the insistence of their client, who, strong in the hold which his position gave her over him briefly intimated to Henry Denvir the decision she had come to, and, on the eve of his departure, un-

veiled to him the true purpose she had in view in dispatching Cyril Mervyn and himself to Spain with a bold unreservedness she had not used towards her own son.

Henry Denvir had not long left the presence of the family solicitors when he was summoned to receive Mrs. Lambert's final instructions. As he entered the library Cyril Mervyn, flushed and apparently indignant, was leaving it, and his mother appeared to be equally excited, the difference being that there was more of cynical disdain than of anger in the expression that lightened from her proud eyes and glittered in the significant smile which curled her lip.

"Close the door, and seat yourself there," said Mrs. Lambert, pointing to a chair near the table at which she was sitting. "I have much to say," she continued, having in a moment cast off all outward sign of excitement as one might a mask, "that requires a heedful listener. You have been with Messrs. Sharp and Lowe?"

"I have, madam."

"And they have instructed you that should it be found impossible to effectually dispute the validity of the Spanish marriage, or the legitimacy of the pretended Luisa Lambert, a doubt must at all events be fastened upon the latter postulate, mainly with the hope of frightening our opponents into a compromise?"

“I so understand Messrs. Sharp and Lowe; but permit me to say, madam, that I do not think those gentlemen themselves believe that any real doubt can be entertained upon the subject.”

“*Tut, tut*, young man! There is nothing, take my word for it, in the moral or material universe which may *not* be doubted by the judicial mind of equity. Our famous ex-Chancellor owes, you know, his great reputation to the prodigious ‘doubting’ faculty with which he is said to be gifted. Still, I confess, I have not much confidence in that weapon, although in lack of a more efficient one it shall be used, and unscrupulously. But this is in some degree beside my purpose in frankly admitting you into my confidence. In the first place, I must tell you that I fully believe with Messrs. Sharp and Lowe, all three of us grounding our opinion upon the communications received from Señor Silva, evidently a clear, hard-headed man, that no effective stand can be made against the pretensions of Luïsa Delmar, otherwise Lambert.”

“Indeed!”

“Indeed! And I send Cyril Mervyn to Spain, in the hope, confidence I was about to say, that he will marry Luïsa Lambert.”

“Marry Luïsa Lambert! And Juliet Arden!”—

“How quickly that name leaps up from Henry Denvir’s heart to his lips,” resumed Mrs. Lambert, with a look and tone that brought all the blood in her auditor’s body to his face. “After I have put you

well *au fait* of my project, we will speak further of Juliet Arden. Now, as to the probabilities, the reasons, upon which my anticipations are based. They are these:—Madame Delmar or Herrera, the mother of the youthful heiress is, Señor Silva reports, nervously apprehensive that, notwithstanding the apparent indisputability of her daughter's right, some unsuspected trick of legal legerdemain may yet interpose between her and the actual possession of the splendid inheritance to which she is entitled. She appears to imagine, reasoning, I suppose, from the practice or reputation of Spanish tribunals, that we may be able to bribe our own countryman, the Lord Chancellor, by admitting him to a share of the vast sum, which, rendered into *reals*, must in truth read like a national debt, sufficient to corrupt all the courts in Christendom. This is a quite natural feeling on the woman's part; and the fact is certain that she *is* apprehensive of the issue of the legal conflict we are engaged in, an apprehensiveness which Silva, a shrewd observer, as I have before remarked, thinks would vanish at once were we by the suggestion of a compromise to reveal our own better-grounded fears. You follow me?"

"Closely, madam."

"You distinctly understand, then, that although the mamma would, in all probability, be glad of a compromise, it would be madness on our part to make a direct proposition to that effect. Fortunately

there is another mode of arriving at the same end without committing ourselves, or showing our cards to the opposite players. Luisa Delmar, as I have used myself to call her, is said to be an attractive, accomplished person, of ardent temperament, but as yet unengaged, unwon, though much sought after, especially since the news has got abroad that she is heiress to incalculable wealth. Happily too, she speaks English, and both mother and daughter French, fluently. Now, Cyril Mervyn is a young man, it will not be disputed, who, circumstances favouring, will be likely to make a favourable impression upon such a damsel, supported as he is sure to be by the influence, all-powerful it is said over her child, of the mother, who would recognize in the marriage of my son with her daughter, a substantial victory, superseding the dubious battle of the law; whilst I, the immediate defendant in the Chancery suit, remain uncompromised, unfettered, at liberty to avail myself, at any moment, as policy may dictate, of changed or of changing circumstances. Your look shows that you at length begin to comprehend me."

"Yes; but doubtfully, confusedly as yet: I hope so at least. Suppose, madam, the Spanish maiden should become attached to your handsome, all-conquering son, and her claim afterwards break down! What then?"

"What then! Why then, Cyril Mervyn would

certainly not wed a detected impostor. But my good, sensitive, and somewhat angry young man," continued Mrs. Lambert, "there is not, I grieve to repeat, the faintest chance that the Spanish maiden's claim will break down, and every probability that she will be Cyril Mervyn's wife."

"May I ask if Mr. Mervyn himself is a consenting party to this scheme?"

"He says not: that he will perish first. He had just concluded as you came in a fine flourish of trumpets upon honour, constancy, and the heroic virtues, generally; and I do not doubt that he felt what he said, whilst he was saying it. But I have no fear of Cyril. In the very tempest, whirlwind, of his wrath, he took care, I noticed, to place carefully in his pocket-book a letter I have intrusted to him for Madame Delmar, which will serve admirably for an introduction. A message of sympathy from the woman, conveyed to me through her attorney here, and not the least significant betrayal of the saucy doubts and fears by which she is disturbed, furnished me with an excellent pretext for writing to her, and the strong god—circumstance—will, I feel pretty confident, do the rest."

"You hold it certain, then, that your son will ultimately, should it be expedient to do so, break faith with Jul—with Miss Arden?"

"Precisely; and that Miss Arden will easily forgive that breach of faith. I can interpret," Mrs.

Lambert went on to say—"I can interpret the inner life of man and woman better than their speech does: for instance, I can read, as in a book, the tumultuous emotion,—the hopes—the fears that at this moment beat wildly at your heart, and flash and sparkle in your eyes."

"I beg, madam," exclaimed Henry Denvir, greatly agitated, and springing to his feet—"I beg, madam, I beg——"

"Permission to reseate yourself: do so, there's a sensible young man. You may believe me, Henry Denvir, when I say that it is quite as essential to your future as to mine, or to that of my son, that we thoroughly understand each other. I readily admit, observe, that Cyril feels the most passionate admiration for Juliet Arden. Love, he and others call that passionate admiration, and in a restricted sense rightly so, I dare say; all unlike though it be to the deep, unselfish tenderness with which I can imagine so fair and gentle a girl may have inspired a thoughtful, enthusiastic youth, in whose mind her image, from earliest girlhood to the present hour, has been associated with the charm, the grace, the glory of life, and apart from whom the world has nothing to offer of beauty or of bliss worth his acceptance or regard. Pardon me for touching a sensitive chord too readily," added Mrs. Lambert, with easy transition to a common-sense tone and manner; "you must surely now begin to appreciate my motives

for deciding that you only shall accompany Cyril to Spain?"

"My knowledge of the Spanish language has been, I presume, the chief motive."

"One only: another, to speak with perfect candour, is, that I hold you bound to my service in this matter by chains which may not easily be broken: a comparatively light fetter is, that should the intrusive heiress triumph over me, my power to serve you will be gone,—a consequence disastrous, not to yourself alone, but to your widowed mother, to your brothers and sisters, who, I have heard from your own lips, look mainly to you for help in the hard battle with the world before them."

"That, madam, is only too true."

"Another and more powerful one is, that should Cyril espouse the heiress, and terms be made with me, which would follow as a matter of course, enabling me to more than fulfil, as I would *much* more than fulfil, the promises made you by Mr. Lambert; my life upon it that Juliet Arden would be the happy wife of Henry Denvir, before ——— Bless the man, how he startles one! Restrain yourself, let me beg of you; or I shall not, after all, be able to impress upon you, with the requisite clear distinctness, the line of conduct which it will behove you, in your interest and ours, to pursue."

"Go on, madam; I will not again interrupt you."

"My counsel or commands may be given in a few

words. You will keep me constantly, incessantly informed of all that passes from the first hour you reach the field of battle, as it may be truly called. Sallies of passion, of regret, remorse, and the like froth-bubbles on the part of Cyril, you will be careful to check and control as much as possible, and always to conceal or make light of. Your knowledge of the Spanish language will afford you abundant opportunities of deepening, aggravating Madame Herrera's nervous tremors, by skilful, incidental allusions to the well-known firmness, the implacability of my character, and the resources which 'Chancery,' a name of fear, the echo of which has, I doubt not, already reached the lady, affords such a person for indefinitely prolonging the contest; at the same time hinting that I am vulnerable through my son. This, remember, must be done incidentally—*par hazard* as it were—not set forth as with a purpose. Cyril's betrothal to an English maiden, of which we may be sure both mother and daughter have heard, must be represented as a mere contract *de convenance*, that under the altered circumstances has been repudiated by all parties. These are the cardinal points. Your own sagacity, of which I have a high opinion, will be a sufficient guide in conforming the general tone of your conversation and demeanour to the furtherance of the end in view, and which, I once more repeat, involves your own future as nearly as it does ours."

"That may be, madam," said Henry Denvir; "but

it is one, for all that, which I will never lend myself to forward by means which my conscience cannot——”

“Nonsense!” interrupted Mrs. Lambert, “you will do as I bid you. Of that I have no fear. Do not repeat vain words of refusal. Leave me now; and, as it is truly said, that *la nuit porte conseil*, sleep upon the matter, which we will speak further of to-morrow. Good evening. This way—not through the window!”

Bewildered, dazzled, overborne—no longer wondering at the absolute dominion Mrs. Lambert had exercised over her husband—Henry Denvir sought his home, which was also mine, and informed me of all that had passed. He was considerably calmed, reassured by my counsel, which substantially was this: That he should accompany Cyril Mervyn to Spain, without promising or purposing to follow the line of conduct imperiously chalked out for him by Mrs. Lambert; and, circumstanced as he was, without giving needless offence by a formal refusal to comply with her behests. Still his mind remained ill at ease: he feared himself: that Mrs. Lambert, who had with so searching and true a finger laid bare what was fevering and festering about his heart, might have so justly estimated his force of character and purpose, that he should, as she with such insolent confidence predicted, fail in the trial; yield to the proffered temptation, though conscious the while that by that base compliance he rendered himself unworthy of the priceless guerdon held up to seduce him from the

straight and narrow path of duty. Happily, he received the next morning a letter from his mother, wherein Mrs. Denvir, after expressing her fears lest he might fall into peril in journeying through those frightful Pyrenees, which she had formerly read were infested by cavern-habiting banditti, though possibly, as a British army had passed through them during the last war, a change for the better might have been effected—and warning him against the enticements of the “Scarlet Lady,” nowhere enthroned in such meretricious splendour as in Spain—solemnly entreated her son, by the value he attached to her blessing, and as he hoped for God’s, always to hold fast, in whatever position he might be placed, by the great principle of doing what was right in itself, without reference to the possible or probable consequences, which should be left to Him, without whose permission not a sparrow falls to the ground. These simple words marvellously strengthened and consoled Henry Denvir: it seemed to him that his mother’s arms were stretched visibly forth for his guidance amidst the mazes of the world; and it was with a lightened, if not very buoyant spirit, that, all necessary preliminaries at length adjusted, he and Mr. Cyril Mervyn set out, on the 21st of July, upon an enterprise, the peculiar difficulties and dangers associated wherewith, not one of us had formed, nor could have formed, the faintest notion. Henry Denvir wrote to me by every available opportunity, and to that correspondence, his carefully-kept diary,

and other sources that will sufficiently reveal themselves as we proceed, I owe the woof and warp—substance, colour, lights, and shadows—in weaving which into a connected narrative I have sometimes, it will be seen, used indifferently, with a view to greater clearness, the first and third person ; but no difficulty will, I think, be thereby occasioned to the reader in deciding who it is that speaks—the actors in, or the narrator of the scenes described.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

THE journey itself, in that brilliant summer-time, was to Henry Denvir a succession of delightful sensations;—a panorama of sights and sounds, the novelty whereof no doubt constituted its principal charm, though at the time he did not believe that familiarity could ever dull its infinite variety. His companion, with whom he had been very slightly acquainted, he found to be, extrinsically at all events, a singularly impressionable, various man—various as the scenes through which they passed—sunny, sparkling as the *paysage* of northern and central France—dull, arid as the *triste*-looking olive-grounds and parched valleys of the southern provinces—grim and gloomy as the giant passes of the eastern Pyrenees! Of large imaginative faculty too, it seemed, from the poetical paroxysms into which he was thrown by the sight of peasants dancing before their cottage doors in the softened sunlight of the dying day—the golden brilliance of the dawn—the radiant glory of the night in southern climes! His demeanour, except during

intervals of excitement, was reserved and distant towards Henry Denvir, and this no doubt added to the disfavour with which the proud, sensitive, *dependent* young man regarded him. Another source of annoyance was Cyril Mervyn's poetical apostrophes to Juliet Arden—demonstrations in the vilest taste, and proof of anything but the reality of the devotion so mouthed of. "To constantly hear," wrote Henry Denvir, "to constantly hear a name enshrined, locked up as it were, in the deepest, most sacred recesses of my being, invoked, profaned, raved about in rantipole fustian, was to me inexpressibly irritating! His mother, thought I, is right; he does not love Juliet Arden! She has inspired him with passion, nothing more." The travellers entered Catalonia from Roussillon by the Pass of Junquera; and a growing sense of the peculiar perils of the adventure with which he was associated would seem from that time to have gathered over Henry Denvir's mind. "That I thus felt," he remarks, writing to me in after days, "I distinctly remember; and there is, you are aware, a memorandum to that effect in my diary. But it may be, that writing now, with all the subsequent events connected with that memorable passage in my life-experience spread out before me, their backward-thrown shadows tinge, in my recollection, former anticipations with a gloom that at the time did not attach to them; at all events, not to the same degree. There was, however, in the lawless, disorganized

state of the country in which we were about to contend for such high stakes, enough to make a bolder man pause, and suggest fears that, in the secure, prosaic atmosphere of Liverpool or London, would never cross one's mind. Spain was in the throes of the Carlist war, not of succession only, but of principle; and although the tide of conflict flowed mainly westward of Catalonia, surging over the inland boundaries of that province in fitful eddies only, the reverberating echoes of the strife shook visibly the whole fabric of society, and by the baptism of its bloody spray leavened the minds of men with ideas little in accordance with the sanctions and restraints of ordinary right and justice. This loosening, not to say disruption, of the bonds of civilized society, was by no means confined to the urban populations; it was equally apparent in town and country. The Catalan peasant, attired in coarse, frequently patched drawers, long red cotton cap set smartly upon his head, and trailing over his shoulder, striped woollen jacket or jacket-mantle, usually carried at that season of the year, except at early morn or late evening, over his arm, and cord sandals, bore himself, it is true, and enunciated with his usual grave self-respect and courtesy the national salutation, 'Vaya usted con Dios,' and appeared to be, but in a scarcely perceptible degree, pride-hardened in the consciousness of increased importance consequent upon the war—that terrible game wherein men of stout heart and hardy

frame are the chief counters; yet had he become more than ever imbued with a passion for swift, summary vengeance, and an almost total disregard of the sanctity of human life, inseparably incident to the state of things which at that time prevailed in Northern Spain." Cyril Mervyn was, it appears, much interested in the manners and mode of thought peculiar to the Catalan peasantry, viewing them, after his wont, through fantastically-coloured media—an inclination which, upon their reaching a posada, or rather a venta, within about three leagues of Barcelona, kept, as they had afterwards excellent reasons for remembering, by a Janus-faced rascal of the name of Francisco Bajal, delayed them for several hours, and had other results little dreamt of at the time.

The horses of their post-carriage were stabled for a long rest, and Mervyn and Denvir seating themselves upon a stone bench in front of the venta, watched with curious interest the demeanour of a considerable number of stout peasants, intently hearkening to the florid eloquence of a recruiting-agent, whether Carlist or Christino did not clearly appear from his public harangue, which mainly dwelt upon the charms of a soldier's life in the abstract. His oratory, Denvir thought, would have been much less effective but for his gay attire; he having been, as he over and over again reminded his auditors, but a few months before a coarsely-clad peasant, like themselves. His jacket-mantle, therefore, of blue cloth,

gaudily embroidered, and further decorated with round silver buttons, red silk girdle, ribbons of the same colour wound round the calves of his legs, something after the fashion of a barber's pole, and a handsome sombrero surmounted by a crimson feather, were ocular corroborations of his seductive speech, that could not be gainsaid. If further proof were required, it was supplied by the glittering duros—silver pieces of about four shillings value—which he freely distributed for mine host's wine. Cyril Mervyn, to whom Denvir interpreted the leading points of the harangue, and who was fond of playing the rich English 'Milor,' contributed liberally, and the enlistment went on with great spirit, much to the chagrin and dismay of an elderly hidalgo-looking personage, the owner, it was said, of large estates in the neighbourhood, whose labourers, just when their services were most urgently required in getting in the harvest, were being kidnapped before his face; and that too for service, as he knew from the beginning—the Englishmen later—in the detested cause of Christiana and Constitutionalism. All in vain did he threaten, entreat, and argue with the rebellious peasants. The military mania was for the moment too strong upon them to be subdued or weakened by vapid common-places upon the blessings of peace, home, length of quiet days; whilst his threats of vengeance for breach of contract were puffed back in his teeth with the smoke of the recruiting orator's paper cigar,

as he condescended to assure the threatener, that the simple word of a captain of infantry was in those heroic days of more potency than a solemn decree of the Audencia Réal of Barcelona—a dictum received with great applause, not only by the men, but the women and girls by this time attracted to the spot in considerable numbers; and guitars, tambourines, and castanets suddenly making their appearance, miscellaneous dancing—the joyous bolero, the laughing, swinging fandango, the graceful, voluptuous oleo—commenced forthwith, and was kept up with such contagious spirit, that the very mules of the Barcelona diligencia, which had just halted in front of the venta, shook their bells with sympathising hilarity.

“Mere physical existence,” remarked Cyril, with his frequent fine-wordiness, as he sipped the landlord’s apocryphal Val de Pénas, and inhaled the perfume of the citron trees, amidst which the villagers were disporting themselves. “Mere physical existence in this delightful clime is an immense boon; a misfortune, perhaps, in so far that the delicious languor one imbibes with every breath of odorous air, must tend to subordinate the higher and nobler to the merely sensuous faculties of man; and yet observe how the breath of battle vivifies, lifts those peasant-clods above the sordid cares, the dwarfing instincts appealed to by yonder furious hidalgo. ‘*Viva el Reyna Isabella*’” he added, with a shout, in

sympathising response to that cry hurled from half a hundred throats at the discomfited proprietor, who was at last stalking off with the swelling dignity of twenty grandees. “*Viva el Reyna Isabella!* Well, sir, shall you know me again, think you?”

This abrupt query, pitched in loud and angry English, was addressed to a lithe, extremely swarthy young man, who, whilst sipping a cup of chocolate at a little distance off, had been staring with impudent scrutiny in Cyril’s face. He was one of the diligencia passengers, well-dressed, might be about five-and-twenty years of age, and but for the sort of bullying, braggart expression of his round jet black eyes, very well-looking. Cyril fiercely repeated his question, this time in French.

“I was admiring,” replied the fellow, in the same language—“I was admiring the enthusiasm of the Englishman for the innocent and constitutional Queen Isabella.” This said, he laughed derisively, and hurried to the diligencia, in obedience to the iterated summons of the zagal, and a minute afterwards, the lumbering vehicle was again *en route*.

In reply to Henry Denvir, the landlord said the young man’s name was Gomez—Balthazar Gomez. “There are few better known than he,” added Bajal, “in this part of the country; and I would wager a real or two that he knows you, señor, and your business in Spain.”

“Impossible!”

“As you please. Certainly, I heard him say that you, señor, were the taller and older Inglese’s valet-clerk, as well as interpreter, but his being a clever physiognomist may account for that lucky guess,” replied Bajal, turning away with a quiet laugh.

Insolent varlet! but the fellow was beneath notice! Could it, however, be true, the puzzled Englishmen asked themselves, that the dark, impudent young Spaniard really know who they were? Or was the landlord’s sneering remark merely an ebullition of the instinctive dislike with which all foreigners are regarded in Spain? Nothing more, they finally concluded. By then, the rustic revelry had died away, the new recruits been marched off, singing and shouting, to the nearest military post, and fast-declining day warned the travellers that it was time to be moving. The post-horses were therefore at once put to, and starting at speed, Mervyn and Denvir alighted at the Hotel del Oriente, in La Rambla, a magnificent acacia-planted promenade, which divides the ancient from the modern city of Barcelona, whilst yet the octagonal church spires of the Catalan capital were tipt with the rays of the setting-sun.

Silva, the notary, with whom Mrs. Lambert had insisted they should personally communicate, before visiting Madame Herrera, was absent in Valencia, and would not, it was expected, return to Barcelona in less than a week. Nothing, consequently, could be done or attempted till his return; but one or two

suggestive scraps of information were obtained on the morrow of their arrival, from a man of all-work, attached to the Fonda del Oriente, familiarly known as Jorgé, a stout, shrewd old fellow, acquainted with every square, street, and alley in Barcelona, and every important habitant thereof.

“Pedro Silva! did he know Pedro Silva, the notary? unquestionably he did. That he was as keen and polished as a Toledo blade, and in law affairs would fit the señor like a glove, if it was made worth his while to do so. Something of a heretic withal; kept Carnival more strictly than Lent, and believed there were more effective remedies for cholera (just then extremely rife in Barcelona) than the *Agua bendita* freely dispensed by Holy Church; the less excusable, as one of Silva’s sons was a consecrated priest.” Juan Herrera had been lost sight of by Jorgé since his uncle old José Herrera’s death; knew, however, that he had married, and was living somewhere in the mountains, near Vich, he believed. Téresa Delmar he had never heard of, comedians being, he hinted, in a general way, beneath his line of purview. Balthazar Gomez! He did indeed, he was almost ashamed to say, know that slip of Satan well. He lodges,” continued Jorgé, “when in Barcelona, in the Calle del Zarga, close by, and old Jacintha, a servant of the house, and a simple credulous Asturian like myself, who has heard that he is shortly to be married, indulges a pious hope of his reformation by

that means ; though, for my part, I have, I must confess, much less faith in the efficacy of the sacrament of marriage, than is, I fear, good for my soul. It did not regenerate a certain person, whom, no doubt for my misdeeds, I—but this is a fragment of domestic history, not likely to interest the señor. The whelp's mother," added Jorgé, with vehement abhorrence in his tone, and hastening to place the sign of the cross between himself and the idea his words evoked—"Balthazar's mother is a Chabo!"

"A Chabo! What is a Chabo?"

"One of the unbaptized, or, if baptized, as it is said she has been, not the less Pagan, Christ-denying, child-stealing, accursed race of Gitanos, Egyptians, sorcerers! And now I think of it," added Jorgé, "I remember that Jacintha once told me that Balthazar and his mother are acquaintances of Señor Juan Herrera and his wife, and reside near them in the country,"

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"I am sure of it. Does it appear extraordinary to the señor that it should be so?"

"Yes; or at least it throws light upon an occurrence that has perplexed me not a little. But it is time, if I would not lose my dinner, that I joined the table d'hôte. We will speak further of this gipsy acquaintance of the Herreras at a future opportunity."

Jorgé had, however, nothing further of interest to disclose; and Henry Denvir passed the days which elapsed before the notary's return in examining the

material and moral features of the *locale* in which he found himself placed. A varied study! full of strongly-contrastive lights and shadows, hardly to be mastered in so brief a space of time! There are many cities with which Barcelona cannot, in extent, street architecture, public buildings, bear a moment's comparison; but there are few more charmingly situated, built as it is between two rivers, the Besos and the Llobregat, upon a gently-undulating acclivity, sloping upwards from the blue expanse of the Mediterranean, and sheltered on the north, south, and west by lofty mountain ranges, beyond which lies old Spain. In all countries, striking contrasts in the condition, moral and physical, of the people are sufficiently apparent; but nowhere is diversity of social and political aspect more strongly marked than in that presented by the inhabitants of the city, of which a splendid view may be obtained from Sarria; a number of villa-like dwellings, perched upon a lofty plateau, reached by an hour's ride from La Rambla, past hedges fragrant with the American aloe, through groves of mulberry, orange, lemon, nut-trees; and the dwellers amidst and beyond the mountains, which, as it were, spurn, thrust out that city from the stern, stedfast land of Spain to more genial companionship with the glittering, changeful sea. Amidst and beyond those mountains Catalonia still exists as in the days of the counts of Barcelona, scarcely changed in dress, manners, or ideas; the same unquestioning faith, implacable bi-

gotry, stubborn adherence to traditional customs, habits, privileges ; the same sense of personal dignity apart from rank or riches, ludicrous to unaccustomed eyes in its universality of exaggeration, manifesting itself as it strongly does even in the " *Mucha gracias Caballero,*" with which the Catalan beggar acknowledges a gift, and admits by its gravely-courteous acceptance, that its bestowal is as honourable to the giver as satisfactory to the gentleman, temporarily under a cloud, who receives it. The Catalan tenacity of old usages is also especially remarkable in their mode of cultivating the soil, which is pretty much the same as in the days, and before the days, of *El Cid Campeador*. As an instance, observe yon hydraulic machine, scores of which are in active operation within one man's range of view. It is an invention of the Moors, and will survive the *Alhambra*. They call it a *Noria*, and it consists, you perceive, of a vertical wheel, to which earthen jars are fastened, placed over a well, and set in motion by a horizontal wheel, turned by an ass. The jars go down empty and come up full, discharging themselves as they turn over into a trough leading to a reservoir above the level of the land it is intended to irrigate. A clumsy contrivance, I dare say, in a scientific point of view, but very efficient for all that, as the aspect of the fields and gardens abundantly testifies. Many other Catalan country usages are quite as old-fashioned, and less effective.

Barcelona, on the contrary, is a modern city, whose male habitants might pass for Frenchmen somewhat over sunburnt, with the exception of a few muleteers, market peasants, water-carriers, and other stray specimens of the more primitive type, whilst the better, beauteous, if one can hardly say fair, portion of the population who promenade La Rambla are—were, I should say, speaking of 1835—quite undistinguishable in dress and *tournure* from their Gallic sisters, the very mantilla having given place to the Parisian chapeau. In graver matters the change was equally striking: the disciples of Voltaire elbowed and out-faced the yet faithful sons of the Crusaders: for one quotation from the *Vidas de los Santos*, the chief mental pabulum of the rural districts, one heard fifty from Balzac and Paul de Koch's novels; heretical worship was tacitly tolerated; gas had been introduced, though but partially; numerous steamers puffed and paddled to and fro the crowded port; a newspaper, "El Vapor," was published daily; and the palace of the counts of Barcelona, subsequently of the Inquisition, was the property and habitat of the College of Surgeons!

Yet, after all, the change in the Barcelonian was rather superficial than profound. Impressions graven upon the national heart by the traditions, memories, wars, songs, the literature written and unwritten of a thousand years, are not easily effaced by even the most potent of modern friction—that of printers'

types. The Voltairian of daylight and society still crept under cloud of night to the confessional; the Spanish maiden's soul of flame flashed with light as darkly lustrous from beneath the exotic chapeau, though, perhaps, with less bewildering, mysterious power, as through the lace meshes of the native mantilla; whilst intolerant pride, fierce disdain of the foreigner, the volcanic rage which, at slightest provocation, grasped the *cuchillo* or other swift means of self-avengement, glowed as intensely beneath the varnish of Catalan city manners as in the fiery hearts of the not even surface-sophisticated peasantry.

The substance of the foregoing dissertation upon Spanish character was repeated *vivá voce* by Henry Denvir for the edification of Mr. Mervyn, who, stretched listlessly beneath the trees upon the plateau of Sarria, and, as usual, absorbed in day-dreams, had not heard one word thereof. "You agree with me, I hope," added the unappreciated orator in a louder key, "that it will be wise to bear heedfully in mind the characteristics I have been speaking of in our intercourse with this impulsive people?"

"Did you speak, Denvir?" drawled Cyril Mervyn, as he rose from his recumbent position. "Oh, Jorgé, was it?"

Jorgé, who usually accompanied the Englishmen in their rambles, was coming quietly and quickly up at the moment, with the forefinger of his left hand pressed on his closed lips, and the thumb of the other

jerked backward over his shoulder in the direction of two men, partially visible through an intervening screen of trees.

“Yonder,” whispered Jorgé, directly he was close up, “are Señor Juan Herrera, and that younger imp of Beelzebub, Balthazar, son of Rachel Gomez. Here they come. This way, if you would not be seen.”

The strangers passed by, and Henry Denvir was sufficiently near, though unseen himself, not only to recognise the swarthy young Spaniard of Bajal’s venta, but to hear him addressed in some familiar lines by his middle-aged companion:—

“Ama, é serás amado,
E podras;
Facer lo que no faras,
Desamedo!” *

“Wise counsel, rely upon it, Balthazar,” continued the speaker. “And then it is always soon enough to hang one’s self.”

“True, and others with the same halter.”

“As thou sayest. And now tell me if thou hast heard if Michael the Eloquent will preach at La Seu to-morrow, knowing as he must ——”

Herrera’s voice had become from distance so indistinct that Henry Denvir could not clearly make out the remainder of the sentence, though he fancied the word “Luisa” occurred therein. His fancy perhaps deceived him. At all events, the close

* Love and thou shalt be beloved, and may’st accomplish what were else impossible.

fellowship of Juan Herrera with that varlet Balthazar suggested curious conjectures. As to the Michael spoken of, Jorgé, upon being referred to, said, he merely knew that a famous priest of that name had made a great noise in Barcelona, and would, it was reported, preach on the morrow, which was the great festival of the Assumption, in the Cathedral, called La Seu in the Catalan dialect; upon hearing which, Mervyn and Denvir at once decided to avail themselves of that opportunity to see and hear the said Michael.

They returned rather later than usual on that evening to the Hotel del Oriente, where they found Señor Silva awaiting them. A very agreeable, sociable gentleman the notary appeared to be during the convivial hour they passed together over some of the best wine in Spain, which pleasant pastime over, a business conference was suggested. This, as the notary conversed in French with some difficulty, Cyril Mervyn declined assisting at, feeling quite sure that it would be faithfully reported to him in the morning.

Señor Silva, the reader is already aware, had been for some time actively engaged in "*Lambert versus Lambert*;" and the result of his inquiries hitherto had resulted, he said, in establishing beyond doubt, that John Lambert and Téresa Delmar were married, with all the formalities required in such cases, on the 4th of April, 1812, as appeared by the signatures of

both parties in the archives of the British consulate ; and on the 9th of the same month, according to the register of the Church of Les Apostoles,—which ecclesiastical record further set forth that the bridegroom, though a British subject, declared himself to be of the same faith by conversion as the bride, and had produced a certificate of confession. The difference of date was unimportant, merely showing that the civil union had taken place five days previous to its spiritual solemnization. The widow's accouchement on the 2nd of February in the following year of a female child, baptized Luisa, was also duly recorded. Señor Silva had, moreover, ascertained that Térésa Delmar or Lambert had, since quitting the stage, resided—of late years with her second husband, Juan Herrera—near Vich ; her means of support, the pension accorded to her by the elder Lambert, and the interest of a sum of money she had received with the orphan child of a distant relative, one Quesada, who had appointed her his son's legal guardian.

“ You remain constant, then, Señor Silva,” remarked Henry Denvir, when they had got thus far, “ to the opinion that Luisa Delmar is the true Luisa Lambert ? ”

“ I do, and notwithstanding some late and rather startling half-relations ; and in defiance, moreover, of a fact which had, and has considerable weight with me, namely, that the young lady is in person a

beauteous and genuine child of Spain; has the glowing hue and temperament of the ardent South, unchilled by the slightest apparent admixture of your paler, colder, northern blood. Nor does she in features resemble her mother. She is more like, though I for one do not perceive any very striking resemblance, her foster-brother, Michael Quesada."

"*Michael Quesada!* Not the priest Michael who is to preach at the cathedral to-morrow?"

"The same. A story respecting him," continued the notary, "told me several years ago by my son, then a fellow-student of his at the College of Santa Cruz, Cervera, has vividly recurred to my mind, I must tell you, in connection with this heiress business. It will interest you. Michael Quesada, at the time I speak of, was about eighteen years old, and of a profoundly religious, perhaps I should rather say, meditative cast of mind. Suddenly he manifested an extreme repugnance to the priestly vocation, for which he had been sedulously educated. This occurred, everybody remarked, immediately after a visit paid him by Luisa and her mother, whom he had not seen for three years previously. The reverend Principal of the College, anxious to secure him for the church, never more in need of able champions, and Michael already gave brilliant promise of the eloquence for which he is now famous, warmly remonstrated with the backsliding neophyte, eliciting replies that induced his reverence to visit

Vich, with a view, it was supposed, of consulting Michael's foster-mother and legal guardian. He did not, however, so much as see Madame Delmar, who was temporarily absent from home upon that occasion. This I have well ascertained; and moreover, that the reverend dignitary preached and heard confessions in the church there, and that Rachel Gomez was amongst his penitents—a circumstance sufficiently remarkable to be distinctly remembered."

"Rachel Gomez, again! That name meets us at every turn of this strange business."

"Both Rachel and her son Balthazar, as I hinted to your friend Mervyn, will be found to be deeply involved therein; but first let us finish with Michael Quesada. For some time after his return from Vich, the reverend Principal abstained from persecuting him with admonitions or persuasions; and it was noticed that his manner towards the young man evinced unusual kindness—a deeply-compassionate tenderness, as it were. Finally, Michael Quesada was summoned to the Principal's private room, from which, ten minutes afterwards, he was carried to his dormitory, in strong convulsions. Brain-fever ensued, and it was many weeks before he was pronounced convalescent. What think you it was that had temporarily dethroned his reason, and I fear ineradicably poisoned the springs of healthful life? This merely, by his own account to my son, to whom he was and is much attached. The reverend Principal, after

some preliminary remarks, skilfully adapted to point and barb what was coming, asked if the surprising likeness as *of brother and sister*, between himself and Luisa Delmar, had never struck and startled him. Doubtless, the Principal's significant words struck upon the chord of some latent dread, or the effect would hardly have been so overwhelming. Whether there was any real foundation for the inference suggested by the reverend Principal, Michael Quesada never inquired; nor was he ever, save to my son, heard to allude to the subject, directly or indirectly. To one of so sensitive a mind nothing further was needed to determine him not only to shun the presence, but all topics, thoughts, that might recall the image of the companion of his boyish days,—until, quoting his own words—until in the divine love of God, sealed by the consecrating sacrament of holy orders, all earthly affections were absorbed, sublimated, lost. The object of the college authorities was attained; and Michael Quesada to this day thoroughly believes that he and Luisa Delmar or Lambert are own brother and sister, has long since brought himself to rejoice in that belief, and would give much that it were made manifest before all the world. I do not incline to that opinion, though satisfactory proof to the contrary, may, as matters have been managed, be difficult of attainment. As to the alleged likeness between him and Luisa, that is but of slight weight. It was but

last summer that I received a Colonel Waller on the Continent, under the injurious conviction, spite of his talents, that he was my own brother, who ten twenty years has been quietly dismissed in Madrid as a servant."

"Is this charming Louis as remarkable, pray, for merit as for personal pretensions?"

"I have not spoken with her more than five or six times in my life, and my judgment may not be worth much: but my strong belief is, that she is a well-principled, ingenious, pious young person, and as fully believes as I do, that she is the legitimate heiress to the vast wealth in dispute. She has, I hear, been taught your language—a rare accomplishment in a daughter of Spain."

"The subtle is hard to read! I should be greatly obliged if your Sister Silvia would favour me with your own unreserved interpretation of the chief difficulties."

"Willingly: since, by so doing, I but comply with the instructions I have received to place entire confidence in Mr. Devereux. Well, sister," continued the mother, "the key to the mystery is now, according to me, that he speaks, and in this all the words. Let us, however, see what from the true starting point, and the true goal will be more surely reached. The confidential servant of Madame Devereux, as we may continue to call her for distinction's sake, was, at the time of Louis's birth, Michael Gomez, a Spanish Gentleman, and a widow with an infant child of her own, the Bel-

some preliminary remarks, skilfully adapted to point and barb what was coming, asked if the surprising likeness as *of brother and sister*, between himself and Luisa Delmar, had never struck and startled him. Doubtless, the Principal's significant words struck upon the chord of some latent dread, or the effect would hardly have been so overwhelming. Whether there was any real foundation for the inference suggested by the reverend Principal, Michael Quesada never inquired; nor was he ever, save to my son, heard to allude to the subject, directly or indirectly. To one of so sensitive a mind nothing further was needed to determine him not only to shun the presence, but all topics, thoughts, that might recall the image of the companion of his boyish days,—until, quoting his own words—until in the divine love of God, sealed by the consecrating sacrament of holy orders, all earthly affections were absorbed, sublimated, lost. The object of the college authorities was attained; and Michael Quesada to this day thoroughly believes that he and Luisa Delmar or Lambert are own brother and sister, has long since brought himself to rejoice in that belief, and would give much that it were made manifest before all the world. I do not incline to that opinion, though satisfactory proof to the contrary, may, as matters have been managed, be difficult of attainment. As to the alleged likeness between him and Luisa, that is but of slight weight. It was but

last summer that I accosted a Colonel Valdez on the Esplanade, under the impulsive conviction, spite of his uniform, that he was my own brother, who for twenty years has been quietly domiciled in Madrid as a scrivener."

"Is this charming Luisa as remarkable, pray, for moral as for personal perfections?"

"I have not spoken with her more than five or six times in my life, and my judgment may not be worth much; but my strong belief is, that she is a well-principled, ingenuous, pious young person, and as firmly believes as I do, that she is the legitimate heiress to the vast wealth in dispute. She has, I hear, been taught your language—a rare accomplishment in a daughter of Spain."

"The riddle is hard to read! I should be greatly obliged if you, Señor Silva, would favour me with your own unreserved interpretation of its chief difficulties."

"Willingly; since, by so doing, I but comply with the instructions I have received to place entire confidence in Mr. Denvir. Well, señor," continued the notary, "the key to the mystery is not, according to me, far to seek, and it fits all the wards. Let us, however, set out from the true starting point, and the true goal will be more surely reached. The confidential servant of Madame Delmar, as we may continue to call her for distinction's sake, was, at the time of Luisa's birth, Rachel Gomez, a baptized Gitano, and a widow with an infant child of her own, the Bal-

thazar you have seen. Téresa Delmar, who had learned from her English husband that an immense fortune would, in a probable contingency, fall to her daughter, was advised by her own prudence, and the Herreras, I believe, to have a full description of the child, its complexion, natural marks, and so on, drawn up by the surgeon who assisted by the accouchement, engrossed on parchment, verified by the Alcalde, and stamped with the official seal; a rather expensive proceeding, but not, under the like circumstances, of unfrequent occurrence in this country. This was done: the years roll on. Balthazar Gomez grows up to be a young fellow, standing wonderfully well with himself, cherishing magnificent aspirations, and as well informed as anybody of the girl Luisa's expectancies. He conceives the idea, his mother aiding, of one day legally appropriating such a treasure of actual loveliness and prospective riches. This is very natural; but he cannot shut his eyes to the fact that the obstacles in that ambitious path are numerous and formidable. Madame Delmar's pride would vehemently oppose itself to such an alliance, and only to extraordinary pressure could it be hoped that pride would yield; whilst the daughter might be expected to offer a yet more decided opposition to so insolent an offer. Sap and mine then, not open assault, might alone ultimately enable plotting Rachel and her precious son to carry their great point; but, in the meantime, it would be a paramount necessity to get rid of

any possibly formidable rival that should threaten to appear — Michael Quesada, for instance ! and what, let me ask, could be easier to a bold, reckless woman like Rachel Gomez, nominally a Christian, but at heart as grossly Egyptian as ever, to avail herself, when the reverend dignitary of Santa Cruz visited Vich, for what purpose she knew very well, of the practice of confession to accuse herself of complicity with Madame Delmar in passing off that lady's own child for the son, long since dead, of the deceased Señor Quesada, well knowing, as she did, that she was shielded from any possible exposure or detection, by the inviolability of the seal of confession, whilst the reverend Principal would be sure to act in such a case upon the information so acquired, though he dared not speak of it."

"A plausible conjecture, Señor Silva. Still it is only conjecture!"

"True. A fancy key, if you will, but, as I before remarked, it fits all wards, turns all bolts. A similar invention has, I am also morally sure, been lately palmed off, by the same sacrilegious means, upon Michael Quesada, causing him to believe, as I know he does believe, that whilst Luisa is truly his own sister, she is not the daughter of the Englishman Lambert. To complete and fortify this hypothetical demonstration," added the notary, "I must inform you that the certified description which would set at rest all doubt of her daughter's identity,

can nowhere be found, has been stolen, it is confidently believed, from Madame Delmar's secretaire, by either Rachel or her son; who, of late, have, I am told, assumed a much bolder tone than formerly, and indirectly threaten that, if they are not *satisfied*, Rachel will depose on oath, that the true Luisa Lambert died during childhood. To this, which, however, would prove to be a mere flash in the pan, I in some degree attribute Madame Herrera's apprehensiveness, and her wish to effect a compromise, which I fully agree with your Madame Lambert cannot be safely attempted on our part, except through the courtship and marriage of the heiress by Mr. Cyril Mervyn; for nothing is more certain than that if Madame Herrera could once persuade herself that, in the *terra incognita* of English law and English law-courts, there exist no unseen snares, no fatal pitfalls, she would quickly find means of bringing over Rachel and Balthazar to her side. You now, señor, comprehend the whole affair quite as well as I do myself."

"That is to very dimly, doubtfully comprehend it then," said Henry Denvir; "for with all possible respect for your judgment, even so young and inexperienced a person as I am may be permitted to say, that you may be utterly mistaken after all; that the rumours, for which you so boldly account, may be founded in truth, and this Luisa, who you admit shows no sign of a mixed parentage, be, unwittingly too, an arrant impostor."

“That is so. I but state to you my own conviction, and the grounds sufficient or otherwise upon which it rests. It were well that you, without delay, furnish Madame Lambert and her son with the case as it now stands, or as I suppose it to stand, in its entirety.”

“I shall certainly do so. Pray may I ask how you account for the friendly intimacy which evidently subsists between Balthazar Gomez and Madame Herrera’s husband?”

“The Herreras, I imagine, fear, or more properly hesitate, to come to an open rupture with Rachel and her son. They may fancy, too, that they shall be able to foil them with their own weapons—cunning and subterfuge.”

The conference here terminated, just as the iron tongues of the church clocks, and the less melodious ones of the watchmen, were proclaiming two o’clock of the morning; the latter adding, that the weather was “serene,” an almost constant iteration in such a climate that has obtained for them the sobriquet of “Serenos.” May not this be the original of the “all serene” of English low life, derived through those unmistakeable sailors who frequent the Spanish ports in large numbers, and cause the “Serenos” more trouble than all the rest of the community put together? Certainly I have read worse guesses in slang etymology!

CHAPTER V.

THE MAIDEN, THE LOVER, AND THE PRIEST.

LEFT to himself, Henry Denvir passed steadily in review the various facts, arguments, assumptions urged by Señor Silva. They did not, so contemplated, bear out to his mind the dogmatic opinion enunciated with such confidence by the notary. So far from that, he felt a strong and growing conviction that he was in presence of a foul conspiracy, of which, it might be—the suspicion *would* make itself felt—that Señor Silva was himself the corrupted instrument, the object of which was to fraudulently obtain the deceased Mr. Lambert's wealth, or as much thereof as possible, for a stranger to his blood. And should he, Henry Denvir—blinded, misled by the dazzling vision conjured up for another purpose, lend himself to such an iniquitous scheme, by simulating a confidence he could not feel, in the integrity of Señor Silva—in the legitimacy of the pretended heiress? With God's help, never! Come what, come may, he would hold fast to his mother's counsel, do that which was right in itself, regardless of the conse-

quences to himself or others, and in pursuance of that resolve, speak frankly on the morrow to Cyril Mervyn—write frankly to Mrs. Lambert, in the sense of his present honest opinion—erroneous as it might hereafter prove to have been.

Not without pain, without anguish, I might write, was that resolve matured; and the oppressive atmosphere of the apartment in which he sat, increased the irritation which consumed him. Too restless for bed, he threw open the casement and the heavy outside shutter blinds, lit a cigar, seated himself in the uncurtained window recess, and again commenced a critical examination of the notary's statement. It was just the hour for quiet meditation; the full August moon, rising in southern splendour above the tall houses on the opposite side of La Rambla, threw its calm radiance into the apartment, carpeting the polished tile floor with strongly-defined shadows of the acacia trees without, of tripods filled with flowers, of the grotesquely-fashioned furniture within; and the stilly night was unjarred save by the occasional drowsy assurance of fair weather by a distant "sereno," or a faint inarticulate hail in the direction of the harbour. Under such quieting conditions one would have supposed his brain would not only cease to palpitate so wildly, but have become clearer, more capable of correctly appreciating the exact value and significance of the confusing statements he had been listening to. It was so for a time,

but presently the points upon which he would most earnestly have dwelt slipped from him, as it were, and his excited imagination carried him irresistibly away to other scenes, evoked other images. He was again a boy, as in the golden time which might never more return; and Juliet Arden was now a girl, garlanded with summer flowers—by his hand garlanded—anon a peerless woman, diademed with jewels of which the blaze scorched, blinded him! Then came back the evening of his patron's death, the mirth, the music—joy, the sudden death-stroke, and—God of judgment!—the fierce lightning, the dread thunder were this time real—palpable!

The guns of Fort Minjuich, saluting the sun-dawn of Assumption-day had awakened him! He had fallen asleep and been dreaming; for some time too, for it was now quite light, and there was unusual noise and bustle without. Heavens and earth! was he still dreaming! for there, right opposite—facing, coming swiftly towards him were Juan Herrera and his dark-visaged companion, Balthazar Gomez! Henry Denvir leapt to his feet, and grasped a brass taper-stand, for the fellows were marching full upon him—were already within arm's length, unchecked by the uplifted weapon, and then they vanished! the shadows, as it seemed, of two men flitting past the window at the same moment, but in an opposite direction! Henry Denvir fell back into the chair behind him in speechless astonishment. As surely

as he lived and breathed Herrera and Balthazar were a moment before immediately in front of him, and had disappeared, melted into air—not turned back or aside, when he might have touched them with his hand, thus — Pshaw! The window recess in which he sat was lined with plate-glass, which, the casement being open, and the shutter-blinds thrown back, vividly mirrored the passers-by; those who came up fronting the glass opposite the person looking thereon of course appearing to advance upon him, till at the moment of passing the window the reflection vanished. In Holland and Belgium this contrivance for staring at passers-by without appearing to do so is common in the fashionable thoroughfares. Henry Denvir had scarcely recovered from the flutter of pulse caused by the absurd apprehension, when Jorgé, who, originally an Aguado (water-carrier), still affected, on working days, the coarse duffel dress and leather skull-cap of his class, entered the room in splendid array—cloth pantaloons, blue, handsomely-slashed velvet jacket, crimson sash, leather shoes, and Montero hat! He was going to matins; but “finding I had not been in bed,” to quote directly from my friend’s diary, “he had brought me the Spaniards’ universal restorative, a cup of hot chocolate. He had also to say that those sons of Belial—these satanic epithets, by-the-by, are rather mild renderings of the untranslatable terms used by Jorgé—Juan Herrera and Bal-

thazar Gomez, after sauntering for some time up and down La Rambla, and gaping at the window near which I was sitting, had gone higher up and mixed with the 'Colorados,' who were mustering under their commander, Colonel Lopez, for, it was whispered, a secret expedition against the Carlists in the direction of Logrono." It may here be mentioned that this Colonel Lopez was the officer who in after years organized the filibustering expedition from New Orleans to Cuba, and suffered death at the Havannah by garotte. His "Colorados," so called, I believe, from their red caps and jackets, were a species of light guerilla soldiery, and chiefly, like Lopez himself, natives of Valencia, a province of Spain, contiguous with Catalonia, on the south. But to return to Henry Denvir's diary.

"See, Balthazar has returned!" exclaimed Jorgé, who had been peeping out of the window. 'Yonder he stands, talking with those two superior officers. It is my decided opinion that if they knew the rascal better they would trust him less than they are said to do.'

"Is he,' I asked, 'attached to the army in any acknowledged capacity?'

"No, señor; spies are used, not acknowledged.'

"Balthazar Gomez is a spy, then?'

"People say so: others, Jorgé amongst them, whisper to each other that he is a traitor as well as spy. Perhaps the virtuous young man is calum-

niated,' added Jorgé, with a combination of wink and squint which he could render variously expressive: 'Virtue often is; even I have not escaped; but I must be off, or, *fa de Catalico*, I shall have evil fortune for the whole twelvemonth to come. Adios, señor, I shall pray for all heretics.' With that he went his way to church; I mine—to bed.

"Of sound refreshing sleep," continues Henry Denvir, "I had but little; the incessant clang of holy bells prevented that; and at about ten o'clock Jorgé roused me with a fresh cup of the eternal chocolate, and an intimation from Cyril Mervyn that he was up and dressed. I rose at once, and we were quickly in the streets, which presented a strikingly gay appearance. It was festival weather too; a light cooling breeze displayed and fluttered the innumerable flags and garlands suspended in the bright sunshine from every window, and tempered gratefully the already glowing day to the multitude of well-dressed people—señoras chiefly—the ruder sex mustering in nothing like proportionate numbers—hastening to church. These crowds, amidst which I and Cyril were quickly involved, had to fight their way through battalions of sturdy, picturesque beggars. I mean by picturesque that their professional rags and apocryphal ailments were displayed with a dramatic effect to which our British beggar can make no pretension. Happily the magnificent cathedral, dedicated to God and Saint Eulalia, Virgin and Martyr, is encircled

with orange and lemon trees, whose perfume dispelled or neutralized the odour of garlic through which we had struggled, and penetrating, as it did, from the cloisters into the body of the cathedral, mitigated the, else to me, overpowering effect of the incense lavishly consumed during the gorgeous ceremonial which ensued.

“The courtesy of an office-bearer—I am ignorant of his clerical designation—placed us near the sanctuary, from which spot we had a clear view of the whole of the splendid interior. The aisles are divided from the nave by lofty, branching columns, festooned upon this occasion, as were the saint-chapels, altars, images, including an enormously ugly head (intended, I was told, for the Moor, Boabdil’s), with a profusion of gorgeous flowers. The sanctuary, circled by twelve marble pillars, is directly over the tomb of Saint Eulalia, before the jasper columns whereof lamps constantly burn, and sinners kneel and pray, or seem to do so. The high altar was perfectly dazzling with gold, gems, lights, and flowers, arranged with taste and effect. The altar-painting, used I fancy for this especial festival only, was a copy of Murillo’s famous ‘Assumption of the Virgin,’ stolen by Marshal Soult from one of the Spanish churches, and carried off with other plunder to France, the surrounding illumination being so managed that, notwithstanding the obscuring effect of the marble columns upon the painting as a whole, the principal

figure stood out in vivid relief. Altogether a novel and imposing spectacle was before us, and by far the most impressive portion, to my mind, was the vast mass of worshippers kneeling together upon the granite pavement, without distinction of rank or riches—the hidalgo beside the muleteer—the countess upon the same flag with the scullion!

“The service was conducted throughout with much sensuous splendour, and the choral mass-music was finely rendered; but the sermon, by a fat, puffy octogenarian, was a vapid piece of cumbrous rhetoric, preached, and badly, from memory. The pale, hectic-flushed, youthful priest who recited the mass, would, I thought, have handled such a theme very differently; or that spiritual cast of features—those dark, mournful eyes—that deep-toned vibrating voice, promised falsely. ‘What is the name of the young priest who said mass?’ asked Cyril, as we emerged from the cathedral, in sufficiently-intelligible Castilian, which language he had, since the journey to Spain was determined upon, been fitfully studying. ‘Michael Quesada, the famous orator,’ was the reply. He will preach this evening at vespers. You had need come early if you wish to hear him.”

“We did go early—I, in the interim, having placed Cyril *au courant* of Señor Silva’s communication, and my own free commentaries thereon—arriving full half an hour before the sermon commenced, and found the cathedral already so thronged that it was with

difficulty we obtained stifling standing-room. Very strangely, as it seemed to us, a passage, five or six feet wide, running completely round the interior, had been strongly railed off since the morning, thus considerably contracting the insufficient space. This circumstance did not appear to excite any one's surprise, and we concluded, therefore, that some customary procession would make the circuit of the building. The garish day, it was yet but five o'clock in the evening, of the 15th of August, had been completely excluded, and nave and aisles were as resplendent with wax lights, suspended from roof and column, as the half-blinding sanctuary itself. At length the monotonous chanting of the psalms commenced, and was concluded amidst a kind of subdued buzz, which, during the last five or six minutes, had become general—expectantly-intense. There was a brief pause, whilst the priests and acolytes formed themselves procession-wise, facing the crowded auditory, which, by-the-by, consisted upon this occasion of to the full as many cavaliers as señoras. Presently the organ thundered with all its stops outdrawn, which, with the multitudinous outburst of voices in the *Salve Regina*, caused Cyril and myself to turn ourselves, mechanically, as it were, towards the organ loft. Imagine our astonishment, to find upon again fronting the high altar, that the picture virgin was a living being, and floating towards us through a mist of incense! Another glance showed us that a youth-

ful maiden, robed in drapery of Murillo's colours, and of a beautiful countenance, though infinitely inferior to the conception of the inspired artist, was in the act of being borne upon painted pasteboard clouds along the railed-off passage round the church, for the edification of the faithful! The reverse of a devout spectacle, it seemed to my unpoetising northern intellect, however well adapted to the religious tone of mind which prevails in southern climes, as it appeared to be by the fervid choral swell of voices which accompanied the progress of the pageant, and continued for some time after the representative-maiden, who was evidently in a fainting state, and evinced by her bowed head, downcast, suffused eyes, a strong repugnance to the part she was playing, had disappeared at the back of the altar, and been replaced by the great painter's idealization of the holy virgin of Judea. Cyril Mervyn's voice caught my ear with difficulty amidst the murmur of delight which followed the conclusion of the *Salve Regina*.

“ ‘That, Denvir,’ he whispered, ‘depend upon it, was Luisa: look at the priest Michael, and note the likeness.’

“ Till Cyril spoke, the idea had not crossed my mind, but upon attentively regarding the young priest, as pale,—paler, than in the morning—with brilliant hectic spots upon his cheeks, he stood fronting the congregation upon the altar-steps, waiting till silence should be completely restored to commence his dis-

course,—I certainly recognized a likeness, though not so striking as to add much in the way of confirmation to the surmise I entertained, that the supposititious Luisa Lambert was, in fact, as well as the priest Michael, a child of the deceased Señor Quesada, at whose death, when both children were in their infancy, she had been set apart by the forecasting Téresa for the rôle of impostor she was now, perhaps unconsciously, personating. The discovery of the official document, said to be lost, would, I felt quite confident, afford much better evidence of the essential truth of my suspicions.

“The discourse or sermon was just what I anticipated it would be—fervid, brilliant, imaginative, rhapsodical; sparkling and glowing throughout with the honours and glories of *Maria purissima*, the second and sinless Eve, called by the Eternal on the day they were there assembled to commemorate to fill that highest place in the heavenly hierarchy, immeasurably above Gabriel glorious, or Uriel fair, prepared for her before the foundations of the earth were laid. Unconsciously to himself, I dare say, but not the less truly, did an earthly memory colour and vivify the impassioned harangue of the youthful orator, whose physical powers barely sustained him to its close; and the thought struck me, that as far as he himself was concerned, it would not be long before the stern teacher, death, irrefutably confirmed or varied the dogma he had so floridly illustrated.

“In the street we were joined by Señor Silva. ‘You recognized the heiress, I presume?’ said he, in French.

“‘Yes,’ said Cyril, ‘but what could have been the inducement to place herself in so unbecoming a position?’

“‘Fortunately you speak in French,’ quickly replied Silva, ‘or it would be advisable to speak in that fashion not quite so loudly in Spain. Unbecoming, by all the saints! Why an Infanta of Spain has before now placed herself in that unbecoming position! True, the practice, under the disfavour of our highest clerical dignitary, him of Toledo, is fast dying out; yet, even in these cold-hearted, degenerate days, I very much doubt that our charming Luisa would have had such an honour conferred upon her were it not expected that some portion of the wealth she inherits will be devoted to pious purposes.’

“‘She inherits! Is it the custom in Spain then to count chickens in the egg?’

“‘No more than it is in your Great Britain; but in this case, as I have explained to your sceptical friend, the yellow bills protrude themselves so saucily that it may be excused.’”

“‘Still a foolish practice, under any circumstances,’ exclaimed Cyril Mervyn, with a gaiety of tone unusual with him of late, and taking the notary’s arm, ‘inasmuch as a weazel, a lawyer, notary, or other animal of predatory habits may, in one luckless

moment, irretrievably damage the calculation. Suppose you and I, Señor,' he added, 'take a few turns this delicious evening up and down the gay-peopled Rambla, you the while favouring me with your own version of last night's conference, unillumined or unblotted by my friend Denvir's hints and comments?'

"'Gladly so,' said Señor Silva. 'And the chief facts are fortunately shut up in a nutshell.'"

"The martyrdom of marriage with the real or fictitious heiress," murmured Henry Denvir, as he entered the Hotel del Oriente, alone, "does not, it strikes me, appear to Mr. Cyril Mervyn, upon closer view, to be so repulsive as he had feared. Well; that is his affair—not mine!"

"Hypocrisy, Mr. Denvir! Untruth, sir! Proved to be so by that wild heart-beat—that hotly-flushing face! It is paramountly your affair that Cyril Mervyn should marry 'Luisa,' whatever her rightful surname may be, provided you do not stain your own soul by insidiously aiding to bring that result about! And with that newly-kindled hope glowing in your brain, you sit down to write Mrs. Lambert, as you had resolved to do, a full, true, detailed account of all that has passed, concluding with an iteration of your decided opinion that the Spanish claimant to that lady's deceased husband's wealth is no more entitled to it than you are! Having finished, directed, and sealed the letter, you

call for wine and cigars, and sipping, smoking in conscious rectitude, secretly exult, nevertheless, that, thanks to the astuteness of yonder crafty notary, the somewhat slighting opinion entertained by Mr. Cyril Mervyn of his 'interpreter's' judgment—your Spartan virtue will, very probably, not merely be its own reward, but will receive that infinitely higher—that priceless one which—With all my heart! Let us drink her health again, though this will be the fifth or sixth time within less than an hour! 'Juliet Arden!' hip—hip—hurra!—"

"Did you call, señor?" asks Jorgé, opening the door, and looking curiously in.

"Eh!—yes!—The decanter is empty."

"I thought it might be, señor. The weather is so hot and sultry."

"Here is a note from Madam Herrera," said Cyril Mervyn, a few days afterwards, addressing Henry Denvir, "inviting you and me to dine in the Plaza Nueva to-morrow. My mother's letter appears to have favourably impressed her. Will you go with me?"

"With much pleasure," replied Denvir; and Cyril, who, I should state, had been convinced by Señor Silva that the legitimacy of Madam Herrera's daughter was indisputable, sauntered away.

Their reception, the first awkwardness of such a meeting over, was very flattering, in fact, overdone to a correct taste in cordiality. The Herreras were

handsomely lodged—the dinner and its accessories unexceptionable—and the host, hostess, and daughter of the house differed but little in dress, manners, and conversational aptitude from the ordinary run of well-mannered people one meets with in England. After a while, Henry Denvir obtained, or thought he did, as the mask of conventional reticence slipped momentarily aside, or was placed unawares in a light which more plainly—according to him again, let it be distinctly understood—revealed its painted artifice—a clearer view of their mental and moral individualities. As to Luisa—a charming illustration of Spanish beauty—its dark, penetrating, unfathomable eyes, bright olive complexion, warmly-rounded figure, and above all, its unmatched elasticity of graceful motion,—she was either, Denvir concluded, the most ingenuous, unsophisticated of maidens, or, in the assumption of guileless simplicity, a perfect model of art—of the *ars celare artem*. The way in which she now and then attempted to introduce some phrase of the inconceivable English she had been taught at a convent — stopping and blushing violently in the midst, as if suddenly apprehensive that the strange, uncouth words she was repeating by rote, might possibly mean something different from what she intended, something rude, perhaps—was the perfection of modest, girlish simplicity. Her, it was impossible to doubt, at all events in her presence. Madam Herrera now was manifestly an actress,

in speech, smiles, *pose* of figure, and graciousness of attention, especially when Cyril opened his lips, displaying, moreover, admirable tact in so managing the conversation, which, for Cyril Mervyn's convenience, was carried on in French, with the help of a sudden incursion from time to time of Luisa's enterprising English, that all awkward or unpleasant topics were avoided, or if heedlessly touched upon by her daughter, led away from instantly with consummate address. A finely-formed, handsome woman too, though *passée*, and scarcely more resembling Luisa in features than that susceptible Spanish maiden did the Juliet Arden, whose throne in the heart of the handsome young Englishman, she from the first moment appeared not at all disinclined to win and usurp—unconsciously usurp, the very existence of her beautiful rival being, contrary to Mrs. Lambert's expectations, unknown to her. Later in the evening, and by slow, nicely-graduated approaches, the while Luisa and Cyril were delighting themselves with song and guitar at one end of the apartment, and Juan Herrera, compromising between comfort and good manners, was smoking a cigar with his head thrust out of window at the other, Madame Herrera condescendingly disclosed to Henry Denvir, who was seated about midway between song and smoke, her Christian sentiments with reference to that admirable Madam Lambert and her very interesting son; and seldom has the beauty of family

concord, the sweet, self-rewarding duty of ministering to the hurt minds of those allied to us, however distantly, by the bond of relationship, who may have been cast down by the same capricious stroke of fortune that raised ourselves to unexpected eminence of position or wealth, been more feelingly expressed; the moral of the eloquent homily being pointed and brought home by incidental comments upon the sweet blending of Luisa and Cyril's voices—the harmonious contrast presented by their opposite temperaments—Luisa's that of the glowing south, so admirably fitted to inspire, with its genial radiance, Cyril's colder one, from which, in its turn, hers would derive elasticity and force, etc.

Henry Denvir perfectly comprehended that he was indebted for those flattering attentions to the manner in which Mrs. Lambert must have spoken of him in the letter that had so cleverly prepared her son's way to Luisa's favour; but the knavery, to his prejudiced eyes—I, the narrator, being of opinion, however, that there was no knavery, properly so called, in the case; what *he* called so being, in truth, nothing worse than soft sawder—but the knavery, I say, to his prejudiced eyes was too grossly palpable, and instead of softening, weakening his suspicions, hardened, strengthened them, besides wounding his self-love—and the most devoted of lovers loves himself at the same time quite as devotedly—outraged at being held so cheap that it was thought

he might be baffled, disarmed, by such poor fence as that!

“Pray,” exclaimed Henry Denvir, with sudden explosion, “pray, Señor Herrera, may I ask if you have lately seen your friend Balthazar Gomez?”

Startled by the question, the señor hastily drew in his head, and, in doing so, struck it violently against the sharp edge of the uplifted casement; an irritating accident, which had, doubtless, much to do with his savage response—

“The devil burn Balthazar Gomez—and—and—”

There can be no question as to whom he would have included in that ardent apostrophe, but for a recovering sense of politeness, aided by the quick interposition of his wife, who, at the moment, had been practically verifying her opinion that Luisa stood quite as high as Cyril’s shoulder, if not a trifle higher.

“Balthazar Gomez!” exclaimed the lady, at the same time darting a look at her husband which sent his head sharply out at the window again, “I was not aware that you and that luckless young man were acquainted with each other.” •

Henry Denvir said he had seen him once or twice with Señor Herrera; the last time, on the morning the “Colorados” set forth on their unfortunate expedition.

“My husband’s acquaintance with him is of the slightest kind,” said Madame Herrera, with recovered

self-possession, "and fortunately so, or in these troubled, treacherous days he might be involved in the grave suspicions which we hear attaches to him of being a spy or traitor in the pay of the Carlist faction; an accusation impossible to believe, although——"

"I verily believe it," interrupted Luisa, "and that the wicked valet *did* lead our brave Colorados into that dreadful ambushade, where——"

"Luisa!" exclaimed Madame Herrera, with peremptory emphasis, "Luisa!"

Luisa coloured, curtsied, and was silent. It occurred to Henry Denvir that Madame Herrera had been more successful in inspiring her daughter, if Luisa was her daughter, with fear, respect, than with affection, though assuredly not from deficiency on her part of attractive, fascinating power. What, for example, could be more charming than the graceful ease with which, passing in a moment from grave to gayest mood, in order, it was easily comprehended, to divert her visitor's thoughts from Balthazar Gomez and everything associated with him, she seized a guitar, and sang a delightful *aria*, originally introduced by herself, she whispered Cyril confidentially, in *La Villana de Xetafe*, a rôle in which she achieved her first success. She could hardly have failed to achieve a great success, thought Henry Denvir, in such a part; the main action of Lope de Vega's pleasant farce being the varied and, at length, suc-

cessful devices of a peasant girl, to entrap a rich lover in the toils of matrimony.

“ You have promised Luisa to repeat your visit to-morrow ?” Henry Denvir overheard Madam Herrera say to Cyril Mervyn, who had not yet left the salon, when he was half-way down stairs. “ *C'est bien,*” she added, in recognition of Cyril's readily repeated assent; “ come alone, as early as you can, and pass the day with us !”

“ On the morning of the eighth day,” writes Henry Denvir, “ subsequent to our visit to the Herreras, since when I had seen very little of Cyril Mervyn, and heard nothing of importance from Señor Silva, I received a note, whilst sitting at my always solitary breakfast, which, upon opening, I found to be from—of all the people in the world—the Reverend Michael Quesada, ‘ who was anxious to confer with me at my earliest convenience upon a matter of pressing importance.’ I lost no time in obeying the summons, and, escorted by Jorgé, reached the church of *Santa Maria del Mar*—said to be built upon ground recovered from the sea, which I can hardly believe—just as its bells were chiming eleven. I was received by a lay brother, who conducted me to a small turret-chamber at nearly the top of the building, where he left me with an intimation that the Padre Miguel Quesada, who was for the moment engaged, would join me after as little delay as possible.

“A pleasant little apartment, and pleasantly situated, commanding, as it did, a full view of the harbour—a purely artificial one, by the way—and the vast expanse of glittering sea, clipped in on the far distant eastern horizon by the deep-blue, cloudless firmament. A wooden crucifix, two roughly-made, wood-seated chairs, and as rude a table, constituted what may be called the furniture of the room, but there was an abundance of choice flowers, and a goodly collection of French and Spanish books, some of which, Chateaubriand’s translation of the ‘Paradise Lost,’ for example, figure, I should think, in the Index Expurgatorius. Presently, the lay brother reappeared, with a copy of ‘El Vapor’ newspaper, which the Padre Miguel thought might interest me. One article therein certainly amused, if it did not greatly interest me, namely, a furious attack upon the Duke of Wellington, *à propos* of his having dispatched, or being about to dispatch, I forget which, Lord Eliot to the head-quarters of Don Carlos, with a view to bring about a mitigation of the ferocious practice, common to both Carlists and Christinos, of shooting all prisoners taken with arms in their hands as traitors. Such a step on the part of the British Commander-in-Chief, argued ‘El Vapor,’ was a proof of the Duke’s imbecility of judgment relative to Spanish affairs, and amounted, besides, to a moral recognition of the pretended claims of Carlos to the throne of Saint Ferdinand on the

part of England, which might have a most injurious effect. Throwing down 'El Vapor' with a careless smile at the editor's angry comments upon a mission of mercy, which I could never have dreamt might one day concern me individually, I was turning again towards the window, and the magnificent view therefrom, when the priest Michael entered the room, and, after a courteous salutation, entered at once upon the matter in hand. Seen closely, he was in more fragile health than I had thought him to be, and his own conviction that his time in this world would be very brief was thoroughly mine before I left him.

"'Señor Silva has, I know, apprised you,' he said, with a return of the brilliant hectic I had noticed in the church, 'of certain incidents in my youthful days which have rendered the certainty, the moral certainty at which I have at length arrived, that the young person known as Luisa Delmar, or Lambert, is really my own sister, and neither of us the child of shame; so great a joy to me that, even as I now speak to you, the thought leaps up and glows about my heart like new-born life.'

"I was not quite sure that I perfectly understood this, and I contented myself with saying, in reply, 'The fact, señor, that the young lady, said to be Luisa Lambert, is *your* sister, is a very important one to persons whose interests I am bound to promote, and if it can be legally established——'

“‘*I cannot legally establish it,*’ he interrupted, with vivacity, ‘*though it is just possible I may help you to do so. My zeal, however, in the matter,*’ he added, “*will, I tell you frankly, be commensurate with the candour you evince in answering one or two all-important questions—questions which Señor Silva believes you can more fully answer than any other person here can, or, more properly, will!*”

“‘*Proceed, if you please.*’

“‘*You will, I am sure, readily agree that, believing as I do, though the world may not, that Luisa is my own sister, it is my bounden duty to watch over her temporal and eternal welfare, to aid her with my best guidance, and no one can stand in more urgent need than she, poor child, of honest guidance in passing through the perils—snares for her undying soul—by which she is encompassed.*’

“‘*So believing, there can be no doubt as to what is the duty of your reverence.*’

“‘*Truly so; and let me further premise,*’ continued the young priest, with some embarrassment, as if there lurked in his thought something which he hardly knew how, or did not like to shape in words, ‘*that, although myself avowed to poverty, and careless for myself of the splendours of a world in which I have not long to remain, I am not insensible to the value of riches and their correlative advantages for others; for my sister, *por exemplo*, so well qualified to fill and adorn a high social position. Well, your*”

friend, to whom, in the event of the failure of Luisa's claim, the riches in dispute will ultimately go, professes the most ardent love for her, and——'

“ ‘ Permit me, if you please——’

“ ‘ Nay, permit me first, if *you* please—and to the end—professes, I say, the most ardent love for her; and surely this is proved by the fact that it is settled they are to be married next Tuesday se'nnight?’

“ ‘ Married next Tuesday se'nnight! impossible!’

“ ‘ It is true; and moreover that all essential stipulations have been discussed and agreed to. Luisa is not only to be secured in the free exercise of her religion, but the children, if any, are to be educated in the mother's faith. This was a condition insisted upon by my sister herself, and I bless her for it. Your facile friend,’ he added, with a faint, sad smile, ‘is equally liberal as to pecuniary arrangements. Fifty thousand of your pounds sterling go to Madam Herrera; the like sum to Madam Lambert; and the remainder of the almost fabulous amount of money is settled jointly on the bride and bridegroom.’

“ ‘ Pardon me for saying that ‘the liberality,’ the lady believing herself to be the legitimate heiress, is all on her side.’

“ ‘ Not entirely so; for although one of the conditions of the contract is that no further opposition shall be offered to the establishment of Luisa's claim, it is provided by a clause, to which I know your

friend's attention has been especially drawn by Mr. Balmaseda, the notary, by whom the contract has been drawn, and who is, you are of course aware, in communication with the English lawyers employed by Madam Herrera, that should Madam Lambert persist in her legal opposition to that claim, and succeed, no matter for what reason, in that opposition, Cyril Mervyn shall carry out all the precited money arrangements *pro rata* with his pecuniary means, as the undisputed heir, in that case, after his mother, to the litigated wealth.'

" 'Really, I must think you are mistaken when you assert that Cyril Mervyn has finally consented to conditions of which the fraudulent intent would be apparent to a born idiot.'

" 'I am *not* mistaken; Cyril Mervyn has deliberately, solemnly assented to the conditions I have recited. And I, for one,' added Michael Quesada, striving, as he spoke, to look through me with those piercing eyes of his, 'am not surprised that he has done so, *if* he really feels the fervent attachment he professes, and which Luisa, measuring the sincerity of others by her own guileless faith, believes, I am told, he truly professes. If I could be assured,'— Michael Quesada, finding I did not speak, presently went on to say,—'If I could be assured that Cyril Mervyn, whose general character is said to be unexceptionable, is acting with good faith towards my sister, I should feel that her happiness, come what

may, would be safe in the keeping of an honest man, whom she might moreover hereafter lead by the strong ligature of love into the true fold of Christ.'

" 'Meaning, thereby, the fold of your own Church but that is of course.'

" 'But if, as I guess, and fear—and this is the vital point upon which I need enlightenment—Cyril Mervyn, despairing of successful resistance to the adverse claim, simulates an affection he does not feel, in order to obtain a share of the riches he believes to be otherwise wholly lost, his conduct, whilst equally intelligible, is base, accursed, and will in the end heap up coals of fire upon his own head, proposing, as he does, to blaspheme the truth of God through one of His holy sacraments, in the temple, in the very presence of the Eternal !'

" 'You speak strongly, reverend sir.'

" 'I feel strongly. And now let me adjure *you*, in the name of Him whom we both, I trust, serve, though after different modes, to deal faithfully with me in this matter.'

" 'How could I, how dared I resist that solemn appeal ! I bless God that I did *not* resist it ; and that, which had even more weight with me than the priest-brother's adjuration, was the thought that had frequently before occurred to me of the cruel fate that would befall the hapless Luisa when the silent but constant agencies which sooner or later upheave the truth to light from beneath how great soever a

superincumbent mass of artifice and lies it may have been hidden, should reveal to a husband who loved her not, that he had been duped, swindled into a detested marriage! I related, therefore, all I knew of Cyril Mervyn's engagement with Juliet Arden, and the reasons, originating with Mrs. Lambert, that had apparently prevailed with Cyril Mervyn in inducing him to violate his faith pledged to that young lady, and seek Luisa's hand in marriage.

"Michael Quesada listened to me with averted face and rending emotion, which found broken, sobbing expression in scarcely articulate phrases, such as, 'Poor Luisa! alas! alas!' 'Sweet, helpless, trustful child! so young, so true, and so deceived!' 'The blow will kill her!' 'Well, better the dagger's sudden stroke than the long agony of death in life!' with others of the like import.

"It was several minutes before he, striving to master the agitation which shook his feeble frame, hurrying, I feared, its premature dissolution, replied in words to what I had said. His power of self-control, when resolutely exerted, must, however, have been great; for when he at length turned towards me, his countenance had resumed its ordinary aspect of sad resignation.

"'I will not conceal from you,' he said, as if I could not have heard or understood his murmured comments upon the statement I had made,—'I will not conceal from you that I believe the discovery of

your friend's perfidy will be a cruel blow to my sister; but it is written, If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee, and this marriage must, shall, at any cost of present pain to her, be prevented. To argue with her, with a girl in love, might be fruitless,' he added, in a musing tone, 'and would certainly arouse all Madame Herrera's energies to combat, perhaps defeat us. Yes, yes, the surest plan is so to manage that it shall not be the Englishman's interest to persist in his traitorous suit. Listen to me, Señor Denvir,' he continued, in a loud confirmed voice, again directly addressing me. 'There is a woman of the gipsy race—but, previous to her marriage with one Gomez, baptized by the name of Rachel, in the Christian faith—who, I have recently ascertained, lived as a servant with Téresa Delmar at the time of her marriage with the Englishman Lambert, and since that time has remained, to my own knowledge, on terms of more or less friendly intimacy with her former mistress, till a few days since, when she became suddenly possessed with a notion that the Herreras had poisoned the minds of the authorities here against her son Balthazar, for whose apprehension a large reward has been offered. This notion, well or ill founded, has stirred the revengeful Gitano blood of the woman to its depths, and she will, I cannot doubt, especially were a liberal reward offered her, reveal to you or Señor Silva any information she may possess, give up *any documentary evidence*

she may hold, careless of the injury that may accrue to her supposedly-traitorous friends. Rachel Gomez has, I hear, left Barcelona; but she resides near the small town of Vich, where you will easily find her: you and Silva should set out immediately. God,' added Michael Quesada, with solemnity, and crossing himself,—' God, who blesses pure intentions, will forgive me if, in this instance, I, to save a sister, to defeat an iniquitous conspiracy, have ventured to pass the strict line of the law of the Church. Adios, señor! be swift and, till all be done, secret!''

CHAPTER VI.

A COUNTRY EXCURSION.

By the time Henry Denvir returned, in a state of painful excitement, to the Hotel del Oriente, Cyril had already gone out to spend the day as usual at the Plaza Nueva; and as Michael Quesada had urged that no time should be lost, he thought it his duty to see Señor Silva without delay. He did so: and had a long consultation with that gentleman, at which it was finally settled that he, Señor Silva, and Cyril Mervyn, if that wilful personage would consent to do so, should, on the third day from then—it being impossible for the notary to leave home before—betake themselves to Vich, and ascertain what would be made out of the exasperated Zingari woman. “Which,” said the obstinate notary “will be, take my word for it, *nil*, for the simple reason that she is really in possession of nothing that will serve us. As a professional man, I am, however, bound to essay any chance, however desperate, that may but seem likely to serve my client, and I shall be ready as

early as you please, on the morning of the third day from this, which will be Thursday, to set out with you for Vich."

"Cyril Mervyn,"—resumes Henry Denvir, after inditing a string of reasons for doubting either the infallibility of the notary's judgment, or the impeccability of his motives,—“Cyril Mervyn did not return much before midnight to the hotel, and I was about to undress for bed, when to my surprise, for of late he had been more distant than ever towards me, he first gently tapped at, and then gently opened my chamber door. He was looking worse, less at ease with himself, more distempered, than when I had last seen him, two days previously, and he had then made progress that way.

“‘You will probably, Mr. Denvir,’ he said, ‘be gone out before I am up to-morrow; I, therefore, take this opportunity of requesting, insisting indeed, that you busy yourself no longer with inquiries which, as matters now stand, are simply offensive.’”

“Upon my word, a very peremptory mandate! One, however, that I must take leave to disregard. It was not from Mr. Cyril Mervyn that I received my commission and instructions; nor is that absolute gentleman alone interested in the unmasking of an impostor.’

“‘Impostor!’ echoed Cyril, with flashing inquisition, ‘Impostor!’

“Yes, impostor! Whether consciously or not,

time will show ; and there is hope that that revealing time is not far distant.'

" 'Hope! hope! still nothing but hope!' rejoined Cyril, with scornful bitterness. 'Hope, if you like, is a gross impostor, with whom I have shaken hands for ever ; and it was high time I did. Let me again caution you,' he added, 'that the fussy meddling, which I hear attributed to you, with matters that concern you not, will not advance your interests.'

"He was of milder mood the next day, listened with patience to all I had to say, again emphatically assured me that I was utterly mistaken in my conjectures ; but, nevertheless, agreed to accompany us to Vich. 'Not,' said he, 'that anything is to be hoped for, to be expected I mean, from an interview with Mrs. Rachel Gomez, but I shall like to satisfy myself that prejudice does not transform fancies into facts.' With this he left me.

"Finding myself, late the next afternoon, after calling upon one of the late Mr. Lambert's commercial correspondents, near the Plaza Nueva, remembering that we were to start at dawn on the morrow for Vich, and that it might be as well to remind habitually-forgetful Cyril Mervyn thereof, so that returning to the hotel earlier than usual he might get a few hours' sleep before setting out upon so long and rude a journey, the whim seized me to call on the Herreras. I did so ; the servant recognized me, and pointing to a back apartment said, I

thought, that Señor Herrera was there. I entered, and found the room empty ; but the window opening from the floor to the ceiling being unclosed, I heard voices in the garden, which I presently knew to be those of Cyril and Luisa. These voices approached nearer and nearer, till the lady and the lover entered and seated themselves at one end of the trellised verandah, just without, and I was compelled either to abruptly announce myself, or submit for a few moments to hear their conversation. I adopted the latter alternative, my excuse to myself being that it was of importance I should understand the footing upon which the twain stood towards each other. I had my wish, and a trifle over. Good heavens ! They were positively talking of the morrow's journey to Vich, which Cyril had promised not to speak of there ! True, the young lady did not seem to be aware of the object of that journey ; but her mother ! but Madam Herrera ! We might save ourselves the trouble of the excursion now that — But, hark ! The theme has changed, it is now my interesting self ; and I have lost the apparently not very flattering remark to which Cyril Mervyn replies, apologetically.

“ ‘ You do Denvir less than justice. Certainly, he has no ill-feeling towards you, Luisa. He is, besides, placed in an awkward, false position.’

“ ‘ Well, I don't like Señor Denvir,’ rejoined the lady. ‘ He looked as suspicious as an alguazil, sour

as an unripe orange. Superbiliois, as you say in English.'

"'Supercilious, you mean. Our cold, undemonstrative English manners must always, more or less, chill and repel the warm, spontaneous sympathies of you children of more genial climes.'

"'Not always, Cyril! Not always, as thou well knowest! But it is only in words, like my father, as my mother tells me, that thou art cold, reserved. This heart is mine, beloved,' added the Spanish maiden, as with the pure-thoughted freedom of her country's manners she placed her hand upon his heart, and drooped her beautiful head confidingly upon his shoulder, 'this heart is mine, beloved.'

"'Can you doubt it, Luisa?' he replied, in a low, tremulous voice, which I did not misinterpret, though she did.

"'Oh, no; I could not doubt and live. Yet sometimes—— but thou wilt be ever true to me, Cyril?'

"I did not hear his soft-toned answer, but I saw through the vine leaves that his hand grasped hers in token of unswerving faith.

"'I knew that thou would'st say so,' was Luisa's delighted response. 'It was but to hear thee repeat that sweet assurance that I affected to doubt thee. But thy hand is suddenly become as chill as death; thy face paler than stone. Thou art ill, dear Cyril; let us in at once.'

"'Luckily escaping unobserved from the room, I

lay for a few minutes *perdu* in the passage entrance, then tapped at the door, and Luisa's sweet voice answering 'Come in,' I obeyed as if at that moment arrived, my face flaming the while as hotly as if I had been detected in the meanness to which an irresistible temptation had caused me to stoop. Cyril Mervyn had regained his exterior calm, but Luisa, who at my entrance started and crossed herself as if suddenly confronted by an evil presence, looked pale, unwell. In reply to a remark of mine, she coldly condescended to say that a pain in her side, felt for the first time after the procession in the cathedral during vespers on the Feast of the Assumption, had returned a few minutes previously. An awkward silence followed, broken by Cyril saying, with the most unconcerned air imaginable—

“Your purpose holds, I presume, Denvir, for the excursion to Vich at dawn to-morrow?”

“Undoubtedly,” said I; feeling hotter and redder than before. ‘And you go with us, of course?’

“Not exactly of course; but as I partly promised, and the journey may be beneficial to me, I think I will go with you,” he slowly answered, looking doubtfully towards Luisa.

“Yes—yes, go; it will amuse thee; but thou wilt return the same night?”

“That will not, I fear, be possible. What say you, Denvir?”

“That it will *not* be possible. Indeed, it will be

late on the following evening before we shall again find ourselves in Barcelona.'

"'How!' exclaimed Luisa. 'Thou, Cyril, will be absent two whole days, till Saturday, and on—— on ——'

"The lips were silent, but the eloquent blush completed the sentence, 'and on Tuesday thou and thy Luisa are to be united in marriage.'

"Madame Herrera came in. We stiffly saluted each other; and that I did not misinterpret the glance of mingled dislike and scorn, which, spite of her practised dissimulation, she darted at the intrusive visitor, was evident from the fiercely-toned remark which followed.

"'Your journey, Señor Denvir, across the Catalan mountains will, in this fervid weather, be an overpowering one, I fear.'

"'Very likely, madam. But it must be something more formidable than hot weather that will prevent me from going.'

"'I dare say,' rejoined the lady, with a saucy smile. 'If I had time to write,' she added, 'I would beg the favour of your taking a letter to an old servant of mine, who resides near Vich, one Rachel Gomez. You have heard the name before, I think?'

"I glanced at Cyril Mervyn, who I fancied looked almost as much confounded as myself, and held my peace.

"Madame Herrera did not pursue her triumph,

perhaps so wily a gamester regretted, after a moment's reflection, that she had so audaciously flaunted her cards, winning ones though they were, in the face of her bitter adversary, as she very erroneously believed me to be. However that might be, but few more phrases were exchanged between us, and I took early leave. Cyril made his appearance at the Hotel just before ten, in an infernal temper. To a mild query as to his motive for breaking the promise he had made not to speak of our Vich expedition to the Herreras, he angrily rejoined that he made no such promise, and did I suppose he was to invent a lie in excuse for his two days' absence? 'And but,' he added, with a fury which I felt had its source in his own perturbed mind and conscience, — 'And but that Madam Herrera insists upon my accompanying you, in order to judge for myself how well founded my *friend's* suspicions are, you should, as it is, go on your fool's errand alone!' He then, with a fierce 'good-night,' flung out of the room, and I went to bed.

"I lay awake during the short summer's night, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies, chiefly the latter variety of the article, and revolving in my mind whether it was worth while to persist in our purpose of hunting up Rachel Gomez. I concluded that it was, if for no other reason than that of proving to Mrs. Lambert, my gracious patroness in certain eventualities, that I had neglected no means of un-

veiling the conspiracy hatching against her. This decision come to, I jumped out of bed just as the first faint pencillings of light shot up on the sea-horizon, and as soon as I was partially dressed, hurried to Cyril's chamber to warn him that it was time to be stirring. There was no answer to my rap-tap on the door, which door, like all Spanish doors, being unlockable, I opened, and stepped into the room. Cyril had not been in bed, had not undressed himself, but had fallen asleep in an arm-chair, only recently it seemed by the not long since trimmed lamp, close by a table upon which lay several opened letters, notes rather. A glance, there at, and the traces of violent emotion, scarcely yet dry upon his white face, testified to the bitterness of the mental conflict in which ambition, pride, desire of riches, had vanquished love, or if not love, at all events, real, genuine passion! The letters or notes were in a delicate female hand, Juliet Arden's I could not doubt, and beside them lay her portrait in an open jewelled case, upon which, too, I thought, but it might have been fancy, hot tears had recently fallen. I withdrew softly from the room, reclosed the door, and then thundered loudly thereon. The summons was presently answered by Cyril, who, in reply to my announcement, that it was time to rise, said he would get up immediately.

“ We started just as the morning gun boomed over the city from Fort Monjuich, gallantly mounted

upon mules, and headed by Jorgé, who had undertaken to pioneer us safely through the thirty miles of rugged, lonesome country, lying between the commercial capital of Spain, and the ancient, decaying town of Vich. The glory of the morning, coming swiftly up over the fresh sea, and chasing back shadows over the brightening, brown mountain summits, towards which our faces were set, seemed to herald, as it certainly lighted our way over those frowning barriers, and, moreover, had a very exhilarating effect upon all of us. Various Cyril was, or affected to be, in high, careless spirits; Señor Silva, always a comfortable, cosy person, was jocund and chirrupy; whilst Jorgé, riding manfully in front, with two enormous pistols sticking fiercely out of the holsters of his mule-saddle, broke from time to time into snatches of heroic song, dating, he assured us, from the time of the world-renowned, invincible Pelayo, and still the battle-songs of the primitive dwellers in the unconquered, unconquerable Asturias. That which I better comprehended and more interested me than Jorgé's ancient balladry was the quite *unheroic* discretion manifested by him in gradually ceasing to uplift his voice in defiant war-strains as we penetrated further and further into the stern, silent mountain country, whose sparsely-scattered habitants enjoyed at that unquiet time so formidable a reputation for strong-handed, and not always 'legitimate' violence. The depress-

ing solitariness of the rough bridle-road along which we rode, generally in Indian file, was now and then enlivened by coming unexpectedly upon a patch of cultivated ground, where some dozen or more fierce, half-labourer, half-bandit-looking fellows would be reaping the harvest, unusually late this year; as a relaxation from more exciting avocations, it seemed, judging from their partly military attire, and glittering muskets lying or piled near at hand. We were favoured with the reciprocal and earnest attention of those gentry every time we came within their line of purview, their scrutiny of our appearance being generally accompanied by interrogative shouts of *Viva el Reyna Isabella*, or *Viva el Rey*, the former greatly preponderating; a fact which would have much surprised me, had I not observed that Jorgé, who was our herald as well as guide, invariably replied to a shout for Isabella or Christina, by one for Carlos, and *vice versá*, a clever, but too indiscriminating device, which would certainly have brought a volley of musket-balls about our ears from a party of fellows whom we disturbed at their dinner of rye-bread and onions, and who, to our dismay, when they cried *Viva el Rey*, really meant it, had it not been that, in the very nick of time, the mule-bells of a strongly-escorted diligencia, advancing along the high road which there intersected our cross-country route, caught our Carlist friends' ear, forcibly suggesting prudence. This lively incident caused Silva to intimate

the advisability of returning to Barcelona by the diligencia, and confiding to Jorgé, who appeared to know the country and its cultivators so well, the duty of bringing back the mules by the shorter mountain-cut, he had persuaded us to prefer ; a proposition, objected to by the whilom battle-ballad singer, with a violence of voluble indignation which nothing but its formal withdrawal could pacify or check.

“ About four in the afternoon we reached Vich, a small, straggling, old town, in the very heart of the Catalan mountains. The rich valley, at about the centre of which it is built, is watered by the limpid Medor and dotted with clumps of mulberry, palm, citron, orange, pomegranate trees, the meanest of the stone houses or huts, as in size many of them are, being screened and shaded by tall, wide-spreading fruit trees ; and the picturesque sylvan landscape is shut in, sheltered, relieved by the towering ranges of the Tangamanset and Monsery mountains. Just such a place, in short, that people, who ought to know better, fancy to be the resting-place and refuge of the primeval virtues, banished or fled voluntarily, time out of mind, as we all know, from the corrupting atmosphere of cities. Alas ! the ‘ Auburn,’ ‘ Deserted Village’ romance of rurality, which only a great poet, dwelling habitually in Fleet Street, could have imagined and clothed with enduring life, is as sad a delusion in Spain as in England. Of this I was sufficiently convinced, when, after walking our

wearied mules nearly to the end of the solitary, sun-burnt, main street of Vich, we alighted at and entered a posada of superior pretensions, the common room of which was full of ill-favoured, rustic rascals, several of whom, heavy-browed, dark-skinned, strapping fellows, with horse-shears, the implements and sign of their ostensible calling, stuck in their girdles, were evidently of the ubiquitous gipsy race, congeners of the lady we had come so far to see; and all brawling, swearing, quarrelling over their drink and dominoes with a savage recklessness, suggestive of anything but Arcadian simplicity and peace."

That is all very well in its way, Mr. Henry Denvir; but I beg, *inter alia*, to observe that there is much and better to be said on the other side of Country *versus* Town which I wish I had time and space for. For example, where in London or Barcelona, would you get such fresh, delicious eggs, such pure, creaming milk, as the pretty Pepita, who has cloven a passage for you, with her sharp elbows and sharper tongue, through the foul crowd and atmosphere of the common room to a perfectly-sweet, nicely-furnished apartment, suggests may be concocted into an omelette whilst you take a little aniseed brandy by way of preparative? (*You* prefer an olio; so should I, though you have to wait longer for it.) And where, oh forgetful, hungry lover, did Juliet Arden catch the clear light of those dove's eyes,—her soft cheeks' blooming tinge? In Fleet Street?

The olio and its corollaries having been satisfactorily disposed of, a guide was demanded to the habitation of one Rachel Gomez; and in popped a man with a promptness that could not have been surpassed had he been waiting just outside the door in expectation of the summons.

"I know Rachel Gomez, señors, very well indeed," said he. "It is about a quarter of an hour's walk to her place."

"And I know your face," replied Henry Denvir; "though where I made such a knavish acquaintance I cannot for the moment remember."

"The señor is more correct than he is courteous, for now I look at him more attentively I recognize the Caballero Inglese, who did me the honour of stopping for a short time, not very long ago, at my house, a posada, not many leagues from Barcelona, on the high road from Bayonne."

"I remember now, and that you are Francisco Bajal."

"Not so loud, señor, if you please," said the man, glancing round with real or affected alarm. "I *was* Francisco Bajal: I am now plain Pasco, which is, you are aware, Francisco in brief, *without* the Bajal."

"But how is this? What sudden calamity has overtaken you?"

"Calamities are, in a general sense, sudden just now in Spain. Mine was decidedly so. Some energetic, well-'pronounced' individuals, disgusted by

the tame, neutral colour of my politics, conceived the idea of enlightening me upon the comparative merits of the claimants of the Spanish throne by the flames of my own house, and carried out their idea too. In other words, the posada, at which I had the honour of entertaining your excellency, was one night burnt to the ground ; and here I am, at your service, in a less exalted capacity."

"A queer story, which does not, however, concern us. Please to lead on towards the dwelling of Rachel Gomez : we follow."

To the foregoing dialogue Señor Silva listened with interest, and as soon as Pasco, as he now chose to call himself, had shot ahead out of hearing, he said, addressing Denvir, "I think I can give you a truer version of the burning down of yon fellow's house than he has done. There was a report about a fortnight since, that a clever, scheming scamp, whose name I do not remember to have heard, who kept a venta, or, as he calls it, a posada, some two or three leagues out of Barcelona, which he had set fire to and burnt to the ground, with a view to cheat an assurance office ; but, clever as he may be, so bungled the business that suspicion, fast ripening into detection, followed ; and, to avoid the consequences, he absconded ; and would, it was supposed, shelter himself with the Carlists. This is doubtless he, and we must be aware of him ; his presence here, at this particular moment, and the unso-

licited offer of his services, suggesting to my mind vague, intangible, but not the less unpleasant suspicions." Denvir agreed with the notary; and they were still talking over the matter when they reached Rachel Gomez's dwelling, a decent, quite unghypsy-like abode, where they found Rachel and her son Balthazar, the Christino authorities who had offered a reward for his capture having no authority in the Catalan mountains, save that enforced by the actual presence of the Royal troops.

Rachel Gomez was a tall, dark woman, with the strongly-marked features of her race, and far from uncomely; showily attired, too, as that race, in Spain, delights to be, in a close-fitting velvet bodice, crimson *saya*, a kerchief of brilliant colours, which confined her ebon tresses, and sparkling ornaments hanging from her ears to her shoulders, and circling her neck and wrists. She received her visitors, who were evidently expected, with grave politeness, and Balthazar was quite as importunately courteous in his insistence that they should partake freely of the wine and fruits displayed upon a side-table, after so toilsome a journey.

The notary began introducing Mervyn and Denvir by name. "I know the persons and purposes of both well," interrupted the woman, with a theatrical air, awkwardly imitated from her former mistress. "Names are but sounds!"

Quite evidently, thought Señor Silva, this fine

dame has prepared herself for an imposing display—has no intention of saying common things in a common way: but he only said, “You know also, I have little doubt, no one, in fact, better, our motive in coming here?”

“I do. To ascertain of me, who *must* know, whether the Luisa now residing with Madame Herrera is verily the daughter of the Englishman to whom Téresa Delmar was married in 1812. Well, I say, she is that daughter—the true Luisa!”

“You have not always said so,” remarked the notary.

“Where, and to whom, Pedro Silva, have I said the contrary?” retorted the woman, with a malicious smile, joined in by her son. “The statement I now make I am ready to swear to?” added Rachel.

“Not the slightest necessity for that,” said Silva. “Your word is quite as good as your oath. Besides, if upon consideration such a form should be thought necessary, you can go through with it the next time you visit Barcelona, where I hope soon to see your son completely cleared of the grievous suspicions that have been maliciously bruited about to his prejudice.”

It seemed that a candle might have been lit, whilst Silva was speaking, at the woman’s black, lustrous, Gitano eyes, so fiercely did their fire leap up and flash; the expression being contemptuous triumphant irony.

“That had been a skilful stroke, Señor Silva,” she said, with a bitter laugh, “but that it struck upon a chord which has ceased to vibrate. Try your hand again!”

“Not I; it is not worth while, the affair, as it appears to me, being substantially disposed of. And you, señor,” he added, affecting to address Cyril in the Catalan dialect, “must be delighted to find that not even the shadow of an obstacle now presents itself to your marriage with the charming Luisa!”

“How! What!” ejaculated Balthazar, surprised out of his self-command. Not so his mother. Glancing at Cyril, who, having with Henry Denvir’s help, comprehended that nothing was to be learned of Rachel Gomez, was gazing listlessly out of the window, she said, “The bridegroom does not appear to heed your joyful announcement!”

“I forgot,” laughed the notary, “that he would not understand a word I said. Your son did, Rachel Gomez,” he added.

“Yes, Balthazar has sharp ears, and——”

“And has learnt, like his mother,” interrupted Silva, “that the *Hokanna Baro** can be performed in more ways than one.”

“Yes, and by pure-blooded Catalans, did they not lack the necessary wit.”

“Well, crow away!” rejoined Silva, who was getting a little heated; “but please to understand

* Gipsy slang for “the great trick,” in cheating or swindling.

that one you have never deceived, whatever may have been your success with dignitaries and priests. And now *adios*, Rachel and Balthazar Gomez; bootless as it may be to so commend you!"

"Truly a fool's errand!" exclaimed Silva, as the three strode back to Vich. "As I have twenty times told you, Señor Denvir, and I still perceive vainly told you, Rachel Gomez affects a power in this business which she does not possess. She has no secret, of value, to sell."

"Why then, I also repeat, does Madam Herrera fear and bribe her?"

"Because the vague, but unvanquishable dread with which your *Chancellaria* inspires Madam Herrera, and, in a less degree, her adviser Balmaseda, renders her nervously anxious that the marriage of Luisa with the gentleman ahead, shall meet with no obstruction or delay; and she fears or imagines that, you aiding, Rachel's hardihood in lying might delay, possibly definitively prevent that union, and so cast herself and daughter back amidst the rocks and quicksands of English chicanery. Let, however, the priest's blessing be once pronounced, and Rachel Gomez, with her son, will be whistled or whipped off like two baffled, worthless curs that they are. Balthazar, by-the-by, appears to labour under a yet grosser delusion than does his mamma. But this is only travelling over the old, well-beaten ground again."

“ Well, yes ; and with all deference to your more practised judgment, I still hesitate to—Hallo ! what is all this ? ”

“ All this ” was that a number of the wild fellows they had left gaming and carousing, suddenly rushed out of the posada, striking furiously at each other with their long knives, and shouting, screaming, and yelling, like so many demons. In the excitement of play and drink, the thin disguise of neutral politics had been dashed aside, and the result was the enactment, on a small scale, of the grand *guerra el cuchillo*, then raging with remorseless ferocity between Rodil and Zumala-Carreguy, and their lieutenants. Happily, three or four fellows, as fierce, but soberer than the others, vigorously reinforced by Pasco, interfered, succeeded in separating the combatants before any lives were lost, and bringing about an armed, sullen truce, which was not yet *de facto* broken, when the servant-girl came rushing in with seemingly breathless haste, to say that a large body of Red-caps were approaching Vich—a piece of news which cleared the posada with marvellous celerity.

This was a considerable relief to Denvir and Silva, forasmuch as they could not help remarking, that they, sitting in the open air, outside the posada, were objects of the especial, though covert, furtive contemplation of the fellows—a sort of half-recognized leaders they seemed—who had stayed the murderous hands of their comrades in the recent affray. Cyril

equally interested them, albeit he, absorbed as usual by sublimer things, did not heed their sinister looks. As soon as the last of them was out of sight, the proprietor of the posada came out with a volley of abuse of the vanished villains; the offscourings, he said, of both the contending factions, guerillas, in campaign for their own private account; and as ready to cut throats as steal purses! This was more than confirmed by Jorgé, who had mixed and drank with them; and after anxious consultation, it was settled that the most prudent plan the travellers could adopt was to accompany the morrow's always strongly-escorted diligencia to Barcelona, with which their well-rested mules would enable them to easily keep up, till, at all events, the most perilous part of the journey was accomplished.

This weighty matter disposed of, our friends supped cheerfully; drank quite a bottle of wine each, and then retired to rest, Henry Denvir's brain, so profoundly preoccupied by Macbeth's philosophical reflection, somewhat verbally varied—"If fate *will* have me wedded to Juliet Arden (and fate really seemed to be obligingly inclined that way) why fate can marry us without *my* stir"—that he did not, brilliant as the night was, look out of the window, or if he did, his eyes had no outward speculation; and he consequently did not see Pasco, Balthazar, and the tallest and fiercest of the ruffians that had evinced such curious interest in Cyril himself, and Silva, engaged

in close counsel together, within two hundred yards of the posada. Had he seen them, and could he at the same time have comprehended the drift of their devisings as well as he did forty-eight hours afterwards, his slumbers would hardly have been so tranquil, his dreams so exclusively dominated by angels in white satin and orange blossoms, as they were that night.

An insuperable obstacle presented itself to the plan of accompanying the escorted diligencia, that heavy machine having broken down at a stage beyond Vich, and could not, it was authoritatively stated, be placed in a condition to continue the journey till the day after the next at the earliest. This was annoying, particularly to Señor Silva, whose business engagements imperatively required his presence in Barcelona. Cyril Mervyn also expressed impatience at the delay, and although warned over and over again that Carlist foraging or plundering parties—not to speak of the guerilla-privateers, whose acquaintance they had made—were prowling about the districts through which they must pass; it was determined, remembering that after all they had made the same journey in safety only the day before, to set boldly forth; when, to the delight of the bravest of them, a troop of irregular horse, on their way to Barcelona, galloped up to, and halted at, the posada, to rest their horses and refresh themselves. Captain Lanos readily agreed that the three gentlemen should accompany

his troop, dined with them himself, and had no objection to his soldiers being liberally treated with wine. Cyril Mervyn, according to his wont, was superabundantly generous; the good wine circulated, and so general grew the joyous excitement that he volunteered a speech in French in laudation of constitutional government, and the regal virtues of Queen Christina, which Captain Lanos, Henry Denvir obstinately refusing to do so, attempted to translate, but for several reasons, one being his own rather confused comprehension of the French language at any time, broke down irretrievably. Sufficiently intelligible toasts, however, succeeded each other rapidly, and so jolly and contented were the company, that it was with great difficulty Captain Lanos, himself a gentleman of large vinous tastes and capability, urged by the entreative remonstrances of Señor Silva, got his soldiers to saddle by seven o'clock in the evening. But as the moon would rise early, night was preferable to day riding, in such gallant company, at that season of the year in Spain, and the cavalcade pranced off in high spirits, and with a bugle flourish which brought out all the boys and dogs in Vich, to yell and yelp them farewell.

“Our soldier-friends” (Denvir *loquitur*) “had become much less boisterous, as well as steadier in their saddles, after an hour’s smart riding had brought us well into the hill-country, the stern solitariness whereof had a sobering effect upon us all. Our

straggling array closed gradually up, not excepting the two couples of horsemen forming the advanced and rear guards, who, by degrees, so diminished their distance from the main body, as to be at last undistinguishable from it. Our party rode in the centre, an arrangement we owed to the sagacious forethought of Jorgé, and our sure, swift-footed mules enabled us to well hold our own with the far from first-rate horses of the cavalry. The moon, apparent queen of the bright stars which looked down upon us from the cloudless heavens, rose about nine o'clock over a wood-crowned range of hills on our left, and its brilliant light, broken, by the abrupt inequalities of the rugged country, into patches of splendour, rendered gloomier by contrast the black narrow fissures, walled in by vertical masses of rock, through which lay our road to Barcelona. One of these which, by sunlight, must have had far from an inviting aspect, now looked frightfully grim—an impression shared by Captain Lanos himself, who, at about a hundred yards from the entrance, commanded a halt; an order easily obeyed, our march, during the preceding ten minutes, having insensibly slackened to about the pace of the dead one in Saul. Ah! my old friend, it's all very well for you, sitting in the guarded quiet of an English home, to laugh, as I know you will laugh, at the panic plainly visible in the demeanour of those half-disciplined, thoroughly-irregular horsemen, when the commanding officer, after reminding

us, quite superfluously, of the evil reputation of the pass we were about to enter, directed them to ascertain that their swords were free in the scabbards, and their pistols properly primed; but it's my belief that, had you been present, you would have felt quite as uncomfortable as I did—as we all did, with, perhaps, the exception of Cyril Mervyn, who, I must admit, seemed to brighten up wonderfully—well for him did his moral but half equal his physical courage—as he listened to my translation of the captain's ominous injunction. Most unfortunately, too, as it fell out, he, with his usual propensity for knocking his cloudy head againsts posts, must needs take that officer's conventional exhortation to fight, if we were attacked, to the last cartridge and last drop of blood, literally, whereas, of course——. But the occurrences of that terrible night must be related in regular sequence.

“The order being given to resume the march, on we went very quietly, and were positively emerging with wonderfully-heightened spirits from the broken, break-neck ravine, when fierce shouts, from every point of the compass it seemed, smote our ears, checking us at once to a stand-still, and immediately some twenty, according to my reckoning, of several hundred I have since read in the official report, grim-looking villains, started into sight, armed with muskets, which they forthwith discharged upon us. Only two of our men were hit, and that but slightly, by the

volley, which would seem to bear out my calculation of the number of the enemy ; but, on the other hand, the captain's report is sustained by the fact that our entire troop, between sixty and seventy men, after a hurried discharge of pistols, gave up the contest as hopeless: vanishing—Señor Silva and Jorge inclusive—in all directions and with magical speed. It certainly was not from want of inclination that I did not follow the example set by the soldiers. I did, as far as firing my pistol, both barrels at once, went, God knows what at, if not the stars ; but before I, in my bewilderment, could get my mule's head turned round in a fleeing direction, a second volley sent a bullet through its head, and down we both came, with my left leg jammed between the rocky ground and the brute's carcase ; thereby placing me *hors de combat* ; and lucky would it have been had the same volley placed Cyril Mervyn *hors de combat* also ! Unfortunately it merely drilled a hole through his hat, and in reply to an officer who, flourishing his sword, and followed by a dozen fellows, rushed forward, calling out to him to surrender, he levelled a pistol, fired, and the officer fell backward with a scream, mortally wounded. The excited madman discharged a second barrel right amongst the startled soldiers ; but not, strange to say, with effect, and was himself, a moment after, felled to the earth by a blow with the butt-end of a musket. All this passed before my eyes like a flashing dream scene ; and I remember

nothing more, till I found myself lying in the broad, bright day, upon some straw, by the side of Cyril Mervyn, gagged and bound like him to the bottom of a cart!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

“WE were, I found,” proceeds Henry Denvir, “escorted by three men only, habited as peasants, and on our way to a Carlist outpost on the borders of Aragon, there, after the brief formality of a drum-head court-martial, to be shot, in pursuance of what the fellows called the Durango decree of his Majesty the king of Spain and the Indies—a fate that would have already overtaken us, but that the officer who succeeded to the command of the Carlist detachment, by which our irregular horse had been so easily sent to the right-about, after the death of him slain by the hand of Cyril Mervyn, was desirous, for the more emphatic warning of the English Legionaries, who were coming to Spain to fight in a quarrel which concerned them not, we should be executed with more of pomp and circumstance, than could have been the case had summary justice been done upon us. It was evidently a settled thing with our garrulous guards, that we, being aliens, taken in arms, against their lord the king, and who had, moreover,

killed one of the royal officers, would be put to death ; but an animated discussion arose between them whether, under the peculiarly-atrocious circumstances, Captain Isturitz having been slain whilst in the very act of offering the foreigners quarter, we should be honourably shot, or like common assassins be strangled by the garotte ; one fellow, who walked beside the cart, and I could not therefore see, but easily recognized by his voice to be that ubiquitous villain Pasco, decidedly inclining to the latter opinion, which he sustained with his accustomed saturnine coolness and acumen.

“ Curious enough, these menacing intimations, coupled with the indisputable fact that we were gagged and fettered prisoners, though both so hurt that any attempt to escape was out of the question, did not excite any very grave apprehensions in my mind. The pain in my leg, which was becoming intolerable, though no bone was, I found, broken, disturbed me much more than did those sinister prognostics. My mind refused, as it were, to realize, to entertain the idea of death in presence of the bright sunshine—the cheerful sounds of rustic life—the careless salutations interchanged by passers-by with our escort. Besides, the notion of confounding inoffensive travellers, guilty of no offence against ‘ our lord the king,’ but, if it were one, of defending their lives, assailed by they knew not whom, with the intrusive foreign soldiers, was supremely absurd—preposterous !

A plain statement of the easily-proveable truth would, I persuaded myself, suffice to insure our immediate liberation, even at the hands of a Carlist court-martial—a comforting conclusion, which, when the gag was temporarily removed, to enable me to swallow a draught of water, I communicated to my companion in captivity, adding, that as his wound was not a very severe one, he might yet reach Barcelona in time to be married on the day fixed upon; to which suggestion he replied by a ghastly smile, and sullenly turning away his face towards the cart-wheel.

“ We halted about noon at a friendly venta, where the gags were finally removed, and an embrocation, at the instance of one of our guards—a rough-spoken, but kind-hearted fellow—was applied to my bruised leg and Cyril’s broken head. Pasco Bajal choose to be exceedingly chatty and familiar. Looking upon us, he was pleased to say, as men that in a moral sense were already as good as dead and buried, he was disposed to be candid with me relative to things general, or particular. Thus he admitted that himself and Balthazar Gomez were old cronies, and had both been long engaged in the secret service of the Carlists; said we might *possibly* have returned safely from Vich to Barcelona but for Pedro Silva’s taunting avowal of the approaching marriage between Luisa Delmar and the proud Englishman, Juan Herrera having persuaded Balthazar that his wife permitted the intimacy between the young people in order to lull the English-

man in a fool's paradise, and induce a discontinuance of the legal opposition to Luisa's claim. The notary's words had revived Balthazar's scarcely quieted suspicion, and he had therefore made assurance doubly sure; 'by which, I mean,' continued the voluble rascal, 'that my young friend's loyal zeal in the king's service was stimulated by personal resentment, and the knowledge that in compassing the captivity and death—by garotte, I persist in believing—of the foreign agents of the Madrid government, he was by the same stroke wisely and quietly ridding himself of his own foe and rival; a perfectly logical motive of action, I take leave to maintain,' said Pasco, in conclusion of the subject, adding, 'You are now arrived at your journey's end.'

"It was evening when we reached the Carlist encampment of about three hundred men, commanded by a Colonel Quiroga, and occupying the ruins of a really deserted village, which had the appearance of having been more than once fired by the patriots in arms to promote the welfare of Spain. Some delay took place; but ultimately we were thrust into a dreary, dilapidated building, and left to silence, straw, dirty blankets, black bread, and cold water.

"The next morning, breakfast, a second course of black bread and spring-water, was served by Pasco Bajal, who informed us that the court-martial, it being Sunday, would not be held till after high mass, which would be celebrated in open air at noon; a

ceremony we were invited to attend, as it was thought it might help to bring us into a fitting frame of mind for the inevitable hour which he, Pasco, was pretty sure would strike for us at about three o'clock, a firing-party having been ordered to assemble at half-past two precisely, which circumstance, he candidly admitted, disposed of his opinion that we should suffer by garotte. We declined attending mass, and Pasco, expressing profound regret that there was no heretical minister of grace in the Carlist camp to ever so imperfectly sanctify our untimely exit from a vain, but, upon the whole, not unpleasant world, withdrew.

“The man’s assured tone of complacent vindictiveness—though how, except by the fact that we were not Spaniards, we had incurred his personal ill-will, I could not comprehend—now alarmed me more than I dared confess even to myself; and Cyril Mervyn remaining silent, moody, and irritable, I cast about in the troubled depths of my own mind and memory for helps to hope; but yesterday, I should have said for new reasons justifying unwavering confidence. As to any accusation of complicity with the persons or aims of the British Legion, that I knew would not bear a moment’s examination. Still, the fact that a Carlist officer had been slain whilst, as it would be held, in the execution of his duty, by an armed Englishman, looked far uglier contemplated now within the four walls of a dungeon, than it did the day before beneath the sunny sky of Spain. Carlist

and Christiano courts-martial, had, I could not shut out from my recollection, an evil name for rash and bloody judgments, and this one, it might be more than feared, would not be attempered to mercy by the fact, that two foreigners, the hand of one of whom was undeniably stained with the blood of their comrade, stood defenceless, helpless, before them. Turn the matter which way I might, its sinister aspect would not away, and still confronted me as menacingly as ever, when Pasco Bajal re-entered the cell, followed by a serjeant's-guard, to announce that the court was assembled and waiting for us.

“Cyril Mervyn sprang up, and assuming the attitude of Macready in William Tell, coming up the stage to confront Gesler, marched out magnificently defiant. I, assisted by one of the soldiers, limped after him, and both were quickly in the presence of the tribunal, composed of Colonel Quiroga and two subalterns, all three fiercely moustached, and seated in the open air, upon a rough plank, supported at either end by a block of wood, the colonel-president having a fir-table before him, upon which were writing materials, the loose sheets of paper having a stone placed upon them, or they would have been carried off by the fresh breeze that swept over us, pale captives, just emerged from that dreary dungeon, with a strange power, so to speak, of youth, health, freedom, life! The firing-party was no bitter jest, as I hoped, of Pasco Bajal; there they stood, drawn

it may be worth with reference to the orgie at Vich, there is other evidence of criminality which such an excuse will hardly cover. Now answer me one more question, and plainly without reservation: Have you not, since your arrival in Spain, actively assisted to enrol considerable numbers of the Catalan peasantry in the army of the Madrid government?’

“‘No! Señor President—no—no! a thousand times no!!’ I vehemently rejoined.

“‘You are English ‘gentlemen’ in dress only,’ retorted Colonel Quiroga, with angry disdain, ‘or you would not have stooped to so gross a falsehood. Request Señor Martinez to step this way. Do you know this witness?’ he added, with a sneer, as a stately-looking elderly gentleman advanced before the tribunal, and confronted us.

“‘No, I do not. And yet—’

“‘You are not quite certain! Ask your fellow-prisoner if he does?’

“‘I did; and Cyril replied in French, ‘*Non,—Oui, non,—c’est à dire—*’

“‘Let me refresh your memory,’ said Señor Martinez;—mine wanted no refreshing by this time: ‘on the seventh of August last, I saw both of you at a posada, then kept by one Francisco Bajal, actively engaged in assisting a well-known recruiting-agent of the Christino faction, to persuade a number of peasants into joining the rebel army by plying them

with wine, and, I doubt not, with money, though that part of the corrupting process was managed less openly. *Los Ingleses,*' added Señor Martinez, 'were so successful upon that occasion, that after they had helped to drive me away with shouts of *Viva el Reyna Isabella,* more than thirty soldiers were added to the rebel ranks, sixteen of whom were labourers upon my own property!'

" 'Have you any explanation to offer?' said the colonel, partially stilling the rising clamour by a wave of his hand.

"I attempted one; but so utterly confounded was I by the evidence of Señor Martinez, with such deplorable effect, that my halting, stammering sentences were presently drowned in the loud, no longer repressible clamour of the soldiers; and before I could recover my self-possession, Colonel Quiroga cut me short by declaring the case closed, and that the court was about to deliberate—an announcement which elicited a burst of bravos from the spectators, and an instant order from the officer in command of the 'firing party' to his men, who had pressed eagerly forward with the rest, to fall back, dress, shoulder arms, and remain at attention.

"The interval of almost unbreathing silence which followed was brief as terrible. Colonel Quiroga, turning with his brother judges towards the prisoners, all three standing up, uncovered, declared the finding and sentence of the court, 'Guilty'—'Death!'

One hour thence, if either of them required the ministry of a priest ; if not, the sentence to have immediate execution ! ”

At the first flash, so to speak, of a doom so sudden, so terrible, Henry Denvir staggered, reeled like a drunken man ; and Cyril Mervyn, who sufficiently comprehended the dread significance of the president's words, spite of his pride and courage, visibly trembled, and his face and lips blanched to the colour of the paper I am writing upon. Henry Denvir rallied first ; the very extremity of the peril lent him voice, force, eloquence. He denounced the pretended trial to be a shameless mockery, the judgment to die a dastardly sentence of assassination, and passionately claimed the right of appeal to the representative of Great Britain in Spain, whose bounden duty, whose unquestionable right it was to secure the decent investigation of a charge put forth as a pretext for murdering two Englishmen in revenge for the death of a Carlist officer, slain in fair self-defence.

“ The representative of Great Britain in Spain,” said Colonel Quiroga, “ is not accredited to Spain's lawful monarch. Your appeal to him, therefore, if not in itself inadmissible, can avail nothing.”

“ We appeal, then, to the good offices of Lord Eliot, now, as I have heard, in Spain, charged with a special mission to your sovereign. He is a soldier like yourselves ; one of the many thousands of our countrymen who freely shed their blood in aid of the

heroic struggle which expelled the French invader from the soil of Spain."

This not badly-sweetened plea, suggested by the paragraph in *El Vapor*, and perhaps a feeling of compassionate admiration for one so young and inexperienced, defending himself and friend with so much tact and courage, under circumstances so terrible, gave the members of the court pause. They again conferred earnestly together; and at the expiration of about five minutes of torturing suspense, Colonel Quiroga pronounced the decision finally arrived at:—

"The sentence of the court upon the prisoners," said he, "is respited till the pleasure of the general commanding the division to which this regiment is attached shall be ascertained. The court, therefore, adjourns till the return of the messenger, who will be forthwith despatched to head-quarters. Remove the prisoners."

Henry Denvir and Cyril Mervyn were instantly hurried back to prison, and were still dizzy with excitement, when Pasco and another entered, bearing an excellent dinner, sent, he informed them, from the colonel's own table.

"A curious custom this, though common I have heard to most civilized countries," said Pasco, as he placed the dishes, "and in my poor opinion a very absurd one, of lavishing the choicest delicacies of this world upon those who have been inexorably doomed

to speedily quit it! Mortification now of the appetite, it appears to me, would be more effectual in weaning the minds of such unfortunates from earthly, and fixing them upon heavenly things."

The bitter caitiff! But it would have been worse than folly to waste anger upon such a fellow. "You forget," said Henry Denvir, "that the general has not *yet* confirmed the infamous sentence of the court-martial."

"You do me injustice, señor. I bear it very painfully in mind, aware as I am that the general's name is Cabrera: this prolonged torture consequently——"

"Cabrera!" interrupted Denvir; "I have never heard of him."

"You will have heard of him to-morrow, señor, at about six in the evening, I should say, and that hearing will not be pleasant for individuals who, as far as I can judge, have no uncontrollable longing for heaven. But, courage! You will have forgotten all about it by a few minutes past noon the next day; at which hour, according to prevalent opinion, the execution will take place."

"Leave us, if you please."

"Directly. But first an enlightening hint or two about Cabrera may be acceptable. Some months since he was an energetic, and not too vindictive servant of the king, our lord; but it happening, not long ago, that your friends, the Christinos, shot his mother—under what exact pretext I forget—he has

since remorselessly sacrificed to her *manes*, speaking classically—I think I have mentioned that when a boy I was destined for the church—Cabrera, since then, I say, has remorselessly sacrificed to his respectable mother's *manes* every man, woman, and child whom the chances of war have placed at his disposal. Imagine then the pain I felt at hearing that your fate depended upon General Cabrera! It is positively a refinement in cruelty to——”

“ Will you go away, or not ?”

“ Decidedly, having a choice, I *will* go away. But just permit me,” he continued, still speaking in French for the accommodation of Cyril Mervyn, “ as I shall not probably see you again on this side of the grave, nor, I regret to believe, on the other, to suggest one concluding, consoling reflection : this,—that should my young friend Balthazar Gomez obtain, and there can be no doubt that he will obtain, the beautiful Luisa and her immense riches, it is probable that you will be amply revenged upon him, beauty and riches being, as we all know, snares to the souls of men ; and now chuckling, triumphant Balthazar may, therefore, some fifty or sixty, perhaps seventy years hence, for his race are long livers, shake hands with this vain world with even less of cheerfulness and resignation than yourselves. And so, once more, adios, señors.”

He was gone at last, and the chained captives in the gate of death breathed more freely. Was that

bitter mood of mind, they asked themselves, habitual with the man, or assumed only for their especial annoyance? and, infinitely higher concernment, was his sketch of General Cabrera a true likeness or a fancy sketch? But why plague ourselves with such idle questionings, when a few hours will solve the all-deciding, transcendent one! Let us, then, eat, drink, for to-morrow, probably——

Eat they could not, and the dinner sent by Colonel Quiroga remained untasted; but of the wine they drank freely, obtaining thereby some sleep,—fevered, distempered sleep, but preferable, they thought, to the slow, dark, torturing hours of waking consciousness!

It may not be amiss to here state that the anecdote respecting Cabrera's mother was sustained by general report, whether justly or not I cannot say positively even now, though I believe there is little doubt of its authenticity. Francisco's bitter cynicism had become a habit of his mind whenever *Los Ingleses* came in contact with him. The Hannibal of cheats, he had many years previously sworn upon the altar of his roguery eternal hatred to the English nation, severally and collectively. The cause was this:—He had been connected with the commissariat department of the Anglo-Spanish armies during the war of independence; and his excellent education, combined with good natural abilities, caused him to be much employed and trusted. The path to competence lay clear before him, but, like many other very clever fellows of

his stamp, he would fain attempt a shorter cut thereto, though over forbidden ground. In other words, he committed various frauds, for which one of the British generals—Picton, I believe—had him severely flogged and drummed out of the camp. From that hour hatred of the English was the master-passion of the fierce, vengeful soul of Francisco Bajal.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COURT OF CONSCIENCE.

JUST before noon on the morrow an officer entered the cell, with a number of letters, which he said had been brought by a serving-man, calling himself Jorgé. "The messenger," continued the officer, "could not be admitted to see you, and these letters have been opened, in conformity with the regulations governing such cases. None have, however, been kept back, and Colonel Quiroga has directed me to say that, as far as they go, they confirm the account you gave of yourselves, and of your motives in coming to this country, and he regrets that the general's final decision will have been taken in ignorance of their contents; though, for my part," briskly added the officer, "I really see no reason to regret such a circumstance, as General Cabrera's decision would not, I am thoroughly sure, have been changed or modified by the exculpatory testimony of an angel from heaven!"

Nothing but songs of death! The prisoners turned, sick at heart, to the letters, all, except an

accompanying note of Señor Silva's, from England. Three were for Henry Denvir; two for Cyril Mervyn—one from his mother, the other directed in a delicate female hand that would have been recognized by Denvir without the aid of the curiously-entwined initials J. A. in the corner of the envelope. First, Silva's note was read aloud; after speaking of his own and Jorge's fortunate escape, he assured the captives that he had lost no time in bespeaking the good offices of every influential person he was acquainted with in their behalf, though sorely discouraged by the universal opinion that nothing less than a miracle could save them, if they had not, which was most likely, been shot within an hour of being made prisoners, supposing that, as rumour gave out, they had not been slain in the "battle." The notary had, notwithstanding, determined to send Jorge with the letters that had arrived from England to the Carlist encampment, whither, it was conjectured, they might have been conducted, with orders that, should he find their worst fears verified, to return with them immediately, that no delay might take place in apprising their friends in England of the misfortune that had befallen them. The priest Michael Quesada had, he said, evinced the greatest anxiety on their account; the more so, as it was by his advice they had gone to Vich, and no sooner was it reported that they were in the custody of Colonel Quiroga, than he left Barcelona to exert

what personal influence he possessed, which was not inconsiderable, with the chiefs of the Carlist party. Madam Herrera, the notary added, was profoundly afflicted, and her daughter Luisa, whom he had not been able to obtain sight of, had, he thought, been kept in merciful ignorance of what had occurred and was apprehended. Señor Silva's note finished with the information that a large reward had been offered for the capture of Francisco Bajal and Balthazar Gomez, to whose treachery Captain Lanos, partly at his, the notary's, suggestion, ascribed in his official report the formidable ambushade through which the second troop of Her Majesty's third regiment of Irregular Light Horse had so gallantly fought their way!

Cold comfort all that! Henry Denvir turned to his English letters, and the first he opened was from Messrs. Sharp and Lowe; brief, clear, business-like; but which need not be quoted here. Mrs. Lambert's, the next he opened, announced that lady's almost immediate departure from England, *en route* for Barcelona. Meanwhile, everything as regarded her son and the Herreras was to remain in *statu quo*. She concluded, by assuring Henry Denvir that he stood very high in her favour, and that, whatever turn the affair might take, her means and influence would always be willingly exerted in furtherance of his fortune.

"Favour! influence! fortune!" murmured Henry Denvir; "words of magical import in the world

betwixt which and me an impassable gulf has suddenly yawned, but here, upon the crumbling bank and shoal of Time, whence in a few hours I must jump the life to come, blank—meaningless—save in their bitter mockery.” He threw down Mrs. Lambert’s letter, and, with trembling fingers, removed the seal of the remaining one. As he expected, a conjoint letter; the first part by his mother—full of gentlest admonition, prayer-like hope of her son’s success, of his speedy return in health of soul and body. The third page, and all the crossings, rectangular and diagonal, were in his sister Mary’s hand, except one little space, strongly circumlined, that it might by no possibility be overlooked, informing him that the starling (one he had caught and tamed) could already say “Mamma,” “Henry,” “Mary,” charmingly, and subscribed “Fanny”—his youngest sister—blue-eyed, golden-haired, beautiful Fanny!

He read and read again, through blinding tears, till the lines grew dim, indistinct, vanished! He must have fainted, for, when roused by a loud knocking at the cell-door, the letter was on the floor—had dropped from his nerveless grasp—and pale, equally shaken Cyril Mervyn, was vainly endeavouring to withdraw a bolt which would have yielded to the strength of a child. It was accomplished with Denvir’s help, and an orderly, whom they had not before seen, brought in—dinner! Presently he returned with a

fresh supply of wine, and, at their request, took away the untasted food.

The sands of the hour-glass swiftly passed; it was already five o'clock, and Henry Denvir was silently watching the fast-lengthening shadows of some palm-trees, visible from the narrow casement, when the sound of booted feet was heard without; the sentry presented arms, and the next moment Colonel Quiroga entered the prison-cell: he had an open letter in his hand, which he placed in Denvir's, saying only in a grave, commiserative tone, "From the General."

Curt mandate of death!—" *Quo los fusillas! Cabrera.*"—" Let them be shot! Cabrera," Henry Denvir repeated in English, replying to Cyril's questioning look.

"Ha! all is over then! Well, Señor President," added Cyril, with rallying pride, "and when is it proposed to murder us?"

"The sentence of the court-martial," replied that officer, "will be carried into effect to-morrow at ten. I dare not permit a longer delay; but, in the mean time, every indulgence in my power, consistent with the firm discharge of my duty, shall be freely accorded."

The prisoners, in reply, requested to be furnished with writing materials, which Colonel Quiroga promised should be immediately sent to them. He then left the cell.

In less than ten minutes, Pasco Bajal made his appearance again; his sallow features a-glow with joy—triumph—victory! He placed paper, pens, ink, wax, upon the table, and seemed about to indulge in wordy exultation over the doomed Englishmen, but checked himself, and with instant change of expression and subdued voice, said, "There is one on the outside of that door," pointing to a low, narrow one, which led apparently to the interior of the building, "who desires to speak with you, Señor Mervyn. Will you favour him with an interview?"

"Who is he? What does he want?" exclaimed Cyril, in great agitation.

"Softly, softly, señor; walls like these have as many ears as they have stones. You will see who he is, and he will tell you what he wants. Come."

Pasco tapped at the door; it was opened from within, and Cyril disappeared through it. Pasco did not follow, but after pausing in a listening attitude for a few minutes, reclosed the door, and left the prison by the way he entered it, muttering, as he did so, a sourly-civil "good night" to astounded Henry Denvir.

Cyril Mervyn returned to the cell in a state of great excitement, after about half an hour's absence,—anxious, perturbed, yet hopeful excitement it seemed.

"Ask me no questions, Denvir!" he flurriedly exclaimed, "for I have promised to answer none.

I may, however, tell you there is a chance that we shall yet escape the murderous clutches of the Carlisle's."

"By the connivance of Francisco Bajal?"

"Yes! You are incredulous! Well, a few hours will decide."

"Do not, Mervyn," said Henry Denvir, "buoy yourself up with vain hopes of a deliverance which be assured will not, cannot be realized."

"I do not buoy myself up with vain hopes," rejoined Cyril Mervyn; but his flushed face and flaming eyes betokened anything but the tranquillity of resignation or the calm of despair.

Henry Denvir continued the letter he was writing to his mother without further remark, and had just finished it, when Cyril Mervyn exclaimed in a loud, metallic, assumed voice, as if in contention with himself or his auditor:—

"It is wonderful, Denvir, how many veils fall in the actual or imminent presence of death! What a detestable part, for instance, do I now perceive I have played in deceiving Luisa Delmar, or Lambert, into a belief that I loved her; whereas my heart has never for a moment swerved from the idol of its first, its only worship. But I will not die with the huge lie on my conscience. I will write to her, and at once confess the shameful fraud."

"All that, Mr. Mervyn," said Henry Denvir, "has a sort of high-sounding tone about it; but the feeling

by which it is dictated appears to me strangely unreal, hollow, simulated! There can be no necessity for inflicting such pain upon Luisa Delmar as such a confession would cause her."

"Silence!" exclaimed Mervyn, waving his hand impatiently, and sitting down to write. "Silence, now, would be deception in another form. Never shall it be in the power of any one to boast that I was ever false to Juliet Arden."

"Ah!" murmured Denvir, unheeded by Cyril, whose pen was already moving rapidly over the paper. "Ah! there perhaps gleamed forth the truth, if there be truth at all in what he has been saying. This boasted confession is, it may be, the last incense flung by a lover's dying hand at the feet of his mistress. All self-blinding veils do not, if that be so, fall before the face of death. And did he not just now say that he was hopeful of escape. I cannot at all comprehend it."

Henry Denvir would have comprehended it easily had he been present at the interview between Cyril Mervyn and Rachel Gomez which had taken place that evening; would have known that Cyril's sounding grandiloquence was an attempt, and a poor one, to put a gloss upon the covenant he had concluded with that subtle, unscrupulous woman, by which, upon the fulfilment of certain conditions on his part—yielded to with much reluctance, but yielded to—his gain being life, precious, youthful life, in

exchange for imminent bloody death, she guaranteed his escape from custody before the morning dawned. Those conditions will be best understood by quoting Rachel's summing-up, so to speak, after they had been discussed and mutually assented to, in order that there should be no misunderstanding upon essential points. She had, it should be stated, made a difficulty of including the deliverance of Henry Denvir in the bargain; but upon that point Mervyn was firm, and she with seeming reluctance gave way.

"It is understood then, señor," said Rachel Gomez, "that you sign a paper guaranteeing to my son and Francisco Bajal, or either of them, four hundred ounces (about twelve hundred pounds sterling), to be paid within one month of your liberation; that you at once write to Luisa Delmar, or Lambert—who I on my part undertake to hereafter prove is no more the granddaughter of the rich Englishman than I am—to avow, confess, if you like it better, being about to die, you know—that you have never loved her, that you sought her in marriage from selfish, sordid motives only, your heart the while remaining constant to the beautiful English girl whose portrait Bajal found upon you before you recovered your senses after the fight at the pass of Manolos. That letter, written remember with perfect seriousness, you will give unsealed to Pasco Bajal within one hour from this; he will enclose the portrait, not the jewels it was once set in though, seal and forward it

by a sure hand. I have, you cannot deny, plainly exposed our reasons for requiring this condition. This, let me repeat, neither more nor less than that we hope thereby to replace Luisa's love for you with scorn, contempt! Balthazar loves her better than his own life, and you once well out of the way—cast off, scorned, hated by her—or she is not a true daughter of Spain, he doubts not of ultimately winning her regard; and the more confidently that he will have been the means of unmasking you! I speak, you perceive, quite frankly, and I have a right to do so, for without the help of my son and Pasco Bajal, you and your companion would be rotting in your graves before noon to-morrow. And now, for the last time, do we perfectly comprehend each other?"

"I will make the four hundred a thousand ounces," said Cyril, "if you will forego the other hateful condition; although I shall certainly not wish to marry an impostor, which you assert Luisa Delmar to be; besides, if——"

"It is vain, Señor Mervyn," interrupted the woman, "to attempt changing the determination we have taken. The conditions I have named, with life—the rejection of them, and death. This is the choice before you."

"How can I be sure that in consenting I save my life?"

"If we fail to set you at liberty your money gua-

rantee is worthless, and a few hours hence it will matter little to what once was called Cyril Mervyn that Luisa Delmar had received an unwelcome letter from him."

"Enough, I yield! Let Pasco Bajal come to me in an hour. The letter shall be ready!"

This stipulated letter, and a written guarantee for the payment of four hundred ounces of gold, were placed in punctual Pasco Bajal's hand, who received them with a flashing smile, and left the cell without a word.

Another visit from Colonel Quiroga. He was this time accompanied by the priest, Michael Quesada.

"This reverend father," said the colonel, apologetically, "who arrived here shortly after the termination of the court-martial, at once set off with my messenger to head-quarters, and could eloquence, persuasion, rebuke, have prevailed with the general, he would have returned with an order for your liberation."

"May I remain awhile?" asked the pale, young priest, timidly. The captain assented, and Colonel Quiroga, taking with him Henry Denvir's letter, which he promised to forward immediately, and unopened, withdrew.

"Pasco Bajal," said Michael Quesada, "has placed a letter of yours, Señor Mervyn, in my hand, directed to the Señora Luisa, it shall be faithfully delivered."

"It is a confession, reverend father," said Cyril,

bitterly, "and I shall be obliged by your delivering it when the young lady is alone."

"Your wish shall be strictly complied with," replied the priest.

"You did not see the Herreras, I conclude, before you left Barcelona," said Henry Denvir.

"No, I called soon after hearing of the misfortune that had befallen you, in the Plaza Nueva ; but either there was really no one at home, or strict orders had been given to deny the inmates to whoever might call. Even Katerina, the servant, whom I know well, could not be seen."

The conversation flagged ; and the young priest, true to his vocation, essayed to lead it into a religious channel, but finding the young men indisposed to accept his ministration, said, "Perhaps, under the circumstances, you are right ; our forms are not your forms ; a faithful word to God," he added, "however simple and informal, is always a word *from* God, and may your own experience of that truth sustain you both during the dark and bitter hours, and few as they are, dark and bitter, which intervene between you and, as I, too, shall fervently pray to-night, the dawning of a glorious eternity !" He then left them.

I shall only partially disclose what really passed during those dark and bitter hours. Mervyn's agitation increased almost to delirium as the hour of expected deliverance, one o'clock, drew near. One o'clock pealed from the village church tower ; half-past

one chimed; two—three—struck the chimes. The faint rays of light in the east proclaimed half-past three, the dawn of a new day; and the frantic young man could no longer conceal from himself that he had been deceived, duped, mocked! and his ravings disclosed to his astonished companion all that, till then unknown to him, had taken place.

“I warned you,” said Denvir, as soon as the first burst of frenzied passion had passed—“I warned you not to delude yourself with false hopes; and your execration of the woman and her son, is, I cannot but think, misplaced. They could not have had any motive that I can perceive for intentionally misleading you. Something must have occurred to prevent them from carrying their purpose into effect. I only wish you had not written that cruel letter.”

“Curse the letter!—Curse——.” But enough!

Cyril Mervyn had regained a portion of his sustaining pride by eight o'clock, when breakfast was brought into the cell by Colonel Quiroga's servant.

“Tell the priest Quesada we wish to see him immediately,” exclaimed Cyril, with eager abruptness.

“He left more than an hour since,” replied the man. “There is, however, another priest whom I will send to you.”

“No, no. We—I, at least, want no priest *as* priest!” exclaimed Mervyn, and the man, looking scared but pitiful, went away.

The morning sped on; it was half-past nine; the drum was calling the soldiers to parade, and presently heavy, hasty steps were heard approaching the dungeon-door. "It must be later than we thought," said Henry Denvir, rising from his knees, "and, —ha!"

In a moment, with the celerity of a shifting play-scene, that condemned cell changed to a fairy dwelling; the chill shadow of death vanished and was replaced by the light of life. The presenting of arms outside, the flinging wide the dungeon-door, and the entrance of Colonel Quiroga, followed by other officers, exclaiming, "You are free! Pardoned! Pardoned by the king himself!" passed so swiftly as to appear to the captives one simultaneous act.

"Free! Pardoned! Pardoned by the king himself!" they echoed bewilderedly. "You, surely, do not mock us!"

"Heaven forbid!" said Colonel Quiroga; adding, "You are indebted for your lives, the officer who brought the royal order informs me, to the passionate supplications of a young and beautiful damsel, who, the moment she heard you had been made prisoners, set off, accompanied only by a woman-servant, from Barcelona to the north-western extremity of Aragon, and forced her way into the king's presence, with the result already announced to you. You are silent —overwhelmed!" continued Colonel Quiroga, "and

no wonder; sudden joy stuns equally with sudden calamity. We will withdraw, and directly you have subscribed a formal record, which shall be at once drawn up, you will be free to depart." He was going away, but an officer making a remark in an undertone, he turned back and said, "I have omitted to tell you, that the young lady to whom, as I before observed, you owe your lives, accompanied the king's envoy to as near this encampment as she was permitted, and waits at a village half a league from this the return of the officer to assure her that the king's mandate of mercy has not arrived too late. He will soon be here again, and any message which he may bring shall be instantly communicated to you."

Cyril Mervyn remained immoveable on his seat, bowed down, transfixed, as with the thrust of a poinard, his face hidden in his outspread hands, and not a syllable had been uttered, when the cell-door was again flung wide, an orderly presented Henry Denvir with a note, and immediately went away.

"It is from *her!*" said Henry Denvir, "and for you. Shall I read it aloud?"

Cyril assented by a gesture, and Denvir read with difficulty, so scrawlingly was the first part especially written, as follows:—

"Cyril! hope, idol of my soul! has thy Luisa arrived in time to save thee? The officer with the

king's order has just left me ! Will he come too late ! O, God ! most merciful, save him ! save me ! Holy Mary, pity—pray for me !

“The good priest Michael comforts me. There is no doubt, he says, that the king's messenger will arrive in happy time. Yet he may be deceived—may deceive himself, and therefore me. O, God !

“He has a letter he tells me, thine, Cyril, for thy beloved Luisa, but which he will not, he says, give me till I am at home again in Barcelona. I comprehend the good, thoughtful Michael. Thy letter would, at this moment, he thinks, agitate me too much ; those eloquent sighs of thine, thought to be thy last, assuring me that thy love remained undimmed, changeless, in the very front of death. Death ! horrible word !

“Yet thou couldst not have lost all hope, knowing thy Luisa would never abandon thee whilst life remained.

“Don Carlos—the king I shall for the future call him—is a stern man : but he was vanquished at last. How could he withstand the passion of a despair, pleading for thee ?

“Hark ! there is a shout ! Is it the signal of—of—I am sick—sick.

“Joy ! Joy ! Joy unutterable ! Thou art saved, beloved ! saved by thine own Luisa ! God, most merciful, has heard my prayers. Blessed be His holy name.

“I am calmer now, dear Cyril, much calmer, yet the kind Michael insists that I must return home without waiting for thee. Thou must not, in thy impatience, be too angry with him. He urges, that a meeting now might be too much for me—for thee. Too great, too overpowering a joy he must mean; I think—I feel so too. This agitation, this trembling between hope and despair—life and death, has renewed the pain in my side; and faithful Katerina is half-dead with terror and fatigue. Hasten to me, Cyril; but thou needst no urging. Thou wilt find me reading thy dear letter, written by thee in the gloomy pass of death, and with the blood of thine own heart, by the light and beauty of our renewed lives, of the quenchless love of thy thrice-happy LUISA.”

“Accursed chance!” groaned Cyril, when Denvir had for some minutes ceased reading. “I slay her who gives me life.”

“A sad, terrible business,” rejoined Denvir; “but the arrow is sped, and reproaches, however well merited, will neither arrest its course, nor blunt its point. One thing is now clear to me. Rachel Gomez knew last night that the king’s pardon was on its way here. I, moreover,” he added, “begin to believe that Señor Silva may be right after all; that the Luisa you have with such unreasoning rashness spurned, insulted, outraged, is the true heiress;

Rachel Gomez and her son, astute, patient, audacious conspirators, who——”

“Peace, screech-owl, peace!” interrupted Cyril Mervyn, as he flung himself upon the straw-pallet; “you torture, madden me.”

CHAPTER IX.

NEMESIS.

CYRIL MERVYN and Henry Denvir returned to the Hotel del Oriente on the fifth day after their release from custody, where Jorgé received them, with his hair on end with the yet scarcely-cooled excitement arising from his recollections of the terrible "battle" in the Catalan mountains, from which only by the help of all the saints could he or any other of the desperate combatants have escaped with life. "This was pretty well; but simplest truth itself," remarks Henry Denvir, "compared with the official report of the 'sanguinary combat,' by Captain Lanos, published in *El Vapor*, by which it appeared that his irregular and valiant horse had repeatedly charged the rebels, formidably posted, and vastly superior in numbers, as they were; in one of which furious encounters Cornet Davila, subsequently promoted for his valour, had with his own hand slain Captain Isturitz.

"Señor Silva called within two hours of our arrival, and if delighted, as he said, was certainly much more

astonished at beholding us again in the flesh. He brought me a message from Michael Quesada, requesting that till he had seen me neither I nor Mervyn should present ourselves in the Plaza Nueva; a superfluous precaution after what had passed, and more especially as Cyril was for a time so shaken in both mind and body as to be compelled to keep his bed, cerebral fever having, according to the doctors, been only arrested by the lavish bleeding and blistering to which they had subjected him. Michael Quesada had also told Silva that Luisa had been suddenly seized by, it was at first feared, mortal illness, but had partially recovered, and that hopes were now entertained of her restoration to health. Of Cyril's letter to her no mention had, I found, been made; and I did not think it necessary to supply the omission. Mrs. Lambert's speedy advent upon the scene of action had also, it appeared, been announced to the notary, as well as to myself and her son; and he, Silva, expressed a confident belief that when that lady arrived, she would at once cast to the winds all the audacious fictions invented by Rachel Gomez and her son, for the furtherance of their own unscrupulous purposes; and whilst it was yet time, urge on the marriage of Luisa and her son, directly the health of the heiress was sufficiently restored to permit of the adjustment and confirmation of the legal preliminaries.

“‘Delays,’ added the notary, as he made his bow,

'are proverbially dangerous; in this matter they will be fatal, take my word for it. I happened to meet Madam Herrera yesterday at Balmaseda's office, and there was a clear, cold light in her eye, a hard sternness in her countenance and tone, as she shortly replied to my felicitations upon Señor Mervyn's fortunate deliverance through the heroic efforts of her daughter, that I did not like, and which I shall tell Madam Lambert bodes us no good. Madame Herrera has, it strikes me, gazed into the reputedly bottomless pit of your English Chancery till she has gauged its depths, proportions, dangers, and is no longer greatly scared by them. Adios!' "

"Right, Mr. Notary," thought Denvir; "right in your conclusion as to Madam Herrera's present temper of mind, I dare say, though not for the right reason. Well, patience, enjoins your Spanish proverb—'patience and shuffle the cards;' and since such an adept as Mrs. Lambert is to take my hand for the remainder of the game, it may be that she will yet make these odds all even."

A week had elapsed, when Michael Quesada made his appearance at the Hotel del Oriente. Days had done the work of months upon him. A rude breath, it seemed, would extinguish the fluttering yet ardent life, which looked sadly forth of his solemn, bodeful eyes.

"Yes," he said, in reply to Henry Denvir's ex-

clamation of dismay, "Yes, my friend, the end is very near. I have been long suffering under pulmonary disease, of a type which under certain conditions does its fatal work with much more certainty, if not so swiftly, than pestilence, ordinarily so called. And the conditions required for the rapid development of the hereditary taint," he added, "have not been wanting to my sister. Luisa is dying of the same malady."

"Dying—Luisa dying!"

"I fear—believe so. You are distressed—shocked—but let us reason together. Had Luisa been so toughly framed as to have corporeally borne up against the cruel shock of that letter, her mind, I think, would never have recovered its former healthful tone. Now as the bonds of earth loosen, fall off, the mind, though slowly, becomes brighter, clearer, and I trust—believe—those angel-eyes will yet, ere she depart, recognize the brother whom she precedes by a few steps to the tomb. Still overwhelmed—aghast! Consider, this visitation of God is plainly in mercy—not in anger—chastisement. The Saviour with his loving, pierced hands, withdraws the sweet, gentle child, in the very blush and perfume of her youth and innocence, from the defiling world to heaven—to himself. Supreme, unutterable mercy this, I say, to her. Judgment to others, it may be. Yes—yes!" added Michael Quesada, in changed and sterner mood; "yes, a stern judgment

upon others, it may be. Offences will come, but woe ! woe ! unto those by whom offences come."

Henry Denvir could only murmur a few scarcely coherent words, to the effect that Cyril Mervyn could not have imagined his letter would have produced such direful consequences.

"A cruel, fiendish letter," exclaimed Quesada ; "the sole, faint excuse for which is that the writer must have been suffering under incipient insanity, caused by the near prospect of a violent death, and I do not suppose he for a moment thought he was destroying her who had, although he knew it not, saved him. Modern philosophy mocks at the notion of broken hearts, and therein, I have no doubt, modern philosophy is much nearer the truth than old romance. Even in this instance, it required a rare combination of sinister conditions to render the blow a mortal one. Luisa is young, of a plastic, ardent disposition and temperament ; and her heart, first softened by pity for the reputedly amiable and interesting young Englishman, whose future her own existence darkened, was thereby rendered susceptible of a deeper impression. Then the hereditary taint latent in her constitution had already, I understand, shown symptoms of activity by side pains, faintings, following the slightest excitement ; and when that dreadful confession, striking at her feeble life at once, through her pride and her affections, was placed before her, and alas ! by my hand, she had scarcely

tasted food for three days; was in truth worn out, prostrated by the agonizing apprehension she had suffered during that interval of time. Yes, it must I think be conceded, that had that last stroke been spared her, my sister's exhausting efforts in saving Cyril Mervyn's life would have proved irremediably fatal to her own."

"You are skilful in speaking daggers, reverend sir."

"I speak the truth! Yet mayhap too bitterly—too bitterly! Heaven mend us all! Have you a glass of wine?" he added, hastily. Denvir handed him one, and the faintness passed away.

"You see," he resumed, "how the slightest agitation causes the lamp to flicker in the socket. A warning to be brief and earnest in the work yet remaining to be done!" He rose to leave.

"One word before you go," exclaimed Henry Denvir. "Is it certain that Luisa's life cannot be saved—prolonged?"

"The Giver of life can only with *certainty* determine when the divine gift will be resumed; but it is *my* belief that not many suns will have risen and set before my sister's spirit will be freed from its frail prison-house. The physicians, however, have not yet given up all hope of her recovery; at least they say they have not. She suffers no pain," continued Michael Quesada, in a low, broken voice, "and appears to be unconscious of her state, except during

brief, lucid intervals, yesterday and this morning; and, strange to say, of all that has recently occurred. Memory seems to have loosed its grasp of recent events in order to clutch and retain with greater force those of former years. Thus her low, murmuring, disjointed talk has been wholly of the bright laughing days and scenes of child and early girlhood; and me she at times recognized as her boy-playmate; yet confusedly so, as if peering beneath the man's mask of years she indistinctly detected the boy-features concealed there. In one particular only do the painful incidents of these last days retain hold of her mind. The portrait enclosed in the letter is rarely out of her hand. Over that she will, by fits and starts, laugh, smile, weep—talk with it by the hour as to a sister or child companion, of girlish frolics, tasks, pastimes! She has never, I am told, once mentioned your friend's name; me, she sometimes speaks of as the 'good Michael.' Alas! alas! not to report of—but to feel, to know these things are, and being, are past remedy—past help or hope, unmans me—rives my heart!" And the stricken man wept aloud with inconsolable abandonment of grief!

The sources of Christian consolation, for a moment checked and driven back by the flood of human passion, soon however regained their course and power, and when Michael Quesada took leave, the sad, yet hopeful calm of his chastened spirit, again shone upon his white, wasted, lustrous face! It will

have been noticed, that he spoke in the foregoing dialogue of "my sister," as if that relationship were established beyond doubt or question. Yet had he no further evidence of its reality than the pretended revelations of Rachel Gomez, disclosed to him in the confessional! He had not even yet spoken upon the matter to Madam Herrera, though he daily proposed doing so. Was it that he secretly feared to discover that his life had been poisoned—ruined—destroyed—save for the infinite hope that had sprung from its ashes, by a lie! I judge so!

Yes, and Michael Quesada was mistaken as to the impossibility of the hapless Luisa's restoration to health. From that very day her recovery was rapid. The sweet bells jangled of her reason, became clear, harmonious as ever; and just one week after he had so horrified Henry Denvir with his dismal forebodings, Doctor Saturio pronounced her convalescent. Concurrently with this intelligence came a letter to the Hotel del Oriente, announcing that Mrs. Lambert, detained for a short time by an accident at Bayonne, would probably reach Barcelona on the next day but one: and as it never rains but it pours, Henry Denvir had hardly returned to the salon from discussing the twofold tidings with Cyril Mervyn, who still kept his chamber, though not his bed, when Jorgé, accompanied by a lieutenant in Lopez corps of Colorados, burst in, exclaiming—

"Praise and glory to the saints and this gallant

officer! Those treacherous, ambuscading villains, Balthazar Gomez and Francisco Bajal, are caught at last, and now only wait to be shot."

"Is this news true?" asked Denvir of the officer.

"Quite true, señor. They were taken yesterday; and my business here is to say that the presence of the two Englishmen, lately prisoners with the Carlists, will be necessary at the trial of the malefactors, which will take place at Fort Monjuich at two precisely. May I, señor, assure Colonel Lopez that you and your friend will be punctual in your attendance at that hour?"

"For myself, yes; but I will inquire of Mr. Mervyn whether he thinks himself able to attend or not."

Henry Denvir was back in less than a minute. "Mr. Mervyn," he said, "desires me to assure you that no consideration of peril to his health shall hinder him from presenting himself at Fort Monjuich, and giving his evidence against the two miscreants, Francisco Bajal and Balthazar Gomez."

The officer bowed and withdrew, and Jorgé was directed to have a volante at the door by half-past one precisely.

Mervyn and Denvir arrived at the fort a few minutes past two, and were immediately ushered into a low, dingy apartment, crowded with officers, of whom one only, Colonel Lopez, was seated. The ceremony

of condemnation had been for some time going on ; but it seemed from the impatience manifested by the commander of the Colorados, that the evidence against the prisoners did not come out clearly enough to please him. The aspect of the fettered culprits was sullen, dogged, and ever and anon a flush of horrible dread would sweep over their pallid faces, leaving ghastly traces of its passage. Michael Quesada stood beside, and Rachel Gomez immediately behind them : her dress torn, disordered, travel-stained : her long hair partially escaped from the loosened kerchief, and her inflamed countenance, black, flaring eyes—expressive of a fierce, defiant despair—painful, almost terrifying to look upon. The evidence did not increase in force as the trial, if trial it may be called, proceeded ; and a faint glimmer of hope was stealing doubtfully into the blood-shot eyes of the prisoners, when an officer whispered Colonel Lopez, and *Los Ingleses* were requested to come forward. Cyril Mervyn was sworn, and his testimony, given with bitter force and precision, was decisive. “Enough! enough!” exclaimed the president : “Clear the court.” This was done of all but the prisoners, Rachel Gomez, and the priest Quesada. The officers composing the tribunal consulted for a few moments, and then Colonel Lopez, turning towards the wretched prisoners, said briefly—coldly, “Francisco Bajal and Balthazar Gomez, found guilty of treason and murder, are condemned to death. They will be shot in the Fort

Parade-ground at sun-down this evening. Remove the prisoners."

The order was obeyed amidst a tumult of yells, curses, prayers, blasphemies : and the two prisoners, accompanied by the priest Quesada, and followed by Rachel Gomez, who would not be kept back, were thrust into the dungeon, which they would leave only to die. The zealous priest strove to press his ministrations upon the doomed men, but his efforts were defeated by the lava-torrent of blasphemy which flowed from the lips of Rachel Gomez. In that confession of despair, the hypocrisies of a simulated belief were spurned, defied, hissed at, and the dark, mystical fancies of the Magian superstition in which she had been cradled, defyingly proclaimed, and urged upon her son, as the supreme influences which governed his birth, and would his death and eternal destinies, whether or not the craven Christian blood flowing with hers in his veins, caused him to shrink from acknowledging their dread omnipotence! At the first accents of her impious rage, Michael Quesada imagined that the sentence on her son had affected her reason, but Balthazar recognized that seemingly frantic phase of mind to be one of frequent occurrence with the fiercer-souled individuals of her race, who, outwardly complying, from various motives, with the religious forms of the people amidst whom their lot is cast, thus avenge and relieve themselves in secret of the accumulated hate and abhorrence

pent up and fostering in their breasts. "The *Ruah* is upon her," he said, in reply to Bajal, "and she cannot choose but curse!"

During a pause in that terrible invective, Michael Quesada resolutely interposed, and threatened to have the cursing fury forcibly removed by the guard. This sufficed to concentrate the woman's whirlwind of rage upon himself; and well knowing where her venomous words would strike with most afflictive effect, she audaciously avowed, and gloried in the success of the lie she had palmed off upon the dignitary of Santa Cruz, and upon himself, that Luisa, the daughter of Téresa Delmar and the Englishman Lambert, was his, Michael Quesada's, sister. "Thy sister, forsooth! poor, blinded fool! And that lie, Michael Quesada, has killed thee; drained thy heart's blood slowly, drop by drop; has killed, or is killing the wench herself! Ay, and its blasting curse is not yet stayed, *shall* not be stayed, until—Oh, my son! my son! thy mother cannot save, but she has, she will fearfully avenge thee!"

The rush of conflicting emotion was too much for the young priest's strength: he fainted; and it was several hours before he was again fully conscious of an existence which he would have loathed, but that it was so swiftly passing. At about the same time that Michael Quesada's weary eyes again opened recognizingly upon the world, those of Balthazar

Gomez and Francisco Bajal closed thereon for ever. They perished at evening gun-fire, Rachel Gomez remaining to witness the execution, and to claim the corpse of her son, which Colonel Lopez directed to be given up to her.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH.

MRS. LAMBERT had arrived at the Hotel del Oriente, and, notwithstanding the fatigue consequent upon so long a journey, at once held long and separate conferences with her son and Henry Denvir. Jorgé was also dispatched to summon Señor Silva to an interview with the impatient lady; but that functionary was not to be found, and, till the next morning, Mrs. Lambert could only study her future course by the doubtful lights afforded by the varying statements and conflicting opinions of the two young men.

The next morning Señor Silva was early in attendance with news of a decisive character, and completely bearing out the opinion which he had long since arrived at, and unvaryingly maintained. Rachel Gomez had been to Balmaseda's office, assured herself that, were Luisa's right established, the Englishman Mervyn would not have even a prospective claim to the riches of her grandfather, and then produced the missing official document, "which," said the notary, "destroys any pretence of doubt that

Luisa is the daughter born of Madam Herrera in February 1813;" "and the result is," continued Silva, "to speak with the entire frankness to which, madam, you are entitled from me, that further legal opposition on your part, is not, it is true, rendered impossible, but will assuredly be fruitless; and that I strongly advise you to effect a compromise, if it be still within your power to do so."

Mrs. Lambert quietly replied that she, perhaps, agreed mainly with Señor Silva; and invited him to a private interview, which at length terminated, the notary again sought Cyril Mervyn to say that Balmaseda suspected Rachel Gomez of cherishing some design of desperate vengeance upon him for the evidence he had given against her son. "I therefore recommend you, Señor Mervyn," he added, "to be wary, circumspect, not to go out of an evening whilst you remain in Barcelona."

"You recommend me to live in fear of a crazy old beldame!" exclaimed Cyril. "Bah! I should like to catch the deceptive devil at that kind of game. It would give me a chance of settling with her, in a more satisfactory manner than I have yet, for old as well as new."

"As you will, señor; at all events to be warned is to be armed. Adios!"

"Ill news came apace. Mrs. Lambert knew the very next day that Madam Herrera had expressed a determination to no longer keep any terms with the

adverse party, and had given directions to vigorously, inexorably, press her daughter's claim directly the English courts should open; and that Luisa herself—who proposed ultimately retiring to a convent, apprehensive that although apparently fast regaining her health, the silver cord of life, already so rudely strained, might suddenly be severed—had subscribed and sealed a testamentary disposition of the property in the safe keeping of the English Court of Chancery, and which there was no longer any doubt that court would award to her. “With the exact provisions of the deed,” added Silva, “which you are aware, madam, that Luisa, being of age, is fully competent, under the marriage settlement, to make, I am not acquainted; but the Arden family, whose baptismal names were, I understand, obtained of you, Señor Denvir, by the priest Quesada——”

“Yes,” interrupted Henry Denvir; “but I knew not for what purpose.”

“Well,” resumed the notary, “the Ardens being relatives of your late husband, madam, are, Balmaseda tells me, munificently provided for; and so of course is Madam Herrera.”

“You say the deed has been positively executed,” said Mrs. Lambert.

“Yes, madam; last evening, in triplicate.”

“But the young lady has the power to revoke it, should she please to do so?”

“Unquestionably.”

“Just so,” said Mrs. Lambert; and a very superficial observer would have known that she by no means yet looked upon the game as lost, or nearly so. Indeed, a woman of talents and address is never without trump-cards till the last hand has been finally played out.

A letter, not so long an one, but which cost the writer an immensity of pains to satisfactorily achieve, was, after a few days' interval, dispatched by Mrs. Lambert to the Plaza Nueva, addressed to Madam Herrera.

An answer was returned the same day—brief, cold, and disdainful, but the concluding lines, “Madam Herrera will receive Mrs. Lambert at eleven o'clock to-morrow, if that hour will suit her convenience,” atoned for all the rest.

Mrs. Lambert was punctual to the appointment, remained to dine, and when she returned, was rapturous about Madam Herrera and that charming, amiable, beautiful Luisa! In short, a fortnight had not passed away, when the two mothers were upon the most friendly, intimate terms, could, in fact, scarcely live apart; and Henry Denvir, much mystified at first, comprehended at last, that Mrs. Lambert having succeeded in persuading, caressing Madam Herrera into a belief that, not only had Cyril been infamously practised upon by that horrid Gitano woman, but positively delirious when he penned the outrageous letter to Luisa, that lady was

as vehemently solicitous as ever for the marriage of her daughter with Mrs. Lambert's son. Albeit Luisa herself did not yield anything like so readily to the influence of Mrs. Lambert's glozing flatteries, and, however willing to be deceived she might be, her doubts, fears, and convictions could not be so overcome. "This Juliet Arden," sighed Luisa, "doubtless, loves Cy—, loves the man whom she has been taught to regard as her future husband, so that, even if I could persuade myself, which, oh, my mother, I cannot do, that he now prefers—prefers—me—shall I strike at her peace by weakly yielding to excuses, protestations, which my foolish heart may accept; my reason—never?"

Luisa's resolution, fortified, it was thought, by the counsels of Michael Quesada, whom she was fond of consulting, had not so far yielded to her mother's urgency as to at least see Cyril, and hear from his own lips what he had to allege in his own behalf—Mrs. Lambert's *grand coup*—when the family removed to Sarria, for the benefit to Luisa of the purer air, and the haughty, chafing English mother began not to doubt of ultimate success, but to grow insufferably weary, impatient of a delay, during which she, imperious lady, was compelled to play the sycophant and suppliant to a woman whom, for that very reason, she hated with all the force of her strong, prideful nature, when a post from England placed a new and potent weapon in her hands.

“Go now, and send Denvir to me,” said Mrs. Lambert, addressing her son, with whom she had been some ten minutes in consultation; and whose aspect, far from reflecting the exultation which shone in his mother’s, was terribly lugubrious, grim, and sullen, as he rose to obey—savagely muttering the while, “Confound it, I can hardly believe what the girl writes. It seems impossible! Secretly prefer your husband’s clerk to—to——”

“‘To Cyril Mervyn.’ Just so,” laughed Mrs. Lambert, “wonderful, no doubt, but true as wonderful! All girls do not see with the same eyes as loving Luisa.”

“I shall send Jorgé to say you want him,” growled Cyril Mervyn, as he left the room. Having done so, he went out and promenaded La Rambla, evidently in a most diabolical humour.

“I have news for you, Denvir,” said Mrs. Lambert, “news from home—your home: do not alarm yourself, no *ill* news. Your letter, sent off with such haste by Colonel Quiroga, reached its destination several days before that which you dispatched not many hours afterwards, and caused, of course, great consternation; and, moreover, brought about certain revelations, which will, or I greatly miscalculate, powerfully influence and colour your future life.”

“Pray, madam, be explicit! What has happened? Have you a letter for me?”

“Yes, one from your sister Mary. It came in an

enclosure from the Reverend Mr. Arden. I have, you perceive," added the lady, with the utmost coolness, "taken the liberty to break the seal."

"A most unwarrantable liberty, madam," exclaimed Denvir, "one that——"

"One that you," interrupted Mrs. Lambert, "will forget, have forgiven as you read the letter: read—read!"

Mrs. Lambert marked the increasing agitation of the young man, as his eye ran over the lines, with a sort of curious, amused interest, for a minute or two, then hastily rose, and left the room, saying, "Pardon my thoughtlessness; you were best alone for the next half-hour."

She was no sooner gone than Henry Denvir, whose shaking hands grasped the thickly-written sheet of paper with a tightening pressure, as if he feared it might escape from him, jumped up and strode wildly to and fro the apartment, reading aloud, with trembling lips, and eyes a-flame, and presently falling, or casting himself upon a sofa, gave way to a violent paroxysm of weeping, sobbing excitement.

It will require but a few sentences to put the reader in possession of the essential points of that long, agitating communication. Mrs. Denvir, upon receiving her son's letter, written, it will be remembered, in the prospect of almost immediate death, and containing, with other revelations of his inner life, a passionate avowal of the deep, hidden, bound-

less love he felt for Juliet Arden—for her of whom Cyril Mervyn, had he lived, would have been unworthy, since how, if he had ever truly loved her, could he have so lightly, willingly, and but that he was a so strangely-various man, he, Henry Denvir, would have written, joyfully consented, as he had, to wed the pretended heiress of the Lambert property? There was much more to the same general effect, and of course intended only for the perusal of his mother and her family. This letter Mrs. Denvir had no sooner glanced over, than she fell down, with a loud cry, upon the floor—rigid, senseless, and apparently dying! Aid, medical and religious, was instantly sent for; and with her father came Juliet Arden. The surgeon had, for some time, preceded them! Mrs. Denvir was already restored to consciousness, though hardly to speech, and pointing to the opened letter, she asked with her eyes that it should be read. Neither of her sobbing children could do so; and Juliet Arden volunteered the task. She read—hesitated, colouring violently, read on, stopped again and burst into tears! The consequence was an, in some degree, involuntary confession on her part, escaping her, as it did, in the tumult of emotion excited by his supposed untimely death, and the touching avowal of his so long sedulously concealed love for her, that she had reciprocated Henry Denvir's sentiments and had only consented, for her father and sister's sake, to marry Cyril Mervyn! These,

and correlative details—paraphrased and coloured by the pen of his sister Mary, who especially dwelt upon the inconstancy “of that haughty, self-sufficient Mr. Mervyn, who, I never could believe, loved Juliet Arden as she deserved to be loved,” made up the missive which had so agitated and convulsed Henry Denvir, and who was still white, trembling with emotion, when Mrs. Lambert, long after the expiry of the self-stipulated half-hour, re-entered the room.

“Well!” she gaily exclaimed, “fortune seems to be at length in a propitious humour with you and me. The letter in your hand will go far to remove Luisa’s objections to a renewal of Cyril suit, and that union accomplished, my former prophecy relative to you and Juliet Arden will be as good as fulfilled!”

“I cannot speak; I feel stunned—bewildered.”

“Yes, yes, I know! You will be better presently. What you have now to do, is simply this: Give that letter to Quesada, the young priest, who I believe you see every day, and ask him to place it in the hands of Madame Herrera’s daughter. It will have pleasanter consequences than that of which he was once before the bearer.”

Henry Denvir agreed to do so, and Michael Quesada promised, though with evident reluctance, to give it to Luisa.

Mrs. Lambert had rightly anticipated. The letter

afforded Luisa an excuse to herself for seeing Cyril Mervyn, and an interview, in presence, however, of others, for the first time, was arranged for the next day but one, in the early afternoon. Mrs. Lambert, her son, and Henry Denvir, left the Hotel del Oriente just before two o'clock, and were driven speedily towards Sarria. They had nearly reached the house occupied by the Herreras, when, at a turn of the winding road, they came suddenly upon Rachel Gomez, who was proceeding in the same direction as themselves. The woman turned, stopped an instant, threw one glance of unextinguishable, ferocious hate at Cyril Mervyn, and resumed her walk.

“By-the-by!” said Cyril Mervyn, “the sight of the old hag reminds me that Jorgé says she has been inquiring very particularly after my welfare of late. The beldame means mischief, I dare say; but her tongue is, I fancy, the only weapon she can use with effect.”

“Her look is that of a permanently crazed person,” remarked Mrs. Lambert. “Ah! here we are!”

There were present with Luisa, her mother, Señor Juan Herrera, and Michael Quesada, so that the meeting between her and Cyril, though extremely embarrassing, agitating for both, was much less so—for her, at all events—than if no one but themselves had been present. The gentle maiden received Henry Denvir with a smile of inexpressible sweetness; and after a while, the conversation, at first

constrained and artificial, assumed a freer, more natural tone, save on the part of Michael Quesada, who joined not in it even with his mournful expressive eyes, which were persistently fixed upon the floor, whilst, judging from the motion of his lips, and his clasped hands, he was engaged in earnest devotional exercises. His presence, for some unexplained reason, Luisa had in a manner insisted upon, or assuredly he would not have been there at such a time.

The visitors were received in a large apartment on the ground-floor, opening, by windows reaching from floor to ceiling, upon the garden. The weather, though they were in the month of October, was exceedingly sultry, and the casements were in consequence wide open. Henry Denvir was standing with his face towards the company, just within the centre window, when a rushing step behind caused him to turn hastily round; and he had hardly done so, when Rachel Gomez darted past him into the room, and, with an inarticulate cry of rage, towards Cyril Mervyn, who was seated just opposite upon a couch. Another moment, and he was a dead man, so quick was she; but love was quicker—Luisa threw herself, with a scream of terror, between Cyril and the descending death, and the vengeful fury's glittering knife found a bloody sheath in her bosom, instead of his!

A pause of inexpressible terror and dismay fol-

lowed; the murderess stood aghast, horror-stricken by her own deed, then rushed out, and fled howling, followed by Henry Denvir and Juan Herrera, who, after overtaking and consigning her to safe custody, returned to the house,—now that of death!

Luisa was lying, supported by pillows, upon the couch, and life was fast ebbing, but the mortal paleness of her face a divine ray caught, as it seemed, from the near and opening gate of heaven, tinged with beauty inexpressible:

“Forgive thee, Cyril, dost thou say?” her sweet lips murmured, “I have nothing to forgive: and if I had——” the faint voice fluttered, stopped, but presently resumed, “where art thou, mother? How quickly evening has come on!”

A shadow fell, and an indescribable change passed over the angelic face. “That is death!” said Mrs. Lambert, solemnly.

“O cruel death! O blighted life!” exclaimed Michael Quesada, with gushing, uncontrollable, emotion.

“O blessed death! Immortal life!” murmured the dying girl.

The young priest did not accept that implied rebuke to his passionate despair, and in his frenzied lamentations seemed to ask of the Eternal, where had been His care of that sinless child,—where was the reward promised to innocence and truth!

“Die, and thou shalt see!” (*Muerete y vedras!*)

responded Luisa, with her solemn eyes fixed steadfastly upon her foster-brother, "Die, and thou shalt see!" Those, the last words she uttered, were followed by a smile, which, till the coffin-lid shut it from view, was seen to remain as bright as when the passing angel stamped it there.

Two days afterwards La Seu was crowded as on the evening of the Feast of the Assumption. The congregation were now there to witness and assist at the funeral obsequies of Luisa Delmar, as she was usually called, whose remains were to be placed in the cathedral catacombs; and a vague expectation prevailed that Michael the Eloquent would deliver one of his glowing orations upon the occasion. He was present, it was noticed, in the sanctuary, where he remained seated with his bowed head supported in his wide-spread hands, till the conclusion of the *Dies Iræ*, when he suddenly rose, advanced to the centre of the sanctuary, turned his face, that of a corpse, but for the burning eyes, towards the breathless auditory, and seemed about to address them. That was probably his intention; but his glance, falling at the moment upon the coffin immediately before him, a wild, sobbing cry broke from his lips, and he threw himself upon and clasped it in uncontrollable agony! The priests and acolytes hurried up, Michael Quesada was forcibly removed, and the ceremony proceeded. In less than two months afterwards, the coffin of Luisa's foster-

brother lay beside hers; and upon both had been inscribed, by his direction, her last words—*Muerete y vedras.*

CONCLUSION.

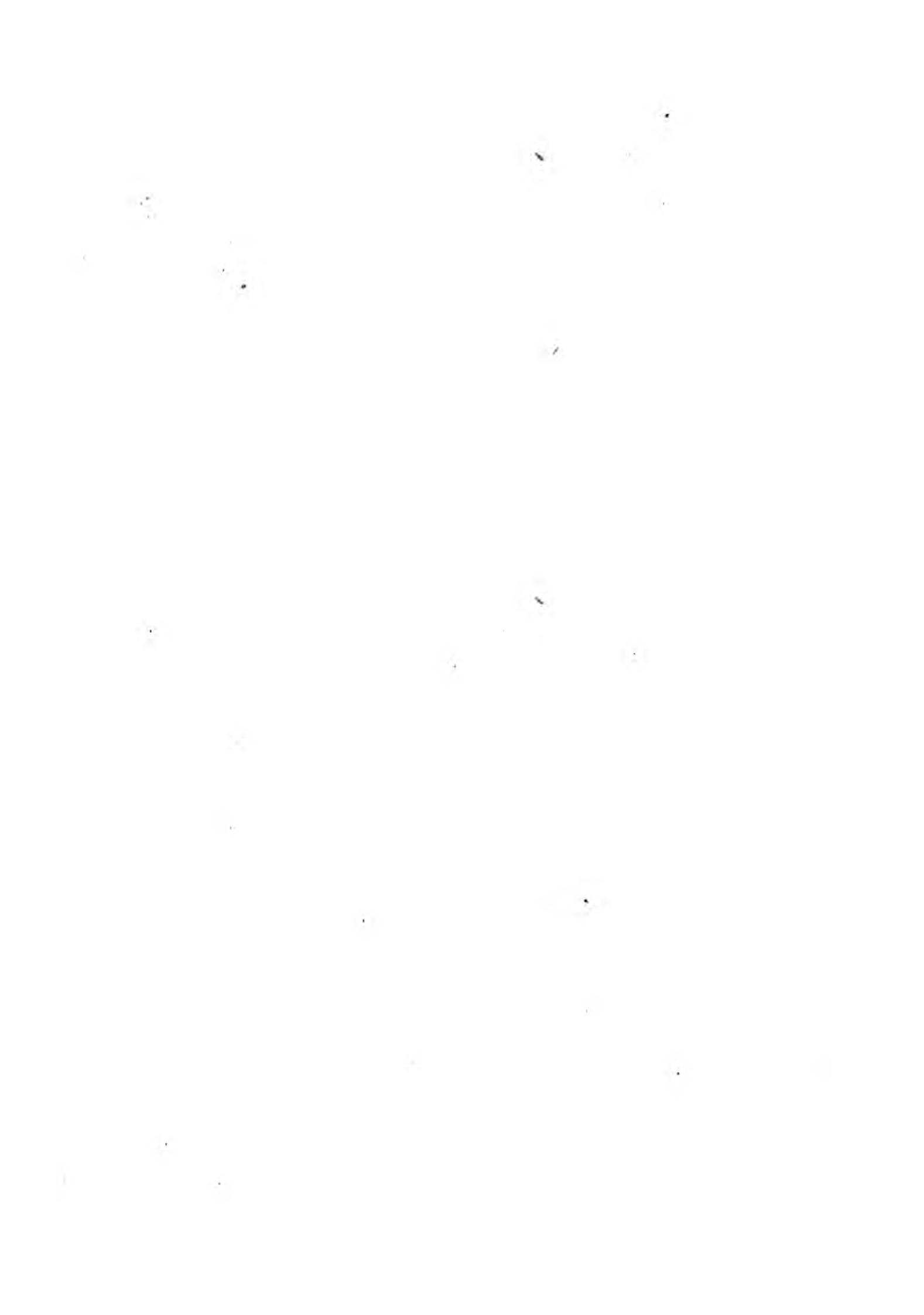
The story which I set myself to relate, here essentially concludes: the instincts, passions, virtues, called into activity, have done their work; and the result, if a chequered one, and very far from realizing the "poetical" justice which is, I fear, only administered in the realms of Fiction, exemplifies, it seems to me, the approximating, preliminary, due apportionment of the fruits of our purposes and acts, which usually obtains in this actual preliminary world. The testamentary deed, which had been skillfully drawn up by Señor Balmaseda, aided by the advice of the British Consul, could not be more successfully disputed than was, when the push came, the legitimacy of the testatrix Luisa herself; and Mrs. Lambert was fain to accept the one thousand a year, with remainder to her son, flung to her, as it were, by that instrument—a fearful shrinking up of ill-weaved, wide-reaching ambition! The deed which, had Luisa lived a few days longer, would, there is no doubt, have been annulled, further secured a splendid provision to Madam Herrera,—a munificent sum to Henry Denvir, "who did not lend himself to the deception practised towards me,"

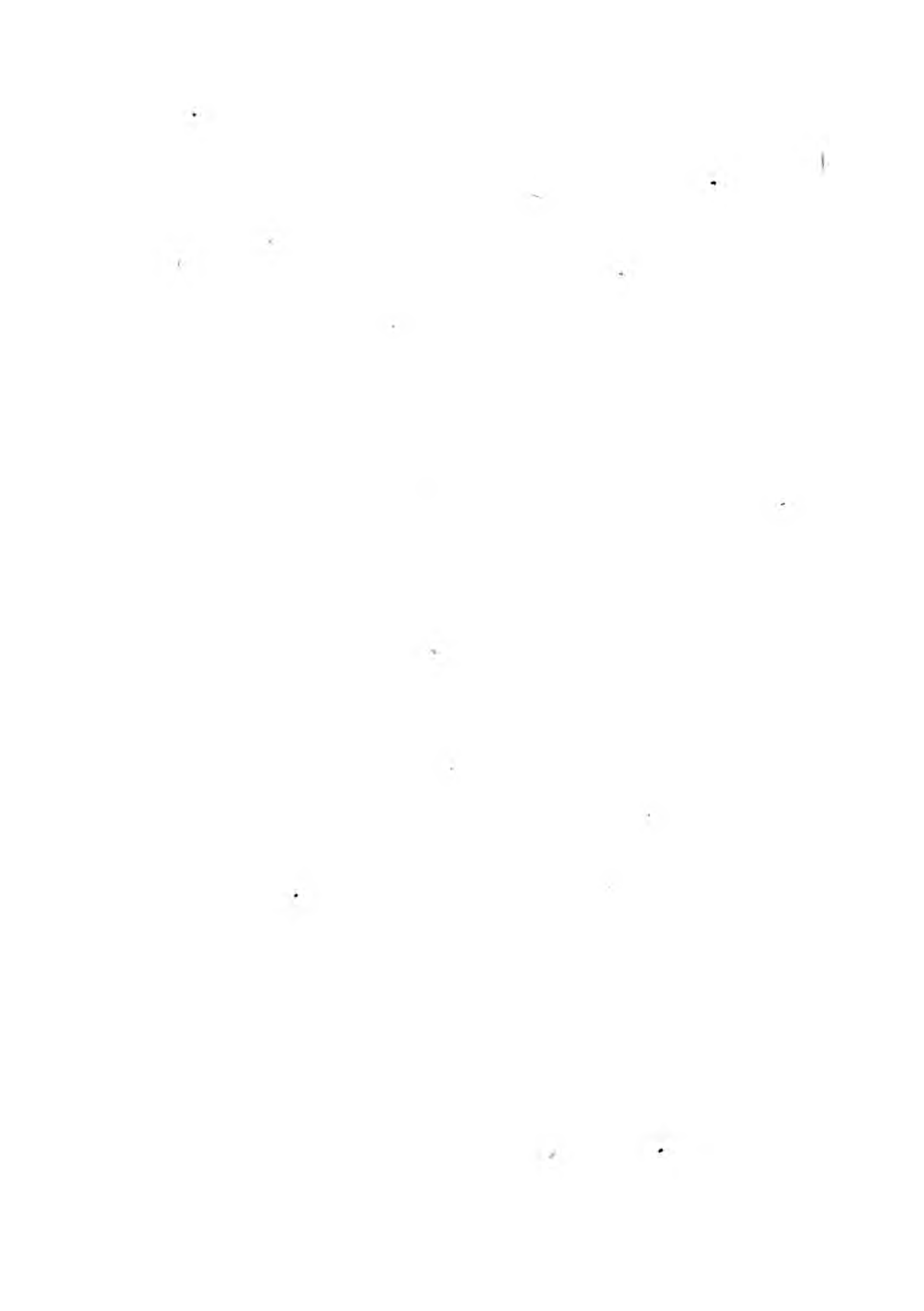
—a moderate one to Michael Quesada and his administrators, for pious purposes; which, had the relations pressed the objection, might have been pronounced invalid under the statute of mortmain, or that affecting bequests for superstitious uses,—and the remainder of the vast wealth inherited by the testatrix from her English grandfather, was devised to that English grandfather's blood-relatives, the Arden family, in varying proportions—much the largest share to Juliet Arden, who was named residuary legatee and executrix, conjointly with her father, appointed executor under the will. The marriage, consequently, of that young lady with Henry Denvir, founded a wealthy family, which is yet apparently but on the threshold of its eminence. So far, rough but substantial justice appears to have been meted out; and albeit those whose bodies moulder side by side in the catacombs of La Seu, had hard measure meted to them here; the all-sufficing, infinite recompense was the earlier, the more assuredly gained!—whilst, as regards Luisa, one cannot but believe, that the sharp brief pang inflicted by the knife of Rachel Gomez—who died raving in the jail of Barcelona, before she could be brought to trial—was mercy itself, compared with the long life-agony which one so ardent and sensitive must have endured in an union with wilful, self-seeking, unstable Cyril Mervyn! In conclusion, I may be permitted to instance the old truth, pointing a great moral, involved in the preced-

ing narrative ; namely, upon how slight, seemingly insignificant a link, a lengthened chain of mightiest consequences may depend : for, did not the aching void, the thorny barrenness of John Lambert's own life, the tragic incidents which followed his death, result primarily from the fact, that he, at one pregnant moment of his existence, lacking the moral courage to face the sneers of the silly world, took deliberately the wrong turning, though the *right* lay plain and straight before him ?

Cyril Mervyn, I had almost forgotten to state, married a very wealthy, middle-aged shrew, and is supposed to be one of the richest, wretchedest men alive.

END OF THE TWO LOVE STORIES.







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