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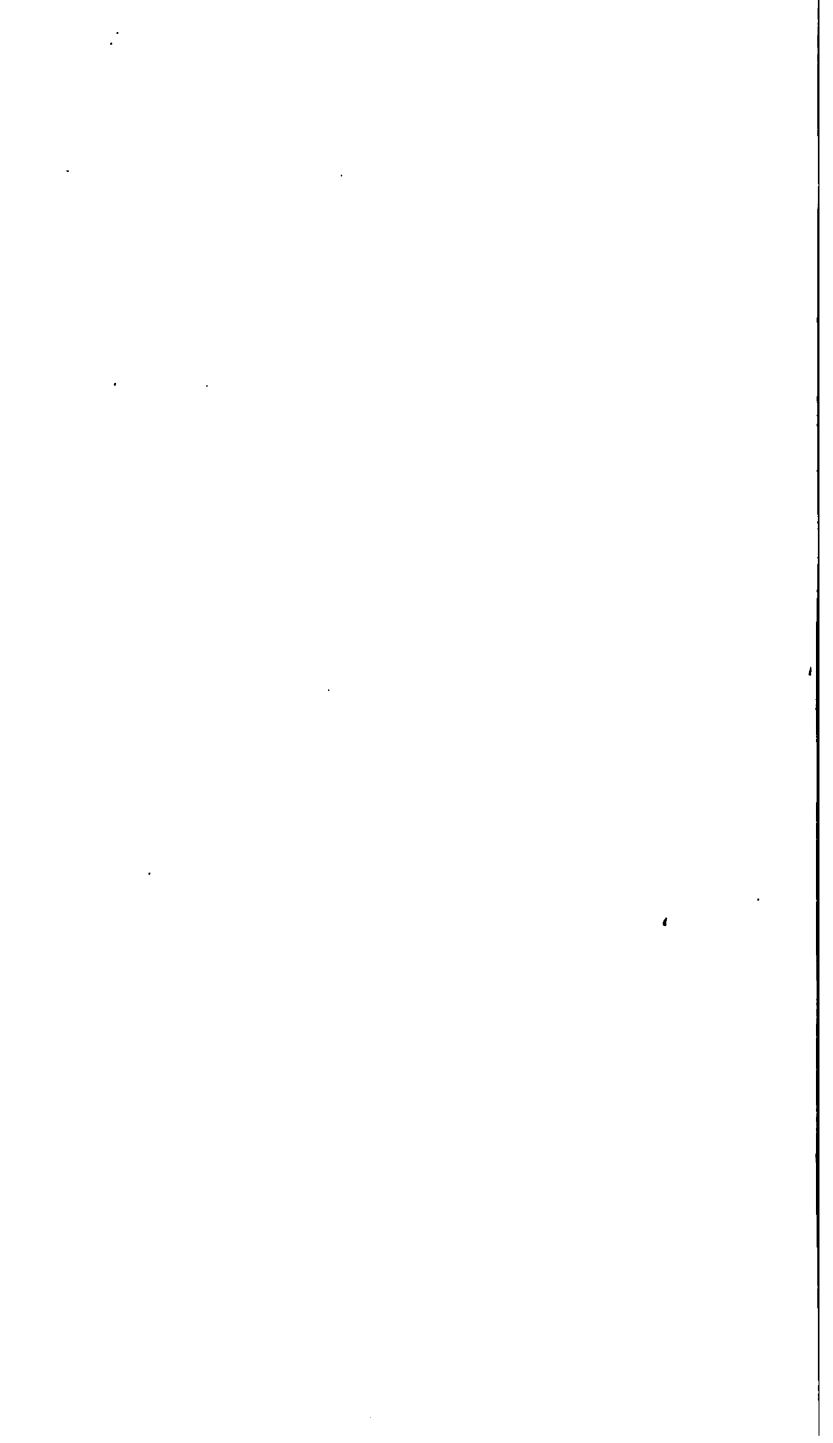
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with



DOÑA BLANCA

OF NAVARRE.

An Historical Romance.

BY

DON FRANCISCO NAVARRO VILLOSLADA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

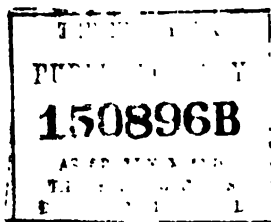
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DOÑA BLANCA OF NAVARRE.

CHAPTER I.

FIFTEEN years have elapsed since the terrible and mysterious catastrophe recorded at the close of the last volume—fifteen years since the prostration of the kingdom of Navarre appeared to indicate its approaching ruin—fifteen years since the perpetration of a crime, whose punishment seemed to be reserved for that tribunal which pronounces sentence for all eternity.

Nations are a sea, which, in addition to the regular heaving of the unstable waves which merely agitate the surface, undergoes another movement more slow and measured, which stirs up the very sands of the abyss. This ebb and flow of events is the hope of suffering peoples, infusing courage, and strengthening

the mind in adversity ; it is the terror of the fortunate, dictating prudence in prosperity.

But man knows the exact term and measure of the ocean's rise and fall, while God alone holds the compasses with which the periodical prosperity and decline of nations are measured.

When, after fifteen years, we meet nothing new in Navarre, except a greater intensity and exacerbation of evil, it must be admitted that that long period did not bring to a conclusion the calamities of that distracted kingdom.

The civil wars of the Agramontese and the Beamon-tese which burst forth in 1452, with the rupture between King Juan and his son Don Carlos, and were not mitigated by the death of Doña Blanca of Navarre, still exist in 1479—exist without any known object, without any definite end—exist mysteriously, through the inveterate feuds cherished by each party, through the force of custom derived from twenty-seven years of revolt, through the indomitable pride, the turbulent ferocity, the rudeness and barbarism of a generation which is born, lives, and dies, amidst the turmoil of battle, the shouts of triumph or terrors of defeat, in the pestilential atmosphere of festering enmities, and ensanguined fields.

The Count de Lerin, Don Louis de Beaumont, is



still head of the party which bears his name ; Mosen Pierres de Peralta, and his nephew Don Philip, the Marshal of Navarre, are also chiefs of the Agramontese faction. Nevertheless, we are about to see them together in the palace of their sovereign ; we are going to see the first, the mortal enemy of Don Juan, wedded to one of his daughters ; and the second, him who enjoyed the largest share of the monarch's confidence, excommunicated by the pope and persecuted by Doña Leonora, who was so firmly attached to the policy of her father.

Those who now read this chronicle, will find in our contemporaneous history the key to the decipherment of the enigma. We Spaniards have less reason than any other people to be surprised at such anomalies : factions and partisans in all times and places present the same aspect, similar vicissitudes, identical results ; and this is the reason why we have given the preference to the description of an epoch, above all others, which, if it wants the attraction of novelty, may in return serve to us as an instructive example and warning.

Since we are about to relate a series of painful events, let us begin by informing our readers, that if it will produce on them the same impression as on us, it must, undoubtedly, be very disagreeable. We are now deprived of that bright torch which lighted us

through the most tortuous and recondite passages of our story—we are deprived of that pharos which served to guide our uncertain course—that *cicerone* who related to us the most minute details, the most trivial anecdotes, the most astounding miracles, and diabolical sorceries, with that patriarchal simplicity, that infantile credulity, that maiden shame, which have more than once excited our admiration:—in a word, the chronicle of the Friar of Irache does not now exist—his narration concludes precisely where ours begins; on the same day, at the same hour.

It might be about the third canonical hour, when two slow but loud knocks, given with the knuckles, resounded at the door of a cell in the ancient monastery of Santa Maria of Irache, towards the close of the month of January, 1479.

As if suddenly disturbed in the midst of pleasing reveries, a Benedictine monk raised his bald head, with bewildered eyes and peevish gesture. Comfortably ensconced in his easy chair, covered with leather and adorned with gilded studs, he had fallen into a doze, induced perhaps either by meditation, or by early rising. Before the Muscovy chair stood a broad table, supported by clusters of delicate pillars; and on the table were about half-a-dozen ponderous books, with a

profusion of bronze clasps and ornaments, and a heap of papers, on which had rested the tranquil and serene forehead of the simple-minded monk, who, with pen in hand, appeared to be gazing on fantastic visions, in order to describe them, at the dictation of an angel, like St. John in the Apocalypse.

If the slowness of the knocks was an indication of respect, their force and loudness did not accord with the stillness of the cloisters, and seemed to betoken authority ; and while the worthy friar, perplexed as to what judgment he should come to in this matter, was indulging in a yawn, the unwonted knocking was repeated, as if the visitor, whoever he might be, was determined to show that he had neither patience nor the hand of a milksop.

This time, however, there was heard at the same time a word which tempered the rudeness of the noise.

“ *Benedicite !* ” said the person outside.

“ *Pax vobiscum !* ” answered he within, yawning.

By this time the latter had almost recovered his mental faculties, and probably suspected that the hour of matins having passed without his being aroused by the bell of the choir, the father abbot must needs be on thorns until he learned the cause of his delay.

He rose, therefore, from his seat in this persuasion, when he heard within the chancel, which was closed by a woollen curtain, a strange noise, which was certainly

louder and of a different kind from what would be produced by the garments of a friar.

Filled with alarm, he placed his hand on the papers, which must have been his most highly-treasured possession, and in this attitude—that of the hen covering her chickens with her wings when in danger—he received a cavalier, who quietly drew aside the curtain, and made an inclination, which was meant, not so much as an act of respect, as to prevent the top of his helmet from striking against the lintel.

His armour was complete. He wore a helmet, not a morrion, a gorget, breast-plate, with rest and back-piece, tassets, cuisses, pauldrons, brassards, and gauntlets, a sword without guard from the cross to the pommel, in order that it might serve for two-handed blows, a poniard and a dagger. Besides the horse, the shield, and the lance, which he had probably left at the entrance of the convent, he had all the pieces of armour which the *fueros* required of the *infanzon*,* who received pay as a trooper in the royal guards.

All these accoutrements, so complete and so ponderous, of blue iron ornamented with silver, were

* The *Infanzons* were a class of petty nobility who were exempt from every kind of service, but who did not exercise on their lands and possessions any other power or superiority than that which was allowed them by the grants and privileges conferred on them.—*Diccion. de la Acad.*

worn by the new comer with the most perfect ease and the most gallant bearing, the only personal qualities, besides his lofty stature, which could be discovered, because his whole man was enclosed, as it were, in that ambulatory prison, which bears the name of armour.

The monk tried to advance a step, out of courtesy ; but, without being able to help it, he communicated to his tendons a quite opposite movement, so that he rather retreated back a step—a physiological phenomenon which was due to the strangeness of such an apparition as that of a soldier in a friar's cell, and above all, a soldier who spoke Latin.

It will be here proper to inform our readers, were it only for the purpose of excusing the fear and wonder of the monk, that letters, scared by the din of arms, and the fierce uproar of thirty years of horrors and vengeance, had completely forsaken the kingdom of Navarre, which was quite a stranger to the intellectual agitation with which Italy, Spain, France, and Germany, were at that time fermenting.

Priests as well as monks scarcely knew any other book than their breviary ; and when the former were appointed canons, and the latter abbots, they did not disdain to go through a course of study at Toulouse or Paris, and some decretalists even went as far as the universities of Germany. It is not known if there was

any other school in Navarre besides that of grammar at Sangüesa, which was protected by an express prohibition against the establishment of any other in the district. The town of Lumbier solicited that privilege ten years before, but it was refused by the princess Leonora, governor of the kingdom, and her father's vicegerent.

As all were not abbots and canons, and could not therefore afford the expense of a journey to Mayence, and as they had neither sufficient motive nor patience to listen to the macaronic Latin of the dominie of Sangüesa, it may be supposed that the language of Latium would not be very familiar to the sons of the Pyrenees.

"The learned father Abarca?" asked the discreet soldier, as he entered.

"The same, brother," answered the monk, somewhat reassured by the mild accent and respectful address of the cavalier.

"Will your paternity deign to read this epistle?" said the stranger, taking from his leathern girdle a folded paper, which diffused a delightful fragrance.

"A letter!" exclaimed the friar, "and in a woman's hand, if I am not deceived, and a woman too who is more familiar with essences and perfumes than with hair shirts and scourges."

And on the meagre cheeks of the venerable friar

appeared a tinge of modest carmine, which the cavalier could not perceive without smiling inside his casing of armour.

“Pardon me, brother,” continued the monk, “I cannot open this letter without the permission of the abbot.”

“As to opening it, you do not require the permission of the abbot or of any one else, for it is already open; and if you are afraid to transgress the rule by reading it, be under no concern, good father, for I have licence to read it for you.”

“This proves to me, Sir Soldier—”

“I rank somewhat higher.”

“Grandee perhaps?”

“Lower—but in short call me by any name, or any title, in any language, and if you address a question to me, you need not fear that it will fail of receiving an answer.”

The friar glanced at him again and again, fixing his eyes especially on the closely set bars of his visor; but as he could make nothing out after all, he rubbed his eyes, which were certainly not to blame for the impenetrability of the cavalier, and resumed his interrupted speech.

“This proves to me, Sir Knight, what your presence had already indicated—”

“To wit, that I am something more than a messenger.”

“Precisely,” replied father Abarca, looking at him a second time as if he were amazed not only at the arrogance but at the penetration of the Unknown.

“Well, then, have you any scruple?”

“None, since no evil temptation can come to me through so good a channel. But first of all let us see the signature,” added the friar, unfolding carefully and deliberately the broad sheet of paper, like one who could appreciate an elegance of calligraphy not common at that period. “A large sheet for so few lines! How many things might have been written here! Let us look at the signature. Leonora, and nothing more. This is signing like a princess.”

“The handwriting you are looking at is that of a princess.”

“What! the Queen’s!” exclaimed the monk, raising his hand to his forehead in order to take off the hood of his cowl, though he had on neither cowl nor hood.

“Queen! not yet,” replied the cavalier quickly, and the clear ring of his voice seemed to become hollow as he uttered these words.

“Not yet Queen? For whom then are they tolling those bells, for whom do we chant funereal psalmody,

and say mass with mourning hung all round, for whom but the most illustrious Juan the Second of Arragon and Navarre who has just deceased at Barcelona?"

"On Tuesday, last week, the nineteenth of January, in the year 1479, at the age of 82. Do you want further particulars for your chronicle, father?"

"Thanks," said the latter, darting furtive looks at his papers. "By-the-by, at the moment you arrived I was just meditating what judgment I should form of that great king, in order to wind up my work."

"The judgment is very simple," said the Unknown. "Ambitious, stained with every crime to which ambition urges, adorned with all the qualities which justify ambition, he is in the north of the Peninsula, the representative of that infamous school of politicians, more artful than warlike, who have adopted *respice finem* as their motto, and who, in looking to the end, are utterly regardless about the means—a school which is personified in Louis the Eleventh in France and in Cesar Borgia in Italy."

The Unknown ceased, and the friar continued gazing at him with his eyes wide open, not now from curiosity but astonishment—an astonishment that almost bordered on stupefaction. A layman, a soldier, had explained to him in one minute, what he could not have

excogitated after a whole night's vigil, wound up with a beatific vision.

The opinions of the warrior possessed evidently too great authority for the monk to neglect consulting him.

“And after the death of King Juan,” he asked, “who can dispute the crown with Leonora, now that Don Carlos and Doña Blanca of Navarre no longer exist?”

“Dispute it with her, indeed! No one. All her competitors have died—by accident—”

“Then why do you refuse her the august name?”

“In Navarre no one reigns until the Cortes recognize him as king and exact of him the oath, and the great nobles raise him on the shield, and the heralds proclaim him.”

“Bah! Bah! these are distinctions fit for Mosen Thibaut, my professor at Toulouse.”

“Mosen Thibaut would tell you that Doña Leonora is Queen *de jure*, but not *de facto*; *virtualiter*, but not *formaliter*.”

“Heaven protect me! and our glorious predecessor Saint Veremundo, and our father and patriarch Saint Benedict,” exclaimed the monk, crossing himself. “It is strange enough for a secular person to quote Latin like the most plodding canon, but to have studied

logic!—Confess, Sir, that with all your learning you admit the rule that it is more usual to see a monk a soldier, than a soldier a monk.”

“ Read the letter, if you please, learned father.”

“ Reverend father and most excellent master :

“ Know that at the writing of these presents, although grieved and afflicted at the death of our illustrious father, (heaven rest his soul,) we are well, by the mercy of God, whom I pray to preserve you, and all that belong to your holy house, in the same good keeping.

“ Further ; know that I have need of you for an especial charge which will redound to the glory of his divine majesty, and welfare of this kingdom ; wherefore you are desired to set out immediately on your journey.

“ Further ; know that the messenger whom I send to you is a person entirely in my confidence, and that you must adhere to his counsel.

“ Given at the palace of Estella, on the 22nd day of the month of January, 1479.

“ LEONORA.”

“ But to whom is this letter directed ?”

“ To you, reverend father.”

“ But the queen does not know me.”

“ I know you.”

“ But I don't see my name here.”

“ I deliver you the paper.”

“ But who are you ?”

“ The letter tells who I am—a messenger who is entirely in the confidence of the princess.”

“ But your name !”

“ It does not signify,” said the Unknown ; “ I have already said that I will answer to any name.”

“ It is very strange.”

“ Do you doubt me ? What is the office for this day ?”

“ The office this day is for the dead ; but we also commemorate Saint Ildefonso !”

“ Call me Alphonso. You cannot in justice, reverend father, refuse me the *Don*. You who, besides being a chronicler, are so knowing in the matter of *fueros*, must, when you see me so completely armed in this manner, suppose me at least an *infanzon*, a cavalier of the royal guard.”

“ Good and well, brother ; I am willing to take you for a bishop and mitred abbot, much more a knight and cavalier. Will Don Alphonso then have the goodness to let me know the orders of the Queen ?”

“ The orders of the *Infanta* are very simple. Reverend father, are you not writing a chronicle ? And in that book, which you conceal from the whole

world, not so much from modesty as to preserve an impartiality which might be dangerous to you, do you not bewail the fate of this poor monarchy, victim of the ambition, the jealousy, and rivalry of two families? Have you not had in mind the saying, ‘ *Omne regnum in se divisum desolabitur* ? ’ ”

“ Gracious heavens! the Bible also ! ” murmured the friar, looking at his helmet as if he wished to discover in its iron outlines the physiognomy of the mysterious personage ; “ if his knowledge were more profane I would certainly take him for a wizard.”

“ Have you not,” pursued the cavalier, “ pondered upon this as historian, philosopher, and monk, and has no idea occurred to you ? ”

“ Yes, sir, and I have even conferred often on the subject with my friend the Count de Lerin, who is a pious protector of this holy house,” said the father, rubbing his arched eyebrows as if he wished to elicit by friction the electricity of his brain ; “ and I assure you I cannot account for the perpetuation of these enmities, these bloody wars between two Christian families. If they had only been Jews or Pagans, deprived of the communion of the faithful, and of the spiritual graces——”

However prepared the cavalier might appear to have been for the simplicity of the friar of Irache, he

could not repress a sort of smile at seeing such a display of historical philosophy and critical research on the part of the worthy chronicler.

“Magnificent!” he said, within his helmet, “this is the man I want. Well then, father,” he proceeded, aloud, “Doña Leonora has made choice of you to remedy these evils.”

“Me!”

“You, reverend father.”

“For what purpose did you say?”

“In order to reconcile the hostile families; that you may extinguish these inveterate feuds, that you may bring peace to the kingdom of Navarre, that you——”

“But, sir!” answered the friar, stammering; “but I—how?”

“By faith and charity; you well know the Lord said to his disciples that by faith they might remove mountains, stop the course of rivers——”

“But I, who scarcely know any layman besides the Count de Lerin; I who have never been at court except when I went yesterday with the brotherhood to offer our condolence to Queen Leonora! And then they say that the Queen is swayed by an adventurer, a favourite—who was then pointed out to me—and then it is necessary to come to an understanding with

Mosen Pierres de Peralta who is excommunicated for the murder of Bishop Chávarri! and, moreover, so many Jews as there are in Navarre, so many Moors, and above all so many lepers as infest us——”

“Nevertheless, Esther and Judith were poor women.”

“Enough, sir, I know by your language that you are some holy prelate, and that you are sent by God.”

“You speak rather fast. How do I know whether it is God or the devil?”

“Gracious powers!” exclaimed the horrified monk, who by a transition not less natural than sudden in his present confusion of mind, began to think that he whom he had supposed to have descended from heaven, had just risen out of hell.

“As I told you before, reverend father, neither so high nor so low; take me always to be a man and I shall thank you.”

“Reveal yourself, I entreat you, sir—I know not how to call you!”

“Tell me first,—you who have studied without being either canon or abbot—you who are good, pure, and single-hearted—you who will doubtless receive the rays of Divine inspiration without their being adulterated in passing through the unclean pool of a corrupted conscience,—tell me if man can second the designs of Divine Providence, assist it, and——”

“ Who doubts it ? ”

“ If man,” pursued the Unknown, with warmth and agitation, “ if man may prevent a partial and momentary good in order to attain one more solid and enduring ? ”

“ To prevent good is to do evil, and this—— ”

“ And if the object is to chastise the evil-doer, to prevent him from obtaining the fruit of his crimes ? ”

“ The evil-doer should be chastised only by God in heaven, and the authorities which represent God on earth. ”

But let us suppose a person so high as to have no superior on earth ; let us suppose a king, reverend father ; who chastises delinquent kings ? ”

“ God alone. ”

“ In the other world. ”

“ And in this. The sins of kings are the scourge of their people. ”

“ Oh ! enough, learned father, enough. God forgive me if I rebel against such a doctrine. I see it, I feel it, but I do not admit it. When you finish your chronicle do not forget that terrible sentence, ‘ *The sins of kings are the scourge of their people.* ’ ”

The accent with which Don Alphonso pronounced these words betrayed a degree of bitterness, a degree of exasperation of soul which were more clearly manifested, when he suddenly raised his visor, disclosing the

countenance of a man of mature years, pale, dark, and slightly kindled by the mantling tide from an impassioned heart, whose agitation is perceived in the heaving breast, whose fervour is detected in the tones of the voice, whose foam is the carmine which glows on the cheek, whose mirror is the eyes sparkling and dark, soft and fierce at the same time, like those of the stranger, harbingers of all thoughts of vengeance, all generous passions, all sacrifices, all mysteries.

“Oh, heavens!” exclaimed the father, “you are the——”

And his lips suddenly closed as if he wished to confine an imprudent word which was going to escape.

“Continue, father,” said the cavalier, gently. “I am not one of those whom the truth offends. I am the Queen’s favourite.”

CHAPTER II.

DOÑA LEONORA DE FOIX would have great difficulty in selecting a person less fitted than the friar of Irache for the desperate enterprise of reconciling the embittered factions. Credulous, simple, more accustomed to the study of books than of men, the court was to him an unknown region which he took pleasure in peopling with phantoms, monsters, and enchantments, such as those he has scattered through his book, which is still unpublished, unfortunately for gossips and nurses, who would find in it savoury food enough to gratify the curiosity of a whole legion of children.

The monk, however, was distinguished by certain qualities, which if they were not of much avail for the purpose of softening the manners of the rude feudal lords of that period, might nevertheless be turned to good account by such skilful hands as those of his friend the Count de Lerin.

The chroniclers of former times resembled pretty much the journalists of the present day—curious, ob-

servant, and much given to chronological details, and the retailing of old jokes; and when with the qualities of journalist were combined those of friar, it is needless to say that our friend of Irache possessed a turn for negotiation and match-making. Circumstantiality was in his eyes the most commendable property of an historian, and the *ne plus ultra* of merit was to note well the year, the month, the day on which an event occurred, with the names and surnames, the colour of the hair, and other peculiarities belonging to those who were concerned in it.

The worthy friar was right; chroniclers of his kidney and ours are the working masons who put the stones into shape by rule and compass, in order that the architect may then come and construct from these materials the grand fabric of history.

Not less punctilious in his actions than in his writings, he was one of those men who are more careful and interested about other people's affairs than their own, one of those to whom nothing is insignificant, who devote all their zeal, all their faculties, all their time to everything.

Thus it was that while in compliance with the rules he went to the abbot's cell to ask leave from the superior, he was all the while meditating on the peace; and while cogitating on this subject, he meditated

with not less earnestness as to arranging his cowl and donning his hat, the only accoutrements, besides his breviary, which he took for the journey. Equipped in this guise he proceeded to the gate, accompanied by Don Alphonso, and there they bestrode, the latter his mettlesome Norman charger, and the other a mule as large as an elephant, burying his feet in huge stirrups, which might serve to them as a protection in case of a snow-storm.

That case was not remote. They had not gone half their journey, followed at a short distance by a squire and a lay brother—the masters fortifying their minds with grave meditations, and the servants comforting their bodies with rashers of bacon and draughts of wine, when there began to fall from the leaden sky, which seemed as if propped by mountains of alabaster, a heavy shower of snow, which was blown by impetuous gusts, and lashed the faces of the travellers so as to oblige them to suspend conversation and breakfast.

In a few minutes the wind increased to a hurricane. The snow not only descended from the clouds, but burst also from the earth in terrific eddies; it crossed in all directions, minute, violent, penetrating, finding its way through all the joints of Alphonso's armour, through every pore of the other's dress, depriving the travellers of speech and respiration, and stupifying the

horses to such a degree that, insensible to the spur, lowering their heads, and flattening their ears, they remained rooted and half buried in a drift, at the risk of perishing, together with their riders.

Barricaded there, and somewhat defended from the wind, they heard the gusts passing over them, and letting fall masses of snow, like the clods of earth which the grave-digger throws upon the coffin.

The danger had become most imminent, when at a little distance were confusedly seen through the troubled atmosphere the outlines of a form which, bursting with great effort through the masses of snow, and struggling against the hurricane, approached the travellers.

It was a woman, covered with a long veil and a coarse heavy tunic of black sackcloth, which, fluttering in the wind, disclosed her blanched and naked feet.

“ Oh ! I expected it ! I expected it ! ” exclaimed the Unknown, when he perceived her.

And she, without answering him, drew forth a pale and fleshless hand, and seizing his charger by the bit, made him proceed warily, and extricated him from peril, leading him at her will like a lamb. The monk's mule followed the infanzon's horse, and the animals bestrode by the servants followed the mule.

Don Alphonso was the only witness of the mysterious

apparition; the others could observe nothing, their eyes being closed, and their heads bent over their saddles; they allowed themselves to be led by their horses, renouncing all direction of them. Relying on their instinct, or in Divine Providence, their only care was to cover well their faces, secure themselves well in their stirrups, and hold on with both hands at the saddle-bow, to prevent being blown down by the whirlwind.

“Who are you?” cried the cavalier, when the wind permitted him: “who are you? Where are you leading us?”

But the words were doubtless lost amid the roaring of the tempest, for the woman made no reply, not even turning her head to indicate that she had at least heard the echo of his voice.

“Always the same!” murmured the Unknown; “in all my dangers, in all my difficulties, in all my necessities, and always the same!”

They soon found themselves beneath a shed with a gable roof, which served as a porch to a hermitage.

There they could all breathe freely, open their eyes, and loosen their tongues; but the monk, before availing himself of the last of these privileges, crossed himself in a state of utter amazement, and then burst forth into these exclamations:—

“The Holy Virgin protect me; Saint Munio and

Saint Veremundo, sons of our holy house, assist us! When I thought we were about to fall into a chasm or over a precipice, do we not find ourselves before the hermitage of the Penitent?"

"The Penitent!" said the cavalier; "is that the woman who saved us?"

"The same you now see, Señor Infanzon, and before whom it is irreverence and almost ingratitude not to prostrate ourselves."

The monk's hint was too opportune not to be immediately acted upon. They all believed that they were rescued by a miracle, and that they ought to humble themselves before the person who wrought it.

Nothing was more common in the middle ages than this sort of hermits, imitators of the old anchorites of the Thebais, and who, either voluntarily or in consequence of a penance imposed by their confessor, practised a more austere life than that of the cloisters. They went to expiate their sins, and hence received the name of penitents.

Every day new religious orders were founded, and new convents erected with unwearied zeal. Sometimes the monasteries went in search of cities, and sometimes the cities in search of monasteries, and in this way civilization was extended and diffused from the towns to the forests, and from the forests to the towns.

But as if this great social movement—very similar in its nature to the economical movement of the human body—were not sufficient to fulfil the high designs of Providence, there were also seen, as the complement of the system, eremites, who penetrated into the recesses of the most rugged and sequestered mountains, bearing with them the unfathomed sublimity of the Christian virtues into the caves of the earth; while they clung sometimes to the rocks like moss, to the hermitags like the sacred image, to the niches of the great urban edifices like the bird which places its nest among ruins and scares away the reptiles that swarm around.

The women were particularly distinguished in this sort of enterprise; for which perhaps more force of imagination than strength of body was required, more feeling than conviction. Tender and delicate maidens buried themselves alive in the impenetrable shades of primeval forests, and supporting themselves on herbs and fruits, devoted themselves to almost uninterrupted contemplation, living and dying unknown and forgotten by the world, until some huntsman that had lost his way, some rider carried away by an unmanageable horse, some simple shepherd, discovered the lifeless, but, though dead years before, undecayed body of the penitent, surrounded by a soft halo, ex-

haling a balsamic fragrance and protected by the wild beasts.

The solitary virgin was converted into a saint, her cave into a cathedral or monastery and the forest into a city. Monarchs loaded the church with riches, and conferred privileges and immunities on the city.

At other times the anchorites dedicated themselves to the service of an image, to the care of a chapel within, or in the neighbourhood of cities. They lived in the world but were not of the world—in it by practising the most heroic acts of benevolence; not of it by their absolute estrangement from earthly concerns, like hidden and mysterious flowers whose presence was only known by the fragrance of their good works.

To this last class belonged the penitent of our Lady of Rocamador, so called because she attended to the cleaning and adorning of that famous chapel situated outside the walls of Estella, on the road to Irache. She did not live in the church itself, but in a building which was half hut and half hermitage, at some distance from the road and the city, on the skirts of the mountain, which was covered at that time with large trees and underwood.

“ Thanks, señora, thanks !” exclaimed the cavalier, kneeling before the servant of God; “ in order to extricate us from danger you exposed your own life to

peril—we on horseback, you on foot ; we clothed, and you barefoot. May God reward such charity !”

The Penitent did not answer a single word ; she drew her hand from beneath her veil—the same pale, emaciated, cadaverous hand—with which she beckoned them to enter where they would be better sheltered.

Don Alphonso seized and kissed it, in token of gratitude and reverence.

He expected to find it rigid and cold ; it was tremulous, burning, feverish.

In the middle of the cabiu burned some branches of oak, and the travellers seated themselves around.

The whiteness of the walls and the arrangement of that humble hut indicated that this was the first time a fire had been kindled in it. That fire was not intended for the penitent but for her guests.

A large cross, a skull, and a breviary, on a rude white pine-table, were the principal ornaments of the chamber, whose austerity was relieved by a cage, within which cooed a turtle dove—the only profane object to be seen in those solemn precincts.

“ Holy woman,” said the cavalier, with persuasive accent, “ in the name of God I ask you to reveal your object in saving us.”

Still the Penitent opened not her lips.

“ But,” said the friar, seeing that she gave no signs

of intending to do so, "what other aim can she have had than to fulfil the precept which tells us to exercise charity?"

"You are right, and I am mad to—— But did you know us?" added the Infanzon, again addressing the Penitent. "How did you know that we were in danger?"

As the Penitent remained silent, the monk, who thought himself endowed with full authority to serve as her interpreter, hastened to reply: "Charity makes no distinction of persons; consequently does not require to know them. This servant of God may have seen us leave the monastery before the snow-storm and may have gone to the road; or the Lord may have revealed it to her if she was in mental prayer; or without revealing it to her it may have been a vague inspiration; or lastly—is it not so, venerable sister?"

Neither had father Abarca, as was now seen, sufficient virtue to make the female hermit speak.

"But, father, these doubts which you express, and which give you scarcely any concern, give me much cause for reflection and anxiety."

The infanzon looked around; he was seeking a pretext to dismiss the servants, when the horses began very opportunely to neigh. The squire and the lay brother hurried forth at the sound. Probably they had at least as strong a desire to leave the company of

their masters as their masters had to get rid of them, for besides the neighing of the animals they doubtless heard the voice of an inward monitor summoning them to finish their breakfast which had been so disagreeably interrupted.

“Be not surprised, señora,” pursued the cavalier, now delivered from an auditory he was glad to dispense with: “I expected the assistance which I received from you.”

The Penitent, still enveloped in her veil, made a slight movement with her shoulders, which might either indicate surprise, indifference, or incredulity.

“Yes, I expected it, as I expect it always,—always, in all the vicissitudes of my life,” he continued, with faith and enthusiasm.

“Do you consider your good fortune so secure?” asked the monk.

“Yes. it is good fortune to be invulnerable in war, rich in peace, to escape unhurt from all dangers, to be successful in every enterprise; I confess that I am the most fortunate of men.”

“And yet, you do not deem yourself happy, if I may judge from the melancholy tone with which you relate so many marvels.”

“All I want is to know whence my happiness proceeds.”

“ From whence does good spring but from the source of all good ?”

“ What I mean is that I—listen to me, holy woman, listen to me, father, I tell this to you as a relief to my oppressed heart, as a revelation made at the feet of a confessor, before persons who are so nigh to God by their ministry and their virtues—I have a particular providence which watches over me, besides the general providence which watches over all created things and the especial providence which watches over man. I blush when I am called valiant, for who can be called so if he is sure of conquering? I am ashamed when I am praised for generosity, for who gives enough when he is certain that he can want for nothing? To-day it was the Penitent that saved me, to-morrow it will be some man who is utterly unknown to me; again it will be a cavalier of lofty bearing and then an humble shepherd; to-day it is at Estella, to-morrow at Paris, Mayence, Padua or Salamanca; and if I try to follow the track of those benefactions I wander and am lost in a sea of conjectures and confusion. Do you know anything, señora? Will you disclose to me who came here to tell you to go and rescue me from danger? Can you clear up my doubts?”

The Penitent, who remained standing with her arms

folded and her head bent down, still preserved a silence so obstinate as to appear mysterious.

She was not, however, a motionless and insensible statue; for the throbbings of her heart might be counted by a slight oscillation of her cloak.

“You see, whatever I say, it is all in vain,” said the knight.

“Let us leave her alone,” said the Benedictine, “doubtless she has made a vow of silence.”

There was a brief space, during which all followed her example.

The hurricane continued to roar, and lash the walls of the hut, now half buried in snow.

The elemental din appeared more lugubrious when a gust of wind forced open the door, and the cross shook and the skull quivered, and both struck against the wall with a dull but fearful sound. On that occasion also the turtle dove aided the funereal harmony with its deep, sad, and monotonous cooings. These last sounds roused the Penitent from her abstraction or her contemplation; and tender, and anxious as a mother, she hastened at the call of the bird, which approached the wires of its cage to receive the endearments and caresses of its companion.

The Infanzon, seeing his hostess so much occupied,

now despaired of drawing from her a single word ; and he seated himself on a small bench of beech-wood beside the fire, until the tempest should pass away.

The friar had already done the same, and, not to lose time, began to meditate on the mission with which he was charged, and from which his attention had been, as he thought, too much distracted.

“ Tell me, Señor Infanzon,” he suddenly began, “ what do you think of the eldest daughter of the Count de Lerin ?”

“ Catalina ! What should I think but that she is the most perfect creature on earth.”

“ And that, too, although she is not more than fifteen years of age !—Just the exact age,” said the monk, as if answering his own thoughts.

“ Yes, fifteen years ;” exclaimed the Unknown, in a tone of indescribable tenderness and melancholy.

“ All but twenty-one days,” added the circumstantial historian, inasmuch as she was born the very day on which poor Doña Blanca of Navarre died. Did you know that circumstance ?”

The Unknown made no reply, either by word or gesture, although he had hitherto evinced the most delicate courtesy.

The Penitent ceased caressing the turtle dove, and remained with her back turned on her guests.

“ Yes, indeed, brother Don Alphonso, on the very day of the death of that beautiful and unfortunate princess, Catalina de Beaumont came into the world, as if the soul of that angel, before ascending to heaven, had wished to remain some time longer among us in the body of another being not less angelic. And what is become of Don Philip, the Marshal of Navarre? is he not yet married?”

This question also received no answer from the Unknown; for before he could hear it, he had opened the door of the hut, gone out under the shed, and taking the gauntlet from his right hand, he rubbed his eyes which swam in tears, and closing his visor hastily, that his agitation might not be observed, put on again his mailed glove, and joined the reverend father.

The Penitent had also wept, for on her tunic of sack-cloth shone more than one tear which reflected the reddish glow from the hearth.

“ You were speaking to me, learned father,” said the cavalier, when he had recovered his composure, in a bland and affectionate voice, which, however, still betrayed some slight trace of emotion—“ You were speaking to me about — —”

“ I was asking you if the Marshal Don Philip, the head of your Agramontese faction—”

“ No; you were speaking to me of Catalina de

Beaumont, who came into the world the same day on which Doña Blanca of Navarre ascended to heaven."

"Just so; on the 12th of February, 1464."

"And have you recorded that circumstance in your chronicle?"

"How do you suppose I could forget a circumstance so extraordinary, or to speak more correctly, so providential?"

"Providential! How do you apply the word?"

"I explained it before; but you were doubtless abstracted. Do you not see that the hand of God is very manifestly seen in the creation of Catalina, that he has given her all the beauty, all the goodness of heart which belonged to the princess of Viana, at the same moment that the soul of the latter was winging its flight towards the regions of bliss, from a world where happiness was so obstinately denied her?"

"Oh! you are a Pythagorean, learned father!" exclaimed the Unknown, with a delight which he could scarcely conceal. "And have you explained yourself in this manner in your history?"

"I have some difficulty in answering."

"What is it?"

"Is it a partisan of Queen Leonora that addresses to me this question?"

"Ah, reverend father, I know well that the judgment

of the pen as well as the sword is not always that of the man that wields it. In proof of this you see me, the favourite, as they say, of the Countess de Foix, appreciate your impartiality, take an interest already in your book. By-the-by, will you intrust the manuscript to me for the purpose of having it printed at the Parisian press, or at that which has just been established in Valencia?"

"My book! my book in print!" exclaimed the friar, as if stunned by an unexpected blow.

"Yes; your Chronicle of the Reign of Juan II."

"But tell me, brother Don Alphonso,—I have never seen a book, made in that way by a sort of mechanical amanuensis. The father abbot was going to sell the flour-mill with two stones, which you will see immediately on the Ega, and purchase with the price of it, the *Catholicon Joannis Januensis*, and the works of St. Augustin; but the brotherhood opposed him—because who knows if the invention of printing comes from God or the devil?"

"It may savour of both."

"That is what the father refectioner said; and in case of doubt," he added, "is it not better to take into your house good sacks of flour than dangerous enemies?"

"But would you not like that what you write in

the stillness of your cell, should appear next morning in a thousand different places, in the hands of numberless individuals who would study, admire, and applaud it?"

"My chronicle!" exclaimed the friar, almost weeping with joy. "But what have you seen in it worthy of—"

The father Abarca did not venture to say "of such honour."

"The correct judgment which you have formed of Doña Blanca of Navarre."

The Penitent heaved a sigh, and the turtle again began its cooing as if it wished to drown it.

"I have said simply what the whole world acknowledges, that Doña Blanca was beautiful, pure, innocent—and that she died the victim of the jealousy of a lady* in the service of the Countess de Foix, called Ines, who, madly enamoured of a certain Ximeno—"

"You are too exact, too scrupulous, and above all too upright to give credit in your history to such infamous calumnies."

"Brother, everybody says it; among the partizans of the Queen you will not find one who ascribes to her a crime which, as they state, she is the first to lament;

* Some historians say that Leonora did not administer the poison directly, but through the medium of one of her ladies.

and then this Ines has disappeared ; this Ines died without uttering a word in defence of her reputation."

"Everybody says it ; but history is not the echo of vulgar gossip, or the calumnies of a faction. I am certain, learned father, that you will do justice to the Countess de Foix's lady ; and that Doña Leonora will have to answer in future the terrible accusations of history, after having silenced the tremendous accusations of God and her conscience."

The Penitent, who had listened to this dialogue with affected indifference, sometimes playing mechanically with the turtle, and at others not heeding its affectionate cooing—the Penitent who, still with her back turned, tried with the skirt of her veil to check the flood of tears that gushed from her eyes, as if suddenly struck with an idea, opened the door of the cage and let out the turtle, which fluttered at first around the chamber, and then flew out to the fields through the door, which the stranger had left wide open.

"How stupid I was !" exclaimed the Infanzon ; "I am to blame if you lose the poor bird."

And, as if he wished to repair his fault, he sallied forth in pursuit of the turtle, thinking that the storm would not allow it to fly very far from the hut.

"It is a pity if the turtle—"added the friar, without moving from his seat.

“It will come back,” said the Penitent, breaking her silence for the first time, with a sweet and melancholy voice ; “it will come back ;” and she remained tranquilly beside the cage.

The turtle did indeed return to place itself within the wires of its prison ; it first perched upon the door of the cage, and was then about to hop down into the bottom, when its mistress caught it, hid it beneath her veil, and there she must have covered it with caresses, for sobs, cooing, and kisses were heard mingled together.

After this sudden transport of tenderness, she let the bird go abruptly, and fell on her knees before the cross, both her hands resting on the skull.

The scared bird fluttered for a little around its inconstant friend, giving her a generous example of fidelity, and came at last and lighted on her shoulder.

The Penitent remained kneeling a long time.

The weather had meanwhile become fair. The sun broke through the clouds, and saw the earth arrayed in a mantle of ermine.

The travellers wished to continue their journey, after taking leave of their hospitable protector ; but, plunged doubtless in deep contemplation, or transported in heavenly ecstasy, the Penitent did not hear their expressions of courtesy and gratitude.

“What an extraordinary woman! What could be the meaning of that silence, that charity, and that sensibility?” said the knight as he took his departure.

“And that turtle? Did you not think on the signification of that turtle?”

“I did not think there was anything extraordinary about it.”

“It looks,” answered the friar, “as if it were, rather than any earthly thing, the Holy Spirit which illumines the heavenly country, holding familiar converse with her.”

When the travellers were at some distance from the hermitage, the Penitent raised her veil, disclosing a countenance well known to our readers, and exclaimed sobbing—

“Forgive, O God! Forgive me if I love him still, as I loved him fifteen years ago.”

CHAPTER III.

THE road from Irache to Estella is certainly not very long : the cavalcade had already travelled more than the half of the distance ; and if extraordinary events had occurred to them in that short space, others still more strange awaited them before arriving at their destination.

They were now close to the suburbs, when they were roused from their meditations by loud cries and shoutings, which seemed to proceed from the granges, huts, and farm yards all round.

“Ho! cavaliers, to the left,” they cried.

“Back, back, good father, with your companions!”

“Beware!”

“Let them alone and they are sure to stumble right over him.”

“To the right, cavaliers.”

“To the left; to the left.”

It was not easy to obey so many contradictory

orders, and much less to divine the cause of such a hubbub.

The friar shrugged his shoulders; gave his lips the form of a Norman arch, knitted his brows, opened his eyes, and made a gesture which signified "May I be tarred and feathered if I understand what is the meaning of all this." The cavalier looked at the friar, and the friar at the cavalier; while the cries continued, and doors and windows were crowded with people of all ages, sexes, and conditions, who accompanied their language with loud shouts and violent gesticulations.

The Infanzon, somewhat annoyed, and despising threats and warnings, buried his spurs in the flanks of his charger, to urge him forward, but the proud animal, so docile at other times to slighter hints, remained firm and motionless, pricking up his ears, and snorting violently, while the perspiration flowed from him in copious streams, and, evaporating in the icy atmosphere, ascended in clouds of white mist, which sometimes partially, and sometimes completely enveloped the dark figure of the astounded cavalier.

"Back, back! The devil's in the men!" shouted with one voice men and women, greybeards and children.

"The leper! The leper!"

"The leper! Here; here a leper!" exclaimed the

friar with horror, making his mule retreat a considerable space.

“The leper!” said the knight, and slightly raising his visor, which prevented him from seeing very near objects, he observed a bulky object extended at his horse’s feet, which, half buried in the snow, enveloped in tattered garments, and with swollen and naked feet, looked like the corpse of one who had been suffocated, presenting the livid and tumefied aspect which accompanies asphyxia.

But he who seemed a corpse uttered a deep and heart-rending groan, and then said, with a piteous and scarce-audible voice, “Fly from me, cavalier, and if you have bowels of compassion, slay me from a distance with the point of your lance!”

The unhappy creature who implored for death as an especial favour, belonged to a race of cagots, or lepers, which existed from a very ancient period in Navarre, and of which some vestiges are found even at the present day in the valley of Bastan. This race consisted of all those whose forefathers had been attacked by leprosy, as well as those who had not received the disease by hereditary transmission, but had contracted it by contagion, misery, and the use of unwholesome food,—a frequent enough cause at a period of interminable wars, accompanied by periodical famine. The

leprosy of the cagots was so revolting a malady, that no one attributed it to natural causes, but rather to the visible chastisement of God for personal sins, or sins of race ; and those who were afflicted with it were regarded as the most vile, infamous, and contemptible of mankind.

The lepers, according to the *fuero*, had to ask alms without ever entering into walled towns, wandering through the fields, and begging at huts, farm-yards, and isolated farm-houses. To touch a cagot was sufficient to incur the repute of being one ; alms were not put, after being kissed with humility, into their hands, as in the case of Christians ; they were thrown at them with horror and contempt, as to unclean animals ; and in order that they might never touch those who did not belong to their caste, they were obliged to carry a board, on which they received the bitter bread of charity, or rather of abhorrence.

When a leper passed through the outskirts of a town, it was curious to see the mothers calling their children that they might not be contaminated by his touch, or even his breath ; masters calling their dogs in order that they might not contract the leprosy by biting him ; it was curious to see how all the people took away from their doors jars and pitchers in case the feverish leper should drink out of them, and how

they made way for him and dispersed, and quickly threw alms to him, before he approached to ask them, and closed their doors and cursed him, and from a distance—always from a distance—pelted him with sticks and stones.

The hatred to this race, which was supposed to be accursed of heaven, was carried to such an extreme in those times of ignorance and superstition that even the clergy refused to administer the sacrament and spiritual succour to the cagots, who died abandoned by God and man, until they had recourse to his Holiness in the year 1517, complaining to him of the rectors and vicars of the churches in whose jurisdiction they lived. Neither the pariahs, nor the helots and slaves of antiquity, nor the Jews in the middle ages were ever so abject, so despised and execrated as the cagots of Navarre and Bearn.*

“Who are you?” asked the cavalier of the person lying at his feet.

* At the Cortes of 1817-1818 (the date is worth observing), an attempt was made to put an end to the hatred with which the cagots (Sp. *agotes*) were regarded, by the enactment of a law prohibiting the use of that name, and granting them all the rights possessed by the other inhabitants of towns:—Law 69. *Diccionario de Antiq. del reino de Navarra*, DON JOSE YANGUAS Y MIRANDA. See that article and the *Histoire des races Maudites*, by F. MICHEL; also the tale of the *Cagot's Hut* in Mr. Grattan's *Highways and Byeways*.

“A cagot! Do not approach me! Throw me a piece of bread, a garment to cover my body, for I am dying of hunger, cold, and grief.”

That voice pierced the cavalier's heart like a dart, and a mortal paleness overspread his countenance, to conceal which he lowered his visor.

The crowd kept their eyes intently fixed on the two actors in so terrible a scene; and observing with horror the proximity of the warrior to the unhappy leper, they murmured at his imprudence, his unheard-of temerity in remaining so long beside a miserable creature, accursed of God and man.

Their fear, however, began to abate on seeing the stranger quit the cagot without having touched him, and calmly bend his gaze towards the hill where stood the monastery of Santa Maria de Irache.

“Kill me, for pity's sake, Sir Knight! kill me, although you have to thrust into the flames the lance dyed in my poisonous blood!”

The Infanzon remained motionless and silent, but deeply affected, looking towards the road to Irache, without heeding the leper's piteous language.

“The Holy Virgin protect me!” exclaimed the friar, who had taken the prudent resolution of quitting the stage and joining the spectators, “and God forgive me, brethren, my evil thoughts; for I fancied

that I saw him embrace the cagot as if he were his father!"

"He must be mad," said a miller, who was almost as white as the ground he trod.

"Embracing one another! oh horrible!" exclaimed others who seemed to be wool-combers, from the blood with which they were besmeared; "the cagot's taint, they added gravely, no lye can wash out."

"All that I have to say, brother, is that that man is a saint and a sage—but I certainly feel uneasy, for he seems ready for any extravagance; and, the blessed Virgin shield me! Do you see? My God! he is lost beyond redemption. Forgive him, Lord, for he knoweth not what he doeth."

The Infanzon, who was waiting for his squire, so soon as he saw the latter beside him, alighted, and throwing him the reins with the air of a prince, proceeded to where the cagot lay, with firm step and lofty front. His rashness went even further—to take off both his gauntlets, throw them on the ground, seize with his naked hands the fetid and scaly hand of the leper, and what is more, what could not be witnessed without a deep and general cry of horror, indignation and astonishment—to raise his visor a little and approach that same hand to his lips—all this was the work of a moment.

“But, Sir,” exclaimed some honest citizens, of the few whose tongues were not paralysed with terror, “would it not have been better for that man to have had himself hanged by the executioner? In that case he would at least have been buried in consecrated ground.”

“But who is this demon incarnate?” they asked of the friar, who had taken refuge among the multitude, protesting against the possible supposition of his complicity or participation in such atrocities. “Who is he? Is he a Christian? Is he of Navarre? Does he know what a cagot is? Does he know that that wretch is outcast of God?”

“Brethren! brethren,” answered the monk, from whose forehead rained drops of perspiration; “may Jesus, may Saint Munio, and Saint Veremundo, and Saint Benedict, and Saint Escolastica, and Saint Mauro, and all the saints, male and female of my order, enlighten me; I am as much confounded as you are! Did I ever suppose it—If I ever—Only fancy, my brethren, that where you seem to behold a soldier, fonder of blows than of *per signum crucis*—of oaths than of litanies—of good victuals than bad books,—you have before you a man that knows more Latin than the dominie of Sangüesa, more theology than the *Magister sententiarum*, more ethics than Aristotle,

more alchemy than Hermes, more Scripture than Origen, more cosmography than Ptolemy, more astrology than Merlin, more—look at him, look at him, what a neat manner he has of feeling the pulse, as if he were Jehu, the Jew physician to Doña Leonora of Navarre.”

What with the much that they saw in the cavalier, and the little that they understood of the monk, with the gibberish of the latter and the atrocities of the former, there was more than sufficient grounds for holding one of them to be a sorcerer.

“That smells to me of witchcraft,” said a cobbler, with a magisterial air, who was considered very knowing because he mended wounds as well as shoes, stitching the skin of man as well as of calf.

“You are right, master Bernal; a wizard—a wizard!”

“Well, deuce take——”

“Silence, brother,” said the friar, “you must not tax him roundly with it.”

“Well, I say, and say again, I vow to Gog (and that is no sin, reverend father), that all the gentlemen’s sorceries, and organs, and ologies, will not help him to get rid of God’s curse for having touched the cagot.”

“One who is more swollen than an adder, and more scaly than the barb in that river.”

“It is clear : to touch the leper and catch leprosy is all one.”

“How glad I am to see gentlemen turn cagots !”

“Let them come and beg alms of us !”

“And the priests will expel them from the churches.”

“They hold us to be infamous ; the leprosy levels all ranks.”

Meanwhile the warrior continued to examine the old man with the intelligent look of a skilful physician, and when the murmurs became more violent, he raised his forehead with noble pride, imposing silence on the prejudiced multitude with his lofty bearing.

There was in his looks a certain expression of grandeur, of compassion, of tenderness, and self-satisfaction, which really made him superior to all around him. He who truly felt deep emotion was the miserable leper, who, almost on the verge of death from want and misery, abhorred by all, deprived of all sympathy and intercourse with his fellow-creatures, saw himself touched, consoled, relieved by a gallant cavalier, who defied vulgar prejudices as well as the imminent risk of contracting a foul and loathsome disease, and which was generally considered incurable.

This leper was a venerable old man, with white hair and beard, dark and deep-sunk eyes, a long and sharp

nose, pale and prominent cheeks, the type of a race, not indeed so abject as the cagots, but also persecuted and barbarously sacrificed, especially by the inhabitants of Estella, who a century back had the bad fame of being their most implacable enemies. In one word that unfortunate creature had the double taint of being a Jew and a leper. Even among the cagots he was the vilest of cagots.

Down his emaciated cheeks and hoary beard flowed tears of joy and gratitude. He raised his eyes to heaven, extended his arms with a supplicatory gesture ; all the blessings of heaven, all the dew of heavenly grace, did not seem to him enough for the consoling angel whose countenance he could not see.

“Fortun,” cried the Infanzon to his squire, “my fur cloak.”

The servant untied from his horse a wrapper, took from it a cloak of richest brocade, turned over and lined with otter fur, and instead of handing it to his master, he threw it at his feet.

The latter did not choose to notice this insolence ; knowing how far service may be exacted of a hireling, he took the garment in silence and wrapped it round the cagot.

“Fortun,” then cried the cavalier, “you have money, and activity more than enough ; buy bread

and milk and return with them to where I shall be."

Fortun complied with these orders, with so much the more alacrity and diligence as he was less disposed to obey other commands.

But that voice must have excited strange emotions in the heart of the leper, whose countenance and gestures expressed the utmost wonder and anxiety, until seeing himself in the arms of Don Alphonso who wished to remove him to a more sheltered spot, he put his hand on the latter's vizer and uttered a cry of terror which was heard by all the bystanders, giving occasion to new murmurs, to new and more extravagant commentaries.

The cagot struggled to extricate himself from the Infanzon, and the latter tried with kind and affectionate words to allay his fears ; and thus they remained contending for a few moments until the old man, shedding sweet and copious tears of consolation, cordially and closely embraced the stranger, who carried him on his shoulders with the greatest care and gentleness towards one of the nearest farm-yards.

The bystanders retreated with one accord, and rushed to the defence of their hearths, threatened, as they supposed, by the greatest of all calamities, closing their doors, and guarding them besides with people

armed with sticks, scythes and pitchforks; but they could not prevent the cavalier from making his way into an open straw-shed, the owner of which was too far off to come in time to the defence of his property.

The squire arrived soon after with the food he had brought, and deposited it at the threshold of the door where his master came to fetch it. The latter, in a few minutes, left the hut, washed his hands in the snow, put on his gauntlets, and as if he had been touching the purest lilies of the valley instead of a loathsome leper, he untied the reins, slung on his shield, examined his lance, and mounted his now quiet charger, which on a very slight hint from the spurs, trotted briskly towards the gates of the city.

Here all was uproar, confusion, and terror among the furious and turbulent crowd. They might, with some difficulty, have understood that a man might be so incurably mad, or of such heroic benevolence, or reckless desperation, as, from caprice, folly, or simplicity, to give assistance to a leper with the full conviction that he would become a participator in his guilt ;*

* It was a generally received opinion, that leprosy was a Divine chastisement for certain sins committed either by the cagots or their ancestors. When the cagots of Navarre resorted to the Pope, as we have already stated, in 1517, their application was opposed by a certain Caxer Arnaut, Usher of the

but what seemed incredible to them was, the audacity, the utter absence of apprehension with which that man went to mingle among others, and penetrate, against all law, into the interior of a town, bringing with him the taint, the contagion, the Divine curse, and converting the second city of Navarre, at that time the residence of the Queen, into a city of cagots and accursed reprobates.

“Back, back!” cried at the same time a thousand persons, whose gestures indicated that they were ready to arrest the progress of the cavalier with more than words. “Back with the cagot! Let him die—let him die!” they continued, supporting their words with sticks, pitchforks, scythes, and stones.

The Infanzon well knew that there is no tempest more terrible, no wild beast more furious and dangerous than an enraged mob, especially when its anger arises from prejudice and fanaticism; he well knew also that of

Royal Council, who set forth that the cause of their separation from the Christians occurred in the time of the Prophet Elisha, when “The Prince Nahaman went to be cured of leprosy, and in consequence of having, by the Prophet’s advice, washed himself in the river Jordan, whereby he was cured of the disease, the Prince offered presents to the Prophet, which the holy man refused; but Gehazi, a servant of the Prophet, prompted by covetousness, took the gifts, wherefore the Prophet pronounced a curse on him as well as his descendants, who are the cagots.”

all the towns in Navarre there was none whose populace was so much to be dreaded as that of Estella, which had set the example one night of attacking the magnificent quarter of the Jews, who were all found dead in the morning; but Don Alphonso, not less daring and courageous than wise and benevolent, rode forward, with his lance in bucket at the pace which his horse chose to adopt, as tranquilly as if he advanced amid shouts of praise and welcome.

A furious shower of stones, which rebounded with a loud clang from his armour, convinced him that they were not people who lose time between threats and blows. He resolved, therefore, to abandon the defensive: he grasped his lance, placed it in rest, and pressed the flanks of his horse; but the crowd fled at his approach, without, however, desisting from the shower of missiles which blinded and stunned him with the noise, while it did more serious injury to his charger, which, unfortunately, was not defended with caparisons of mail as when engaged in regular battle.

It was impossible for him to maintain the struggle unaided and alone, against a whole population, whose rage would be only redoubled by the effusion of blood. Perhaps he was then appalled at his own rashness, and perceived how foolish it always is to oppose violent popular prejudices. Surrounded on all

sides, unable to return, and the gates of the city closed, he could, nevertheless, smite and slay ; but the death of one, two, six, twenty, would not give him the victory ; blood would add fresh fuel to the conflagration, in whose flames he was destined to perish.

“ Now, now is the time when I need the invisible power that protected me,” exclaimed the Unknown, turning his eyes on all sides, as if he expected a legion of spirits to come to his aid.

There did not come a legion—but one man came—for the divine power has no need of the apparatus with which human authority delights in surrounding itself—making a parade of force with the symbols of its weakness. A man came through the centre of the tumultuous crowd, who made way for him, with peaceful gestures, and expressions of good will—a man towards whom all turned their eyes, standing on tiptoe, those behind climbing on the shoulders of those in front, and uttering murmurs of respect and curiosity.

“ The hermit ! the penitent’s lay-servant ! the friar from Our Lady’s of Rocamador ! ”

There appeared, indeed, working his way through that tempestuous sea, an elderly man, of formidable stature, with thick and grizzled beard, jovial and vigorous aspect, and eyes more quick and roguish

than became his dress of dingy sackcloth. He carried in his hand a box, surmounted by a rude image of the Virgin, curiously encircled with a garland of artificial flowers, made by a hand both tasteful and delicate.

“Well, brethren,” exclaimed the colossal hermit, “the Virgin of Rocamadour wishes to work a miracle immediately with this sinner, who has excited your just wrath. There you see him, more polluted with leprosy, than the villain Gehazi, who stole from Prince Nahaman a hundred spick and span new florins, which belonged, saving tithes and first fruits, to the prophet Elisha. Well, only because this sinner has caught the leprosy, through an excess of charity, ill-understood, of course, and not through any taint inherited from his fathers and grandfathers, I, in name of my mistress, and my mistress in name of the Virgin of Rocamadour, order him to take off his gauntlets and armlets, and show you his body, which is now, by miraculous agency, as pure as a new-coined medal.”

The warrior could not repress a certain movement of wonder, when he saw the hermit beside him ; concealed, however, by his armour, he laughed at will at the unintelligible jargon of the holy man, and he did not hesitate to submit good-humouredly to the process prescribed, allowing those parts of his armour to be

removed, and the sleeve of his richly embroidered doublet to be tucked-up, in order that all present, laying aside fear and reluctance, might examine with religious fervour and wonder, the hand and arms suddenly cleansed from a leprosy which they never had.

“Thanks, Chafarote!” he said, after this tedious operation was completed; “take care of the cagot as if it were myself.”

And spurring his horse, he rode swiftly towards the city, avoiding the acclamations of the multitude, who now applauded to the skies him whom they would have torn in pieces a few minutes before, but for the opportune interference of the hermit.

The latter remained for a little in a thoughtful attitude, muttering between his teeth—

“The devil! he knows my name.”

Chafarote was not a person to lose much time in brooding over one subject; besides that he had many others of more importance to attend to at that moment; and one of those was to collect the alms which were showered as by enchantment into the box of Our Lady of Rocamador.

CHAPTER IV.

GREAT was the stir and bustle in the city of Estella, at that time the centre and emporium of the industry and commerce of Navarre, or to speak more correctly, a wretched example of what industry and commerce were at that time. The former was contented with maintaining a guild of woollen-cloth manufacturers, whose dwellings clustered round a fulling mill, with eight troughs ; and the second, ever since the slaughter of the Jews, remained in a feeble, precarious, and rickety condition.

History says, and we might readily suppose it although history did not say it, that, when the Christians of Estella murdered their Jewish fellow-citizens and burnt their houses, they took care to save from the flames the immense riches which their victims had employed in commerce ; and that in consequence of this Pactolus having thus overflowed its banks, the inundation spread all round, and the abundance of

precious metals made itself felt in all the markets, to such an extent as to cause merchandise to be neglected. But this golden age was of very short duration; scarcity soon followed abundance—the reverse of what took place in Egypt. Money in the hands of the Jews was dough which fermented, and in the hands of the faithful, a ball of snow which quickly melted.

Neither did the movement in the city proceed from the exertions of its inhabitants to rebuild the numerous houses which had been swept away by the river four years before; it had not the appearance of order and regularity, the low hum of manufacturing life, similar to that of a hive of bees; it proceeded merely from the circumstance that the most loyal city of Estella had been chosen for the solemn and magnificent ceremony of coronation.

A truce having been arranged between the factions, who agreed to proclaim the Countess de Foix Queen of Navarre, the Cortes were to assemble shortly, and the nobles of all parties, cavaliers, bishops, and abbots, besides the representatives of the *good towns*, were thronging into the city on superb chargers and mules, and in litters.

Thanks to the confusion caused by so many strangers, as well as to the varied and savoury food with which

curiosity was supplied ; and thanks above all to the sustained speed of his horse, our Infanzon managed after a few turns in opposite directions, to make those who followed him vociferating the miracle of his cure, lose all trace of him ; and when he supposed that no one observed him, he stopped before an ancient edifice near the destroyed Jewry, which was never afterwards rebuilt.

The entrance in the façade formed an immense semicircular arch, with graceful mouldings on each voussoir, and from the springing of the arch, and at the distance of two yards, arose a sort of rectangular frame, the ends of which rested on two large consoles. Beneath the transverse portion of it, and over the key of the arch projected a marble scutcheon, in one quarter of which were seen the chains of Navarre, and in another a castle upon a rock and a ladder placed against the gate of a castle.

Around the shield was observed the legend "No porta de otro," which meant that that edifice was of palatial dignity ; its owner the head of his family, and that he was exempt from furnishing military quarters and subsidies, and enjoyed a seat in the Cortes.

The cavalier entered a vestibule equally spacious and gloomy, and he was immediately surrounded by pages and squires ; some aspiring to the honour of

holding the stirrup, and others to that of taking the reins from the exhausted animal.

“And the count?” asked the Infanzon.

“Señor,” answered the *maestre hostel*, for thus were the *major-domos* of palaces then called; “the count, my master, still remains at Lerin.

“Well, *Maese Tomás de Galar*, come up with me, and tell me what news you have from the count.”

“From the count, my master!—I will freely tell you, Sir—from the count, my master, I know nothing new, further than that he must not have any to tell; for, as the count, my master, is expected every moment, you will easily understand—”

“Ha! so the count is coming? and Catalina?”

“Doña Catalina—I know nothing of Doña Catalina.—You must be aware that I—as I—”

“Yes; as you are *major-domo*—”

“*Maese hostel*, señor.”

“Well, as *maestre hostel* or *major-domo*, you must know whether the count has given orders that the palace should be prepared for the reception of his daughter.”

“None whatever; he has not even sent here her *dueñas*, and you will perceive—”

“The deuce!” answered Don Alphonso, visibly affected; “the Count de Lerin has some odd fancies.

Poor child, shut up among rocks and precipices like the brood of the stork !”

“ Señor, have you any orders to give ?”

“ Yes ; give a feed to my horse, and a dozen blows with a cudgel to my squire when he comes.”

“ Very well, Sir.”

“ But, hang it ! I forgot the principal thing ; find out for me who is that venerable hermit—big, burly, and rosy—who goes about here with an alms-box for the Virgin of—”

“ Brother Juan ! i’faith I know all about him. I will relate to you—”

“ No ; I don’t wish you to relate anything. I prefer learning everything from his own lips.”

“ That is to say, you wish to see him ?”

“ Precisely.”

“ I will offer him, in your worship’s name, alms, and a draught or two of good liquor, and there is no fear but that he will be forthcoming.”

By this time they had, after passing through various large apartments, come to a small ante-chamber ; and on opening its enormous, richly carved door, the cavalier dismissed the major-domo.

Scarcely was he left alone when he heaved a profound sigh, and, uncovering merely his head and hands, he seated himself before a table, with his cheeks

resting on his closed hands, his forehead bent and gloomy, and in this posture he remained for a while, absorbed in deep meditation.

It was not long before Fortun, his squire, made his appearance. "Ha! Don Rascal," exclaimed the Infanzon when he saw him, "have you received certain wages which the major-domo of the palace was ordered to pay you on my account?"

"Yes, Sir; and I have paid them back."

"How?"

"An hundred for one, Sir; but it is true Maese Tomás stopped at the first."

"Do you speak of the cudgelling?"

"Yes, of the cudgelling. This sort of pay I will only receive at the hands of my master."

"Such homage would have become you better this morning, when I wanted your assistance."

"Master, order me to do whatever you will against Christians, Moors, and Jews, but as to Cagots, I think that it is best not to touch pitch."

"Well then, I don't tell you to approach or to touch, but I wish you to go to the tavern in front of the shed, and take care that no one go near or molest the old man, and when the night sets in come to me."

"These are reasonable orders, indeed," said Fortun to himself. "That one should station himself in a

tavern to watch lepers !. What queer crotchets my master has got ! and he who knows so much ! Cagots are pretty well taken care of by themselves ; and there is no fear that any one should approach them ; and if there were — to keep sentry over them from a tavern ! Such an idea would never have occurred to any one but my master, who never drinks.”

The Infanzon returned to his solitary musings. He could doubt no longer ; that invisible and mysterious providence which never abandoned him, was not a fond creation of his fancy ; no dream, no hallucination ; he had just seen it personified, first in the penitent, then in the hermit, in Chafarote,—Chafarote ! In what a sea of reminiscences did that name plunge him !

A persecution of benefits humbles the spirit more than a persecution of misfortunes ; we oppose to the latter the resignation which bows the head, and lets them pass over, or the pride against which they dash themselves in vain ; but a happiness undeserved, and whose blessings come from an unknown source, humbles and annihilates.

Dòn Alphonso would have wrestled perseveringly with adversity, without feeling disheartened in the struggle, but he could not resign himself to enjoy with tranquillity and comfort, those favours showered upon

him by an invisible hand, for causes and ends which were equally a mystery to him.

“ To whom did he owe them ?”

Not to the Queen, he was well assured, nor to the Count de Lerin, for the count could hide his hand when he smote, but not when he caressed.

The Infanzon had led for a long time a wandering unsettled life, sometimes devoting himself, with indefatigable zeal, to the profound investigations of science, and at others, plunging into the din and tumult of war, as if he tried to deaden his feelings with the chill of study, or to drown his sorrows amid the clash of arms: he passed under different names, and travelled through various countries, systematically avoiding all sorts of friendships and connexions,—all intimate relations; it was his pleasure to live by himself, unknown to all, although inspiring respect by the superiority of his talents, and the prowess of his arm; and nevertheless his protector never lost trace of him amid his tortuous windings, his ups and downs, the vicissitudes, eccentricities, and contradictions of an adventurous and mysterious career.

That protection seemed too poetical, ardent, and generous to be attributed to a woman so stained with horrid crimes; or to that cold and sceptical man, whose

character, at that period, was almost an anachronism. The Infanzon had sufficient knowledge of the human heart, and sufficient penetration to appreciate all the ideality, all the devotedness and abnegation revealed by that uninterrupted chain of secret favours, rewarded, perhaps, with ingratitude, indifference and forgetfulness. How seldom is the hand of man concealed when conferring benefits! How seldom does charity resist the incense offered by self-love! He who bestows a favour, hastens to proclaim it, in order to receive at least the meed of gratitude; none other but an angel could accompany us disinterestedly, day and night, pointing out to us on all occasions, with invisible hand, the path of duty, amid the confusion and complications of the labyrinth of human life.

And was not the tutelar genius of the Infanzon very much like a guardian angel?

“Oh! if she were alive!” he suddenly exclaimed, covering his eyes with his hand, to concentrate his thoughts, his recollections, or his reveries, or to hide a tear which trickled down his cheek.

“Fortunately,” he pursued, rising and pacing hurriedly through the apartment, “fortunately, I know this time the accidental instrument employed by the particular providence which watches over me:

Chafarote! But did he know anything? Did he not work blindly? Did he know whence came the impulse which he received? Oh I remember his tricks—the buttery of the count is well provided—however much he may have changed his habits, there are arguments which will be always irresistible to the old soldier of the Bárdenas.

To add to his satisfaction, the doors of the cabinet opened slowly, and the count's major-domo, who was to bring him the reformed bandit, appeared cap in hand.

"Well, Maese Tomás de Galar," said Don Alphonso, "is the hermit come?"

"The hermit, Sir, has flown, after having performed the most stupendous miracle. Only imagine, your worship, that he has converted a cagot into a Christian like ourselves!"

"And where has he gone?"

"The hermit, Sir, has to be in all quarters."

"And why do you come here when you have executed my orders so ill?"

"As regards the order for the cudgelling, I confess that it has been very stupidly fulfilled, for instead of giving I received it. But I dare say that as far as you are concerned it comes to the same thing. Your worships want a flogging to be given, and

whether it fall here or there—I say that for your worships it comes to the same thing.”

“And are you come here to tell me your grievances?”

“No, Sir, for your worships the grievances of—”

“Enough.”

“I know it is enough, and more than enough, and I only remain in order to place this letter in your hands.”

Don Alphonso took it with anxiety and opened it; but when he recognized the handwriting he betrayed a gesture of displeasure, and read rapidly, with his back turned to the major-domo.

“The friar is come; I give you thanks for your zeal and promptitude in serving me. Come and see me soon, and I will speak to you of a thought which has occurred to me—a very happy one, and which will promote our object. I wait for you anxiously, as I always do.”

The billet had no signature; but it was not needed by the cavalier, who crumpled the paper in his hand with a sinister expression which would have inspired fear in any one who had attentively observed him.

“Maese,” he said, seating himself with a calmness and ease of manner which contrasted strongly with the

impatience of the person who waited for him, "did you say that you knew the hermit?"

"As I do your worship, cavalier; I mean to say much more than I know you, because my knowledge of you is as of yesterday."

"And of the hermit?"

"I know the hermit—much farther back. Indeed I may say that before he became a hermit, I—"

"You knew him, eh? and then?"

"Then he was—Sir, in these times very extraordinary things take place. Who would have thought that a highway robber was to perform miracles like those of the king of France who cures the scrofua? But—"

"But the hermit—"

"I am coming to that, Sir. The person in whom your worship sees a hermit—although in fact he is not a hermit, but the servant of a hermit, for he is not much in the hermitage, but goes about in this neighbourhood collecting alms for the purpose of supplying the Virgin with tapers—"

"But who is he?"

"I was coming to that. I do not know if you, as a stranger—for I think you are not of this country or you would not be inquiring. But in truth you do well,

for by asking one can go to Rome, and he who asks nothing knows nothing. But do not make that gesture. When I am interrupted I cannot speak to the purpose. Well Sir, there was a famous bandit eighteen years ago, not the first, who was called Sancho, and was a regular downright robber, but another renegade bandit, a hard-hearted monster, and to crown all a Jew. Sancho de Rota murdered and robbed, it is true ; but after all he was a Christian ; the other besides being a robber was a Jew, and the late king pardoned him and made him a captain."

"But you are relating to me, Maese Tomás de Galar," replied the cavalier with great calmness ; "you are relating to me the history of the captain, and I was asking you —"

"About his squire ; for this hermit, who works miracles—I say miracles, although *he* does not perform them ; no, Sir, it is the Penitent who does."

"What ! Chafarote is with the penitent ?"

"Ho, ho ! well I declare your worship is asking me about him, although you know even the name, or title, or nickname, or whatever it be, which he bore when he was a robber."

"A truce to your impertinent observations, and answer me without circumlocution."

“Circum—what?” asked the major-domo, more alarmed at the word than the cavalier’s look and tone.

“Answer me simply and plainly. What has the hermit,—whether he be called Juan Marin or Chafarote,—what has he to do with the Penitent?”

“What has he not to do, Sir, if he is as one may say her servant, or lay attendant, or her—. In short, your worship, who knows all about him, and is acquainted with his nickname as well as name and surname.”

“So that the miracles which the hermit performs—”

“Are the miracles of the Penitent.”

“And who is the Penitent?”

“The Penitent! Sir, I can say nothing more than that she is herself, and no other, and that she cannot be mistaken for anybody else. Ask the poor cottier who has not wherewithal to pay his rent to his master because it was a bad year, and he has not gathered a single ear of corn, who succours him? The Penitent. Ask the woman whom the wars have left a widow burdened with a family, who maintains her? The Penitent. In short I can say nothing more to you than that it is the Penitent who does all the good that is done in Navarre.”

“ To everybody ?”

“ To all ; she knows neither factions nor—”

“ Very well, Maese ; prepare dinner and send me here a couple of pages to take off my armour.”

“ Señor, the person who brought this billet told me that they were waiting for you with impatience.”

“ It does not matter, Maese Tomas ; do not hurry on that account the cooking of the viands.”

There was not much preparation needed for one of the knights of old, and although we of Navarre have the reputation of being great gourmands, it must be admitted that if we may credit ancient documents this reputation is very modern or very undeserved. All the expenses of a Navarrese ambassador, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, for himself and half a dozen attendants, did not exceed six sous daily, and the viands were confined to fish, eggs, onions, oil and vinegar, grapes and chickpeas.

Our Unknown, who was not an ambassador, and therefore not obliged to eat for two, his nation and himself, was satisfied with a slice of salmon, and a few walnuts and filberts as dessert, but in discussing so small a variety, we should rather say so small a quantity of dishes, he employed much more time than was necessary ; and by the slowness of his progress it

was evident that he was putting off as long as possible the time to go somewhere.

In the midst of his frugal repast he received a letter in the same hand as the former, but it did not certainly meet with the same reception. On the contrary the cavalier smiled with visible signs of satisfaction on seeing it.

It was conceived in these terms.

“I am driven to despair, my Alphonso, by waiting so long for your coming. What is the matter with you? Has anything happened to you? Come quickly, quickly, quickly.”

From the terms of this epistle, some writers who are given to archæological investigation infer that the three quicklys in *billets-doux* are not an invention of the enamoured courtiers of the present day; but be that as it may it is certain that the cavalier said to the major-domo, with a very composed and even cheerful air,

“Maese, I rose early this morning, and I intend to have a siesta to-day, although it is not my custom. If they should come with another letter or message, do not awake me, under pain of being delivered over to the secular arm of my squire.”

“And if news should come from Lerin?”

“Ah! if they bring me news of Doña Catalina, let me know immediately.”

Don Alphonso then went up to his chamber ; but while the major-domo was charging the servants to make no noise for fear of disturbing their guest, there might be heard in the latter's room, the grave, slow and measured steps of one who is absorbed in profound meditation.

CHAPTER V.

THE Infanta, Doña Leonora, was seated on one of the stone benches, in the embrasure of one of the windows in the royal palace of Estella, her arm leaning on the sill, her feet resting on a velvet cushion, and her hand supporting her cheek, down which rolled tears, which no one, not even herself, cared to wipe away.

The sun, which, until then, had been struggling with the morning mists, at last obtained the dominion of the sky, and his rays, which were brightly reflected from the snow-covered mountains, were somewhat obscured by passing through the painted windows and curtains of the apartment.

Everything indicated that that chamber was prepared for the reception of a lover. Enormous faggots of fragrant wood blazed in the spacious marble chimney, diffusing an agreeable warmth in the apartment, through which floated clouds of perfumes, rising from

rich censers, to the gilded roof, where the mysterious reflections of the light of day contended with the flickering glow from the scented flames.

The princess, or rather the queen, for we are not such sticklers as the Infanzon,—the Queen Dofia Leonora is not the woman of severe and almost masculine beauty, of haughty look, and majestic bearing, with whom our readers are already acquainted;—fifteen years have passed since then, and the wheels of time nowhere imprint deeper tracks than in woman's countenance. Coldness of heart, however, like material cold, has a highly conservative virtue,—in fact it is the most efficacious preservative against feminine decay; and the Countess de Foix, protected by this cold and calculating indifference, managed to preserve, if not the freshness of the complexion, at least the greater part of her charms, until fate, or, to speak in more Christian language, Providence, threw at last in her way a man capable of inspiring a passion so much the deeper perhaps because it came so late,—so much the more anxious, jealous, and violent, the smaller were her claims to a return.

She, the Countess de Foix, so haughty and domineering,—she, with her icy heart, defended by the corslet of ambition against the armoury of love,—had undergone, in a few days, that sudden transformation

which tells upon every feature of a woman when she loses her tranquillity of heart, when she enjoys unknown sensations, and opens her eyes, for the first time, to the world of passion, now blandly tinted with the rosy light of happiness, now sadly overcast by the baleful shadow of adversity.

She was not now, as of yore, calm, and prepared for every difficulty, one on whose forehead might be read projects of guilt and crime,—whose vigorously-marked features indicated tenacity of purpose,—on whose curling lip sat pride and disdain;—that untamed and raging tigress now licked the hand of the man she had trampled on; that marble statue wept, or, in other words, put on the varnish of tears, which even make plain women interesting.

The mourning which she wore, on account of the recent death of her father, served also to heighten her sadness; but even in that dress, as well as in everything around, might be detected the desire to please. A light and graceful head-dress of black gauze, adorned with ornaments of jet, and which fell gracefully upon her shoulders, and served as a setting to her countenance, in which sometimes appeared the traces of satisfied ambition, and, at others, the disdain with which she regarded the joys of ambition. Perhaps her misery conjured up to her imagination the misfortunes

of others; perhaps, she recollected, for the first time, that from that very window, where she sat, once fell Prince Theobald, son of King Henry the Fat, that his nurse precipitated herself after him, in trying to save him, and that they were both dashed in pieces against the rocks which serve as a foundation to the castle.

Her fingers unconsciously played with the bars of the window, which, in spite of the intense cold, remained frequently open; and sometimes she looked out, defying the rigour of the atmosphere, and then closed the lattice impatiently, perhaps repenting her weakness, or horror-struck at the temptations suggested to her by the example of Theobald's nurse, and at seeing herself despised by an adventurer.

Growing tired at last, and ashamed of her insane passion, she left the fatal window, and seated herself beside the chimney, covering her face with both hands, and saying, in an under tone, with mournful and broken accents,—

“Thus it is with all things! How much did I desire to be queen! how much did I labour to attain the throne, and within three days I shall be crowned; yet I never felt so dejected, so hopeless, as at this moment.”

Doña Leonora did not now look out on the street; but she from time to time fixed her eyes on the door,

by which, persons coming from the street, must of necessity enter.

“Oh! he comes not! He cares not for me. O that I could tear from my breast this shameful passion which consumes me! Shameful it undoubtedly is. Oh that I could go back twenty years! At that age, I should not have to wait so long as now, even though I were not, as now, styled queen.”

“Brianda,” she cried suddenly, and the principal door opened soon after, through which entered a reverend duenna, with black head-dress.

“Has the page returned?”

“Yes, madam.”

“And what —?”

“They have not given him any message.”

“How?”

“The major-domo told him that he was reposing, and that he did not wish to receive any news, except from the castle of Lerin.”

“Reposing!” muttered Leonora, and her cheeks became crimson, then pale and haggard. “Ah! yes,” she exclaimed immediately after, “I had forgotten that that was the watchword, to send to him as from the Count de Lerin —”

“No, madam,” he said, “from Doña Catalina.”

“Catalina! Yes — well then—from the count’s

daughter! I meant to say that.—Very well, I am not in a hurry.”

“The coiners, then,” said the duenna, “may enter, I suppose.”

“What do they want?”

“They say they have not metal enough, nor time, to stamp it with your highness’s bust before Thursday, the day of coronation.”

“Dismiss them, dismiss them,” answered the Queen, who was almost bursting into tears, “they may proclaim me with coins of my father.”

“And the judges, and the provost of the city, who are coming to offer their condolence to —”

“Let them come back in four days, to offer their congratulations.”

“And Mosen Pierres de Peralta?”

“No one, no one; I wish to be alone.”

Leonora, indeed, needed to be alone, for her eyes, brimming with tears, overflowed as soon as the duenna closed the door.

“He detests me,” she exclaimed, “he despises me. I must combat this passion. I must again become the lioness whose roar makes all tremble. Oh. I shall once more feel the luxury of revenge; I shall be feared without being loved; this unknown adventurer must leave my kingdom, he shall never more place his foot

within my dominions ; and if I knew that any other woman were the cause of this neglect, this insulting disdain ;—Oh, could I forgive a rival, I, who did not forgive my own brother and sister ?”

At that moment a secret door opened, and a man, carefully muffled up, made his appearance. After throwing off his cloak, and laying it on a chair, he advanced towards Doña Leonora with gallant bearing. He wore a short tunic of crimson brocade, a loose surtout of black cloth lined with ermine, which was turned over his shoulder in a broad collar, terminating in a point in front, and from his pink-coloured belt was suspended a short sword with richly ornamented hilt. His black hair fell down in clusters from beneath a bonnet with a border of scarlet, forming a small peak in the centre, on which shone a cluster of brilliants.

“Alphonso,” exclaimed the Queen, on seeing him so handsome, so gallant, and so elegantly equipped ! “Alphonso !” she repeated, forgetting all that she had said, all her pangs and bitterness, “how long you have tarried !”

“What means this ? You were weeping, Señora,” said the cavalier frowning, and yet with a look of compassion.

“Yes, I was weeping ; I thought you would never

come—I feared—What unhappy moments you make me pass! Oh! do not smile, Alphonso!”

“Why not?” replied the cavalier, with that half-jeering, half-compassionate look which had attracted the Queen’s notice. “Why not, if I see in your tears the most evident testimony that I am loved?”

“Yes, I love you, my Alphonso! I love you more fervently the more unhappy you render me.”

“You unhappy!” exclaimed Don Alphonso, with that undefinable expression of pleasure, pity, and gentleness. “Are you really unhappy?”

“When you are beside me, when you regard me with so much tenderness, with that smile which makes me uneasy, and yet delights and fascinates me, then I am not unhappy; but when I do not see you, when I am longing for your appearance, as I always do when you are absent—Alas! Alphonso, Alphonso! Look, my only thought during the whole of my life, my only anxious desire was to be queen, to be seated on the throne of my fathers, to rule from that elevation all that my vision embraced, well, then, this desire will be completely gratified within two days; my fingers already touch the crown which will speedily gird my brows for many long years. Is it not true that I shall be crowned within three days, and that I have vigour enough to enjoy for many years what has

cost me so much care and anxiety? But, if I were compelled to choose between your love and a throne, I feel as if I should not know which to choose."

"You would not know which to choose, eh?"

"Ungrateful man! You think it a small matter to hesitate between your heart and a throne, when I did not hesitate between——"

Here Doña Leonora checked herself. In the transport of her passion she was about to reveal a terrible secret which would have filled Don Alphonso with horror.

"Yes," pursued the Queen, "and if you asked me, my Alphonso, if you insisted, I would even sacrifice to you the throne itself."

"For why?" answered Alphonso, with an ingenuousness which looked very like sarcasm. "Why should you do so if God has destined you to reign? You, the third child of Juan the Second, could not think for a moment of obtaining the crown in right of your husband, for you were married when still a child to a Count; you had before you a brother who already possessed a numerous offspring, but it was the will of God that he should die in the flower of manhood; it was the will of God that he should commit certain errors, and that his children should be disinherited. You had still before you an elder sister; that sister

the legitimate heir to the throne, might marry, might transmit her rights to whomsoever she thought fit, by virtue of the testament of your illustrious grandfather, Don Carlos the Noble; but God, God who predestined you to reign, made the way perfectly level and straight for you, and decreed that Doña Blanca should die intestate, having been poisoned by one of your ladies—called—called——”

“ Ines!” added the Countess de Foix, in a voice that was scarcely audible.

“ Ines it was, prompted by jealousy of the princess, on account of her love for a certain—a certain——”

“ Ximeno! Ximeno!” added Leonora, shocked at the reminiscences associated with the name. “ But why do you recall these events to me?”

“ Ximeno; you are right—a bandit, a captain of adventurers, a Jew. It must be confessed, Madam, that your august sister was much to blame in conceiving a passion for——”

“ No, Alphonso, she was not to blame. Then it appeared to me a crime to love. But did I know what love was? Now—let us suppose for a moment that you were a plebeian, could I help loving you as I do?”

“ It is well, Madam, that you fortify your mind with such arguments, for—let us see, Who am I?”

“ Yes, then, who are you?”

“ Don Alphonso de Castille, an Infanzon in Navarre, according to the fuero which grants that title to all strangers who can maintain a horse, complete armour, a squire, and a lance.”

“ My Alphonso, the beloved of my heart ! ” added the Queen.

“ It is well ; but between a stranger with lance, horse, and squire, and a lover of your Highness, there may lurk—what shall I say ? A plebeian ? that does not much matter ; a Jew ? less.—A Cagot ! ”

“ Oh ! no more ! what horror ! ” exclaimed the Countess de Foix, with visible repugnance ; “ let us speak of—— ”

“ Let us, Madam, resume our conversation. Oh ! confess, Doña Leonora, that Divine Providence favours you in a most signal manner. You are alone, you need not share the supreme power with any one ; all your desires are about to be fulfilled in a more complete and satisfactory manner than you could have conceived. Your husband is dead ; you will share your throne with no one ; your son, Don Gaston, is dead ; no one disputes your pretensions to the crown. It would be a crime, Madam,” added the Infanzon, in a grave tone ; “ it would be a criminal opposition to the wishes, to the decrees of the Most High, to prevent you from reigning. The Divine Being, doubtless

taking into account the tears which the death of your brother and sister cost you, and wishing to reward your virtues, your noble ambition, now vouchsafes to Navarre, plunged for so many years in all the horrors of a civil war, a prosperous, pacific, and, above all, a prolonged reign. No, do not suppose me so rash or so foolish as to place, for the vain gratification of self-love, my poor heart as an obstacle before the steps of the throne. Reign, Madam, reign, for God desires it."

Don Alphonso ceased, and fixed his eyes on the princess, who listened to his words with her hands on her face, attempting to conceal her agitation, which was revealed by her hurried breathing, her heaving bosom, and, occasionally, an ill-repressed sob which escaped from her troubled and anxious heart.

Deep and piercing were the glances of the cavalier; and in his smile and accent, sometimes sarcastic, and at others grave and sincere, there was a mixture of cruel mockery, and profound, even superstitious conviction, so that we have great difficulty in conveying to our readers a distinct idea of the different parts which that mysterious and impenetrable personage apparently represented.

At length Leonora removed her hands from her burning countenance, and the rim of purple round her eyes betrayed her suppressed tears.

“Why do you weep, madam?” asked Don Alphonso, with enchanting sweetness of tone.

“I know not,” replied Doña Leonora, “I have such a tendency to weeping since I have known you! Doubtless I shed now the tears which I ought to have shed in other times.”

“But to weep when I address such kind words to thee?”

It was the first time that the cavalier treated her with such familiarity.

“Alas! these soft words of yours pierce my heart.”

“Then I shall remain silent.”

“No, it would be still greater torture not to hear your voice.”

“What means this inconsistency?”

“Because I would appear in your eyes sinless, immaculate, without remorse, of untroubled conscience; I would seem an angel, with her purity of soul at least, if I cannot have the freshness of her countenance. with her bland smile, since I have not the delicate carmine of her lips. Alphonso; Alphonso!” she exclaimed, in a transport of sincere passion, “I have nothing now but love, ardent and unbounded, and that love is all for you—all!”

“And do I ask you for more?”

“But I who measure the depths of my passion, also

contemplate with horror the abyss of my guilt. You, besides being famous among the flower of chivalry for your valour and courtesy, possess unrivalled knowledge and discretion; you deserve as guerdon, my Alphonso, not the love of a queen, but that of a pure angelic, blushing maiden! Oh that you had known me in my early years when I looked on the crown as a bauble, and the sceptre as a plaything, and had not yet breathed that impure atmosphere of ambition which corrodes my heart and withers my beauty!"

"But what does it matter, Señora, if you are at all events sure of me?"

"Seriously, my Alphonso?" exclaimed Leonora, seduced by the charm of these words.

"Do you doubt me then?"

"No, no, I will not doubt, I will believe you, and persuaded of your love, I am going to reveal my plans to you. You will see, you will see how I have traced the picture of my regal life, that life for which I have sighed so long."

"Let us hear," said Don Alphonso, with sincere pleasure, and giving an expression of infantile curiosity to his physiognomy. "You do not know how much interest I feel in listening to you."

"I shall place my seat beside you."

“Pardon me, I shall place mine near you ; you are my queen and mistress.”

“Give me your hand.”

“Yes, hold it in yours. So then we are going to dream,” added the Infanzon.

“No, we are going to paint the picture of our felicity, but in colours—”

“Brilliant, splendid—!”

“Yes, but true. In the first place you must love me ever, ever.”

“Good, I must love you—ever !”

“In the second place we must restore peace to the kingdom, because—”

“Let alone the because, and come to the how.”

“The how is very simple ; my father, heaven rest his soul, with the object of—”

“I know what you are going to say,” said Don Alphonso, in order to release her from her embarrassment ; “your father who reigned in Navarre and Arragon at the same time, and who, without having the crown of Castille on his forehead, wished nevertheless to rule in that kingdom still more than in Arragon and Navarre ; your father, Don Juan, instead of labouring to extinguish factions and feuds among the nobles of the kingdom, on the contrary fomented war, strife, and private animosities, in order to rule more easily in a

divided country, from which he was estranged by his ambitious designs in Castille and Catalonia."

"What penetration!" exclaimed Leonora, with a gentle pressure of her hand, and regarding him with a look of tender admiration. "You are quite right; my father, who attached little importance to the kingdom of Navarre, appointed me as his vicegerent and governor, with the especial charge to encourage civil war, to stir up the flames if they were like to go out for want of fuel."

"And have you not reigned long enough, Señora, to lose the desire of reigning?"

"On the contrary," exclaimed Leonora, as if she had been touched in the most sensitive part, "on the contrary; to reign as governor and lieutenant of Don Juan II. was to sit in the stocks and not on a throne, to be the slave of one who from caprice baits his hook with the royal purple; it is to suffer hunger and thirst, and witness, in fetters, a banquet where others consume savoury viands and exquisite liquors, whose fumes flatter and caress the senses, while no one has compassion enough to offer him a mouthful, or a drop to his parched lips. To govern in the name of others, in short, is to endure all the annoyances of rule without tasting any of its delights. Oh, if I were not to reign now, alone, free, tranquil, independent, I should die of

despair, for this alone has served to kindle, to irritate my desires, to make me know in all its extent how much was wanting to enjoyment. Do you see this letter," added Leonora, drawing a paper from her girdle, "this letter which I always have about me, and which I will tear up at the hour of my death, in order that no trace of such an opprobrium may remain? This letter is from my father, and it contains the proof of my humiliation—of my dishonour.* I asked money from the king for my ordinary expenses, for he did not even give me wherewithal to live, and he replies to me that it is I who must pay to him twelve thousand florins as Don Carlos had done; I accused Juan and Fortuño of Toledo, because they had defied my royal authority, and he answers me by openly defending them, and threatening me if I punish them, and loading them with favours; I complained that the king's officers were very badly paid, and that they murmured against me, and he replies by wondering that they were not full of gold, and bringing against me the most unjust accusations; I asked him to declare once for all what were my powers and functions as queen-governor, and he answers me with shuffling and circuitous language, in order to have always pretexts for accusing me, and finally

* This letter exists in the archives of the *Camara de Comptos* at Pampeluna, Case 160, No. 39.

threatens me, how horrible ! with the fate of my brother and sister, Carlos and Blanca, who died of poison. And this is to reign, and this is to wear a crown ! Alphonso, Alphonso ! now I am alone, but—how long the king lived !”

“Poor Leonora !” exclaimed the Infanzon, “to see herself obliged to wish for the death of—”

“Of all my relations, even of my father !”

The eyes of the princess, as she pronounced these words, were cast down under the weight of remorse or shame, and the knight withdrew his hand with a look of horror and contempt, as terrible perhaps as the guilty secrets to which he was listening.

“To me as well as my father,” pursued Leonora, “it was necessary to encourage division ; but now, that I am secure of reigning, I must strain every nerve to consolidate peace, to reconcile the different factions, in order that my sway may be more complete, and no one may disturb the sweets of sovereignty.”

“That is to say,” answered Alphonso, with soft accents, “that so much blood shed for the space of thirty years, so many families sacrificed, so many towns destroyed by fire, in order to secure your indisputable rights to the crown, ought to signify nothing when your object is to enjoy without fear, without suspicion, without importunate clamour, the delights of a reign for

which you were predestined by God from your birth—is that what you mean to say?”

“Yes, Alphonso. On the other hand, what is a throne when keenly attacked by some, and defended by others; when the former do not obey you because they do not recognise your authority, and the latter also refuse obedience, because being charged with the defence, they have actually more influence than you? Peace, and your love, Alphonso, are my only desires!”

“Peace and my love, do you say?”

“Yes; many years of peace and love; many years of bliss.”

“Good and well; but we are only yet at the beginning; my heart is yours, but how will you manage with regard to peace?”

“I have an idea.”

“An idea! Zounds! Let us hear it.”

“But do not suppose that it is mine.”

“Then I doubt whether it be a good one.”

“It belongs to the reverend father who came from you this morning.”

“So the friar of Irache also has ideas?”

“Of his own sort—You know all friars pique themselves on their skill in match-making.”

“Ha! a marriage then is the means devised for the attainment of peace?”

“ Yes, the union, by means of a marriage, of the two rival families which act as leaders to the factions.”

“ The Count de Lerin is a widower, but now old and frail. Don Philip of Navarre—well, he is young and handsome, and—But who the deuce does the friar wish to marry him to ?”

“ Doña Catalina de Beaumont, daughter of the Count de Lerin.”

“ Catalina !” exclaimed Alphonso with surprise.

“ What are you astonished at ? I thought you were of the same mind as the friar.”

“ The devil take the friar and—Who could entertain so absurd an idea ?”

“ Say rather, an idea so unpalatable to you,” added Leonora, in an angry tone.

“ To me ?”

“ Yes, to you, and all Catalina’s lovers.”

“ Ah ! You are jealous ! Are you jealous of Catalina ?” repeated the cavalier with inward satisfaction.

“ Is not Catalina a girl ?”

“ Of fifteen years.”

“ Is she not gentle, blooming, and beautiful ?”

“ She is all that, and much more,” said Alphonso ;
“ she is an angel.”

“ Is it not true that when you are in the retirement of your chamber you are only visible to angels ?”

“Well, I see that your system of espionage is good.”

“I am filled with rage, jealousy, despair, as well as shame, for loving you and having confessed it,” replied the princess, losing her self-possession; and then added, when she saw the cavalier’s undissembled satisfaction, “And this makes you smile?”

“Yes, because I see you love me ardently, as I should wish to be loved.”

“No, it is not for that. What do you care for any love but that of a girl of fifteen years? You deceive me, Don Alphonso, you deceive me; that smile is an insult—that reserve, indifference—your caresses, artifice. You know not, unhappy man, you know not how fierce has been the vengeance of Doña Leonora of Navarre, when she had no jealousy, and you cannot imagine how terrible it will be when that passion is roused in her.”

“Neither can you prevent me, my Leonora,” said the cavalier, with his perpetual smile, “from laughing now at your threats.”

“Well then, Don Philip will wed Doña Catalina?”

“Who knows?”

“Yes, he will marry her, because they love one another, do you hear, Don Alphonso? their love is mutual.”

“I am sorry on her account,” answered Alphonso

with the greatest tranquillity ; “ I am sorry for her sake, she is a lady for whom I entertain a singular affection — an affection almost paternal. Unhappy girl ! It is a pity that she is enamoured of this Don Philip ; for I assure you, my queen and mistress, that she shall not marry him.”

“ Alphonso, Alphonso ! do not fulminate her sentence of death !” exclaimed Leonora, perfectly frantic with rage. “ Ah ! you do not know what I am capable of.”

“ I know full well, Señora ; I can divine it from what you have been,” said the Infanzon, coldly, and left the apartment, shutting the door after him with violence.

“ Alphonso, Alphonso !” cried Doña Leonora, repenting her language.

But Alphonso heard her call on him without stopping, and one who had seen the Satanic joy that gleamed in his eyes, must have trembled at it still more than at the menaces of the princess.

“ Oh ! that man knows me not,” exclaimed Leonora, “ or he is more perverse than myself when he goes away so calmly.”

It was almost night when the Queen’s minion left the palace, and remembering that he had to go to the outskirts of the town, in order to remove the aged leper, under favour of the darkness, he bent his steps home-

ward, to put on his armour, that he might be completely unknown.

In his house he found a letter conceived in these terms :

“ The cagot is in safety, and much better cared for than he could be in your keeping. Now more than ever I shall be at your side ; now more than ever I shall aid you in your undertakings.”

His squire Fortun afterwards came almost drunk, as might be expected after having remained so many hours in the tavern. He could give no account of the disappearance of the leper ; and Don Alphonso became absorbed in deep meditation, occasioned by such strange and marvellous events.

CHAPTER VI.

SAD and sombre was the hermitage of the Penitent. Behind it a lofty rock reared its bare and jagged summit, which projected over the base, and served the humble dwelling as a covert from the tempest, while depriving it of the rays of the noonday sun, and the soft breezes of the south. In front it was defended against the rigours of the north by a cluster of robust beeches, which enhanced the sadness of the lonely abode, when the wind agitated their wide-spreading boughs with jarring sound, or howled among the pines which extended over it their horizontal branches, adorned with verdant fringes.

Between that wall of granite and those lofty trees, rose timidly the poor cabin, whose straw-covered roof was caressed by the branches which hung from the rock. It had in front a porch, beneath which was sheltered the humble door, with a large unwrought

stone at each side for seats, and the sign of our blessed redemption over the key-stone of its Gothic arch.

It is more than probable that some streamlet gushed from the foot of the precipice, fertilizing with its waters the vigorous vegetation of that sequestered spot; every blade, every fibre, had now become so many threads of water, the furrows were changed into rivulets, and the ravines into torrents.

The clear and cloudless sky did not deprive the rays of the sun of any of their influence in melting the snow, and uncovering the face of nature, now concealed by her white veil; the south wind with its balmy breath also took part in the work, which was only impeded by the silvery vapours from the rivers and valleys.

It was eight o'clock in the morning; the Penitent, seated on one of the large stones beneath the shed or porch, with her veil thrown back, and her arms folded, cast her eyes mechanically around, without fixing her attention on any of the objects which were painted on her retina.

Outside the hut the streams murmured; within, the turtle cooed with unheeded plaining; it called its mistress, who, since the fatal apparition of the travellers, had not bestowed on it a single caress, nor

brought it a single ear of corn to sustain it, nor even released it from its dark prison to see the rising sun, and inhale the morning breeze.

One only thought filled the soul of the female hermit; one only image met her wandering eyes; one only remembrance did her memory call up from its depths; besides that thought, that image, that remembrance, to her nought else existed.

Till then, time and solitude had protected her with their twofold shield against the pangs of grief; the hermitage served her as a citadel, where she was protected against the tumult of earthly thoughts which haunted her; the hair shirt as a cuirass, prayer as encouragement; but from the moment that *he* had penetrated into her retirement, the fortress was abandoned; its defender was conquered; everything was impregnated with the presence of the stranger, everything invested with a charm.

The breeze was no longer the pure airs of heaven, bringing down the song of angels, it was the atmosphere which *he* had breathed; the hut was not the poor nest of the wounded dove, it was the roof which had served as an asylum to him; the cross, the skull, instead of sacred and ascetic emblems, were objects on which he had fixed his regard; and the solitude, the solitude itself, had a mute but ceaseless voice, the faithful echo

of his—an echo which repeated all his words, with every inflection of tone, with all the enchantment of harmony lent them by an impassioned heart—an echo so much the more profound and penetrating, as it was disturbed by no one, and suffered interruption from no foreign sound.

The first that roused her from her deep reverie was produced by a rustling among the naked branches, and the plashing of heavy footsteps on the miry ground.

She raised her forehead, and Chafarote appeared before her.

“ You are still here ! ” exclaimed the under-hermit in a compassionate tone.

“ Well, what —— ”

“ The whole night ! the whole blessed night ! or rather cursed, for I love not these bitter winter nights ; and in the same posture ! and without tasting a morsel ! I am a hermit myself, and I flatter myself I can pray as well as any man, but, Señora, I must have good victuals and better liquor. There is nothing that requires more and better feeding than doing penance. ”

“ Have you delivered the warning to him ? ” asked the Penitent, without heeding his admonition.

“No, Señora.”

“Why not?”

“Because he is coming here himself, and you can tell him all personally.”

“Here again?” exclaimed the Penitent, rising in great alarm; “to see him again! Oh, I cannot, will not receive him.”

“Well, consider what is to be done, for he is coming up the hill with great speed.”

“Very well, leave me; place yourself where he cannot see you.”

Chafarote obeyed. The Penitent seized a piece of charred wood from the hearth, a remnant of yesterday’s fire, and, on the white pine doors, he wrote hastily these words:—

“Fly to save your beloved.

Treachery—conflagration in her palace.

Woe to her if you do not go quickly.”

“No, no; I will not see him again. I should place my soul in endless peril,” she then exclaimed, and suddenly shut the door of the hermitage, letting it close after her like a tomb-stone.

Soon after a man appeared among the trees, and advanced to the hut with hurried steps. He drew a white and delicate hand from under the cloak in which

he was muffled, and gave a knock, saying at the same time, in a calm and sonorous voice—"Open, Penitent, open in the name of God."

But, as no one answered, he applied his ear to the key-hole, then looked at the door, and observed the recently written characters, but did not care to decipher them. He knocked again with the same result, and rubbing his hands beneath his cloak, began to walk up and down in the porch, as if he wished to warm himself with the exercise. ♣

"Deuce take it," he murmured between his teeth, "she is now perhaps in the church of Our Lady, especially as it is Sunday; nothing but praying and fasting. What a lot of masses this holy woman must have laid in; she will be the better able to spare a few for those who can't afford time."

The worthy cavalier was soon tired of walking about, and sat down; but he very quickly got tired also of sitting. He recollected the inscription on the door, and to kill time, endeavoured to decipher it.

"Let me see if I can remember the lessons of the father abbot. By the soul of—— these pothooks look as if they were written by some reverend doctor. *Fly to*—Ha! this looks as if it were some sentence from the

gospel. *Save.* Faith I am not so stupid as I thought. *Your beloved.* The devil! *Treachery.* I am on thorns. *Conflagration—in her palace.* My God! this is a warning from heaven. *Woe to her if you do not go quickly.* Catalina! Catalina!" he exclaimed, rushing away in the opposite direction to that by which he had come.

A few minutes passed, and on the footpath which led from the chapel of the Virgin to the hermitage, appeared a man of lofty stature, muffled up to the eyes, and his head covered with a Milanese cap. The only part of his dress which was not concealed by his cloak was his Cordovan boots, covered with mud, and without spurs.

He advanced, like his predecessor, to the door of the hut; his step, however, was grave and tranquil; his looks took in everything at a single glance, and before knocking, he read the Penitent's warning; but far from betraying the confusion and concern of the other, he smiled sadly, and in a tender and melancholy tone, which had, however, a dash of bitterness, he exclaimed—

"This is not for me: for me there is no beloved to rescue; mine has now nothing to fear!"

And as he uttered these words he also drew forth his hand, not to knock, but to wipe away a tear. He then

pushed the door gently, but seeing that it did not yield, and hesitating whether he should knock or go away, he again read those lines. He remarked that they were newly written; he fancied that he could trace some resemblance between these characters and those of certain letters and intimations he had received; he remembered the great favours conferred on him the day before by the Penitent. At length the terrible threats of the Queen rushed to his memory, and now he did not doubt a moment longer that the inscription had been placed there for his perusal.

“Penitent, Penitent!” he cried, knocking violently and repeatedly at the door. “Tell me, for heaven’s sake, is it Catalina? is it the Count de Lerin’s daughter?” and he held his breath in his eagerness to listen.

He could not doubt there was some one within the hermitage, for in the silence of that deep solitude was heard the panting of a bosom struggling to smother its sobs.

“Is it Catalina?” he cried again; “is it Catalina?”

“Catalina!” answered a mournful voice, that seemed to issue from the bowels of the earth.

Don Alphonso did not care to know any more; he vanished from the spot like an exhalation.

The Penitent, in her anxiety to see him depart among the trees, left her cabin and advanced a few steps ; but she could not proceed, and fell senseless in the middle of the porch.

“ My God !” she murmured as she fell : “ to love him again as then ; to suffer as then the horrible torment of jealousy !”

CHAPTER VII.

THE castle of Lerin stood upon a lofty rock whose sides were nearly precipitous, like a stork's nest suspended over an abyss. It commanded a spacious and fertile plain where the Ega slackens its hitherto foaming waters, winding about as if it rejoiced at seeing itself set free from the narrow channel in which it was hemmed by the mountains, and flowing placidly through vineyards, olive-plantations, and meadows where pastured numerous flocks beneath the unclouded expanse of heaven. In short it combined the proud and frowning character of the fortress with the soft and smiling features of a rural abode. It was perched on the first step of the Pyrenees, which rise gradually from rock to rock until the Pico de Mediodia crowns the whole,—on the first bank, against which beat the waves of that immense and luxuriant lake of verdure and flowers, which the slow and majestic Ebro furrows with distant murmurs.

But this palace would have to us no other charm than that which its picturesque situation lends it, if fancy did not delight in investing it with new attractions. That mansion, so often lashed by the winds and encircled with clouds, is the abode of an angel of purity and candour, a girl of fifteen years, fair, gentle, cheerful, simple in her aspect and apparel, as well as simple of heart. It was beautiful to see her walk along the terrace like a dove on the cornice of a tower, clothed in white woollen cloth, with cambric head-dress also of purest white, from which descended her dark hair, falling over her temples in large tresses, and gathered gracefully behind her small and delicate ears, while the soft carmine of her countenance betokened life, health and tranquillity. It was sweet to see her bend her azure eyes on the vast plain with a sort of chastely voluptuous expression, which indicated a pure and upright mind, and a highly refined and susceptible heart. She was the guardian angel of the whole district; to her aerial mansion ascended the lamentations of the widow for the loss of her husband slain by a brother's steel, the tears of the mother who missed from her bosom the child for whom she had suffered such cruel pangs; the groans of the peasant returning to his hut, mutilated in a war whose object no one knew, and whose termination no one

could foresee—all these signs and sounds of sorrow and misfortune ascended to Catalina de Beaumont's terrace, and were gathered by that ministering angel to be offered up in her prayers as incense from the bitter flowers of life, bathed in the dew of her tears.

When she passed with her attendants through the streets of the city, the women came to their doors and windows to salute her; the old men she had comforted to extol her; the children to smile with satisfaction and point her out with their finger; and all to bless God with tears of joy: for she did not move a step without diffusing consolation; she only opened her lips to soothe grief; she only employed her eyes to divine and remedy misfortune.

But above all Catalina exerted herself to the utmost to extinguish the inveterate feuds, the embittered strife of the different factions.

“My friends,” she would say to the men, “let our fathers settle among themselves their rights and grievances; but we—why should we abhor those who call themselves our enemies? Do they not live within our own kingdom, do they not speak our own language? do they not worship the same God? are they not perhaps descended from the same throne as ourselves? do they not expose themselves—also like our own fathers, sons, or husbands to the same dangers in

war? do they know any more than we why they fight? in the heat of battle, indeed, let them assail one another, but when they lay aside their arms why should we harbour hatred against them?"

"We especially," she used to say to the women, "ought to appease the rancour and hatred of the men instead of encouraging it. A day will come when the war will cease, peace will be celebrated, and union will be effected and consolidated; and in that day, believe me, sisters, we shall regret all the evil we have done to our opponents."

Thus was Catalina wont to speak, infusing a greater warmth into her counsels than she usually manifested on other occasions; thus was she wont to speak, and when she gave utterance to such language her bosom heaved, her lips quivered, and her look had something rapt and inspired, which imparted irresistible force to her expressions.

Great was her delight at this time because the factions had signed a truce for two months, all having agreed to proclaim Doña Leonora as Queen, and to crown her in the presence of all the principal cavaliers of either party, while they should hold the Cortes, which on this occasion might be truly called national; for hitherto each faction had held their own where they

denounced each other as factious and rebellious, and passed contradictory laws.

Although of tender years, Catalina was not so young as not to have seen more than a hundred truces expire, some of which even came to a premature end, from the impatient animosity of the factions: and that which had just been agreed upon did not promise much in favour of lasting peace and concord; but nevertheless, whether the daughter of the Count entertained a presentiment that the present truce was the dawn of a perpetual reconciliation, or thought that she might find amusement in leaving the confinement of the castle, to witness the royal festivities, or whether, in fine, she fancied that she would find in Estella one she was not accustomed to see in the castle of Lerin, it is certain that she did not dissemble her satisfaction, and that the soft tints of hope and happiness beamed in her countenance.

On one of those serene and peaceful days she saw two figures on horseback coming along the road to Estella. However usual and unworthy of remark this circumstance might be, it nevertheless arrested her attention to such a degree that she could not withdraw her eyes from them as they slowly descended the hill. She occasionally used to observe one or two cavaliers

mounted on powerful chargers passing at full speed and always at the distance of an arrow's flight from the castle, and one of them on perceiving her on the battlements, would take out a white handkerchief, wave it quickly, and gallop off, not without turning his head in the midst of his career, and making his signal flutter again in the breeze.

Catalina imagined that she now saw the mysterious cavalier who used to greet her in this manner, and her cheeks immediately became scarlet, and her heaving bosom betrayed the agitation of her heart, which she wished to keep tranquil ; but the pace of the horses did not exhibit so much spirit as usual, nor did any white signal relieve the unmitigated blackness of the figures, who resolutely directed their course to the city, a thing which never happened to the others.

After no small anxiety and uncertainty, she saw plainly that the fancied cavaliers were converted into reverend Benedictine monks, who slowly ascended the steep acclivity that led to the castle, apparently more occupied with thoughts of rest and comfort than of greetings and gallopings.

They alighted at the gate, and having been recognized by the Count's pages and squires, they were led, the one to the presence of the lord of the castle, and the other to the more modest, but more savoury, accom-

modation of the kitchen, where he could, before the blazing fire, satisfy two of his most pressing and peremptory wants—warmth and breakfast—internal and external comfort.

It is needless to say whether the lay brother envied the lot of the learned father Abarca (for the newcomer was no other than he, as our readers must have surmised), especially when he found himself seated on a bench of walnut-tree, beneath the bell-shaped chimney, and before a table covered with a white cloth and fastened to the wall at one extremity, on which a hare was served up that had been caught the day before in the plain of Sesma ; when he saw himself surrounded by dogs of every description—greyhounds, setters, pointers, and harriers—thrusting their snouts upon the edge of the table, or pawing his sandals, or growling behind him, while to one of them he would throw a well-picked bone from the head, to another a carefully-polished rib, and to a third, a shank bone without an atom of flesh ; in such circumstances he would not have exchanged with a patriarch, let alone the reverend father. He regarded himself as a monarch every inch, with the chimney-arch for his canopy, the bench for his throne, and the hearth for his footstool ; while his courtiers were the dogs, which, with all their pawing, growling, and snarling, showed a less rapacious

disposition than Juan the Second's courtiers, contenting themselves with bones, and well-polished bones too.

Unfortunately, he was not long allowed to indulge in such lofty thoughts, for the voice of his master came to summon him from those agreeable illusions, and, what is worse, from those savoury realities, in order to escort him back the same road by which they had come.

"Brother Gregorio," said Father Abarca, rubbing his hands, whether from joy or cold, or both together, "I leave this castle well pleased with my visit."

"I should have been better pleased if we had remained a few minutes longer."

"How good and how simple is the Count de Lerin!" exclaimed the holy man.

"Good! I will not say that he is not, because he gives alms liberally to the convent; simple he may possibly be, but he is not generally thought so."

"Only fancy, brother, he supplies me with all the materials I want for my chronicle, and confesses to me—everything, even his own faults."

"'Faith, father, if my faults were to be published, I should try, like the Count, to have the chronicling of them myself."

"Know, brother, that the Count de Lerin is of the

same opinion with me as to the causes of the civil war, and as to the means of putting an end to it," said the father, in whose beatific countenance appeared a smile of vanity and self-complacency.

"Well, now! and the Count really desires the war to cease?"

"He desires, he anxiously longs to see the end of it."

"Then why," replied the lay brother, with a roguish look, "why did he not for the last seven-and-twenty years wish to put an end to it?"

"Because—because—but what does the lay brother know about such matters? There is no doubt that the Count wishes it to finish, and to let by-gones be by-gones, if I may be allowed so familiar a phrase. It is certain that he thinks as I do with regard to the marriage of his daughter with the Marshal of Navarre, and the expulsion of the Moors and Jews; but if this last measure cannot be carried out, as the good of the country requires, he also agrees with me as to the imposition of double taxes on the congregations of both races; and should our plan be adopted, the kingdom will become as quiet as a lake of oil."

"And, tell me, learned father, what dowry must the bridegroom give?"

"Ah! there is my glory and triumph," exclaimed

the friar in great glee ; “ but I am wrong—and God forgive this lack of modesty—there is the triumph and glory of our holy order, since God makes use of my humble person to work such miracles. Only fancy, brother, the Count has lost his best castles, towns, and villages, in this war, and, nevertheless, he asks nothing more of the Marshal than to restore all those villages, towns, and castles which are his own.”

“ Which were his own ?”

“ That is to say, he is to restore them previously, and while the conditions of peace are being arranged. And they supposed the Count so covetous, so intractable, so irreconcilable !”

“ Certainly, father, he is the first man in Navarre. I do not estimate people by their talent, their castles, or their vassals, but by their kitchen ; and, 'fore God, that of Count Lerin will stand a comparison with our own.”

Here our story loses sight of the travellers, and returns to the palace of Lerin.

It then goes on to relate that the old Count, whose spirit was not enervated or enfeebled by years, went to see his daughter, and, in a few words, explained to her that he was under the necessity, as one of the chief nobles of Navarre, of attending the coronation of Doña Leonora and the royal festivities, and enjoined

on her, at the same time, the propriety of remaining in the castle, without taking any part in the Court rejoicings, and without even indulging in her accustomed walks and recreations outside the walls.

We have said "in a few words," not only because the Count's daughter did not require much persuasion to obey her father, but because, at that period, fathers did not waste their breath in enforcing obedience on their children.

The Count charged her above all to admit no one within the gates of the castle in his absence, and not to leave the company of her women for a single instant; with which strict injunctions he departed, taking with him, on two sumpter mules, the magnificent dresses which he had caused to be made for the coronation, and accompanied by a cavalier, who had come in haste from the Court to communicate certain important information.

Although well furnished with soldiers, the castle of Lerin was almost deprived of domestics, who had accompanied their master to the Court, in order that he might conceal by outward pomp, the straitened circumstances to which he had been reduced by his enemies.

Catalina did not even in thought murmur at the severe arrangements of her father: she had so much

confidence in his foresight, that she did not doubt for a moment but that they were the most proper and fitting; that very conviction, however, caused her great uneasiness; for she feared that since her father who thought only of gratifying her, and who anticipated her lightest caprices, refused her that solace and recreation, the peace would not be very solid, nor the reconciliation very sincere and lasting.

She resolved, therefore, not only to execute the Count's orders, but to redouble their severity by shutting herself up in a tower of the castle.

She was contemplating one day, from the grating of a window, the snowy peaks which concealed from her view the city of Estella, and even thought that the east wind brought the distant echo of the chiming bells which celebrated the coronation of the Queen, when her vague and melancholy looks were arrested by a muffled horseman ascending towards the castle at full speed.

Soon after, her attendants informed her that a cavalier, who would not uncover his face, nor tell his name, solicited the honour of kissing her hand, and that he waited before the moat, because they refused to let down the drawbridge.

“Tell him,” said Catalina, “that I thank him for

his courtesy, but that I cannot receive him in the absence of my father."

"Señora," continued the duennas, "the cavalier insists on seeing you, and says that his business concerns you deeply, and that he can communicate it to yourself only, because it is of a very urgent and secret nature."

"Tell him that the Count is not far distant, and that he can soon find my father, to whom he may impart anything that concerns me."

The attendants did not trouble her with further messages, knowing her firmness of character and scrupulous filial obedience; but the cavalier went round and round the castle, sometimes on the plain, and sometimes on the hill; and when he discovered the grating where Catalina appeared, he drew forth a white kerchief, and waved it several times, and even joined his hands in the attitude of entreaty, exhibiting in his actions the utmost anxiety to see her nearer, in order to speak with her.

But Catalina, whom a small part of these demonstrations would, at other times, have readily induced to ascend to the terrace, left the window, from a feeling of delicacy which prevented her from showing any interest in them, in the absence of her father.

The cavalier seemed to be driven to despair by this shyness; and after wandering about the castle, he slowly disappeared, with a saddened air, among the thickets of Baigorri.

Several hours after, when the early shadows of the evening had rendered objects scarcely visible, and Catalina, leaning on the window, kept her eyes fixed on the spot where she had seen the cavalier, she perceived that the soft sounds of a lute ascended from the base of the rocks, accompanied by the tones of a voice, not unpleasing, but tremulous and agitated, which distinctly sang the following verses, to the air of a well known song :—

Oh ! gentle dove, take wing,
 Fly from thy narrow nest ;
 A snake with deadly sting
 Is lurking nigh,
 To plunge it in thy breast :
 Then fly, oh ! fly.

Take wing, for I am loth,
 My beauteous dove,
 To see thine prove
 The fate of careless moth.

That unknown voice, that unaccustomed music, those mysterious words repeated more than once, the apparition of the cavalier with the white handkerchief, and his reiterated efforts to speak to her, produced great

commotion in the mind of the timid maiden of Lerin, who fancied she saw in such an accumulation of circumstances, the warning of a friend who wished to guard her against some danger.

But what kind of danger was it, if she was protected by the walls of the castle, in one tower of which she lived completely retired, with those only in whom she could repose confidence ?

The voice however continued—

Take wing, for oh ! I'm loth,
My beauteous dove,
To see thine prove
The fate of careless moth.

What means this burden of the lay ? Was it a mere filling up of the couplet, or a clear and precise indication of the kind of death which, according to the singer, was suspended over her ?

Catalina was then startled at finding herself alone ; she wished to leave the window, in order to summon her attendants, but felt an extraordinary heat in the chamber, and a hollow noise beneath her, like the roar of a cataract ; the light of the moon had not force enough to penetrate that dense atmosphere, loaded with smoke ; and when the nocturnal troubadour was about to repeat his monotonous refrain—

Take wing, for oh ! I'm loth,
My beauteous dove,
To see thine prove
The fate of careless moth—

there was heard the loud clang of a lute dashed against the rocks, and instead of the song, a despairing cry of—

“ Fire ! fire ! fire in the castle of Lerin.”

Catalina had swooned away at the foot of the barred casement, which in the midst of the darkness looked like the mouth of a glowing furnace.

CHAPTER VIII.

EVER since daybreak on Thursday, the twenty-eighth of January, numerous bands of the inhabitants of Estella, as well as strangers, roamed about singing and shouting, from one extremity of the town to the other, which was divided, still more than by the waters of the Ega, by the dissensions and jealousies of its inhabitants.

So happy was this kingdom at the period of our story, that besides the animosities arising from difference of castes and classes, known by the name of cagots, labourers, peasants, yeomen, gentlemen, cavaliers, and nobility, besides the religious divisions of Moors, Moriscos, Jews, and Christians, new and old besides the political divisions of Agramontese and Beaumontese, each town was divided into local factions, some of which are famous in history, sometimes quarter against quarter, as La Navarrería and Los Burgos in Pampeluna, sometimes families against families, as the Ponces and Learzas in Estella.

That day, however, those who had only seen one another before in the field of battle, who had only met to cut each other's throats, who only knew in order to detest one another, and even, perhaps, detested without knowing one another, promenaded affectionately together through streets carpeted with rushes and reed-mace, beneath triumphal arches tastefully constructed, between rich tapestries and curtains, to the sound of tambourines and popular music, to the centupled din of all the bells of the city and district.

They went in crowds from the palace, and crossing the river by two bridges proceeded to the great square. There stood the church of San Juan, in the chapter-house of which the Cortes were assembled; there was to be performed the imposing ceremony of administering the oaths and crowning the Queen.

The Cortes consisted of three estates, viz., the ecclesiastic, the military or that of the nobility, and the representatives of the *good towns*; each of them had its own president, and the president of the first presided over all. This estate, nevertheless, although the most important and most highly privileged, was the least numerous. It was composed of the bishop of Pampeluna, the prior of the order of Saint John, the prior of Roncesvalles, the abbots of Iranzu, Oliva, Leire, Irache, Fitero and Urdax, the Dean of Tudela,

and a few other ecclesiastical dignitaries. The bishop was their president.

The military estate or that of the nobles, presided over by the Constable, and failing him by the Marshal, was formed of the twelve ricos-homes (grandees), and cavaliers and infanzons whose residences possessed palatial honors as the seats of heads of houses, and lastly the popular estate consisted of the procurators of the *good towns*, or places which could send one or more deputies according to law (fuero) although never with more than one vote.

The estates sat in their order; and even the individual members of each body had their assigned place, so that to take possession of another would have been considered a usurpation or an affront.

Beside the modest garments of the monks, and the still more homely dress of the representatives of the *good towns*, shone in striking contrast the splendid costume of the knights, who were almost all clothed in a long mantle of scarlet silk and a tunic of the same material, which the monarch used to bestow on them, when they received the honour of knighthood.

On some glittered the collar of the order of *Good Faith*, and on others the insignia of the *White Hound*, which consisted of a golden hound suspended from a chain whose links had the form of a chestnut. The

king also was at the expense of the devices when he honoured any one with these decorations.

They were all displayed on the person of the aged Count de Lerin, who formerly enjoyed the first seat among the barons on account of his Constablership, an office of which he was deprived by King John as a punishment for his rebellion : he did not occupy the seat of presidency, nor the second seat, which belonged of right to the youthful Marshal Don Philip of Navarre, but the third, which immediately followed next in order.

These two first seats of the military estate were vacant.

Mosen Pierres de Peralta, successor to the Count de Lerin, should have occupied the first, but for the excommunication under which he lay for having murdered with his own hand Don Nicholas de Chávarri, the bishop of Pampeluna ; but what meant the absence of the Marshal, who, in default of Mosen Pierres, should preside over the estate of barons ?

It was known that the chief of the Agramontese had arrived at Estella, that as a near relative of the princess he was a guest at the palace, and as no one surpassed him in magnificence, there were brought for him at all hours splendid dresses and ornaments in which he meant to shine at the royal festivities. Why then did he not make his appearance at the Cortes

when the church clock had just struck ten, the hour appointed for taking the oaths? Was it an unconquerable repugnance to sit side by side with his mortal enemy the Count de Lerin, the leader of the opposite faction?

Such was the general opinion, and one which was probable enough considering the previous history of both chiefs: the feuds which existed between them could not be considered as appeased by a truce which was more politic than cordial, more forced than sincere. A grave lay between them as a barrier to reconciliation—the grave of Don Philip's father, who was treacherously slain by an unknown hand.

These were evil prognostics to those who sighed for the perpetuity of the truce; the clergy were scandalized, the knights shook their heads and smiled maliciously, and the representatives of the towns calculated in silence how many men and what amount of taxes that vacant seat would cost the civic corporations.

While the absence of Don Philip was commented on in such different ways, the chiming of the bells suddenly resounded with redoubled vehemence, the rolling of the drums, the clangour of the trumpets, and the loud acclamations mingled with the hoarse murmurs of the tumultuous crowd, formed altogether a deep and deafening harmony which produced not less stupefaction of the senses than exhilaration of mind.

If we were orientals we should say that it was like the noise of many waters rushing headlong from the mountains.

The Queen was arriving.

Don Alonzo de Carillo the bishop of Pampeluna, president of the Cortes, appointed a deputation to go to the door of the church in order to receive Doña Leonora and accompany her to the hall of the National Assembly ; after this all was again silence.

No one ventured to speak aloud about the Queen, but nevertheless all murmured against her.

The Beamontese said : “ This is she that assisted in poisoning the prince of Viana, and four years after poisoned with her own hands Doña Blanca of Navarre. Two fratricides to obtain the throne ! And now she is to be Queen ! ”

And the Agramontese added : “ A war of seven-and-twenty years have we maintained in order that this woman might reign, because her reign meant the extermination of the Count de Lerin and his adherents ; and at the end of these seven and twenty years she comes this day to be crowned among the Count de Lerin’s followers.”

The representatives of the cities said as they shook their heads with a sigh : “ This woman is the bond of union for all the factions ; there are now no rival claims,

no royal ambitions to raise their head for our destruction; but is it possible that God can bless a union formed for the purpose of enthroning crime?"

"How incomprehensible," continued the clergy, "are the judgments of God, how unsearchable his ways, above all on the present occasion! But if the Lord permits this woman to reign as long and as happily as the welfare of the people requires, how much more unfathomable and incomprehensible will not this appear to the poor and weak judgment of man!"

Leonora was received in the Cortes with such sentiments and reflections uppermost in the minds of all. The people nevertheless continued shouting in the great square, not because the younger daughter of Juan II. had achieved a triumph over her brother and sister; the people shouted and rent the air with exclamations of joy at seeing the hostile partisans mingled confusedly together, and relating the feats of valour which they had performed or witnessed in the ranks of either faction—at the novelty of seeing those eating and drinking together who had yesterday drawn the sword on one another, and to-morrow might again come to blows; for in short the people of Navarre are implacable enemies while they have arms in their hands, and the most faithful and cordial friends when they lay them aside.

Before the coronation of the princes of Navarre, they were obliged to swear that they would preserve the laws, usages, and customs; and without this oath, the nobles, and the representatives of the towns, would never consent to vow fidelity and obedience to them.

Bishop Carillo, clothed in his episcopal robes, arose, and, addressing Doña Leonora, said to her, in a loud voice,—

“Do you wish to be our queen and mistress?”

“It so pleaseth me,” she answered, kneeling before the prelate.

“Do you wish to be our queen and mistress?” he repeated, with more emphasis.

“It so pleaseth me.”

“Do you wish to be our queen and mistress?” said the prelate a third time.

“It so pleaseth me.”

These repetitions of the same question must have been very annoying to one who had showed so much anxiety to reign, and she would doubtless have gladly dispensed with them.

“Our queen, and natural mistress,” pursued the bishop, “it is necessary, before you come to the sacrament of the holy unction, to make oath to your people, as did your predecessors, the kings of Navarre; and in

like manner, the aforesaid people will swear to you what it swore to your aforesaid predecessors."

"I am ready," answered the Queen.

Then he presented to her a cross, and the book of the Holy Gospels, on which Leonora laid her hands pronouncing the following oath, which the chief notary of the kingdom handed to her written out:—

"We, Leonora, by the grace of God Queen of Navarre, Countess of Foix, and Princess of Bearn, swear to our people of Navarre, upon this Cross and these Holy Gospels, touched manually by us, that is to our prelates, nobles, gentlemen, men of the good cities, and all the people of Navarre, that we shall maintain and keep, and cause to be maintained and kept, all their laws, usages, customs, immunities, liberties and privileges belonging to each of them, as they now exist, to them and their successors throughout our lifetime, without any injury, improving and not making worse, either in whole or in part."

And as Doña Leonora's accent, in pronouncing these words, was not sufficiently strong and distinct, the notary repeated them in a loud voice, in order that all might be informed, and that no one should have the least doubt, but that the Queen had sworn to respect their *fueros*, without which none would have acknowledged her.

When she had finished reading, Doña Leonora sat down, and, as the ecclesiastical estate did not swear, she called on the president of the military.

All turned their eyes towards the Marshal of Navarre's seat.

It was unoccupied.

In the seat of the Constable had been placed the insignia of his office—a huge two-edged sword ornamented with silver, which represented the sword of justice.

There was a moment of confusion and anxiety. The president of the military estate was again called, when the Count de Lerin rose gravely, and grasping the sword of the Constable, placed himself in the seat of the president, leaving in the middle the seat destined for the Marshal, and after having remained in it sufficient time to take possession of the new dignity, which he had with such boldness and dexterity conferred on himself, he advanced to take the oath, with as much calmness and security as he could have done when he legitimately filled the office, before he had been dispossessed of it by Don Juan II.

All applauded the Count's presence of mind; the Queen confirmed him in his dignity with a look of gratitude, and he, with calm and deliberate accent, pronounced these words,—

“ We, the barons of Navarre, and in name of all, Don Luis de Beaumont, Constable of the kingdom, and Count de Lerin, in our name, and that of all the knights and other nobles and infanzons of the said kingdom, swear to you our Queen upon this Cross, and these Holy Gospels, touched manually by us, to keep and defend faithfully your person and lands, and to assist you in keeping, defending, and maintaining the *fueros* of Navarre, with all our power.”

The nobles having sworn, the representatives of the towns also did so, in the following terms :—

“ We, the representatives of the good towns, in our own name and the name of their citizens, inhabitants, and residents, swear upon this Cross and these Holy Gospels, by us manually touched, to guard well and faithfully the person of our lady the Queen, and to assist in guarding the kingdom with all our power, according to our laws, usages, customs, privileges, immunities, and liberties, enjoyed by each of us.”

When the ceremony of oath-taking was terminated, all proceeded to the chapel, where the Queen was to be anointed with the holy oil. Doña Leonora had to divest herself, in an adjoining apartment, of her royal robes, and appeared soon after clothed [in white silk.

The bishop anointed her ; she then advanced to the

altar table, girded herself with the sword, placed the crown on her head, and grasped the golden sceptre.

The time for proclamation was now arrived. The Queen was to be raised upon the shield by the twelve *grandees* (*ricos-homes*) of the kingdom. The Marshal was one of them, the Count de Lerin another. Who should act as substitute for the former?

This was a matter not easily settled: scarcely was the name of one cavalier mentioned, when all the rest protested against him,—each asserted the antiquity of his family and the value of his services, and even the epithets of loyal and rebellious, victorious and vanquished, were uttered in hollow murmurs.

An inauspicious dawning, certainly, for the first day of a reign which was heralded as one of peace, union, and forgiveness. The disappearance of the Marshal filled all with uneasiness; his friends feared for his life; his enemies for their families, lands and hearths, and all reproached one another with evils which had not perhaps happened.

When angry charges and recriminations were beginning to wax stronger, and nought but the deep murmurings of human passions resounded in the house of God, there was heard a soft feminine voice, like that of the guardian angel of the mariner, which stills the thunder, and the roar of the tempest.

“Wait, wait, cavaliers, the Marshal will very soon arrive.”

All eyes were directed to the spot whence the voice seemed to have proceeded.

A woman covered with a long black veil was retiring through the middle of the crowd, which made way for her, and bowed reverently as she passed.

“It is the Penitent,” said those who were nearest to the mysterious woman.

“The Penitent!” repeated all in astonishment.

“I hold it to be a happy augury that the holy woman from our Lady’s of Rocamador should have come to my coronation,” said the Queen with a sigh, who until then had not unsealed her lips except to repeat mechanically the accustomed formulas.

No one had suffered so much as she, nor felt such cruel tortures of anxiety during the now allayed disputes and recriminations; every moment of delay was an age of torment, and every little impediment an insuperable obstacle. She who had gone to work with so much activity, such breathless haste that she had, within five short days after receiving notice of her father’s death, arranged a truce, convoked and assembled the Cortes, and begun the coronation,—she was now to be detained whole minutes in the middle of the ceremony!

Her tranquillity was completely restored by a noise among the crowd collected at the door.

“ The Marshal, the Marshal ! ” exclaimed the princess.

Don Philip entered hurriedly, and was received with peaceful murmurs, which gradually became fainter until they died away altogether. A profound silence reigned ; all were eager to hear the excuses or revelations of the youthful chief, and kept their eyes fixed on his countenance, in order to divine from its expression the cause of that mysterious delay. It might easily be perceived in examining his appearance that his cheeks were somewhat flushed, his fair curling locks a little disordered, and his gala dress hastily put on ; but besides these particulars his most intimate friends could discover nothing.

Moreover, let it not be supposed that his eyes were downcast from shame at the fault he had committed, or that his manners betrayed any agitation. On the contrary, he looked boldly on the assembled multitude, with a loftiness which evinced sovereign contempt for public opinion, or great confidence and satisfaction of conscience, while his manners were natural, free, and unembarrassed.

He presented himself before the Queen without even muttering an excuse for form's sake.

“Have you sworn to keep my fueros and privileges?” he asked dryly enough.

“Yes,” answered the bishop; “the oath-taking is over; take this ring that you may assist in raising the Queen on the shield; nothing now remains but the proclamation.”

“And who has presided over the barons?”

“The Constable of Navarre,” gravely answered his enemy, the Count de Lerin, making a display of the insignia of his office.

The Agramontese chief could not repress an almost imperceptible movement of repugnance; but he then greeted his enemy with a good-humoured smile, saying, “Ah! cousin, I congratulate you; and I would give you my hand if you would swear to me that you were not my father’s assassin.”

“It will be better, cousin, that you should give it to this buckler, which has at length become the shield of many lives,” answered the aged Count, smiling almost paternally, and looking at the Queen, whose breast throbbed with anger and impatience.

The Marshal again looked at her with those daring, almost fierce eyes, which used to make even his own partizans tremble, and seized one of the rings of the shield.

The Count de Lerin also looked at the Queen, but

with an expression of respectful homage, and placed himself on the other side. At that moment their parts seemed to have been exchanged; the Agramontese appeared to be the princess's enemy, and the Beaumontese her defender and partisan.

When all the grandes had grasped the buckler by the twelve rings, the Queen placed herself in the middle and was raised aloft.

“Royal, royal, royal!” cried the heralds.

“Royal, royal, royal!” answered all the bystanders in chorus.

Then the Queen showered money upon her people, not coined as the *fuero* required; compliance with that law would have delayed the coronation three days longer; and Leonora's haste was not scrupulous; one formality more was purchased too dearly at three days' reign.

What meant such impatience? Was it perchance a vague presentiment of the future? Was it a secret voice which warned her that unless she made speed to reign, she might never reign at all?”

She descended from the shield, and the bishop of Pampeluna conducted her to the throne, which was raised at the right of the high altar, and made her sit in it for the first time; after which *Te Deum* was chanted.

The prelates, barons, and representatives of the good towns, kissed her hand, and that honour was then granted to the common people (*pueblo menudo*), who were in the church.

Doña Leonora submitted to this tedious and disgusting ceremony, not only with patience and firmness, but with pleasure.

She was Queen of Navarre; no requisite was wanting to her regal authority; she was acknowledged by the Cortes, the factions, and the people, and in token thereof they kissed her hand, kneeling before her at the foot of her throne. This thought would have sufficed to inspire her with courage, fortitude, and even joy on the rack.

The people, who were passing before her in long procession, and whom she looked at without seeing, did not disturb her enjoyment—her ecstasy, and the blessing which each pronounced on her, when imprinting his reverend lips on her royal hand, ascended to her ears in grateful murmurs as a lullaby to her own thoughts. But all of a sudden she trembled on her throne on hearing a feeble, deliberate, scarcely-perceptible voice, saying to her, “Remember the TWELFTH OF FEBRUARY.”

The person who lay at her feet was a woman.

Leonora wished to speak—to utter a cry, but the voice continued—

“ FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, all but FIFTEEN DAYS.”

“ Ah!” exclaimed the Queen, in terror, and preparing to order her guards to detain the woman, who again for the last time said, “ FIFTEEN DAYS,”—coolly and calmly, as if she defied all the power of the Queen, whom all treated with veneration, or as if she wished, with her stern, icy, and prophetic words, to stupify, fascinate, and silence her victim, and this was the effect produced. She then rose, grave and serene, letting fall a thick veil over her countenance, and disappeared immediately in the crowd. When the Queen recovered from her stupefaction there was a bumpkin at her feet, regarding her with stupid wonder, and who thus addressed her :—

“ Madam, God grant to your Excellence more years than those of my uncle Anton, who was an old man before the war.”

“ Enough now, enough!” exclaimed the Queen, rising, with haggard features and pallid hue.

The august lady returned to her palace as she had come, drawn in a carriage, and endeavouring to bow and smile to her people, who hailed her with acclamations.

When the royal cortège reached the bridge, a mounted

knight in armour, and with closed visor, was waiting there. He looked on all sides, as if he eagerly sought some person.

When the Count de Lerin passed, he earnestly called on him, beckoning at the same time with his hand.

“Depart, sir, depart; your palace is in flames.”

“Lerin?”

“Yes, Lerin.”

“And my daughter—my daughter?”

“Ask the Queen what she has done with your daughter.”

“Explain yourself, explain yourself, for the love of heaven!” exclaimed the count.

“Ah, let us not lose time. Leave this court of traitors and assassins. To Lerin, to Lerin!” said the mail-covered warrior, as he galloped off along the river.

The new Constable, before leaving, turned to salute the Queen, smiling affectionately, and with the same smile he greeted his enemies.

“What can have happened to the old Count?” asked Leonora of the Marshal, who was riding by the side of her chariot. “It can be nothing evil, for he went away smiling.”

“Nothing evil, indeed! I believe the castle of

Lerin is burning from top to bottom, and, as it would seem, he has only two castles left—”

“ Good heavens !” exclaimed the Queen ; “ from what neglect, from what cause ?”

“ I think it must be from carelessness on the part of some of our adherents, because the Count smiled so sweetly as he looked at us.”

“ Is it possible, Marshal ?” exclaimed the Queen, directing a terrible look at him.

“ Softly, madam, for now I recollect, the Count’s smile did not fall less sweetly on you than on us.”

The Queen bent her forehead under the weight of so bitter a reproach.

The people followed her with vivas and acclamations, which were almost directed to a corpse or a crowned statue of marble.

CHAPTER IX.

THE hour of noon was one of the most welcome and agreeable to our ancestors ; it gave them—unlike the Jews—little concern whether the evil spirit mentioned by the Psalmist, that walketh by noonday, was then going about loose, nor did they care a straw whether the rural divinities which made the Gentiles tremble, waxed furious at that hour : they had by that time worked for six hours, and their hunger was too keen to allow them to think of anything else than the means of satisfying it.

They sat down to table at the last stroke of the bell ; the chaplain, or, failing him, the head of the house, blessed the meal in brief and summary terms, and then, though the world were to tumble about their ears, they would not stir from their seats for two hours, unless to receive some honoured guest from the neighbouring castle, or a devout pilgrim returning from Compostella.

At that hour our cities, in their silence and solitude, resembled Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Such was the aspect of Estella the second day of Leonora's reign, when the clock of San Juan was striking twelve. All the cavaliers of each party, all the leaders of high rank, were seated in the palace at a banquet to which they had been invited by the Queen.

Strife, hatred, and sullen looks frequently resist the efforts of reasoning and eloquence, and yield to the spontaneous impulse of a toast, to the freedom inspired by seeing one another together and partaking of the same viands and the same enjoyments.

Political animosities are protuberances which disappear in the friction of mutual intercourse. Society is the river which keeps these angular stones rolling along, until, by rubbing against one another, they soon become smooth, round, and polished.

Leonora knew all this; she knew that there is no one whose brow does not lose its wrinkles when he is eating; and this was doubtless one of her principal reasons for giving the banquet, besides the influence of the good custom of our fathers, who could never imagine diversions or entertainments that had not a superb dinner as their basis.

The present festivities formed a very solid founda-

tion, which might sustain with all security the edifice to be raised upon it—the future reconciliation of parties. The success of the new peace did not depend on the facile lips of a minister, nor the indifferent pen of a journalist, but on the staple articles supplied by the gardener and the officers of the kitchen and pantry. The workmanship was not likely to be very refined, for we have seen that the Navarrese in the fifteenth century, in matters of diet, approached more nearly the antediluvian times than the age of Lucullus; but to make amends, their feasts were as barbarously abundant as that of Camacho, and had a certain solemnity of character which gave them a peculiar aspect.

The principal officers in the royal palace, including those connected with the victualling department, were filled by clerks, and this custom had become so deeply rooted that, although the clergy gradually relinquished functions so ill-becoming the dignity and decorum of their ministry, the laymen who succeeded them in the royal service were still denominated clerks; the royal stewards and butlers were clerks of the buttery and pantry. One and the same class had the cure of souls and bodies.

The carvers were kept hard at work, dissecting oxen and poultry as if for a wager. The cup-bearers had not hands enough to uncork flasks and bottles,

and pour out wine ; the demand was immense, the consumption frightful. Doña Leonora might be well satisfied with the extraordinary success which attended her work of substantial reconciliation and practical harmony.

Nevertheless Leonora, whatever efforts she might make to conceal the bitterness of her soul, felt gall and wormwood in her heart, which neither the exhilaration of the banquet, nor the aspect of that reconciliation of enemies making themselves happy together could sweeten.

Two persons were missing in the brilliant assembly—Don Alphonso and the Count de Lerin ; without the latter, the courtesy and cordiality of the cavaliers of the opposite factions were more apparent and superficial than solid, since they were not participated in by one who with a single word, a single gesture, could set all by the ears ; and without the former, what cared she for the peace of Navarre or of the whole world ?

Each of these two circumstances was sufficient to cloud her satisfaction, but the two united amounted to real martyrdom ; her lively imagination enabled her to perceive that the simultaneous disappearance of these two personages was not accidental, and that her plans as a queen and as a woman might, at one and the same time, receive a fatal blow.

It was natural that the burning of Lerin should be spoken of at table, and it was also natural that so extraordinary an event, of which only imperfect accounts had been received, should be magnified and distorted, and narrated with as many variations as there were narrators. One asserted that the Count de Lerin's daughter, driven to desperation by the seclusion in which she was kept by her father, had set fire herself to the palace, in order to bury herself in its ruins; another said, on the contrary, that a vindictive lover, irritated at the disdain of that peerless beauty, determined to take this barbarous mode of revenging himself, and witnessed the horrible death of Catalina with his arms folded and his visor down. Others affirmed that the Castilians had entered with fire and sword, by the bridge of Lodosa, but this opinion was contradicted by those who swore they saw the soldiers of Louis the Eleventh. There were not wanting some who made a friar the author of so many disasters, and others again, who, to crown all, charged the Count de Lerin himself with the perpetration of the deed.

Among so many different opinions, there were three persons at the table who had none, or, if they had, took good care not to express it—the Queen, the Marshal, and Mosen Pierres de Peralta. Leonora looked at Don Philip as if she wished to make him

understand that she suspected him or his partizans ; Don Philip looked at the Queen as if he charged her with so horrid a crime ; and Mosen Pierres looked at the plate he had before him, as if neither the delinquent nor the crime gave him the slightest concern. But to make amends, the friar of Irache spoke for all, endeavouring to prove that while the kingdom was infested with Moors and Jews, and, above all, lepers, such lamentable events would constantly recur.

Nevertheless, although he was sufficiently wide of the mark when attempting to probe anything to the bottom, or to philosophise on the causes which produced it, no one could be more scrupulously exact than father Abarca in the relation of facts.

The following is the true account of the affair, according to the Chronicler, who as such, took good care to ascertain it from eye-witnesses.

The Count de Lerin's beautiful daughter had, for greater security and retirement, confined herself in one of the towers of the castle, during her father's absence. The lower portion of that tower served as a cellar for firewood, and there began the conflagration. It was long before it was observed by Catalina, and by that time it seemed impossible to subdue it ; she made an attempt to leave her apartment, but fell senseless on the floor. To save her was a desperate

attempt; the windows of her room overlooked the precipitous rocks on the south, and even though they should attempt to climb up by means of ladders, there was a strong iron grating which would prevent access to the apartment. In the inside of the castle it was also impossible to reach her without the most frightful danger, and without prodigious efforts; the landing on the stair before Catalina's chamber had caught fire, and soon fell with a crash, so that a deep abyss of flames, like the mouth of a volcano, seemed to defy all approach. To reach her chamber it was necessary to leap over this fiery gulf, and, as the door was closed, steady oneself on a narrow space before the threshold, remain there until the door was opened, which might perhaps require to be done by force, with flames behind, and an unstable footing of half a yard in breadth, which might any moment give way, and be buried like the rest in the flames. Some idea of the danger may be formed, when no man dared to face it in order to rescue one who was the ministering and consoling angel of her vassals, the idol of a people, and the comfort, joy, and life of the aged Count de Lerin.

With their arms folded, all contemplated, with looks of dismay, the devouring flames which were about to consume like flax the gentlest and most gracious creature in the world, when a cavalier, clad

in the richest armour, which showed him to be a person of high rank, suddenly appeared in great haste, and, without hesitation, without reflecting an instant on the danger, rapidly ascended the stairs with an axe in his hand, reached the brink of the terrific gulf and, although the opposite boundary was scarcely distinguishable amid the smoke and glare, he leaped across, burst open the door with one blow of his axe, and immediately re-appeared on the threshold, with a white object on his shoulders, again to encounter the flames, which now lashed his face.

There he paused: he was observed to vacillate a moment; he dared not leap the roaring chasm, he was afraid; he who a few moments before had displayed such recklessness of danger, now trembled. Ah! It was not strange. Before he went alone; his life gave him little concern, or rather he never bestowed a thought upon it; now he bore with him a woman, their two lives were intimately connected—inseparable. If his strength failed him, if he planted his foot insecurely, if he slipped a hair's-breadth, what would become of that sweet burden which he bore upon his shoulders?

The unknown warrior now formed a resolution. He lays down the precious treasure which he was snatching from the flames, and a cry of horror escapes

from all present, who imagined that finding it impossible to save both, he thought now of at least saving his own life. Poor Catalina! what shrieks then rent the air, when all thought her now lost beyond all chance of rescue.

But the cavalier did not wish to save himself alone; he again grasped the axe, and discharged tremendous two-handed blows on one of the enormous leaves of the door, and when he had forced it from its hinges, he caught it in his arms, raised it with herculean strength, and threw it, with a violent effort, across the flaming gulph, in order to make it serve as a bridge.

It was necessary to take immediate advantage of this momentary pathway, which the flames would speedily devour; her unknown deliverer again took the lady, and crossed the chasm with rapidity; between the life or death of both there was but a plank, which was converted into a sheet of flame, and fell into the abyss a moment after the warrior, with the lady in his arms, found firm footing on the stair.

What shouts of joy and wonder then mingled with the deafening roar of the flames! There remained now but few obstacles to clear, and these were slight compared with those already surmounted; at length he reached the principal court of the castle, where he

was surrounded by all, asking him a thousand questions, and embracing without knowing him; but when he had placed the lady in the hands of her attendants, without uttering a word, he returned to the scene of conflagration to try and check its progress, and to save the building, if possible, after having saved its angelic mistress; and he did so much, and by his example encouraged all to such a degree, that even the most timid contributed their aid, and in a few hours there were no further signs of the fire than the damage caused in that tower of the castle.

Who was that man?

No one knew, for, avoiding demonstrations of gratitude and admiration, he suddenly disappeared from the view of the multitude when the flames began to yield, and the danger to diminish.

This account, so circumstantially related, was generally believed, and then all other versions of the story were forgotten; for that which we have given combined the conditions necessary to strike the imagination, which in those ages had a strong relish for the marvellous.

But the question of the friar was repeated in chorus by his audience:—"Who was the brave and enterprising cavalier who had brought to a happy issue so dangerous an adventure?"

The kingdom of Navarre was rather small for any one to be able to shield himself under an *incognito*, especially when there were indications of high rank about him. Such there were in this instance, as was evident from the description given of his appearance. He was clad in a suit of rich armour, which could not cost less than a hundred florins,* a considerable sum, indeed quite a capital in those times, when the majority of knights often wanted the best portions of their armour, which they were obliged to pawn to some Jewish merchant,† and in which nothing more was needed, as we have seen, in order to rank as an *Infanzon*, than to be able to go into battle in a complete suit of armour. Those who were at table were perhaps the only persons in the kingdom who could wear such splendid accoutrements; but all those who were seated there were incapable of exhibiting such a display of courage and reckless daring, as was requisite to represent worthily the hero of that mysterious drama. Among the most distinguished of

* Suits of armour, made at Bordeaux, cost about 80 florins.

† This practice was so general that Juan II. had to prohibit it strictly in 1451. But this did not put a stop to it. In the same year the prince Don Carlos ordered six florins to be paid to Samuel, son of Yeuda, a Jew of Toledo, to redeem a helmet ornamented with silver, which he had in pawn with Pedro de Goñi. *Vide Art. Armas*, in Yanguas' Dictionary.

them, it would be necessary to leave out those who, from their inveterate party feuds, instead of braving death to save the castle of Lerin, with its mistress, would have gladly stirred up the flame which consumed the last remnants of their enemy's power. The circle of probabilities was thus narrowed more and more, and it was diminished still further when the guests asked one another—"Who were absent from Estella the day of the conflagration? Who?"

"None but the Marshal of Navarre and Alphonso of Castille."

Between the two cavaliers the election was not doubtful: the one was a mortal enemy of the Count de Lerin; the other, though of a different party, was a stranger, recently come to Navarre, and therefore without any grudge to satisfy; besides, he was an old friend of the Count, and had a natural inclination to engage in hazardous enterprises, and to overcome difficulties. The opinion, therefore, was unanimous in favour of the Queen's favourite knight; and that nothing might be wanting to establish the truth clearly, it was confirmed by Don Philip of Navarre himself, who witnessed in silence a discussion in which his name was so frequently heard.

But no one believed it so firmly as the Queen, whom, perhaps, some imagined they were gratifying when

they exalted the brilliant exploits, the heroism of the Infanzon, while they were unconsciously planting the pangs of jealousy in her heart. How could she doubt that Catalina's paladin was Catalina's lover? How could she be ignorant of what was hidden from the others,—that in the most trifling circumstance, at each word that issued from the mouth of the friar of Irache, he betrayed the feelings of a lover? How could she fail to acknowledge that no one but Alphonso was capable of such decision, fearlessness, and intelligence?

Oh! Alphonso, Alphonso, her perfidious lover, had held in his arms the girl of fifteen—the tender virgin of Lerin, who was now become much more interesting since her misfortune, who had moved with compassion the most indifferent, nay even her enemies. Alphonso had inhaled her breath, heard her sobs, dried her tears. Alphonso had pressed that lovely flower to his bosom, delighted in its perfumes, and felt on his glowing cheek the sweet freshness of its luxuriant blossoms.

Oh! what tortures did she feel when the courtiers said, and said too by way of flattery,

“An exploit certainly worthy of his great fame.”

“And who is he? who is this Infanzon who is as wise and learned as a monk?”

“And the bravest of cavaliers!”

“ And surpassed by none in grace and gallantry !”

“ And richer, and more generous and splendid than all !”

“ He is perhaps some exiled prince.”

“ A bastard, perhaps, of the King of France.”

While such comments were passing around, the Queen, who was doubtless tired of assuming a serene and smiling countenance, retired to her chamber, where she could give vent to her unutterable sorrow.

CHAPTER X.

“ My attempt to retain longer the love of that man is vain, and more than vain, it is ridiculous,” said the Queen, after two days’ reign, a sleepless night, and long hours of anguish and melancholy reflection.

A humiliating confession but not free from pride. A young woman would have said roundly, “ That man trifles with me, he has never loved me.” A woman of her age could not even imagine such a thing. The reason is that the former has no reason to fear aversion, and the latter has more grounds than enough to suspect it.

The words at the banquet, “ Don Alphonso, the Infanzon, is the hero of the conflagration,” sounded in her ears as prophetic as those at the coronation, “ Remember the twelfth day of February !”

She had need of great firmness to wrestle with so cruel a fate. Her heart, which earnestly longed for happiness and consolation, did not faint, however : as

she found obstacles in the path she had entered, she turned back to try a new one, if not with better success at least with greater energy and decision.

While the guests were making themselves happy at the ball which followed the banquet, she remained in a chamber far removed from the tumult, accompanied by three personages of our story. One youthful, handsome, of frank countenance, and noble but at the same time fierce expression of eye, was Don Philip of Navarre ; the second, a Benedictine monk, evidently astonished at finding himself in such company, and looking askance and almost with fear at the third personage, an elderly man of harsh and morose features and bilious temperament, with a very bushy beard, as dry as an atomy, strong limbed, insensible physically to toil and hardship, and morally to soft and tender affections ; he was called Mosen Pierres de Peralta.

It is not to be wondered at that father Abarca, who was well acquainted with his tricks with regard to the clergy, should preserve beside him the expression and attitude of the mouse in presence of the cat.

The conference was of too great importance for the Queen, as president, to omit the inaugural address which was to instruct all as to the objects of that meeting. The object, however, was well known to all,

and the speech might have been very well excused, if men would readily dispense with formalities.

But the short-hand writers of those times, as well as those of the present day, could compress into two lines the longest and most highly-adorned orations, and here is the brief abstract which they have left us of Queen Leonora's discourse.

"I have summoned you here, gentlemen, because I cannot hope from any one with better grounds than from you, for that active assistance and co-operation which I require in the great work to which I have been called by God."

The friar made a movement with his hand in token of assent; the Marshal remained motionless; at the beginning of her discourse his imagination was in some other place, and at the end it still continued there; Mosen Pierres knitted his brows and gave a sort of grunt which was followed by a sceptical smile.

"I am resolved," pursued the Queen with a husky and feeble voice, the result of two days' suffering and prostration—"I am resolved to consolidate peace in my kingdom; it is necessary that in future there be no Agramontese and Beaumontese, but Navarrese in the kingdom of Navarre."

"And there cannot be, madam," answered the monk, "a more Christian resolution, nor more conformable to

the law of God and what we are taught in Holy Writ. I will begin from the fratricide of Cain, when God cursed, and put a mark on his forehead—no, the mark was not on account of the fratricide, but because the Lord would not that any one should slay him, notwithstanding the murder of his brother, which proves—”

“Reverend father,” asked Pierres de Peralta, interrupting him, “are you the abbot of some monastery?”

“No. The mercy of God—”

“And are you not a bishop or something as good?” demanded Mosen Pierres, with a frown.

“I am a servant of God and one of the humblest.”

“So that you have not a single turret, a single vassal of whom you can dispose?”

“No, sir.”

“Peace or war, then, you can have no more concern with, than we with your Cains and your lenten prosing.”

“Mosen Pierres,” observed the Queen, “father Abarca is a holy monk chosen by — me,” she said, after a very short pause, during which she was assailed by cruel recollections, “chosen by me to negotiate the perpetuity of the truce —”

“Well, let us see, and what have you done?”

“ I, Señores,” answered the Benedictine, edging away as much as he could from Mosen Pierres, “ I begin by protesting that only the sacred duty of obedience can oblige me to converse or confer with this cavalier, who is beside me, and upon whom weighs, as the proclamations in our temples inform us, the ban of excommunication.”

“ I vow to God,” exclaimed Mosen Pierres, “ were it not that I had resolved to go to Rome and get myself absolved by the Holy Father, I would compel you now to absolve me yourself, if you did not wish to die without confessing your sins.”

“ Sir cavalier !”

“ Sir friar, or sir devil ! I ask you to leave your twaddle, and continue or begin your story, without a word about Cain, or excommunication ; for by my faith I am not to be trifled with, and bear in mind the proverb—Don’t stir it—”

The friar, prudent or timorous, for fear and prudence are very often confounded, making himself as small and meek as possible, continued in these terms :

“ Señores, I cannot regard the war but as a scourge of God for our sins, and I have considered that by casting out from us heinous sinners, such as lepers, Moors, and Jews—”

“ The Jews ! and if we expelled the Jews who

would lend us money in future?" said Mosen Pierres.

"And what have we to do with expelling the infidels if the war is between Christians?" observed the Queen.

"Therefore I propose further, that in order to unite both parties, we ought to begin by uniting the two chiefs, and the two chiefs may be united by means of a marriage."

"How? do you mean to marry the Marshal to the Count de Lerin?"

"To his daughter, Sir cavalier, to his daughter."

"Most capital! I am quite pleased with this union of light and darkness, summer and winter, heaven and hell. Lerins and Navarres! Hah, hah, hah! It is long since I have had such a good laugh. And what do you say to this, my fair nephew, who look now as if you were one of the seven sleepers, what think you of this match?"

"I say, uncle," answered the Marshal, at length breaking his silence, "I say that God cannot grant me greater happiness than this marriage."

"Ho! ho! I see you are in a more pleasant humour than you look. Let us finish, brother monk, if you have not devised any other medicine for the cure of

the kingdom, your patient's case must be utterly hopeless."

"But, Sir," exclaimed the friar with ingenuous surprise, "if the parties accept, if the Count de Lerin consents, if the Marshal desires it——"

"What do you say to that, nephew?" asked Mosen Pierres, in alarm.

"Uncle, be calm, for you are in presence of a lady, and a Queen."

"But is this true that I hear?"

"It is true, to be plain with you, that I am desperately in love with Catalina de Beaumont."

"And since when, and how?"

"The when and the how are nothing to the purpose."

"But with *her*! the daughter of your father's assassin! *you* call the Count de Lerin father!"

"It is not proved that Don Luis de Beaumont slew the late Marshal," said the Queen.

"You did not express yourself thus a short while ago," Mosen Pierres ventured to reply.

"The suspicions of enemies are generally unjust," answered Leonora.

"The Count de Lerin was certainly not present at the surprise of Pampeluna, where your illustrious

father perished ; and I have said so in my chronicle," said the friar.

" Reverend father, if you have one day to blot that line out of your book, and say the contrary," answered Don Philip in a firm and solemn tone, " you will be enabled to add that the new Marshal buried his sword in the breast of the traitor Count at the very foot of the altar where he was to be united with his daughter, and if it is ascertained after the marriage, you will say that the Marshal drew his sword, and cut off the hand which he had given to the daughter of his father's assassin ; but while the crime is not proved, good uncle, I am Catalina's or nobody's."

" By God," exclaimed he of Peralta, " this looks like a conspiracy ! And I have not been summoned hither to be heard, but to hear my sentence, and everything was concerted and arranged."

" Not with me ; if the Queen conceived the happy idea of the union, she was very sagacious in divining my inmost thoughts ; I would not have ventured perhaps to express them myself, and much less to urge them ; but since the proposal is made, I accept it, uncle ; I accept it with all my heart, for myself and my party."

" Ah, ha !" said Mosen Pierres, shaking his head, with his eyes almost closed, and smiling bitterly. " I

ought to have known it when I was stripped so readily and so unjustly of my office of Constable."

"You were excommunicated," said Leonora, excusing herself.

"But I knew it before," continued Peralta, disregarding the Queen's interruption, "and neither you, Madam, with your royal power; nor you, wilful child, spoiled with being placed at the head of the Agramontese party; nor you, father, with your monkish fooleries, can now think of peace, till after the utter ruin and extermination of the hostile faction."

"How is this?" asked all three in one breath.

"You must know, my Queen and mistress, my dear nephew, and you, reverend father, that I also, however incredible it may appear, was also devising means for terminating this war, which to our shame has lasted so many years; the reason why is known to myself, and the Queen also cannot be ignorant of it. But my measures have been very different from yours, and also much more efficacious. I had already my suspicions that Doña Leonora when fairly seated on the throne of her ancestors, would sigh for peace at all hazards and any price, and I said to myself, Let us give her peace, such as God wills, and the illustrious Queen will have the less to do. The Count de Lerin is almost prostrate, weaker and poorer than ever; of all his numerous

castles, he now only holds two ; all the rest have fallen into our power, by the valour and enterprise of my nephew, the brave Marshal, in whom I did not suspect such weakness as I now perceive ; if he has only two castles remaining, let us deprive him of them, and he will have nowhere to take refuge ; the Count disappears, and the kingdom is restored to peace ; and there is in that case no necessity for schemes of marriage, or monstrous and insane alliances which even make the dead turn in their graves. I have no expectations of peace until all my enemies are exterminated. Did I not reason well, reverend father ?”

“ Finish, be done, Mosen Pierres,” said the Queen, in an imperious tone.

“ I have finished,” he replied with an insolent sneer ; “ of the two castles which the Count possessed, I yesterday burnt one, and to-morrow I rase the other. In this way I will give you, in a couple of days, a peaceful kingdom, that is to say, a kingdom entirely Agramontese.”

“ Entirely yours.”

“ Entirely, your Highness’s. Is not your Highness the head of the Agramontese faction ?” asked Mosen Pierres, with a malicious look ?

“ Mosen Pierres, I am the head of all Navarre, and if I now call my guards, and order them to seize you,

and the Courts to punish you as an incendiary, a traitor and a rebel—”

“ Softly, Madam, do not utter words which, as you must know from experience, have no meaning.”

“ Mosen Pierres,” exclaimed the Queen, in a passion, “ remember that my father is no longer alive ; he who protected you, and kept you at my side as a guardian to watch over me, as a tutor to direct me ; remember that times are changed since I laid siege to Sangüesa, in order to obtain the subsidies, and when you arrived with your troops, compelled me to raise the siege, entered the city, and collected the contingent, not for me, but for my father, while I was obliged to depart slighted and humiliated ; remember we are not now in Murillo, where I was insulted by you, Mosen Pierres, who could be insolent towards a woman, because my father paid you handsomely for such acts of insolence. Now Don Juan is in his grave, and I am on the throne, and I am Queen in my own right, not the lieutenant of another, and I have my guards, and my officers—”

“ These guards are placed by me,” replied he of Peralta, almost pale with suppressed rage ; “ these officers received their appointments here from your dear and well-beloved father, who is now in glory, and they are my vassals. Although excommunicated, the

priests and friars, and most pious Christians respect me, and ought not others also to respect me, though an incendiary, that is a representative of the system of terror which it is necessary to pursue with the enemies of the country? Know, Madam, that the Beamontese, your new friends, are traitors, who have sold the kingdom to your brother Ferdinand of Arragon, and if you receive them into your bosom you will only cherish frozen vipers who will afterwards sting you to the heart."

"So you mean to say that my will does not rule here? that I am not obeyed? that you, Pierres de Peralta, are greater than the Queen of Navarre; that you are the real monarch of these lands? that the Queen concludes a truce, in order that you may violate it whenever you think fit? And is it for this that I am Queen,—for this I am proclaimed and crowned? then I will change my guards, I will appoint my own officers—"

"You will doubtless go to seek for them in the Beamontese party, who can never forgive you the—" answered Mosen Pierres with increasing audacity.

"Silence! I shall seek them where there is one who will revenge me on you!"

"I shall revenge you on him, Madam," said the Marshal, who now raised his head.

“ There is an invincible sword ! a brave cavalier ! ”
exclaimed Leonora, in triumph.

“ I need no sword, Madam ; the offence was one of words, and by words I shall avenge you.”

The chief of Peralta cast at him a look of mingled surprise and ferocity, which the gallant Marshal bore without flinching, and affecting a calm and indifferent air proceeded as follows in a tone which betrayed some agitation :

“ You, Mosen Pierres, you the second chief of the Agramontese party, attempted to subdue the Count de Lerin, by destroying his castles during a truce which rests on the sacredness of my word ; for this purpose you must have gained over the Count’s servants, and hired them to set the building in flames, in the tower into which Catalina had retired ; whether that lady perished there or not was an accident which did not alter your plan ; this you arranged, alone, I rejoice to hear it, alone,—you the second in command of the Agramontese party. I, the principal chief, knew it almost by a miracle, and flew to undo your work.”

“ You ! ” exclaimed the Queen ; “ was it indeed you ? ”

“ It was I, as God liveth ; it was I who saved the daughter of my enemy.”

“Catalina?” repeated the Queen with intense, unmingled joy.

“Catalina; and not only Catalina, but the castle.”

“So you were the unknown cavalier.”

“Yes; why do you wonder? I love Catalina, I detest treachery and disloyalty.”

“Ah! why did you not tell me before?” exclaimed Leonora, with a sigh which came from the bottom of her heart; “what tortures you would have spared me!”

“Madam—” answered the young Marshal modestly.

“Oh! say no more. I excuse, I admire you—you did not come forward to gather the abundant harvest of honour, applause, and glory when others were gleaning the field which did not belong to them. That noble action deserves a worthy recompense; Catalina shall be yours; yours my treasures, yours my kingdom. Mosen Pierres I forgive you all—because you have given your nephew an opportunity of displaying so much gallantry, such heroic generosity.”

Leonora could dissemble her sorrow but not her joy. Radiant with delight she approached a table, wrote two lines, called a page and delivered to him the paper.

She then returned to the conference; but she could not now speak of state affairs, as the adventure at

Lerin engrossed her whole soul. She asked of Mosen Pierres minute details as to the means he had employed for carrying his horrid crime into effect ; she asked and listened to them as if any indifferent action were the subject of conversation. She then turned to the Marshal, to talk with him about his passion for Catalina ; nothing could be more interesting, more agreeable to her than that picture, above all, when she perceived in it some token of Catalina's affection. Oh ! how deeply must her jealousy have been wounded when the first respite seemed an unimaginable, insupportable felicity !

Before the four members of the conclave arose, the majority to return to the dance, and the minority to the monastery, Leonora received intimation from her confidante that the Count de Lerin, supposing Don Philip of Navarre the author of the conflagration, had called together the cavaliers of his party, doubtless for the purpose of breaking the truce which had been concluded scarcely a week before.

The Marshal and the monk were struck with consternation. Mosen Pierres smiled to himself with an air of triumph ; but Leonora underwent no alteration.

“They do not love one another !” she said to herself, with delight, while the others were commenting on

such sad news. "It was not he who rescued her, he did not hold her in his arms, nor did he expose his life for her. Oh! when he comes here I shall on my knees ask forgiveness for such unjust suspicions; and how strange that I, without knowing it, should have supposed that Catalina loved the Marshal, and have hit upon the truth. O! consoling truth, which tranquillizes and gives me life!"

CHAPTER XI.

LEONORA at length enjoyed a moment of happiness after having passed so many long hours of anguish since she had attained the object of all her desires. She had shaken off from her heart the intolerable load of jealousy, and felt the pleasure of alleviation, which is an almost physical enjoyment, and the commencement of every agreeable transition of mind.

Her lover was about to arrive ; she had written to him to come, and had just received his answer, prompt, brief, and satisfactory. To see him, and throw herself at his feet and ask pardon—unhappy woman!—for having suffered so much on his account, and kindle him into love with the violence of her flame, would all be the work of a moment.

She saw one horizon of life bright, glowing, jocund, and the rest could not appear to her dark and gloomy ; the light of felicity radiates everywhere, softens the harshness of the most sombre tints ; it is impossible, in

short, to be happy in one thing without being so proportionately in all; grief is assuaged, fear vanishes, and hope, poor languid and drooping flower, receives new life, and unfolds its petals with the first beams of the sun of happiness.

Leonora, secure of her lover, also regarded the peace and her crown as secure. In order to torment Alphonso, in order to make him feel the pangs of jealousy, by which her own heart was torn, she had suggested the idea that Catalina returned the Marshal's passion, and, to her great delight, the supposition, as it turned out, had great appearance of truth. What did it matter though the Count de Lerin should break the two months' armistice, when it might be renewed for ever by a single word from his daughter?

While she thus allowed her buoyant fancy to float along in this halcyon sea she heard footsteps on the secret stair, and her heart began to flutter at the first indication of her lover's approach.

Three gentle raps were heard, and she flew to the door, her heart palpitating with delight, and her whole frame trembling with love and impatience. She opened it, and uttered a cry of surprise. It was not Alphonso; it was a woman clothed in black, and covered with a long veil.

“Ah!” exclaimed Leonora, in alarm, “Who are you? You came here by some mistake.”

“No, assuredly not,” answered the new-comer, advancing firmly towards her, without feeling at all disconcerted at such an abrupt reception; “I am come to seek you, Doña Leonora, Countess de Foix, and Queen of Navarre.”

“You come to seek me! For what purpose? Do you bring me any message?” asked the Queen, with less harshness, fancying it might be some duenna sent by Alphonso. “Are you come to conduct me to some other place?”

“No, no, Madam,” calmly answered the unknown visitant, “we are very well here, here I catch you and here I speak to you.”

“How! such language to the Queen! To address me so familiarly and boldly! Uncover yourself.”

“You are very easily shocked, Doña Leonora; you must hear this night much harsher language from my lips, for it will be the language of truth.”

“Uncover yourself,” repeated the Queen, in a tone of great authority.

“Be not afraid, Madam, I will uncover myself,” answered the stranger in the same cool and collected manner; “but I warn you that I am come to command and not to obey you.”

“Uncover yourself,” exclaimed Leonora, losing all self-control, “uncover yourself, or my guards shall come and tear off your veil.”

“Ah! you are very anxious to know me, but assuredly you will not regret that you did not know me sooner.”

“Who are you?”

“Do you recollect the kissing of hands, yesterday?”

“Ah! it was you!”

“REMEMBER THE TWELFTH DAY OF FEBRUARY.”

“My God! my God! that voice—I now recognise it!”

“FIFTEEN YEARS HAVE ELAPSED, ALL BUT FIFTEEN DAYS.”

“Explain yourself, explain yourself for the love of heaven, these prophetic words have been ringing in my ears the whole night. I have not slept—I have not closed my eyes.”

“And you shall not close them as long as you are Queen, for I am come from the tomb to open the door to remorse, and when remorse takes possession of the heart, there is no bed which rest can visit, there is no sleep heavy enough to weigh down the eyelids, and if sleep does come—Ah! you are not novice enough in crime not to know what it is to sleep with a remorseful conscience.”

“But, good heavens! what does this mean? Who speaks to me?” exclaimed the Queen, confounded and amazed, and stretching forth her hand mechanically in order to raise the stranger’s veil.

“You are very anxious to know me although I have no greater defence against you than my countenance, my features.”

“How?”

“The moment I raise my veil you will fall annihilated before me. Rush, fly to the door,” said the mysterious woman sarcastically, “call your pages and squires; tell them to come and witness my triumph, to bear testimony that they have seen you at my feet. But—will you sit down? You do well, Madam, for we have much to talk about.”

“But who is this woman?” exclaimed the Queen, scrutinising in memory the events of fifteen years. “Whence comes she?”

“From the tomb,” answered the veiled stranger with solemn voice.

“Blanca!” suddenly exclaimed Leonora. “Oh Blanca, it cannot be,” she said with pale and haggard features, and horrid aspect, “my sister! It is impossible, because my sister—”

“Yes, your sister is safely lodged in the grave,” said the Unknown, with a bitter smile; “the poisons of

her of Foix are infallible. They kill even the shadow, otherwise the crown would still tremble on your brows, you would still think you saw the hand of Carlos wresting it from you, the hand of Blanca wresting it from you, the hand of thousands of victims wresting it from you, the hand of Ximeno wresting it from you, the hand of Ines—”

“Ines! Ines!” shrieked Leonora as if struck by a thunderbolt. “Is it you, is it you? Whence do you come?”

“From the tomb,” she repeated; “Ines did not die by your poisons, Ines can rise from the grave.”

“But Ines,” muttered Leonora, obstinately sceptical, “Ines, consumed by jealousy, threw herself into the Gabe. Ines was drowned, I saw her clothes on the bank of the river—I saw her corpse.”

“And as you saw her clothes, and as you saw her body, and as you knew that the dead prince and princess do not reign now, and that calumniated suicides do not rise again to defend their honour, you did not hesitate to blacken the memory of Ines, by casting a blot on her good name, and you said, ‘Her act of desperation was very opportune, she will bear all the weight of my crime; let us denounce her as a poisoner.—The princess loved Ximeno, who returned her affection; and Ines loved the same Ximeno, who

slighted her. What can be more natural than that Ines should take revenge on the princess by poisoning her, and that afterwards, stung with remorse, or afraid of punishment, she should throw herself into the nearest river? Who can call in question so probable a story?"

"Is it not true that you reasoned thus, Doña Leonora?"

"Yes," answered the Queen, who had not now sufficient energy to dissemble.

"Is it not true that you had no apprehension of the grave opening at the end of fifteen years to give you the lie?"

"No."

"And what do you think now?"

"Nothing."

"Sign this paper," then said the stranger, as if wishing to take advantage of the prostration to which she had designedly reduced the Queen: "sign!" she repeated, presenting a writing to her.

"What is this?"

"A reparation which you are in justice bound to make. Listen: 'I, Leonora of Navarre, declare that Ines de Aguilar, daughter of my squire, Juan de Aguilar, is innocent of the crime of which I accused her; namely, the poisoning of my sister Doña Blanca of Navarre.'"

“Impossible, impossible!” said the Queen. “I shall part with my right hand first.”

“Not your hand alone, but your hand with the sceptre, you must part with if you refuse to sign.”

“How?”

“Because I will not be contented with defending Ines, I will accuse you, the Queen of Navarre; I will go through the streets proclaiming your crime—and they will believe me, because the dead lie not, because I am Ines, Ines your attendant, she who was driven to despair and death. Do you know me?”

Hereupon she raised her veil, and disclosed a pale and emaciated countenance—the countenance of a corpse, if a corpse could have two large bright flashing eyes.

“Ines! Ines!” exclaimed Leonora, “my last hour is come.”

“No, not yet. Sign, or I will go from house to house, from town to town, publishing your crime like a spectre, stirring up the whole kingdom against you.”

“Ines, I am very guilty I know; but have compassion on me.”

“Compassion! compassion on you, who had none for your brother and sister, whom you poisoned—on Ximeno—on Ines, whom you shockingly calumniated. Sign; now *I* command, sign.”

“ Ines, I will do whatever you will, but—”

“ Sign, madam,” repeated Ines with energy. “ I have neither guards nor squires to terrify you, but I have a voice to rouse the people against the poisoner of their princes.”

“ Squires—people,”—muttered the Queen, making a last effort at resistance, on seeing herself driven to the brink of the precipice. “ Oh, a good idea !”

“ Sign,” repeated Ines, with a sepulchral tone and spectral gesture. “ Sign, or I shall rush into the midst of your festivities.”

“ Ines,” said the Queen, exaggerating her weakness, “ my strength fails me ; I am devoured with thirst ; I shall die consumed by fever. For the love of God a glass of water, and then—whatever you will.”

“ So said Blanca ; so said your sister. She asked a cup of water, and you gave her a cup of poison.”

“ Well, give me poison, only let me quench my thirst.”

“ I !” replied Ines, with a cold smile ; “ how can I give what I have not ? Call your pages.”

“ Do you consent ?” said Leonora, with ill-dissembled joy.

“ Why not ? provided you give me your word to sign after—”

“ Oh yes, my royal word.”

“ Call your squires,” said Ines, calmly.

“ No, not my squires, my duennas will do,” said Leonora, anticipating a refusal.

The apparition shrugged her shoulders as if saying, “ What does it matter to me ?” Leonora observed that freezing gesture, looked again at Ines before going to the door ; but her former attendant had let down her veil, and remained motionless in a tranquil attitude.

“ Brianda !” cried the Queen, half opening the principal door of her chamber.

The duenna speedily appeared.

“ Do you see that woman at the extremity of the room, leaning on a chair, and covered with a long veil ? Look at her, for God’s sake, as if you were not looking—”

“ Well, and what —”

“ Let all my servants assemble in this ante-chamber, and when I clap my hands three times, let them enter and seize her.”

“ Three times ?”

“ Yes ; speak lower.”

“ All the servants ?”

“ Yes, especially my squires. Warn them that they must not be startled at anything.”

“ Startled at what ? ”

“ Nothing—only she is mad. ”

The Queen closed the door again, and slowly advanced towards Ines, who had not changed her posture.

“ Have you drunk ? ” Ines asked her, with an accent cold and piercing as the point of a dagger.

Leonora was disconcerted at so simple a question, for she had not thought of asking for a glass of water to keep up appearances.

“ Yes, yes, ” she answered, stammering.

“ You feel better then ? ”

“ Somewhat better. ”

“ Strong enough to sign ? ”

“ Oh yes ; yes for that, ” answered the Queen, as if wishing to banish by her docility the suspicions which her confusion might have awakened.

“ I see the drink has revived you so much that you would be able not only to sign, but to copy the paper. ”

“ Why ? ”

“ There is always more faith attached to a document written out by the person who signs it. ”

“ But—that was not agreed on, ” answered Leonora, affecting resistance.

“ But that is what I wish ; and as you have to do whatever I wish — ”

The Queen bit her lips, and then, shrugging her shoulders, she muttered to herself—

“It comes to the same thing.—But no, it is better—I shall in this way gain time—”

“Be seated,” said Ines. “Well, I see the glass of water has restored your strength.”

“Oh! do not abuse your superiority,” exclaimed the Queen, in a whining voice; “let us finish quickly.”

“I shall be very glad. I shall dictate to you,” said Ines, taking the paper.

“Formerly you could not read,” observed the Queen, who was just struck with an idea, and fixed her eyes on her muffled visitant, cursing the veil which concealed her countenance.

“In the grave everything is learned, everything is known. Write, then, a good and clear hand; yours is so in general; but I must forewarn you, you are in the presence of a master.”

“Dictate.”

“I, Doña Leonora of Navarre, declare.”

“Declare—I have written.”

Ines approached silently, and over the shoulder of the princess followed the pen with her eyes.

“No, you do not say Leonora de Navarre, but Ines de Aguilar—”

“ Ah !” exclaimed the august amanuensis, with surprise, “ so you can—”

“ I can correct your lesson, royal madam ; do not be concerned ; this was a slip which can be easily remedied, by taking another paper and beginning again.”

There was no help for it. After that useless attempt Leonora had to copy the writing faithfully, and what is more, she had to sign it.

Ines took it, and said to her in her usual sarcastic tone, “ Madam, may the glass of water do you much good ; adieu till fourteen days hence,” and prepared to depart.

“ Stop, stop ! why do you say till fourteen days hence ?” exclaimed the Queen in consternation.

“ Yesterday it was just fifteen days to the twelfth day of February.”

“ What of that ?”

“ We shall celebrate together the anniversary of Blanca of Navarre.”

Leonora strode about like a tigress in its cage, sometimes pausing before the door, until she heard a noise of people crowded together and endeavouring to keep silence.

Then the roving tigress turned furiously upon the

poor sheep inclosed within the fatal circle of her steps.

“No, woman, phantom or demon! no, before that day you shall perish by my hands. What care I for one crime more when it will serve as the tombstone of all my crimes? You shall die, this time you shall really die; those whom I kill never rise again. Oh! how silly have you been! to such a degree, indeed, that I almost feel inclined to pardon you, out of contempt for your stupidity. Have not the fifteen years you must have been planning your revenge, the fifteen years that you have been occupied with this fixed idea, taught you nothing more than to come here and disturb my tranquillity for the space of an hour, to be then delivered up to me for ever—nothing more than to exasperate me and put my mind in a proper frame for killing you without remorse? Rush now into the streets, excite the people against me, undertake a crusade against your Queen, when with thrice clapping my hands, with a single word I can confound and annihilate you for ever!”

Ines made no answer, remained motionless; then she drew her pale hands from beneath her veil and clapped three times.

“What are you doing?” exclaimed the Queen, astonished at such resolution.

“Committing suicide,” said Ines, drily.

The principal door opened noisily, and the apartment was immediately filled with pages and squires, some with arms and some without.

“Seize her, seize her!” cried the Queen, like the huntsman to his hounds, as she pointed to Ines with her right hand.

“Back!” cried Ines, raising her veil.

“The Penitent!” some exclaimed.

“The Penitent!” all repeated, falling on their knees and laying aside their arms before the female hermit of Rocamador.

“Give way! open a passage for the servant of God!” said Ines, slowly passing through the crowd, who seemed to implore her forgiveness.

With the same solemn bearing and firm step Ines left the palace of the Queen, in which there was no door that did not open at her voice, and no forehead which did not bend in her presence.

CHAPTER XII.

THE words which the Penitent hastily wrote at the door of her hermitage when Chafarote announced to her the speedy arrival of Don Alphonso, were read in succession by two persons who came singly, and carefully disguised; these two persons conceived the same fears, interpreted the inscription in the same manner, hurried to the same point with the determination of saving the same object.

The proceedings of the first and most fortunate of these paladins have been already described. The noble Marshal rushed to Lerin, where he succeeded by singular vigilance and sagacity in discovering from the language of treacherous domestics the secret of the projected conflagration, which was not to take place, however, for a few days; after the Count's departure for court, he attempted, in the manner we have already related, to obtain an interview with Catalina, and having failed in this he endeavoured to warn her by singing sundry couplets, until he flung

away his lute on the appearance of the flames, and rushed into the midst of them to rescue his beloved.

We shall describe at greater length the steps which were taken by the other disguised visitant at the cell of the Penitent ; but we must first relate an event, which although it occurred at a much earlier date, also refers to Philip, the Marshal of Navarre, and is of great importance to our story.

Eight years previous to this period, in 1471, Pampeluna was in the hands of the Beamontese party, to the great annoyance of their enemies, who eagerly coveted its possession. Doña Leonora of Navarre, who had just been appointed governor and vice-regent by Juan II., had the most anxious desire to fix her residence in the capital, not only because that would add to her dignity, but because she wished to secure that city which occupied the highest place in renown, population, and strength. She sent a message to the Count de Lerin commanding him to open the gates to her ; but the Beamontese chief answered her that if she came as Queen in her own right, as lawful successor to the crown, he would order the portcullis to be raised, and would lay at her feet the keys of Pampeluna, but if she came as vice-regent and lieutenant of her father, the gates would remain closed.

The count acted in conformity with his opinions and

principles as a partizan chief, but he also acted sagaciously. If Leonora, tempted by ambition, preferred the title of Queen, she would place herself at the head of the Beamontese faction, and occupy the place of her brother Carlos and her sister Blanca ; and if from fear of her father she declined renouncing the regency of the kingdom for the throne of a rebel, Don Luis had gained his object in preserving the capital without the disquietude of having the enemy in his house.

Leonora would have gladly accepted the Count's proposal, and consented to be proclaimed queen by the Beamontese faction, if she had thought it sufficiently powerful to maintain her on the throne ; but, as her father was a dangerous enemy, and she had taught him the art of getting rid of rebellious children ; and above all, as her father was now upwards of seventy, and could not live very long, she thought it most prudent to resist the temptation of reigning a few months sooner, at the risk of being immediately dethroned, and to wait for some time in order to reign without apprehension. We do not know what would have been her resolution if she had supposed that the old man of seventy-four would have lived eight years longer.

The vice-regent, hitherto caressed and favoured by the Count de Lerin, resolved, therefore, to turn back

when at the very foot of the walls, humiliated before a feudal lord, at enmity with a powerful faction, in order to take refuge in the arms of another feudatory chief, who had recently humbled her pride at Sangüesa and Murillo, as we had occasion to intimate briefly in a foregoing chapter. Such was then the condition of royalty,—an august beggar, covered with rags of purple and maintained at the expense of its great vassals, on the alms which it collected from castle to castle.

The Marshal, Don Pedro of Navarre, and his cousin, Mosen Pierres de Peralta, the chiefs of the Agramontese party, saw now a favourable opportunity of effecting a reconciliation with the Queen, who might easily be induced to forgive the injuries she had received at their hands. The Marshal, especially, espoused so zealously the cause of the Queen-governor, that he promised, as a handsel for her rupture with the opposite faction, to place the Count de Lerin's head, and the city of Pampluna, at her royal feet.

It was a bold undertaking; but the Agramontese chief concerted measures so well that he was very nearly accomplishing it. He made arrangements with one of the magistrates of the city, called Nicholas de Ugarra, governor of a tower, and guard of the adjoining gate, who promised to give him admittance if he came

to the wall with a small band, and in the silence of the night.

The time chosen for this blow was one in which the Count de Lerin was absent from the city, and on a tour of inspection through his territories.

Don Pedro selected eleven of the bravest and most resolute cavaliers among his adherents, and summoned them, with the utmost secrecy, to a place where they should all meet when night had set in.

Don Pedro had a youthful son, called Philip, who solicited the honour of accompanying him on this perilous expedition; but Don Pedro, considering his tender years, smiled paternally at his boldness, embraced him, and set out, strictly charging him not to leave the corps of reserve which was to rush into the city, after the others had obtained possession of the gate and tower, which Nicholas de Ugarra promised to deliver up to them.

As soon as the shadows had reduced mountains and valleys to one indistinguishable mass, the twelve Agramontese gradually assembled at a hermitage in the neighbourhood of Pampeluna; each as he arrived gave a concerted watchword, and joined the others.

A feeble light shone in the battlements of the tower defended by Ugarra; this was the signal agreed upon to intimate when they were to approach the gate.

The moment for setting out was come, but, before beginning their march, the party was counted, when, instead of twelve, the number was found to be thirteen.

“Treachery, treachery !” exclaimed the chief.

“Treachery !” they all repeated, and from beneath the cloaks they wore to conceal their armour, each drew forth a gleaming dagger.

“Let us see !” then said Don Pedro ; “each must tell his name, and those I recognise will place themselves at my side.”

Eleven cavaliers approached their chief, one after another, each pronouncing a well-known name. One now remained alone ; Don Pedro advanced to the intruder, and said to him,

“Who are you ?”

“A friend,” replied the latter in a low voice.

“Your name ?”

“I will not tell it.”

“Your name !” repeated Don Pedro, in a menacing tone.

The unknown warrior remained silent.

“What your tongue conceals, my sword will discover,” added the Marshal, attacking him vigorously.

The intruder resisted bravely ; he did not attack,—he merely defended himself. After a quarter of an hour, the Agramontese, who were getting impatient,

would have terminated the combat by taking part with the Marshal, but their chief's vanity was too much hurt by the length of the struggle, to permit such assistance.

He returned to the charge, and became more and more enraged at seeing the cool self-possession and firmness with which his adversary parried his most violent and dexterous blows. It looked as if the stranger was giving him a lesson in fencing,—that he knew the attack beforehand and had his defence prepared.

After fighting for half-an-hour, the Marshal stuck the point of his sword in the ground, exhausted with his exertions and perspiring profusely;—panting for breath he said,—

“Whoever you are, you excel me in valour and skill, and so brave a warrior cannot be an enemy. Come with us.”

“Yes,” answered the stranger, with a clear calm voice, “I will go with you, for a son must not desert his father when in peril.”

“My son Philip! my son!” exclaimed the Marshal, embracing his son, and weeping with joy and admiration.

“I' faith you have given your lesson in fencing famously this night.”

“My friends,” he said, overjoyed; “our party will

lose nothing when I die ; I shall leave you a chief who will soon make you forget my name."

"Father," said Philip, excusing himself, "you left me because you thought me a child, and I wished to prove to you that I am a man."

After this adventure they all proceeded in silence to the city.

The night was dark and tempestuous—well fitted for such deeds ; and although well acquainted with the ground, they did not know they were close to the town until they almost stumbled upon the walls. Nicholas de Ugarrá was waiting for them, with the drawbridge down and the wicket open. They entered without any obstacle. Close to the gate of the walls was that of the tower, of which they were to take possession, but the entrance was low and narrow ; they could only go in one at a time. The first who passed the threshold, was Don Pedro of Navarre, his son followed, and then four of the most daring ; when the six were within, a portcullis fell from the lintel and prevented further ingress.

There were now heard within the tower confused cries and dreadful voices, shouting—

"Treachery, treachery !"

At the same time the war cry of Navarre resounded through the streets of the city ; and voices were heard, shouting—

“To arms, to arms ! Death to the traitors ;” and a crowd of people made their appearance, and fell on the seven Agramontese warriors who remained outside the tower.

There was no doubt they were betrayed, and although salvation was impossible, they resolved to defend themselves to the last, in hopes of the reserve coming to their assistance.

The wished-for succour came ; the Agramontese who came to reinforce them under the command of Mosen Pierres de Peralta, strange to say, entered the city without meeting the slightest obstacle ; but as soon as they were inside, the gates were closed, and from the houses, the churches, the towers, issued partisans of the Count de Lerin, who made horrible carnage among their enemies. The Chronicle relates that Saint Fermín, the patron of Navarre, appeared to them clothed in white, and surrounded with a glare of light, to restrain the furious havoc. Mosen Pierres and some of his friends gained another gate, and effected their escape by it ; but the Marshal and his son remained shut up in the tower.

Those outside at least sold their lives dearly, but those in the tower, who had not even space enough to use their swords, were forced to surrender to the numerous warriors who garrisoned the fortress. One

of these searched in the dark for Don Pedro, the chief of the opposite faction, and when he discovered him, he embraced him, with demonstrations of agreeable surprise.

The Marshal waited in astonishment till his unknown friend should speak, when in the midst of such manifestations of affection, he felt the cold sharp point of a dagger, which he who held him in his tender and silent embrace, introduced between his gorget and shoulder-piece.

He fell on the ground, uttering a deep groan, without having time to call his son, whose name stuck half uttered in his throat.

Philip was disarmed, and could not avenge his father, but he threw himself in a frenzy of rage on the assassin, overturned him on the dead body of his father, sought about him for a weapon, and not finding one, he tried to strangle him with his hands, and tear him with his teeth. But it was impossible to do either. The assassin was in complete armour, and the associates of his treachery quickly came to his aid.

Don Philip reserved his vengeance for another time; and desirous therefore of finding out some day the murderer of his father, he seized by stealth the half of the assassin's blade, which had broken in two when the latter fell on the floor.

The Marshal's son remained a prisoner in Pampeluna ; and in two days Don Luis de Beaumont returned to the city. He manifested towards Don Philip a degree of affability, which far from appearing an insult to his misfortunes, seemed rather the effort of a friend to make him forget it. He took him with him to the castle of Lerin, where Philip remained four years, and was treated more like a guest and friend, than a prisoner and adversary.

But for that conduct, and the certainty there was, that the Count de Lerin was absent from Pampeluna on the terrible night of the surprise, Don Philip would have supposed that the whole plot, the whole stratagem, had been contrived and directed by the skilful hands of the Beaumontese chief.

The opposite faction was now without a head, disgraced in the eyes of the princess-regent, the flower of its chivalry dead, and the chief's successor in captivity ; and as to Nicholas de Ugarra, if he was guilty of two-fold treachery, it was not fitting that the author of such perfidy should live, and *the traitor died.*

The gate where these events took place was afterwards known by the name of the *Gate of Treachery.*

CHAPTER XIII.

DON ALPHONSO likewise left the hermitage of the Penitent for the castle of Lerin.

He found the count very busy in his armoury, examining, one after another, all the weapons of offence or defence, accompanied by Maese Arnal, an artificer of Tolosa. He had already laid aside many pieces of armour to be repaired, and swords and lances to be whetted.

“Oh! Señor Don Luis,” said the Infanzon, after embracing him, “like a wise man you follow the adage, ‘*Si vis pacem para bellum.*’”

“I know nothing of Latin,” answered the count, “but I don’t consider the time employed in military preparations as thrown away.”

“You don’t know Latin, and yet understand what I said! I would gladly exchange my Latin for your profound penetration.”

As Don Alphonso found him so tranquil, he did not

wish to alarm him suddenly with the news which he brought; and if he did not think them false, he at least judged them premature or exaggerated.

“So warlike!” he added, “so warlike a few days only after signing a truce!”

“My friend, I have already signed more truces than receipts to the Jews; and I can guess pretty well what I ought to think of that which has just been concluded.”

“So you don’t suppose that it will last beyond the two months sworn.”

“Maese Arnal,” asked the Count de Lerin of the armourer, raising his voice that he might be heard from the corner where he was piling up the trophies of war, “how long will you take to repair all this heap of armour?”

“Some ten or twelve days,” answered the artificer.

“There is your answer,” said Don Luis, turning to the Infanzon.

“Ten or twelve days!” exclaimed the latter almost joyfully; “and who will be the first to violate his word?”

“The Marshal, if it suits him; and if it suits me, still the Marshal.”

“Poor kingdom of Navarre! What hope have you for it?”

The count was in the vein for answering in parables,

and approaching the armourer, he took a helmet which had evidently seen hard service, and said :

“Maese, what can be made of this article, which has already more patches than a beggar’s wallet, more bosses than a church-door, and more holes than a nun’s window-blind.”

“It must be melted to make a new one.”

“Now you have heard it,” observed Don Luis to his friend, retiring with him so as that Maese Arnal might not understand the import of their conversation.

“So you think with me, Señor Count, that it is morally and politically impossible for Navarre to remain independent.”

“I think that Navarre is a tempting, although rather small mouthful, placed between France and Castille, two greyhounds with very large mouths. Hitherto they merely growl, and look askew at one another, to see which is going to swallow it; and the wretched offal only remains untouched from the rivalry of those who covet it; but the moment that France is off its guard, and Castille puts forth its snout—”

“And you, Señor Count, who fully understand how inevitable is this destiny, will doubtless try to pick up the envied morsel and throw it to one of the dogs, in order that he may afterwards lick your hand—”

“You have the Latin into the bargain, my friend,

for you are a match for me in penetration," answered the Count, with a courteous smile.

But that smile was suddenly overcast, when Maese Arnal approached respectfully with a dagger in his hand.

"Sir," he said to him, "this weapon wants the half of the blade; and it will be necessary to make a new one for it."

"And it will be necessary to pitch you out of the window for an impudent meddler," added the Count in the same tone.

"Señor!" exclaimed the artificer, in terror.

"Well, take that, and leave the dagger in its place," said the Count, pointing to the heap, and turning his back.

"Is it yours?" asked Don Alphonso, with indifference.

"I don't know—Yes—I think it was mine," answered Don Luis, in the most natural manner.

"So then, according to your plans, there is no fear of your falling into the snare that is laid for you?" said the Infanzon, turning the conversation.

"Snares! Snares for a fox so often chased, and so cunning!"

"Yes, because they see you are now old and broken in spirit."

“Old indeed, but not spirit-broken.”

“Because your enemies think so, they wish—”

“What do they wish? Let us see.”

“To marry your daughter to the Marshal.”

“To Catalina?” exclaimed the Count, manifesting the greatest surprise. The idea is certainly amusing.”

The Infanzon had a key which enabled him to decipher the Count's thoughts; when the latter appeared surprised, it was not a sign that he was really so, but that it suited him to appear so.

“You are right; an amusing notion,” said the cavalier; “just like the idea of a friar.”

“The idea of a friar?”

“Yes, that of your friend, father Abarca, the Chronicler of Irache.”

“My friend!”

“Yes, precisely. Do you not recollect that when I received the commission to search for a grave monk of good repute, to negotiate the perpetuity of the truce and the reconciliation of the factions, I came to consult with you, and you, Señor Count, pointed out to me the Benedictine monk?”

“Yes, I pointed him out to you as a man of letters, as a respectable person, and, above all, as a fool. You wished to fulfil the Queen's commission, while, at the

same time, you raised up all possible obstacles to her plans, and I pointed out to you a simple man."

"A simple man, indeed—a man whom you have made to believe that the notion of this union is an original idea of his own, although it must have cost you no little trouble to drive it into his head."

"You give me credit for an ingenuity," said the Count, modestly, "which I really do not deserve."

"I give you nothing beyond your merits, my friend Don Luis. The scheme is of too ancient date not to have been well meditated. Catalina was not more than seven years old when you gave her a companion in this castle—one, who, though a man in appearance, was almost a boy; this friend of her childhood was a prisoner of war, the son of your mortal enemy; one who, when delivered from so sweet a captivity, would inherit the titles and dignities of his father. It was for this you treated him as a son, in order that he might not, with his rank, inherit the inveterate enmity of his family. Confess, my good friend, that from that time you cherished the idea of this marriage, which father Abarca has proposed so spontaneously."

The Count was silent when he saw that the half of his secret was known; but afterwards he said, with a view to ascertain if the Infanzon knew the other half,—

“ Well, although I confess that such a thought has sometimes occurred to me, do you consider that I am the person who ought to be most horrified that certain persons should now think of carrying it into effect ? ”

“ Yes, you,—you Count de Lerin, who have only one sheep left of the scattered fold of your family, you ought to be horrified at the idea of delivering it up to the lion, however much they may assure you that love has cut his claws and filed his teeth.”

The Count breathed more freely ; but not yet regarding himself as quite safe he added immediately,

“ I ! what difficulties can I reasonably place in the way, when I am a poor ruined man, and when the blood of a father does not stand in my way ? ”

“ But,” replied Don Alphonso, “ is the Marshal’s father the only victim of a thirty years’ war ? ”

The count was completely satisfied ; the Infanzon knew nothing about the horrible mystery of that night at Pampeluna.

“ In short,” said the Count, “ everything depends on the conditions with which peace is offered to me.”

“ And are you capable of sacrificing your daughter’s happiness ? ”

“ But if they love one another ? Do you not suppose

that Catalina and the Marshal may entertain a mutual affection ?”

“ I do not suppose it, Señor Count, I know it to be true ; and I also know that you have encouraged a passion which will make the heart of your poor daughter wretched ; because—Ah ! you know too well that this marriage is impossible.”

“ Impossible ! wherefore ?” asked the Count, in whose breast suspicion was again awakened.

“ It is impossible, because the union of Philip and Catalina, after a war of thirty years, is not the union of the factions ; because you have not another daughter for Mosen Pierres de Peralta, nor others for Londoño, Armendariz, and all the principal cavaliers of Agramont ; because there are not castles, lands, and dignities in Navarre to satisfy the ambition of the partizans of both factions ; because a struggle which has been prolonged since the death of Don Carlos and Doña Blanca without any noble or known and definite object cannot be brought to a conclusion by a sudden and generous impulse ; because there being no cause which obliges us to make war, there can be no compromise which will oblige us to preserve peace ; it is impossible because you, Count de Lerin, the only person, perhaps, who harbours a political design, amidst so much ignorance, disorder, and disregard of authority,

labour in the cause of anarchy, fight for the dissolution of the kingdom, while angry passions, festering feuds, and inordinate ambition fight on your side, and you have also a powerful ally in the age whose tendency you have divined—an age which is gradually destroying the feudal system and annihilating small states in order to found on their ruins those great monarchies, that new world, which will emerge from the chaos of the past. In short, Señor Count, by marrying Catalina to the chief of the hostile faction you will recover at one stroke all your lands and castles, you will gain a hundred battles in a single day; but you will sacrifice your daughter's happiness, for, carried away by the irresistible force of events, you will have to bare your sword against her husband the day after their nuptials."

"You are greatly interested in Catalina's welfare," replied the Count, slyly.

"Because I love her, love her with my whole heart."

"And you have doubtless discerned the future through the glass of jealousy?"

"Jealousy! jealousy!" exclaimed the Infanzon, in that deep tone with which he always spoke of the past. "You who know me yet speak to me of jealousy, and entertain the idea that my soul can hold a drop more

than the pure essence which it has treasured up for fifteen years? I love Catalina, and because I love her I wish to see her happy in the arms of a husband whose lot it would not be to wage eternal war with you, to slay you or to die by your hands; because I love her I have spent so much time beside her, gradually enlightening her mind with the torch of science, which I brought from the most famous schools in Europe, and only of you, only of a father, could I feel jealous, for my love is more akin to paternal affection than any other."

"Not a father," answered the Count, with something like emotion, "you shall be her brother, in order that I may call you my son."

"Well, then, I beg you as such not to live slumbering in false security, amid the flowers of your own genius, when perhaps a treacherous serpent—"

"Proceed. Why do you pause?"

"I am going to disclose to you the object of my visit. Do you know the Penitent?"

"She is a holy woman."

"Have you faith in her words?"

"Her counsels have been often of service to me."

"Well, then, listen to that which she has just given me. 'Fly to save Catalina! Treachery, flames in the castle. Woe to her if you tarry.'"

“When?”

“This very day.”

“In words?”

“In writing.”

“And you have been perhaps making yourself uneasy about it, poor Don Alphonso?” said the count, with a look of sublime compassion.

“I flew to save her, fearing—”

“But you see,” replied Don Luis, calmly, “there is no fire in the palace but that of the chimneys, for it is infernally cold; as to treachery, I, or rather the gallows erected at my gates, will answer you for that; and as for haste, we have been talking for an hour, and I believe we might continue conversing quietly for several hours longer.”

“You think then that the warning has no meaning?”

“On the contrary, I think it means a great deal. I think my enemies do not wish me to be present at the coronation of the Queen, in order that I may incur the displeasure of the daughter as I fell into disgrace with the father. They would like to style me always a rebel, and preserve the monopoly of the throne, and for that purpose they wish to keep me here, and have given false information to the Penitent in order that she might convey it to you, and I might learn it through this channel. To Estella!

quick to Estella! Let us hasten our departure. We shall see the Penitent there, and perhaps be able to ascertain the cause of her enigmatical warning. Catalina will remain here in my best castle, and I will take care that no one shall see her during my absence."

They did so: on the next day the Count received the visit of his friend the friar of Irache, and, on the day following, he set out for the court. Accompanied by Don Alphonso, he went to see the Penitent; the hermitage was closed,—the holy woman gave no answer.

When the Count received the news of the conflagration, our readers will recollect that, before galloping off, he saluted the Queen and Don Philip with an affectionate smile. The Marshal had no difficulty in perceiving that, to say the least, he and his party, as well as the Queen, were not free from the new Constable's suspicions. Those suspicions, however, did not appear to him without foundation; with respect to Doña Leonora, they were a confirmation of his own, and, with respect to his party, we have already seen what well-founded motives he had for thinking evil, and divining all, if the crimes of a chief could be imputed to an entire faction.

With regard to evil thoughts, indeed, the Count de

Lerin was not backward in drawing conclusions, but his excessive malignity and distrust had this time put him on the wrong scent; and his prejudice against the Marshal and Mosen Pierres was already more than sufficiently strong, when all the hints and information he received tended to criminate the former.

The sentinels at the castle maintained that the muffled cavalier, who so earnestly begged to be admitted into the castle, had quite the air of the Marshal, under whom they had formerly served.

The worthy inhabitants of the village swore that they had seen, about the time, a sturdy young beggar, who had no appearance of lameness. Others called to mind that the disguised stranger wandered all day about the castle, and came, from time to time, as near as he could to the walls, in the direction of the tower; and finally, all saw that, when the fire broke out, two of the Count's servants who were conversing with a stranger, went away, by the road to Castille.

"Oh!" said the Count, "since you will have it so, I will, before the appointed time, throw open the cataracts of heaven, and the deluge will come."

And he sat down and wrote a message to Don Juan de Rivera, commander in chief of the Castillian troops on the frontier.

"My arm and my good fortune are both failing me,

but my heart remains firm. Marshal, Marshal! I do not envy the fire of your youth. You think you will humble me because you see me a ruined man; but he who to-day inspires pity, will to-morrow fill you with terror! Yes!" he exclaimed, more calmly, and in his habitual tone, after a short pause, "I must terrify, and confound with a single blow, those who fancied to-day that the power of the Count de Lerin resides in these four walls."

And, after writing the message, he began to draw up a proclamation of death against the Marshal, upon whose head he set a price.

CHAPTER XIV.

WE have said nothing about the first interview between the Count de Lerin and his daughter, because there are scenes which the reader's imagination can picture to him much better than the author can describe them. However cold might be Don Luis's heart, and however stern and severe might be his disposition at bottom, though soft and flexible in appearance, there are certain emotions against which even a heart of marble is not proof. He was a father, and could not but feel the most lively pleasure in embracing his daughter, a pleasure too which must have been enhanced by her complete recovery from the effects of the terrible disaster in which she had so nearly perished.

This second miracle was due, as the people in the castle said, to the author of the first. The gallant hero of the conflagration—Catalina's guardian angel—after having displayed in the hour of danger the most daring courage and the most astonishing energy and

activity, far from retiring to rest upon his laurels, tried to obtain others, and, transformed into a physician, he distinguished himself, at Catalina's bedside, by his knowledge and skill, which must have excited double astonishment in that age of barbarism and ignorance. The person to whom so many prodigies of valour and wisdom were ascribed was Don Alphonso of Castille. The Queen's favorite gathered all the crowns of laurel that were scattered that day, as Hercules gathered all the exploits of the primitive ages of Greece, and the Cid all the glories of the eleventh century in Castille; for the imagination of the people is unrivalled in producing great dramas with a small number of characters. It creates mythic mountains of glory heaped upon one another, by which a giant people strive in greatness with the Supreme Creator.

Between the unreflecting youth who rushes, unconscious of danger, into the midst of the flames to save the Count's daughter, and the mature and prudent man who, after she is saved, completes the triumph of the former, and restores her to life and health with suitable medicaments and sage and learned advice, the soldiers and inmates of Lerin made no distinction.

Certain circumstances gave substance and a semblance of truth to this illusion. The Marshal made

his appearance clad in the richest armour and with his visor closed, and rescuing from the flames the most precious treasure which the castle contained, he came and placed her in the arms of her duennas, and, without waiting an instant, returned to stop the progress of the conflagration. When he saw that it diminished in violence and intensity, the Agramontese chief, afraid of being recognised, took advantage of the disorder and confusion and vanished unperceived; and at that moment another cavalier arrives, as richly accoutred and as completely disguised. On seeing Catalina lying senseless in the arms of her attendants, he forgets the flames, recks not of the good effect his presence would produce, and thinks only of restoring animation to those features of maiden loveliness in which he recognises, not a transient perturbation of the senses, but all the symptoms of real asphyxia.

To remove Catalina from that spot to a more airy apartment, free from the smoke, noise, and confusion, were his first arrangements, which were followed by others still more efficacious, and which did honour to his skill. When the patient returned to herself, when her lids rose slowly and heavily for the first time, she saw in her chamber the grave and pallid countenance of Don Alphonso, which beamed with unmingled satisfaction at contemplating that first aurora of life,

hastened as it was by his zeal and knowledge. He addressed her in few but gentle words, and prohibited her attendants from annoying her with questions or communications. This order was violated as soon as he turned his back. Catalina desired to know what had passed, as strongly as her ladies did to tell her, and soon after, when the physician approached the fair sufferer, he knew by the inexpressible tenderness of her looks, that she was not now ignorant of what he had done for her, and that she rewarded him with a gratitude which her kind heart exaggerated. The Infanzon was not long in discovering that heroic achievements were attributed to him which might be probable, but were nevertheless very far from true. To proclaim the truth, to explain the mysterious *quid pro quo* to the herd of pages, squires, and valets, would have been folly; and to reveal to Catalina the real history of what had occurred, when much of the credit might probably redound to the Marshal, whose passion he so earnestly desired to thwart, did not seem to him a prudent step; but as his delicacy would not allow him to receive unmerited praise, nor his modesty to listen to what he had deserved, he resolved to leave Lerin, but not before he had sent a message to the Count acquainting him with the sad occurrence.

Three days had passed between the coronation of the

Queen and the arrival of the Constable at his usual residence: in these three days he had time to mature his plans of vengeance, and negotiate the entrance of the Castillians under Don Juan de Ribera, who was stationed at Logroño with an army of observation. Don Luis de Beaumont did not certainly abandon his old scheme of marriage; he only endeavoured to accelerate it by different means. Don Philip had already consented; and according to all accounts the flame of love had taken such a strong hold of his heart, that there was no fear it would go out before the latter was consumed.

In this conjuncture the Count was of opinion that nothing could be more prejudicial to his plans than mild and gentle measures. Terror, violence, a sudden explosion of rage occasioned by the rumours circulated about the Marshal since the fire, ought to produce admirable effects, according to the calculations of the Count, who was a cold anatomist of the human heart. On the other hand his weakness and prostration were undeniable; if he gave signs of feebleness, his enemies might complete their preparations, throw themselves upon him, and annihilate him at a single blow. The blow should not be given by the strong and powerful, but by the weak and impotent: this was the surest means of deceiving his enemies.

The Count, therefore, resolved to publish the ban

against the Marshal of Navarre. When Catalina knew of it, she came overwhelmed with grief to crave mercy for Don Philip, prostrating herself, at the feet of her father, who shrugged his shoulders, and said to her with indifference,

“ Pshaw ! Whether they kill him or he marries you, it comes to the same thing.” And he left her transfixed with terror..

The Marshal of Navarre was at that moment alighting from his horse at the gates of the castle ; for on hearing the sad news which had reached the Queen from Lerin, he boldly and resolutely set out for his enemy’s residence.

“ The Constable of Navarre ? ” asked Philip, with a firm accent, of the sentinel at the drawbridge.

“ Is it you ? ” exclaimed the soldier, with a look of mingled wonder and kindness.

“ Yes, it is I ; do you know me ? ”

“ Enter, sir, enter,” replied the soldier, paying him due honours with his pike, and regarding him with curiosity and respect.

“ This man,” thought Don Philip, “ has doubtless served in my troop, and is desirous of returning : it is good to meet friends everywhere.”

“ What is your name ? ” he said to him aloud.

“ Sancho Garcés.”

“ Good, Señor Garcés ; I will not forget you,” replied the Marshal with an air of protection.

The governor then came out at the gate, and the cavalier did not require to finish his phrase of “ The Constable of Navarre ?”

“ Come,” cried the governor, taking off his cap and regarding him with the greatest civility ; “ who will show this noble cavalier the Count’s chamber ? Although indeed your excellency must know it yourself. Is it not so ?”

The Marshal inclined his head in token of affirmation ; but did the Marshal know really whether his head was on his shoulders ?

It was a great deal to stumble on a friend in Lerin, but that the governor of the castle himself, that the soldiers, who surrounded him in respectful attitude and with joyous countenance, should also be his friends, somewhat staggered him. Wishing to make a last trial, he said. “ Do you know if the Constable will be able to receive me ?”

“ Sir, he is waiting for you with open arms !”

“ But, do you know me ? Are you aware who I am ?”

“ Ah ! Sir, in this castle all know your excellency, and love you cordially and admire you.”

“ What ! All love and admire me !” repeated the Marshal, astonished at such an answer.

“ All, all !” cried these warriors, as if by acclamation.

“ Good and well, Señor ;” murmured Philip, smiling within his visor. “ How strangely things come about ! In my enemy’s own head-quarters, where I fancied that the best disposed would like to see me quartered, all love me and receive me with praise and welcome ; and it may be that if I go back to Peralta, Tafalla, and Pampeluna, I shall be stoned by all. What if these should be some of the Penitent’s miracles ? But let us take things as they come, and not sing pæans of victory till the end, for perhaps the way is made smooth in order that I may encounter new difficulties.”

He ascended the principal staircase, and went along a corridor on the right, where several squires were engaged at play, according to ancient custom, which has been transmitted from one generation of lacqueys to another, down to the present time.

“ Here my good fortune will be wrecked,” muttered the bewildered youth ; and then raising his voice he asked, like one who is determined either to bare his sword or hold out his hand. “ The Constable of Navarre ?”

“ The Count is waiting for you,” they all answered.

“ There is no doubt,” muttered Philip, “ that I have lighted on a magic phrase whose virtue no squire or

lacquey can resist, and with so powerful a talisman I might find entrance even into the infernal regions."

He pursued his way with all the solemnity and importance of one who fancies himself under the protection of some sage enchanter, while he overheard the domestics saying, "It is he; it is he!"

"But, good heavens!" exclaimed the Marshal, "do I know myself who I am? For whom do they take me? For it is absurd to suppose that Don Philip of Navarre, however great his love may be for the daughter of the Count de Lerin, can go about here just as if he were in his own castle of Cortes or Tafalla. May it not be some stratagem of the Count's to get me by gentle means into some place from which I shall never come out? Oh! I begin to think, deuce take it, that I have committed an act of downright madness."

From servant to servant, from question to question, Don Philip at length came to the door of a room in which he expected to find the Count de Lerin.

He entered with so much the greater coolness and resolution, the more his suspicions that he had fallen into a snare appeared well-founded.

"The Constable of Navarre?" he said, for the last time, as if pronouncing the famous *Open sesame*.

"Who inquires for him?" asked a sweet and slightly-agitated voice.

“Don Philip, the Marshal of Navarre.”

“Philip! my God! Don Philip!” exclaimed a lady, whose white and delicate outlines stood out from the dark background of the chamber.

“Catalina! Catalina!” said the Marshal, uttering a cry of joy, restrained by prudence.

“Whom do you seek here, Señor?”

“The Count de Lerin.”

“I am alone,” replied the maiden, in order not to say “begone.”

“Heaven, there can be no doubt, heaven has miraculously led me to your presence. Ah! it is you; it is you that I seek.”

“I am alone, Señor,” repeated Catalina firmly.

“Well, call your duennas, your pages, the whole garrison of the castle, if you like; but let me behold you. By the blessed Saint Fermin, I have entered here by a miracle, or by witchcraft, and I am not disposed to throw away favours, whether they come from God or the devil.”

“I have told you, Marshal, that I am alone, and that ought to be sufficient to make you leave me, but I have to add that your life is in danger, that they are in search of you—that they are going to set a price on your head—”

Catalina's firmness now deserted her, as she pro-

nounced these words; her accent became eager, hurried, and tremulous.

“It is better then that I should remain,” replied the Marshal, calmly. “Let him who wishes to find me, seek for you.”

“Philip, my cousin,” exclaimed the maiden, yielding to the impulse of her heart, “fly hence, I entreat you.”

“Threats to me, Catalina!” said the Marshal, indignantly. “Charges of perfidy, ignominious calumnies against me! As I have said—if they seek me, they will find me here.”

And as he uttered these words, he raised his visor, and sat down.

“But have you no compassion on me, who am here alone; and I cannot call any one, for the first who sees you, will denounce or slay you.”

“Then, by heaven, I ought to be as dead as my grandfather, for I have not been seen merely by one, two, or three, but by the whole garrison of the castle.”

“They have seen you! they knew you! Oh! Marshal, Marshal, you are lost beyond redemption.”

“But let us see; I seem to have come here to lose my wits: either all in this house are artful, treacherous, and more knowing than the evil one, or you are

stark mad. Sit down, Catalina—at a distance from me ; I shall revere you as if you were an angel come down from heaven ; but be seated ; let us go softly and fairly. What the mischief have I done that I should in a time of truce have a proclamation on my head, as if I were a thief or a forger ?”

“ And do you ask this,—you ?”

“ Who has a better right than I have to know it ?”

“ Review your actions, ransack your memory.”

“ Catalina, as I was ascending here, your squires made me doubt who I was ; and now you will completely confirm me in the suspicion that I am not myself, the Marshal of Navarre ; quick and violent, if you will, but noble, upright, and true.”

“ And are you come fresh from the other world, not to have heard the news of what has passed ? Do you not see the blackened walls of this castle, one of the towers in ruins, the furniture in confusion, the atmosphere impregnated with smoke ! Do you not know that there has been a conflagration here ?”

“ Zounds ! how should I be ignorant of it ?”

“ And do you not know that I was near the flames, in the most imminent danger ?”

“ Something of this I must have heard,” replied Philip, with a smile.

“ Well, then,” added Catalina gravely, “ this fire was not accidental.”

“ That also I knew.”

“ It was a premeditated crime.”

“ In fact, the crime of a party, a faction.”

“ And do you confess it ?”

“ I confess it ; it is a crime that would cast an indelible stain on my party, unless—”

“ And do you wish me to say more ?”

“ Zounds ! you have not yet told me anything I did not know already.”

“ Well,” said Catalina, making a last effort, “ I am not ignorant of all that you know, and that if I wished before to save you from impending danger, I now leave you, Don Philip of Navarre, to your own shame, and to the stings of remorse.”

Catalina went towards the door ;—the Marshal’s words arrested her steps :—“ I now tell you, Catalina, that you shall not leave this until you have explained the horrible enigma which these words conceal. Explain yourself clearly.”

“ My father supposes you the author of this crime,” said the girl, timidly.

“ I ! I the author of the conflagration ! I had already, indeed, heard that I was suspected, but I did

the Count the honour of thinking that he did not believe the calumny, and had forgotten it. But what do I care for what your father thinks?—Tell me, what do you think?”

“All the inhabitants of Lerin,” repeated Catalina, trembling, “all the Count’s soldiers swear—”

“But I am not asking what the inhabitants and soldiers of Lerin think,—I wish to know what you think. What is your opinion? What did you say when you heard these calumnies? Do you understand me?”

“I fell into a swoon; I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I recollect nothing. It was a horrid nightmare, which seems still to oppress me.”

“But tell me, Catalina,” exclaimed the Marshal, in a tone which penetrated like an arrow to the maiden’s heart, “do you need the evidences of your senses to be convinced of my innocence?”

“No, Philip, no,” at length she answered, her countenance bathed in tears, and radiant with joy at the same time; “I always said so, I defended you against my father,—against the whole world.”

“You defended me! well, then,” exclaimed Philip, with a look of triumphant happiness, “what care I, though the whole world should condemn me, if you defend me?”

“If I uttered those words,” added Catalina, with all the candour of a child, “it was because I sought your exculpation; because I wished to furnish you with an opportunity of showing yourself to me as I now see you, filled with noble indignation.”

“Indignant! at what? I value your testimony, Catalina, far more than the fame which I may enjoy in the three kingdoms of Spain.”

“Yes, but my testimony is not enough to arrest my father’s anger; and, if you saw how blindly prejudiced he is against you, if you saw how much he detests you, whatever I may say or do! Alas! even the love he bears me turns to your prejudice. On my account he pursues you, for me he seeks revenge, and he will not be convinced that my life is yours, that our life and happiness are the life and happiness of our country. Is it not true, Philip, that you love me, and that you sigh for peace?”

“For what other object, then, do you think that I am come here? When I left this,—when I bade adieu to this castle, where I had been so long a prisoner, I had to fulfil the terrible duty of avenging my father. I roamed about like a wild beast, unchained, strewing all these plains with the dead. A thought at length arrested my arm;—‘Who knows,’ I said, ‘but the assassin smiles unhurt amidst so many

useless victims?’ Then I recalled you to mind; for the first time in my life, I reflected that our love might serve a useful purpose, and, as if heaven wished to confirm this divine inspiration, one night, when I was watching for you, as a tigress alarmed for her young keeps guard around her den, Providence placed you in my arms —”

“What do you say?” exclaimed Catalina, as if she had fallen from heaven, at that strange conclusion.

“In my arms, Catalina; you were in my arms, and I felt the throbbing of your heart, and I became more and more consumed with love, and I turned mad, and I found tranquillity nowhere; and when I knew not what to do, nor what course to take, a friar, Catalina, a friar, marvel at this, came to tell me that I must sacrifice myself, for the salvation of my country, and espouse you. Catalina! Catalina! To sacrifice myself with you! I embraced him as I would have embraced you; because that monk came to give expression to my desires, a remedy to my woes; the salvation of my country was my own salvation; the combinations of state policy, the crowning of my passion. Catalina, I agreed that you were to be mine, and you well know that when I make up my mind to anything— When I was informed, therefore, that your father wished to break the truce, I said, ‘I will go to his

castle, I will go and see him, alone, without any companion but my sword; I will enter, Lerin, and I will never leave it, unless I leave it with Catalina."

"Philip, Philip!" exclaimed the maiden, with inexpressible delight, "your words would kill me with joy, if I did not suspect that you are mad. I in your arms! Your bosom pressed against mine! Do not, for heaven's sake, utter such nonsense; for it fills me with shame and fear at the same time."

"What! do you not remember?"

"What?"

"But you are right; how could you recollect if you were insensible?"

"When?"

"At the conflagration."

"And what had you to do with it?"

"You are right, I had nothing to do with it. It was some deceitful enchanter, who assumed my countenance, shape, and armour. I' faith, now I think of it, this about the armour explains the mystery. The secret of my entering thus far without obstacle is nothing more nor less than that the armour is exactly the same as that I wore then —"

"But, good God! is it true, what I hear? Was it you that rescued me from the flames?"

“Do you recognise this ornament?” said the Marshal, taking a necklace from his girdle.

“It is mine,—I had it on,” she replied, tremulous with joy.

“And did the echoes of a voice not reach you, which sang out of tune from anxiety to make you understand the meaning of the words?”

“Was it you?”

“Catalina, Catalina! if another had saved you, I would never have forgiven him for having held you in his arms.”

“Generous soul! stout and noble heart! I owe you my life, and my father decrees your death! He owes you his castle and repays you with a declaration of war. Good heavens! May they not lay hands on him before my father knows? Oh! excuse him, I beseech you; he thought you guilty—he was concerned for his daughter whom he adores—Forgive him, Marshal—”

Catalina proceeded no further; for her touching language was interrupted by the trumpets, fifes, and drums which resounded in the court of the castle.

“What is this?” said the Marshal, rushing to the window.

“Oh! for the love of heaven, Philip, leave this, do not let them see you.”

“ But what means this ? The music stops, a herald draws forth a paper—”

“ Away, it is the proclamation. Do you not hear your sentence of death ? a hundred florins for your head ”

“ Adieu, Catalina, adieu. I go, I obey you,” said the Marshal, and with his usual firm and resolute air he went to the door.

“ Where are you going, Philip ? Remember that I love you. Your life is my life.”

“ I have already said it. I either quit not Lerin or I leave it with you,” said the Marshal, as he vanished from the eyes of his beloved.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Marshal went out of the castle with still less difficulty than he entered. He did not meet a soul in the corridors; he did not even find a soldier at the gate, as if sentinels were not indispensable. All were in the square which was overlooked by the principal façade of the palace, and in the four corners of which the ban of the Count de Lerin was proclaimed with all due ceremony.

Six kettle-drummers and four trumpeters covered with long green garments in the form of dalmaticas, on which the arms of the Count were embroidered, marched in front, their horses caparisoned with rich housings of cloth which almost trailed on the ground; then followed twenty soldiers of the guard with their halberts on their shoulders, with the exception of the officers, who carried partisans. Next in order came the heralds on horseback, in a dress similar to that of the kettle-drummers, somewhat shorter and wider, but much richer, and

worn as a surcoat over their armour. An escort of cavalry closed the march.

The procession stopped at the entrance of the principal street, and the guards formed a wide circle, keeping off the crowds which were pressing forward at their backs. The musicians ceased their infernal din, in order that all might hear the voice of one of the heralds, who drew forth a parchment, and read as follows in a solemn and emphatic tone :

“ We, Don Luis de Beaumont, Count de Lerin, and Constable of Navarre, for ourselves and the Queen our mistress, whom God preserve, to all our vassals and faithful servants : Know and understand : Inasmuch as Don Philip, the Marshal of Navarre has broken the truce by us mutually covenanted, accepted and sworn—”

“ Thou liest ! thou liest !” cried an indignant and piercing voice which issued from the midst of the throng.

“ By us mutually covenanted, accepted, and sworn,” repeated the herald, “ and inasmuch as the said Marshal did with his own hand set fire to our castle of Lerin—”

“ Thou liest, thou liest,” again shouted the same voice, “ and I denounce as a villain, a traitor, and a false knight, whoever will maintain it, and challenge him to meet me in single combat.”

Another herald hastened to the place from which the challenge came, and was not long in finding the person who uttered it. Meanwhile the other herald continued with imperturbable solemnity :

“ To our castle of Lerin, we declare him a traitor, villain, and false knight, and we likewise declare exempt from all punishment or blame whoever kills, smites, or injures him, whether in his person, or his property ; and we furthermore offer and swear that we shall give a hundred florins to any one who will bring him to us alive or dead—all which we do in conformity with the command of God that wicked and perjured men should be exterminated and swept from off the face of the earth.

“ Given at my castle of Lerin on the thirty-first day of the month of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and seventy-nine.

THE COUNT DE LERIN.”

“ Long live the Queen !” cried one of the heralds, after the first had finished reading the proclamation.

“ Long live the Count de Lerin !”

“ Death to him, death to him !” shouted the cavalier who had twice interrupted the proclamation.

“ Traitor !” answered the soldiers, turning towards the daring knight who thus defied all his enemies ; but

they were filled with amazement in recognizing by his armour, him who had braved so many dangers to save the Count's daughter.

"Do you hear, heralds, do you hear what I say?" pursued the Marshal. "I challenge as a villain, traitor, and coward, any one of you, body to body, in single combat with lance and sword."

The crowd were struck dumb with astonishment at witnessing such audacity.

"The name of the challenger?" said the herald.

"My name!"

"Yes, your name; no one can accept the challenge of a stranger."

"Well, then, I am Don Philip, Marshal of Navarre! Do you know me?" he exclaimed, raising his vizor, and calmly folding his arms.

"The Marshal! the Marshal!" cried the crowd, retreating in terror and confusion, and leaving the chief of the hostile faction alone, and motionless as an iron statue.

He remained thus for a considerable time, cool and tranquil, while all was confusion among the soldiers.

"Come on, ye honest Beamontese, come on; any of you may make himself a rich man; at a single stroke he can gain a hundred florins. Come on, fear nothing,

for I never unsheath my sword against plebeians ; I prefer death to staining my sword with your blood."

This language far from irritating the multitude, increased their admiration, and the sympathy involuntarily inspired by one who, standing alone on hostile ground, and surrounded on all sides by enemies who, he must have supposed, were thirsting for his blood, displayed a degree of valour which almost looked like foolhardiness, incredible coolness, and a nobleness of sentiment, which found a deep echo even in the most plebeian hearts.

The Marshal played not merely the brilliant part of a hero, but also the more modest, though more interesting, one of victim ; all immediately perceived that far from being the incendiary who had set the castle in flames, he was the saviour of Catalina, the tender and beloved maiden of Lerin ; and fear and admiration were soon converted into respect and affection. No one thought of the hundred florins, but with indignation ; and instead of the Marshal, any one who would have approached him in hostile attitude, would have been the victim of the noble and generous crowd. Suddenly from the principal gate of the castle, the Count was seen issuing unarmed, and with slow steps he advanced towards the group which surrounded the Agramontese chief.

“ Ah! sweet cousin,” said Don Philip, when he saw the Count beside him; “ are you coming to gain the hundred florins? are you the only traitor, the only disloyal person to be found in all Navarre?”

“ I am come, answered the Count, to offer you the hand of friendship, and conduct you in triumph to the castle, which would not be now standing but for you, and to the presence of my daughter, who is indebted to you for her existence.”

“ Long live the Count de Lerin!” exclaimed the people, who sympathised with that noble contest in generosity.

“ And the ban?” asked Philip.

“ Is annulled.”

“ And the two months’ truce?”

“ Is converted into a truce for a year and a day.”

“ And Catalina?”

“ Catalina for a long time has lived only for you.”

“ Oh! let us fly to her presence.”

“ Stop, stop, noble Marshal,” cried the herald, “ your challenge is accepted.”

“ By whom?”

“ By a knight who challenges you to meet him tomorrow at the Field of Truth (Campo de la Verdad).

“ Who is this knight?” asked the Count indignantly; “ he is assuredly no friend of mine.”

“The knight,” replied the herald, “will disclose his name before entering the lists.”

“It is fortunate, cousin,” said the Marshal with indifference, “that my enemy gives me time enough to return and see Catalina.”

The two chiefs embraced one another in the view of the enthusiastic multitude, and entered together under the same roof.

In the meantime scenes of a different character had passed in the castle.

A cavalier who was muffled in a cloak, on hearing the bold challenge of the Marshal of Navarre, approached the herald, communicated to him a few words in a whisper, and then, without being observed by the crowd, entered the palace.

It might be easily seen that it was not the first nor the second time that he entered; for he directed his steps deliberately, shortening his way by secret stairs, to the Constable’s room, where Catalina then was.

“Don Alphonso, Don Alphonso!” exclaimed the maiden in consternation. “Do you know what has occurred? What do you say of the Marshal of Navarre?”

“The Marshal!” replied Don Alphonso, smiling bitterly; “come, my child, take no concern about him.”

“ But do you not know that he has just left this ? ” added Catalina, her countenance suffused with the glow of shame. “ He came in search of my father—his meeting with me was accidental—I wished to leave him—but—Don Alphonso, I know not how it was, I could not—”

“ I know all, Catalina, I know all.”

“ How ! did you hear then ? ”

“ All.”

“ Indeed ! who has authorised you ? ” she demanded gravely.

“ Your father.”

“ My God ! I shall die of shame—my father also knows ? ” she said timidly. “ Did my father overhear ? ”

“ All, I tell you, all.”

“ And nevertheless,” exclaimed Catalina indignantly, “ he has published the ban ? ”

“ He did not publish it in spite of having listened, but because he listened,” said the Infanzon dryly.

“ So that all Don Philip’s heroism, all his generosity, all the obligations he has conferred on us, cannot move my father’s heart ? Don Alphonso, I do not believe it.”

“ You are right in not believing it, for the Count was affected at what he heard.”

“ But, good God! what does he mean then by this proclamation?”

“ To try the Marshal’s sincerity.”

“ Oh! I do not need proofs; where is my father? I shall inspire him with all my convictions, all my gratitude, all my love.”

“ Do not seek your father now, Catalina,” said the cavalier with gentle severity; “ the Count is preparing the farce which is going to be represented down there.”

“ Farce!”

“ Yes; because your father is not satisfied with a modest and secret reconciliation, prompted by an impulse of the heart, in the bosom of the domestic circle; your father wishes rather to compromise the Marshal, than to form a union with him; and therefore you will see him go forth into the middle of the street, and embrace, or let himself be embraced by his enemy in the public square.”

“ But in short, let it be when it may,” answered Catalina, gladly seizing at whatever promised safety to her lover, “ Don Alphonso, you assure me that my father and Philip will embrace one another.”

“ You can see yourself, from the window, this tender and brilliant spectacle.”

“ But, do you jest at so auspicious an event?”

“ I laugh, Señora,” replied the Infanzon, glowing with noble indignation, “ I laugh at the sordid calculations of a policy which prides itself on being sagacious, skilful, and provident, while it is petty, cunning, and miserable. I laugh at all acting, farce, falsehood.”

“ What ! Do you call the Marshal’s love a lie ?” said Catalina, anxiously fastening her bright eyes on the frowning countenance of Don Alphonso.

“ No, I will not deceive you ; I fight not with treacherous weapons. The Marshal loves you—at least he thinks he loves you with ardour and sincerity.”

“ Well then !”

“ Then ! ah ! your heart may perhaps be satisfied, but your honour must exact something more. The Marshal loves you, and his love will be traded in by a cold calculating man who will show no mercy even to his own daughter ; the Marshal loves you, but the Count desires more to compromise him than to see him wed his daughter—desires less to unite him to himself than to disunite him from the other Agramontese chiefs, Mosen Pierres for instance, whose iron arm may break, but never bend to embrace an enemy. The Marshal loves you, and his love is worth to the Count de Lerin the twenty castles gained from him by his daughter’s lover, although he has to give for them a pledge which he may have to redeem to-morrow at the cost of rivers

of blood. Lastly, the Marshal loves you, and your father, as you cannot doubt, has encouraged this passion, in whose flames he does not seek the vivifying warmth of happiness, but ambition, honours, power, as the alchemist seeks for gold among glowing embers."

"Cease, I entreat you, Don Alphonso," said the maiden, whose inexperienced heart was deeply wounded, "for you express yourself in language and in a tone which persuade, fascinate, and subdue me; and it is a terrible thing for me who have no other idols, to be forced to doubt my father's love and to despair of my country's good. I do not know what to think; I shudder at myself. Is it right that I who never doubted any human being should begin by doubting my own father?"

"Poor Catalina! a snow-white swan sailing in a muddy pool!"

"But, to what would you urge me with such language? Do you wish to make me hate him who gave me being?"

"No, Catalina, to prevent such a catastrophe. In order that you may not abhor your father, I am come here resolved to make you abhor myself."

"You!"

"Yes, as the child abhors the physician who with bitter potions restores its strength, and gives it new life. Do you see me tremble before you, a weak, de-

fenceless and forsaken child? Alas; it is because the love I bear you compels me to draw forth my scalping knife, perhaps to scarify your heart."

"Oh! I am afraid; you make me tremble."

"Will you do what I bid you, poor Catalina?"

"But what are you going to propose to me?"

"To renounce the Marshal's love."

"What! are you mad?" cried the maiden, as if she had listened to the wildest absurdity.

"Not to accept his hand, if it is offered to you."

"Say no more, it is impossible."

"Impossible! it is still more impossible to love him and be happy."

"I will love him and be unhappy then," she answered, with a slight movement of her shoulders.

"Oh! I understand full well that sublime resolution; I understand the happiness of misery,—when one loves and suffers for a beloved object; but I cannot conceive such resignation when one's own unhappiness brings with it that of others; what consolation will you have in being unhappy when you cause at the same time the unhappiness of your country, if not of your lover."

"Then what—?"

"Ah! why do you not believe me when I assure you that you will make the Marshal as wretched as yourself? Have I no title to be heard? Do you not know,

Catalina, that I had weighty reasons for detesting the Count de Lerin, and but for your sake, in order not to be deprived of the pleasure of seeing you, I came to terms with him and laid aside my enmity; that I have served him as a friend, and enabled him often to triumph by my counsels? Do you not know that while you were still in your cradle I wandered in distant lands, and although I had powerful motives for hating this soil, I came from the remotest confines only to see you, only to fondle you and receive from you an infantile caress? Do you not know that I went from one school to another, only that I might one day be able to instruct you, and that you might thereby be enabled to surpass in knowledge and discretion all the ladies of Navarre as you surpassed them in beauty? And are not these sufficient titles to make you believe me, and to feel persuaded that I can propose nothing to you that will not be for your benefit?"

"Oh! but—when you speak to me—in this way—of your love,"—muttered Catalina, with confused accents.

"I understand you."

Catalina's forehead was suffused with crimson, and she cast her eyes on the ground from which she dared not to raise them.

"I understand you," pursued Don Alphonso, with some severity; "when I speak thus I give you reason

to suspect that I harbour interested designs——that jealousy perhaps—”

“Ah! no, no,” she exclaimed, with still deepening shame.

“Do you wish me to prove the injustice of your suspicions, and the uprightness of my intentions?”

“No, I beseech you, forgive me; you taught me to doubt, and it was perhaps a providential result that, in spite of myself, I began to doubt yourself.”

“There is a means,” pursued the Infanzon, affecting not to hear the words she had just uttered; “there is a means of bringing me over to your side, of even converting me into an encourager of your passion.”

“What? disclose it.”

“The truce must be regarded as at an end.”

“I cannot guess—”

“The general peace must not be proclaimed throughout the kingdom till after the death of Leonora.”

“That is a very long date.”

“Very long!” exclaimed Don Alphonso, with a sardonic smile. “It will not appear so to the Queen of Navarre.”

“And besides the term is very vague. Let us fix a day.”

“Agreed. Does the twelfth day of February seem to you too distant a date?”

“No, certainly not.”

“Well, then, tell the Marshal that the truce this day broken will not be renewed till the twelfth of February.”

“I am sure I shall get him to consent; but will you assure me in return that he will not then be unhappy, if he should become my husband?”

“For this another condition is needed.”

“What is it?”

“He must swear to you before the marriage, that if at any time he should come to learn the name of his father’s assassin, he will love you the same as ever, and maintain the peace and alliance sworn to the Count de Lerin.”

“Why, Don Alphonso, why?”

“Why! Have you not seen the blood of Navarre flow in torrents, after the Marshal, delivered from his pleasing captivity, left this castle, thirsting for revenge? for the Marshal only sought to bury the assassin of his father among the ruins of an entire nation; and his father’s assassin still lives, lives and—”

“Do you know him?”

“Yes,” answered Don Alphonso, leading her to the embrasure of the window, “look there. The assassin is he who at this moment is embracing the son of his victim.”

“My father!” exclaimed Catalina, withdrawing from the window with a shriek of terror.

“Yes! the Count de Lerin.”

“My God! my God! how wretched I am!”

“Do you now understand the meaning of my anxiety, poor child?” pursued Don Alphonso in a compassionate tone; “I who knew the duty of loving you from the moment I knew the day on which you came into the world—I who see in you the image of a beloved angel who, looking down from heaven, sees herself reflected in the sea of the world—I who see *her* in your eyes, in which *she* likewise sees herself, could I willingly consent to the sacrifice of your happiness?”

“But is the horrible mystery you have revealed to me certain?”

“Listen; your father preserved in his armoury a dagger with half the blade broken off.”

“Yes, I think I have seen it lately.”

“The count kept it at first in Pampeluna, and then here, as a reminiscence of the night in which Don Pedro, the Marshal of Navarre, perished.”

“As a reminiscence!”

“Yes! because your father there treacherously slew his enemy; he then fell upon the ground with it in his hand, and the weapon broke in two pieces, one of which was kept by the Count de Lerin.”

“ And the other ? ”

“ By the Marshal’s son.”

“ Philip ! good heavens ! but does Philip know now ? ” asked Catalina in terror.

“ No, he still preserves the extremity of the blade—”

“ And my father the rest with the hilt ? and neither my father nor Don Philip knows where the other half is. Oh ! ” she continued, as her countenance lighted up with hope ; “ if we make the part which my father keeps disappear, this secret will never be known.”

“ Unhappy girl ! even though every avenue to the discovery of this horrible secret were closed, even though the sun of divine justice should this time fail to dispel the darkness in which the mysterious crime has been hitherto enveloped, I must tell you that your design has been already anticipated by others.”

“ How ? ”

“ The count’s dagger disappeared on the day of the fire.”

“ Well, so much the better.”

“ Better ! it would indeed have been better if it had been removed hence with the same object as yours ; but no one knows who has committed the theft ; it could be no ordinary thief, for he was not prompted by love

of gain, inasmuch as he left articles of much greater value; it may possibly have been a friend of the count, who wished, from noble and generous motives, to put it out of sight; but it may also have been, and it probably was, an enemy who means to solder the two pieces—”

“ Oh! but that would be infamous; and moreover it would be useless, for who can prove to the Marshal that the weapon belongs to the Count de Lerin?”

“ We have not even this refuge; for there is a coat-of-arms on the pommel, bearing in one of the quarters the chains of Navarre, and in another a castle on a rock and a ladder on—”

“ Ah!” exclaimed the maiden in consternation, “ there is no remedy. Thanks, thanks, Don Alphonso!”

“ Do not thank me now; favours of this kind bear fruit very slowly.”

“ But what have I to do?” said Catalina, surrendering unconditionally.

“ Do you hear? hurried footsteps are approaching,” said the cavalier, applying his ear to the door. “ It is the Count and the Marshal. They are coming to propose the marriage—refuse.”

“ Refuse!”

“ I would rather fly from his presence.”

“No, my child, courage! and a moment’s pain will save you years of anguish.”

The Count and Marshal entered immediately after with the greatest demonstrations of friendship and concord.

“My daughter,” said Don Luis, in a grave and at the same time joyous tone, “my cousin Don Philip has just proved to me that far from being the treacherous incendiary of the castle, it was he who saved your life and my property; and desirous of putting an end to our mutual dissensions he has promised to restore all my lands, towns, and castles, and he asks your hand as a pledge of the union which will reign in future between the two families and the partisans which support their respective pretensions. Catalina, your sentiments are not unknown to me; I have just embraced my friend, do you embrace your husband.”

The Marshal threw himself at the feet of his beloved, who remained cold and motionless, with her eyes fixed on the Infanzon, who had retired to a corner of the apartment, and seemed to fascinate her with his steady gaze.

“Come, my child,” said the Count, “joy, surprise—a touch of modesty also enthrall your senses; but there stands your husband.”

“Husband!” exclaimed Catalina, without withdraw-

ing her eyes from their object, "No, it cannot be—it is a thing which—Ah! never, never," repeated the poor girl, falling senseless in the arms of her father."

"But what the mischief has happened here since I went out?" cried the Marshal, pale with rage. "What sudden change is this? Who came here after me?"

"I," said the Infanzon, advancing, "I."

"You, Don Alphonso!" exclaimed the Count.

"You, the unknown Infanzon!" said Don Philip.

"Yes, Marshal, I came after you, and I have induced her to refuse your hand."

"Oh! you love her!—you love her, by heaven!"

"I love her more than you do, for in your place I would love her sufficiently to forget that I loved her."

"I had vowed to God to shed no more blood; but, were I to violate a hundred oaths, by heaven I shall glut myself with yours!"

"And I had sworn, Marshal, to fight and vanquish you, in order to make you promise to desist from your pretensions to Catalina."

"Oh!" exclaimed Philip, in a tempest of rage, "I have on my hands a duel for to-morrow. Heaven confound the unknown knight who causes me to defer the pleasure of slaying you!"

"That is a bootless curse, Marshal," answered the

Infanzon, with great calmness, "for I am the unknown person who accepted your challenge."

"Then let us abridge the term."

"It is the same to me."

"Let us go forth, then."

"Agreed."

"But where are you going, madmen?" said the Count; "do you not see that Don Alphonso is without his armour?"

"What does it matter?" said the Infanzon.

"I shall doff mine," said the Marshal.

"My heralds cannot agree to any alteration in the conditions of the first duel, which was fixed for to-morrow in the Campo de la Verdad."

"To-morrow be it," said Don Alphonso, with the same tranquillity as before, when he said, "Let us go forth;" and directing a look of pity to Catalina, he went towards the door of the apartment.

"Stop, Infanzon, we shall go together," said the Marshal.

"Wherefore?"

"I pique myself on being generous, and when I see you depart with the pangs of jealousy in your heart, I do not wish to remain."

"Ah!" replied Don Alphonso, with a smile, more bitter than the first disappointment of youthful love.

"Ah! remain, remain Don Philip; only the angels who see *her* can inspire me with jealousy;" and he departed alone, in sadness and deep affliction.

"Devil take me if I can comprehend him!" muttered the Marshal, who remained.

"I shall explain to you all," said the Count, through whose brain there had just flashed an infernal idea.

A little later, but that same day, the Marshal learned the history of the feigned Don Alphenso of Castille.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR readers will recollect that the Infanzon, after having assisted the leper, at the no small risk of his life, was so far from being discouraged by his peril, that he resolved to crown his benevolent exertions by endeavouring to procure for him the means of subsisting, at least without ignominy.

In order that no one might molest him, and at the same time to prevent him from leaving his place of shelter, should his strength enable him to do so, he sent Fortun to keep watch until the night should set in, under favour of which, and of his armour, the Infanzon purposed to transport the old man, without being observed, to some place of greater security.

The sentinel, as we have already said, converted into a guard-house, by order of his master, the nearest tavern which commanded a view of the enemy's camp, and so anxious was he in the discharge of his duty,

that he did not move a step the whole day from the spot, where he had been planted. But Fortun, who was not, it appears, a person who could remain long idle, occupied himself in tasting, comparing, analysing chemically, and passing through the alembic of his stomach, the different species and varieties of wines which were there publicly exposed, and with such ardour, such blind devotion, did the good squire devote himself to his savoury investigations, that transported with love for the art of gustation, and the delights of sensual philosophy, he rose gradually to the metaphysical abstractions of the peripatetic system, and at length plunged soul and body into the most complete ecstasy of the senses that a spiritualistic philosopher can possibly attain.

It was easy therefore for the Penitent to repair to the leper's shed, and remove him thence without being observed by the vigilant squire, who was so far absent at the time, as to be very near the third heavens.

Ines brought the old man to the hermitage, behind the outer apartment of which there was a deep cavern hollowed out of the rock, and which received light and ventilation by means of a large irregular aperture, through which he could without much difficulty make his exit into the fields. That secure but sombre abode was destined for the refuge of the leper, who

remained in it without being discovered even by Charote himself.

The Penitent, whose noble spirit was also superior to vulgar prejudices, vanquished the repugnance and horror with which all regarded the malady with which her guest was afflicted, and with a courage which springs only from the blackest despair or the most heroic charity, examined his swollen and scaly feet, washed his sores, and nourished him with wholesome, simple, and well-dressed food, by which treatment the disease, which was then generally regarded as incurable, gradually began to yield, and the cagot, provided with clean and comfortable clothing, was enabled to take exercise outside the hermitage, and, with a little precaution, to conceal his wretched condition.*

The aged Jew, utterly unable to account for or comprehend such conduct, entreated the Penitent with tears of gratitude, to explain her motives for having deigned to fix her eyes on him, and for treating him as a brother.

“ You do not know how many favours I owe to your Jewish brethren, to whose principal synagogues I was recommended by a Jewess, who was to me a second mother; spread as you are like a golden network over the whole world, I have been enabled by your aid to keep always within my view a person whom

I felt bound to protect wherever he might chance to be."

"But I am a Jew, and ever since my brethren saw that I was smitten by the hand of God, they all fled from me, dreading the contamination of my touch."

"The Jews shun you, and a Christian protects you; to the children of Jesus Christ, the most wretched of mankind is he who has the strongest claims to charity."

The old man still shook his head as if he were not yet satisfied.

"Well, then, I have still another reason, and it is that your name is Samuel," added the Penitent, "and that you adopted and educated a boy to whom you gave the name of Simon."

"Simon! Simon! Ah! Señora, may the God of Abraham shower as many blessings on your head as on that of the holy patriarch, and make your good works to shine as the stars in the firmament."

And as he uttered these words, Samuel fell on his knees before the Penitent, and kissed the hem of her garment.

"Rise, Samuel; when I heal you, it is Simon that heals you; when I comfort you, it is Simon that comforts you; do not bless me, bless Simon, and we shall together bless him all our life."

One evening, when the Penitent was alone in her poor cabin, she heard a knocking at the door, and at the same time an agitated voice saying, "Open, open!"

Since the fatal appearance of Don Alphonso, Ines resolved to live more retired than ever; fathoming the depths of her heart with scrutinizing vision, she saw that there could be calm no longer in a sea so recently lashed into tumult by the tempest, if that baleful planet again appeared in the horizon.

She resolved therefore not to leave open the door of the hermitage as it was wont to be; and this resolution was adopted with especial firmness as regards those persons who, by their connexion with Don Alphonso, might let loose, with an unguarded word, the storms of passion which, like Ulysses, she kept imprisoned in the recesses of her heart. The Marshal, the Count de Lerin, the Infanzon himself, had resorted in vain to her abode; they knocked at the door as they might have knocked on a tombstone,—the same solitude, the same silence, the same repose; only if the stone were removed, the eye would discern dust and ashes, whereas if the door of the hermitage were thrown open, there would be found a volcano.

The Penitent shrugged her shoulders with indifference on hearing the redoubled knocks which thundered

through her cave ; but the shouts which accompanied them made her hasten to the entrance.

“ Open, Señora, open quickly !”

It was Chafarote, her faithful servant.

He had never before clamoured so loudly for admittance ; something extraordinary must have occurred ; and as the importance of things in the estimation of Ines depended on the relation, more or less intimate, which they might bear to Don Alphonso, her thoughts at once reverted to him ; she opened the door, and asked the hermit in alarm—“ What has happened to him ?”

“ They will kill him, they will kill him, unless you go quickly,” answered Chafarote, who was bathed in perspiration, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, and so breathless, that he was obliged to be very laconic in his first answers.

“ Him ?”

“ Yes, him.”

“ But where, when, wherefore ?”

“ Come, come away.”

“ Well, let us go—conduct me—but answer, answer my questions for the love of God.”

“ One at a time, Señora. Where ? In the Field of Truth. Who ? The Marshal ; or to speak more correctly, not the Marshal, but the most perfidious—. Wherefore ? On account of those infernal love affairs,

out of which I know not how he can extricate himself."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ines, with an impulse of charity—or of love which did not let her give a thought to jealousy, "Oh that I could work miracles as the stupid vulgar suppose!"

"To go and strangle Doña Catalina, eh?"

"To fly and save her."

"Well, Señora, to fly is impossible—but let us set out—no—more slowly—and without looking back."

"Alas! I now remember that the Field of Truth is six leagues distant from this. Is it not between Viana and Mendavia—in a great plain?"

"Yes, Señora—I say—that—yes, Señora," answered Chafarote confusedly; "but this Field of Truth is the most famous in the kingdom. There all the single combats in the kingdom are fought—there all the ordeals are celebrated—there is nothing more certain; but the truth is that Truth has many fields—and without going further, there is one behind that rising ground, which is as well adapted for breaking one another's heads as any in Navarre."

Between the seriousness of the situation and the words of the hermit, there was a species of contradiction which the Penitent perceived instinctively, although her reason could not account for it.

“Oh, why do you go so slowly then? why do you not fly then, if the danger is so near?”

After uttering these words Ines hastened to the spot pointed out, leaping over streamlets, rocks and briars. Though weak from the severity of her fasting and penance, prostrated by the moral conflict which had been going on in her heart for fifteen years, and with increased violence for the last fifteen days, she seemed, nevertheless, like a whirlwind sweeping along the surface of the earth, impeded by no obstacle, clearing every obstruction; her muscles still preserved all their iron hardness and flexibility. Chafarote, although his mortification, as we have seen, did not prevent him from enjoying the good things, as his robust constitution and healthy complexion testified, was much her inferior in agility. He stopped every minute, and with a scantiness of breath which did not seem natural in his iron frame, he cried:

“Señora, Señora! I am quite exhausted.”

“Oh! I have never, never before seen you so sluggish,” exclaimed Ines, impatiently.

“It is because—if you—had gone—five leagues—I say—”

“But did you not say that it was behind that elevation?”

“Behind that elevation?”

“Yes—leave me : I shall go alone.”

“The deuce ! did I say behind that hill ?”

“Yes, man, yes, you pointed to that little hill on the left.”

“No, Señora. The one on the left ! that would have been a pretty business. No, Señora, it is the hill on the right.”

“Well then, I will go alone, if you are tired.”

“Tired and all as I am, I will go there sooner than you, although you run like a hare.”

“How so ?”

“Because I know the short cuts, and you will make a thousand windings and turnings.”

“Lead you, then ; but since I must accommodate myself to your slow pace, relieve me from my anxiety.”

“Agreed, but—to speak and walk at the same time ! Oh ! not so fast, Señora, I cannot find breath. Zounds ! you look as if you had the lungs of a horse.”

“Now why do you turn to look at the hermitage ?” cried the Penitent, in a tone of rebuke.

“Tut, no, no—forward—and let us come to the story. Well, Señora, only imagine that he whom you protect passed the whole of yesterday in Lerin.”

“In Lerin !”

“Yes, in the castle—beside Doña Catalina, who seems to have turned his head. But the girl, who likes another gallant better—Ha! you don’t run so fast now.”

“Chafarote!” said Ines, stopping him with a look.

“This damsel, as I was saying, must have given him the cold shoulder, and no mistake. Shall we stand?”

“Forward, forward!”

“The Marshal, who is the favoured lover, comes to the palace, arranges matters with the father of the girl; Don Xi—I mean Don Alphonso learns this, the two rivals stumble on one another, and straightway there is the devil to pay. But what an infernal hill!—I thought we had it just now right above us, and now, I look again, it has gone to Beelzebub!”

“But what has happened, what has happened to Don Alphonso?”

“Nothing; they agreed to fight in the Field of Truth. Well, I found out all, quite pat, as is my bounden duty—and this is the only duty you have imposed upon me for several days past; but said I, yes, set as many paladins as you like upon Don Alphonso, if there is to be fighting, and I’ll vouch for it he will make minced meat of them just as I would

cut up the broiled chops sold by mother Marisancha, who lives opposite the chapel of our Lady.”

“Get on with your story, Marin, and tell me if we are near the place.”

“Not far, Señora, not far from it. Well, as I was saying, I had no fears whatever about this challenge, although the Marshal of Navarre is a formidable antagonist, and I would have bet two to one in favour of our protégé; and you would have done the same, if you had seen those brawny arms, which might have felled an ox, those sledge-hammer fists, and his gallant way of managing his lance against the whole mob of people at Estella, as I saw him on the day of the miracle, when you sent me to cure the leprosy; I slept then quietly in the very castle of Lerin, where Jaime of Aragon, the butler, was so obliging as to tap a cask of three hundred gallons, in order to do honour to his guest. I said to myself, ‘Zounds! how merry I shall be; this will put me in mind of better times’—I mean to say worse times—the time of my sins, of my bygone wicked life. But if you go along at this rate my lungs will hold out no longer—I shall burst, I cannot follow you.”

“Oh! you kill me, Chafarote,” exclaimed the Penitent, “you kill me with your sluggishness and your useless digressions. I don’t interrupt you, be-

cause then you get worse, for I know you—but tell me quickly, for the love of heaven, and in few words, did they fight?”

“No, Señora.”

“How! the Marshal was afraid?”

“Not that neither.”

“Oh! then say nothing against the Infanzon, for if you do I will tell you that you speak falsely.”

“Neither against him, nor against the Marshal, nor against anybody. Against anybody! yes! there is an infamous man—”

“Explain yourself, I entreat you.”

“Don Alphonso was waiting for Don Philip at the break of day; the Marshal arrives, armed at all points. Ha! said I, the fray will begin, and my heart began to thump as it does now while I climb this cursed hill. Let us stop a little. He advances to our—to your champion, and says—‘Yesterday I accepted your challenge because I thought you of gentle birth, but the Count de Lerin has proved to me that you are ignobly born, and I will not measure weapons with men of such low degree.’”

“Ah! infamous, infamous! Did he tell him that?” asked Ines, with a cry of inward agony.

“That he did say, and he said further: ‘In order to chastise your insolence in having dared to cast your

eyes on a lady of such high station I have brought with me a dozen squires, who will give you your skinful of cudgelling."

"He said that, unhappy man!" exclaimed Ines, her eyes flashing with rage.

"That he did say, and without waiting answer from Don Alphonso, who stood as if thunderstruck, he put spurs to his charger, and sounding a bugle, returned at full gallop to the palace of his new friend the Count de Lerin."

"And the squires, the squires?"

"The squires, Señora, were not in reality servants of the Marshal, and bent on a frolic; they were old soldiers of the count, long inured to war, and were sent by the Constable with orders, not to give a sound drubbing to poor Don Alphonso, but to—"

"Kill him?"

"Clearly, Señora, to kill him—I must conceal nothing."

"So that Don Alphonso—?"

The Penitent did not venture to proceed.

"No, no; he is not dead. Fear nothing. I ran to his assistance."

"You, Chafarote?"

"I did, Señora."

"Oh! how much I owe you! So then, in the name

of our Lady, and with her blessed image in your hand—?”

“How! in the name of our Lady!” exclaimed Chafarote. “It is right and well to invoke the name of the the Virgin of Rocamador among simple Christian people, but among the ruthless myrmidons of a man so ruthless! against them, Señora, I found no other remedy at hand than to seize the first horse that strayed from the troop when his rider bit the dust at the first thrust of the Infanzon’s lance, to pick up the first sword that I found lying on the ground, and without any other armour than this gown of sackcloth, to place myself at the side of Don Alphonso; when more by reason of my strange, uncouth appearance than by the valour of my arm I terrified and scared away the flock of vampires.”

“Chafarote!” exclaimed the Penitent, with a look of profound gratitude, “Oh! what a kind heart! And Don Alphonso—?”

“Don Alphonso, Señora, Don Alphonso—. But there is no necessity for running so fast.”

“What! no necessity?”

“No, Señora, for the more we run the farther we are going from him.”

“What do you say? Is he not in the field?”

“No, Señora.”

“Where then?”

“ In the hermitage.”

“ In ours ?”

“ Yes, Señora, yes.”

“ Then why did we leave it ?”

“ To give him time to enter.”

“ Good heavens ! dead ? They carried him in dead ?”

“ Not dead, but—no Señora—but—”

“ Finish.”

“ He is wounded.”

“ Severely ?”

“ Rather ; at least I don't like his look—poor man !
how sad, how dejected he is— !”

“ Ah ! you weep, Chafarote, you weep !”

“ Well, have I not cause to weep, Señora, when on
raising his vizor, after he fell from his horse, I saw
neither more than less than——.”

“ Oh ! what did you see ?”

“ Do you not know then ? His face, the face of my
master, the good Ximeno, the man for whom I would
let myself be pierced with arrows till I became a riddle,
and fried alive, and— God reward you for it, Señora,
God reward you for all the good you have done me
by obliging me to serve Don Ximeno without knowing
it. My poor master !”

“ But, good heavens !—I cannot be angry with you,
Chafarote, because of your kind heart, your fidelity,

the affection you bear him ; but who conceived the absurd notion of leading me away from the hut, from Ximeno, perhaps when he had most need of me ?”

“ The idea was mine, and nobody’s else. I remained alone in the field with him, uncertain what I should do, when a Jew also came to his assistance. I was going to drive him away, preferring to see Ximeno die where he was than owe a favour to— But Ximeno saw him, gave him his hand—looked at him so—with such an expression—that I shrugged my shoulders and said to myself, ‘ Well, sir, as it is my master’s pleasure I will accept the aid not only of a Jew, but of the devil himself.’ But to me, to me he gave his hand so warmly ! —I thought he was attacked by a spasm. Then I began to reflect that if he was so much agitated at seeing me—me who am nobody, who was only, as I may say, his faithful dog—what would be the consequence when he should see my mistress, when he should recognise the lady of Castle Egúarás ?—It will be better to transport him on horseback, bring him at an easy pace to the hermitage, where he will find all that is needful for his recovery, and when we are near, I shall go on first and get my mistress out of the way under some pretext, in order that she may not witness—”

“ Marin, Marin ! You have done well ; you are as kind as you are generous ; but let us turn back to the

hermitage ; I am now prepared. He will not recognise me—No, no, I shall never raise my veil ; I shall not pronounce a single word—but I shall not leave his bedside—my breath will give him life, my soul will animate his—I will lacerate myself with haircloth, that God may have compassion on him — I will die that he may live. But who is beside him at this moment ?”

“ The Jew, Señora, for he says that he knows you, and knows the hermitage inside better than you ! and i’faith he knows the bye-paths and short cuts round about here as if they were the passages in his synagogue.”

Poor Ines had not now strength enough to return to her abode. What terrible struggles did her anxious heart forbode ! Ah ! she was going to see Ximeno—Ximeno the lover of Catalina—Ximeno whom she could no longer shun !

CHAPTER XVII.

ONLY the anxious desire to be useful to him, which was the sole spring of Ines's actions, could give her sufficient strength to reach her habitation, now occupied by a new guest. She paused under the porch, not daring to advance a step further, but Chafarote entered without scruple or ceremony.

The knight, now completely stripped of his armour, lay in his doublet of proof on the Penitent's humble couch, composed of hard and uneven boards, upon which Samuel had spread dry hay, adding a blanket, which half-concealed this piteous penury.

Whilst the hermit was leading the unprepared Ines away by means of ingenious pretexts, the venerable Jew took possession of the hut. He immediately began to take off the Infanzon's armour, placed him in the bed which was quickly prepared for him, and finished his kind offices by binding his wounds, which fortu-

nately were not so serious as he and Chafarote had imagined.

He then sat beside his adopted son, who could not get over his astonishment at finding himself in the hermitage, and with the leper, who seemed perfectly familiar with all the objects around him, busying himself among and disposing of them as if master of the house.

“So it was the Penitent,” said Ximeno, “that took you from the straw shed where I left you on the day of the snow-storm?”

“Yes, she completed your work; she took me with her, entertained me hospitably, and will finish by restoring me to health, and with health to the dignity of man.”

“And who is she? Who is this woman who anticipates all my desires, and whose protection is never wanting in all my misfortunes?”

Samuel shrugged his shoulders and could only answer, “She is the Penitent, and that is all I know.”

“And she has no dread of you? You do not inspire her with repugnance?”

“Every day she tends me with her own hands, and with the greatest goodwill.”

“And is it only for the love of God that she practises these sublime works of charity?”

“For the love of God, and a man whom she thinks she serves by serving me.”

“And did you never conjecture who that man could be?” asked the Infanzon, less moved by curiosity than by the certainty of the answer.

“It is you; I have made the discovery this day.”

“I! wherefore?”

“Because she has no other wish than your happiness; because, when serving me, she spoke only of Simon—”

“But do you not know her name? Do you not at least suspect it? Do you not suppose that some relation may exist between the Penitent and me?”

“I only know that they call her the Penitent, and that I have never seen her before now.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Ximeno, with both hands on his forehead; “if Blanca existed—if Ines still lived! but, alas, both are dead. And can I see the Penitent? Can I speak with her? Tell her to come, my father; if she hides herself from me—”

The leper looked out at the door of the hermitage, and turning his face, answered:

"She will not be long in coming. Adieu, my

Ximeno anxiously looked for the appearance of the mysterious woman; but as her coming was delayed, a thousand thoughts and fancies assailed him, and half sitting up in bed, with wan and mournful look, he seemed the picture of grief. It was now the second time in his life that he had been treated with contempt, covered with ignominy, hurled from among the noblesse when it was of most importance to the execution of his secret plans that he should live among them. A fatal destiny pursued him, since he was formerly prevented from saving Doña Blanca by an affront, and now a similar affront prevented him from avenging her.

Amidst these bitter reflections he heard cautious footsteps beside him, raised his eyelids languidly, and in his eyes, dimmed by despair, there suddenly gleamed a flash of joy.

He saw before him the squire of the Bárdenas. "Chafarote ! my friend," he said to him in a tender and piteous voice, "in what a state do you see the Captain of the Free Lances again !"

Juan Marin could not restrain his tears, although he fancied that by this proof of tender-heartedness he was compromising his ancient reputation for valour.

“Señor,” he replied, sobbing and ashamed of his weakness, “devil take me if I thought I should ever see you again in this or any other state. But come, we must not be cast down, for God will set all right, and you are in the hands of one who can rescue you even from the deepest abyss. What I am sorry for is that you should see me thus—so—so—but I cannot help it. Master it is now fifteen years since we parted, and you will say that I have turned a milksop—a—yes, you may see I am—with this dress and these tears.”

“Chafarote, come here, come,” answered the Infanzon, with deep emotion, “come and embrace me. So, my dear friend, so,” repeated Ximeno, holding him to his bosom.

“I the friend of your worship!” exclaimed Chafarote, with pride amidst his humility.

“My friend, yes, my only friend.”

“Not so,” replied the hermit, drying his beard, that there might be no indication of his weakness, “I am so far your friend that I would let myself be flayed alive for you, like St. Bartholomew; but your only friend! your worship has very great and powerful friends.”

“The Penitent, the Penitent, perhaps. Who is she? You know her, and you will satisfy my anxious desire.”

“Yes, sir, I speak of the Penitent, for you have the good fortune to enjoy her protection, and if your wounds should get worse, and the Deity determine to take you to himself, the Penitent is even then able to perform a miracle, and through her powerful influence on high she can rescue you from the very jaws of death.”

“But, Chafarote, who is this woman?”

“You know her, so to speak, by sight—”

“I know her?”

“Well, very well.”

“Heavens! who can it be? I do not remember, I cannot conjecture.”

“Master, master, be calm, for such agitation in your present state may inflame your wounds.”

“Ah! my friend,” said Ximeno, sighing deeply, “the wounds of the body are of slight moment compared with those of the mind. Consolation, kindness, friends like you, known faces above all, faces I knew fifteen years ago, these are what I require for my cure, not balsams nor bandages. For fifteen years I have been alone in the wide world, not one friend, not a single voice to call me by my name, not a single eye to fix on me its friendly gaze, and read my inmost heart. I have a silent, invisible, mysterious protector; but you are the first that has called me by

my name for the last fifteen years, the first that has wept for me, you and the old man who accompanied me hither. I wish to know that arm which, like that of Providence, reaches everywhere. I wish to see her, Marin; I have need of all my friends around my bed that their presence may dispel the cloud of infamy which envelopes me. Oh that she would come and console me! Consolation, consolation to my soul, if you do not wish me to die!"

Chafarote was no longer a listener, he had gone out to the porch, where Ines was anxiously awaiting him.

"Enter, Señora, enter," he said to her, taking her by the arm, for in such exciting and critical circumstances Chafarote laid aside all ceremony.

"No, it is impossible," answered Ines, trembling.

"Why so? What is the matter? Come, away with your scruples; enter, and throw back your veil."

"Marin, do you know what you are urging me to?" said the Penitent, in a heart-rending tone.

"I am urging you to see him, to make yourself known to him; I am urging you to comfort him, to promote his recovery—to restore him to health; because, as he says himself, he does not want medicines, nor potions and lotions and devil knows what; but kind treatment, familiar faces—Do you hear?—familiar faces!"

“Does he know then who I am?”

“Oh, no, Señora ; I was strongly tempted to tell him, but I thought it better to leave that pleasure to you.”

“To take me away from this that I might not see him, and now to bring me into his presence !”

“Is that how it is? At present he is prepared, and his wounds, are not so serious as was supposed: the chief thing is his deep melancholy. Zounds! if you had but heard him. He will die, Señora, he will go to Beelzebub's,—I mean to Abraham's — bosom, if you do not take this load of sorrow off his mind.”

“And what gladness can the sight of a withered, pale, and haggard countenance afford him? what comfort can he derive from a heart which is filled with bitterness? No, Marin; covered with my veil, silent and watchful, I will always, night and day, stay beside him; he shall want for nothing; a mother cannot watch over her child with so much affection. It is enough for me to restrain myself, while I look upon him; to hear his sobs and groans while I repress my sighs and tears! It is enough for me to renew all my sorrows; to make my wounds bleed afresh; to see him and suffer in silence, and not die while he lives.”

“But what he wants is to know you; what he most requires is affectionate attention.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Ines, with a deep groan, “why then did you not take him to the castle of Lerin?”

“What! Señora; do you not love a hundred times more and better than that simple girl, Catalina de Beaumont? Have you not done more for him than all the world together? For, but for you—Come, Señora, come; when he knows you—when he sees you—”

“When he sees me, Marin, he will be struck dumb and rigid with terror; he will think I am a ghost appearing to demand from him a strict account of his loves; and if my lips—my eyes, should say nothing to him, his own conscience will reproach him with greater bitterness; for—for, Marin, I forgive him for still loving Doña Blanca of Navarre, but that he should forget Blanca and not remember me! Oh! that I can never forgive.”

“Señora, you must bear in mind,” answered Chafarote, philosophically, “that every one has his soul in his own keeping, and that fifteen years have rolled on since then, and fifteen years are longer than they look.”

“And have they been shorter to me?”

“And above all, when he sees you—”

“Oh! when he sees me!” said the Penitent, with a mournful smile, “when he sees me! Oh! yes, my emaciated cheeks, my sunken and lack-lustre eyes, are very likely to inspire affection! Yes, he cannot fail to love me, now that I am the shadow of myself, when he disdained me full of life, youth, and fire! Yes, he must be charmed with me in these garments of sack-cloth, when he despised me in the gayest apparel! Yes, he will not fail to gather the dry, withered, and scentless leaves of the flowers, which he trampled on when fresh, silken, and fragrant! Marin, Marin, not until grief lays me low, and I fall dead at Ximeno’s feet, not until then shall you raise my veil, and say to him ‘This is Ines—this is your bride!’”

“The fact is,” answered Chafarote, with mingled confusion and emotion, “the fact is that I—to be plain with you—could do no less than—”

“What! did you reveal my name to him?” asked Ines, in terror.

“No, certainly not: not so much as that; no. But he knows that it is the Penitent who protects and aids him wherever he goes, and he is all anxiety to see the Penitent.”

“Oh! there is no help for it—God ordains it—”

“Evidently! If you do not enter he will die, and if you enter—”

“I shall die,” added Ines; and casting a supplicatory look to heaven, she let fall her veil and entered.

The sick man had undergone a serious change; his countenance was inflamed and excited, his eyes glassy, his look wild and wandering, his lips parched and burning—all symptoms of fever, arising from the contending emotions by which he was agitated.

Ines advanced in a state of great perturbation; she did not venture, even through her veil, to fix her eyes on him; she went mechanically and seated herself near his bed, without knowing what she did, until the deep and gasping voice of Ximeno roused her from her bewilderment.”

“Señora, are you my guardian angel?”

“Hush!” said Ines, in a feeble accent, which could not be recognised.

“Tell me your name that I may bless it; show me your countenance that I may adore it.”

“Again.”

“Again! Ah! that promise comforts me—It is the first hope I have cherished for fifteen years. Again! you fear doubtless that I shall become agitated, excited—”

“Yes,” added the Penitent, with an intensity of tone which clearly evinced the anxiety caused by Ximeno’s well-known impetuosity, and the pleasure of being so quickly understood.

But the sufferer, whether from the necessity of having his mind relieved, or from the effects of the fever, had an irresistible propensity to talk, and went on in these terms: “Again, I have to see you again; but in the meantime what will become of me? Do you not know that while I am shut up here, within these gloomy walls, stretched on this bed, and unable to move a single step, others are ceaselessly labouring and bestirring themselves, and will not rest until they have destroyed my work, a work of fifteen years? Oh! perhaps at this very moment, while I am uttering these words, Catalina will pronounce the fatal *yes* before the priest, and the Marshal will receive her into his arms for ever, for ever! Señora, if you can perform miracles, restore me to health at once; give me strength for two days, no, not two days, but six, eight, till the twelfth of February; for after that I will die without concern. You, who have dived into all my secrets, you alone can know the frightful tortures I endure! After having preserved my life for fifteen years, to come here and see myself, like a hungry lion inclosed in a cage, and hear at a distance the bleatings

from the fold! And the Queen will enjoy her sovereign sway in peace and quiet! And Catalina will be the Marshal's wife! Señora, what has your protection availed me if you now leave me on this couch, fettered with the chains of debility? Water, Señora, a little water; do you see, Señora," pursued Ximeno, with convulsive laughter, "do you see how poor, how miserable is man? I ask you for drink, when nothing is to me of any moment but to rush to Lerin, go to the foot of the altar—But I am burning—I am devoured with thirst—Oh! thanks, Señora, thanks!"

The Penitent was standing at his side, with a rude but clean earthen vessel, filled with cool, crystalline water. Ximeno drank eagerly, and while draining the bowl, kept his eyes fixed on his nurse, who tottered and trembled so much, that she had to support herself against the wall, to prevent herself from falling. The Infanzon withdrew his thirsting lips from the goblet, and exclaimed with anxiety, "You tremble as I do."

Ines fell; her lips did not let a single word escape, but her bosom could not repress a profound sigh.

"Heavens! you sigh? Who are you? The *again* has arrived—raise that veil."

"Be calm," said Ines, in her natural voice, without knowing what she did.

Ximeno, startled at her tone, let the cup fall on the

ground, and would have thrown himself out of his bed.

“Who are you? a single word of your’s has stirred my heart to its inmost depths. If you wish for my life, my health, pronounce your name, lift that veil; doubt, uncertainty, anxiety, kill me.

“Ximeno!” exclaimed Ines, with a piercing cry; and stretched her hand over her patient, as the Deity extends his over the seas, when he commands the furious waves to be still.

Ximeno trembled on again hearing those tones, and remained motionless and stupified. It was the second time that she called him by his name. And who uttered it? an unknown person, whose voice awakened confused, vague, long-forgotten memories, which had been buried in the bottom of his heart, beneath the tombstone of a hundred later reminiscences.

“That voice!” he exclaimed falteringly, “I know not—” and at the same time he caught the extended hand of Ines, raised it to his burning lips, impressed on it a kiss of fire, and squeezed it convulsively.

The Penitent could resist no longer; she left his bedside, sobbing, her breast heaving violently, her brain distracted, her heart wounded with love, and wrung with jealousy. Taking refuge in the bosom of religion, she went and threw herself on her knees beside

the table, where stood the cross and the skull, and the notes of the turtle mingled with her groans.

The turtle and the skull! two objects which contradicted and repelled one another,—the vanities of the world, and contempt for the world,—the emblem of sin and of repentance,—love and death,—the rose and ashes,—the transitory and ephemeral of this life, and the eternal of a future existence conceived in the womb of death!

And she laid her hands on the cage, the symbol of love, which Ines, by a contradiction characteristic of the human mind, had resolved to forget, having carried with her to her sequestered abode, an emblem of her passion, while she besought God with prayers and fastings, that it might be effaced from her memory.

The door of the cage opened, and the turtle which personified an allegory of the Castle of Eguarás, escaped from its prison, flew about the fields, and quickly returned to the bars of its sweet captivity, preferring its dreary abode to light and liberty, without the caresses of its gentle mistress.

“Ines, Ines!” exclaimed Ximeno, whose mind received a sudden illumination from that reminiscence; “your voice, oh, let me again hear your voice! for if you are not Ines, if that bird, if that cage, do not

typify the sin I committed against Ines—I am confounded, and cannot imagine who you can be—Ines! but oh! Ines is dead.”

The Penitent rose suddenly, threw aside her veil, and approached in silence. and drowned in tears.

“It is she, it is she!” cried Ximeno, covering his face with both hands. “Unhappy woman! I scarcely can recognise you.”

The Penitent, unable to utter a word, or restrain her gushing tears, fell at her husband’s feet.

Happy for her that she could weep! a thousand times happy that the poison of grief was distilled away in tears, while Ximeno, parched with burning fever, was internally consumed, and racked with agonising pangs.

After a few moments of deep silence, Ines raised her forehead, and stretching her arms towards the sick man, she exclaimed—“Ximeno! regard me as if I were still in the tomb! I ask of you nothing, and I forgive you all, all!”

But Ximeno answered with a loud burst of laughter, which filled the Penitent with dismay.

“You think,” he then said in a sarcastic tone, “you think you have shocked me by calling me a hind, and basely born! Do I deny it, pray?”

“Ximeno! Ximeno! my friend,” cried poor Ines, “be yourself again—see, it is I.”

“Hear, hear, Sir Marshal!” pursued the patient, keeping his eyes fixed on a single point. “I am not only a hind, but of the Jewish race. And—come near,” he added, in a mysterious tone, seizing Ines’s hand, “and not only of the Jewish race, but of the race of cagots. Of cagots! do you hear me? There is my father, covered with leprosy;—there is no remedy, the son must share the same fate with his forefathers. Do you not think that this would be a capital announcement to a certain person? but take care not to tell her before the appointed time, and above all, Don Philip, for heaven’s sake, for the love of God, do not disclose it to Catalina.”

“My God, my God!” she exclaimed, wringing her hands with grief.

“What! do you really meditate such perfidy?” pursued Ximeno, becoming more and more excited; “Do you think to rob me of the affection, the esteem of that maiden?”

“But, do you love her—do you love her after having loved Blanca?” asked Ines, wishing to drain at one draught the whole cup of bitterness.

“But must I not love her, if Blanca and she are one

and the same? did you not know it? The poor princess said when she was dying—‘What will Ximeno do without me?’ And she suspended her flight when soaring upwards to the throne of God, and like the eagle, cast a searching glance over the whole world, and saw Catalina, beautiful, pure, and innocent, and making choice of her immaculate body as her new abode, she folded her wings, and in her she lives, in her she waits for me, until we can ascend together to heaven.”

“But, Ines, Ines!—ungrateful man—Ines, who has suffered so much for you!”

“Ungrateful! Noble Marshal, I am not to be irritated by reproaches, nor affronted by insults; I rejoice in ignominy, because it will avenge me of the infamous poisoner;—the fouler my hands are, the better shall I be able to soil her; but, for the love of heaven, do not deprive me, for a single moment, of Catalina’s estèem.”

“Ximeno, Ximeno!”

“Do you mean to terrify me by pronouncing my name? Ha! you know my secrets, do you? It matters not; I know secrets much more terrible. I have sworn that Catalina must never be yours.—Do you hear?—never; and if you persist, I shall rush to the altar with the dagger in my hand, the broken

dagger, of whose blade you preserve the extreme end, —the same with which Don Luis de Beaumont, the father of Doña Catalina, slew your father, Don Pedro of Navarre. I am going to put you to a terrible test ; and if after you have known all, if after discovering your father's assassin, you embrace Catalina—then, Marshal, I will take you to my bosom, I will embrace you as a friend, for you will have proved that you are worthy of espousing that angel—that you can make her happy !”

“ How much he loves her !” murmured poor Ines.

“ You shall be her husband, but not such a one as I was. My hand also was entwined with that of Ines, and Blanca, Blanca blessed us. Poor Ines ! But, Princess, you made a cruel jest at her expense ; you gave my hand at the same time that you tore out my heart, to take it with you. You wedded her to a senseless corpse. Yes, yes, yes !—It is true that like her, I was nothing more than a corpse ?”

Ines wept no longer ; she left Ximeno's bedside, fixing on him a mournful look, while he continued speaking, without taking notice of her disappearance. She then called Chafarote, who had prudently remained at the door, and said to him :—“ Enter, take care of your master—he is delirious ; you must thwart him in nothing, and wait till he is exhausted with

fatigue, when, perhaps, he may fall asleep. Take care of him, as you well know how."

"But are you going away?"

"Yes."

"Oh! you look as if you had come out of the grave."

"I should have died fifteen years ago." And uttering these words, the Penitent left the hermitage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT is now time to relate the history of Ines and Ximeno, from the point where it was broken off, in the first part of this chronicle.

Our readers will remember that the unhappy Blanca of Navarre departed from this world, which had treated her with unexampled cruelty, bearing with her the pleasing consolation of an unsullied conscience, and the conviction that she had made happy the only woman that had suffered and shed bitter tears on her account. In her final hour, she complacently regarded the lovers of the Castle of Egurás as united by indissoluble bonds, and felt gratified above all, in having, as she then felt, thus afforded complete compensation for Ximeno's weakness. Hapless Princess! whose scanty enjoyments in this world were, alas! nothing more than the illusions of her generous heart.

The first cry of Ximeno, on seeing Blanca's spirit wing its flight to the celestial mansions, was one of vengeance, as the announcement of a new epoch in his existence. The pure and innocent soul of that martyr of sorrow, could have scarcely reached its abode, scarcely pierced the ethereal walls which encompass the firmament, when her ear might have caught the explosion of that exclusive feeling which was to take entire possession of her lover's heart, for the space of fifteen years.

But that sentiment, naturally expressed with all the wild energy of a burning heart, and betraying the stern habits and fierce instincts of the Captain of the Bárdenas, was repressed and crushed by the cold and unexpected answer of the Count de Lerin—"Doña Leonora will be your Queen."

He broke his useless sword against the wall of the castle; and seeing himself despised, alone, without friends, without adherents, he began to reflect that there was a vengeance more terrible than that of the sword, although not so prompt and bloody; and without any plan, but with the firm resolve to form one, he left the spot, without even recollecting that Ines remained in the castle, and directed his steps, in gloom and silence, to Rachel's cabin, mounted his horse, and

disregarding the earnest entreaties of Chafarote and the Jewess, he took the road to the Pyrenees.

To satisfy his irresistible propensity to indulge in grief, and relieve his heart by weeping, he instinctively formed the design of stopping in those places which might most forcibly recall his hopeless love; he wandered over the field where he so gallantly rescued the Princess, and cursed his stupidity or his evil stars for having brought him to the castle of Orthez, and converted him into the blind instrument of the Countess de Foix's wicked schemes; he then went to St. Jean de Pied le Port, and visited the convent where Blanca remained two years a prisoner, by order of the King, her father, who wished to compel her to take the veil, and from thence he went to Mendavia, whose fields and environs were peopled to him with pleasing and melancholy recollections of the tranquil years of his youth, and of his mild and peaceful loves.

Not long before visiting these scenes, he passed through Lerin, where he was obliged to stop, and he there learned, without needing to make any inquiry, that the Countess had one of those days given birth to a daughter. Ximeno received this information with indifference: it is true that the Count de Lerin's daughter was very near of kin to his adored Blanca,

but what relation existed between the latter and her family, except that which connects the sacrificer with the victim, the kite with the bird in which it fastens its talons? His attention, however, was roused by the rejoicings with which the Count's vassals hailed the event, and by the general and confident persuasion of the new-born child's future goodness and singular beauty. As the birth of this child was the universal topic in Lerin, he learned, not without great emotion, that she came to world on the twelfth day of February, the very day on which Doña Blanca of Navarre left it; at the close of evening, too, precisely at the same hour when that terrible calamity occurred.

It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the impression which this information produced on the mind of the unhappy Ximeno; it seemed to him that so strange a coincidence was by no means accidental, and that his destiny was linked with that of the new-born child, the inheritor, perhaps of Blanca's virtues, perhaps of her misfortunes, perhaps even of her spirit. If he regarded with interest the inanimate objects which recalled to his memory the actions, or pictured to him the beloved image, of his Ximena, how much more must he not have felt in an angel whom, on the superstitious suggestion of passion, he supposed to be

endowed with the soul which had transmigrated from the body of another angel.

Resolved never to lose sight of Catalina, for thus was the predestined child named, he proceeded on his way to Mendavia, and in the society of his adoptive father, he passed whole days bewailing the death of Ximena, recalling to memory the snowy head-dress of the supposed peasant maiden, the dignity of her countenance, and the sweetness of her expression, which he sometimes conjured up so vividly as to fancy he saw his lost mistress standing before him.

He then formed a plan of vengeance which was certainly not mean or commonplace; neither was it prompted by Leonora's contumelious treatment, nor by the destruction of the titles and documents which proved his lofty origin; it was inspired solely by a desire to second the decrees of Providence, which never, or rarely, permits crime, injustice, and perfidy, to triumph long with impunity, and displays severity towards none more manifestly than kings who have left a track of blood behind them in their ascent to the throne.

"Let us leave Leonora alone, so long as she does not reign," said Ximeno to himself, as if he held in his hands the scales of destiny; "let us leave her alone, for she who does not scruple to perpetrate the blackest

crimes in order to gratify her lust of dominion, suffers torments enough so long as she is shut out from the throne. Remorse for bootless crimes is the most frightful punishment the ambitious can suffer. Let us leave her alone ; let us regard her even with compassion. But if she comes to sit upon the throne, if she sees her desires fulfilled, then, indeed, then, I shall feel bound to step forward and prove to her that, if the fruits of crime may be tasted with relish, they contain a poison which quickly destroys life."

Confirmed more and more in this determination, he resolved to prepare himself for the day of vengeance, by enlightening his understanding with study, and strengthening his arm in martial conflicts. Before putting his design into execution, in spite of the aversion he felt towards the Count of Lerin, he set out for that place with the intention of maintaining good terms with him, and of contemplating in her cradle, with his own eyes, the mysterious child, which, although never seen by him, he already loved, superstitiously loved, even at that period, and much more when advancing years invested her with all the virtues of Doña Blanca.

After making his peace with the Countess de Foix, Don Luis de Beaumont had returned from Orthez. From him Ximeno learned that Ines, the forgotten Ines, accused of having poisoned the Princess, from

jealousy of a Free Lance Captain, had fled from the palace, and that a few days afterwards her veil was found on the banks, and her body in the channel of the neighbouring stream. He learned also that Leonora gathered courage from that catastrophe, and that the calumny was generally believed, at least in appearance: in order to give it still more probability, the Countess made great demonstrations of grief at the death of her sister, covering herself with mourning, lamenting her loss, and celebrating her obsequies with much pomp in the cathedral of Lescar, and even carrying her hypocrisy so far as to erect a mausoleum in honour of her.

This news was a terrible blow to Ximeno, for besides confirming his opinion as to the sacrilegious perversity of the Countess, it reawakened in his heart the viper of remorse, inasmuch as the desperate act of Ines might be attributed rather to his abandonment of her—to the friendless state in which he left her—than to the stain which had been cast upon her fair fame.—Ximeno, therefore, hastened his departure from the soil of Navarre, where such fatal recollections haunted him, and with the twofold object of blunting his sorrow, and preparing for the day of vengeance, he repaired to Castille for the purpose of devoting himself earnestly to the study of arms.

He served in the courts of John the Second and Henry the Fourth of Castille, both sorry kings, the latter of whom had espoused Doña Blanca of Navarre, and a few days after their nuptials thrust her from his bed, and set about procuring a dissolution of the marriage; he also visited the kingdoms of Arragon, Naples, and France, attracted to the first and last by the desire of studying the refined and astute policy of John the Second of Arragon and Navarre, and Louis the Eleventh, and to the other by an irresistible longing to behold the place of his birth, and learn something about his own family, which he did not venture to greet as a relative. He studied in the universities of Salamanca, Paris, Bologna, as well as those of Germany, with the view of rendering himself superior to his enemies, and availing himself some day of the secrets of science to promote his schemes of vengeance; and he lost no opportunity of taking part in all wars and tournaments, in order to maintain the skill and vigour of his arm, which is usually enervated by the confinement and inactivity of study; but wherever he went he found friends who came to offer him money and protection; everywhere he received advice and warnings, whose usefulness he was not slow to discover; and wherever he might be, whatever disguise he might assume, his invisible protector attended him as con-

stantly as his own shadow, evincing a complete knowledge of his most secret plans, of his inmost thoughts.

Don Gaston de Foix also followed at that time the same wandering and adventurous life as his unhappy friend. In vain he tried to give himself up to the excitements and diversions befitting his youth and exalted birth; the image of Blanca flashed across his memory, even in his most transient moments of exhilaration, and much more when, under the influence of chagrin or disappointment, he sought refuge and solace in the bosom of his mother. The hand with which she caressed his fair and flowing glossy hair seemed to him stained with blood, and he fled appalled from her side.

When he heard his mother sigh, his imagination conjured up the groans of the innocent victims of her ambition, and in the emblazoned arms of Madeleine, his royal wife, he saw the price of parricidal guilt.

He felt this sort of domestic life intolerable, and with the view of drowning his sensations amidst the din of battle, he passed into France, in order to take part in the civil war, called the war of *le bien public*, which broke out between Louis the Eleventh and his brother Charles, Duke of Guienne and Berri—a severe affliction to a mother who idolized her son, to see him leave her with the earnest desire of forgetting

her, and obtaining, far from her presence, alleviation of his misery.

But the civil war of France terminated, in the year 1489, in the reconciliation of the royal brothers. Don Gaston had signalized himself in it by his matchless achievements; desperation made him reckless, and his very indifference to danger saved him from it. His remembrance of the crimes perpetrated in the castle of Orthez began now to make a fainter and fainter impression on his mind, as the circles produced in a lake by the falling of a pebble gradually subside as they reach the shore; amidst the pæans of victory he scarcely heard now the echo of Doña Blanca's dying groans. Triumphant, covered with glory, bending beneath his laurels, he thought himself in a frame of mind sufficiently firm to endure the presence of his wife and mother, and he thought, therefore, of returning to Navarre. But before bidding adieu to his companions in arms, and retiring from the theatre of its exploits, he wished first to have his reputation for valour and skill in arms firmly established by displaying his prowess at the tournament of Libourne, which was celebrated in commemoration of the pacification of France.

He carried off the palm in every contest, and gained the applause as well as the hearts of all; one after another he overthrew his adversaries, who were

esteemed the very flower of chivalry at that time. The people of Navarre were especially proud of possessing such a prince as heir to the throne of Carlos the Noble.

On the last day of the rejoicings and jousting, Don Gaston paced up and down before his tent, which stood at the extremity of the lists; but no one mustered courage enough to break a lance with him. Those who were vanquished the day before, did not wish to expose themselves again to the same disgrace; those who saw the most brave and gallant champions overthrown, felt no inclination to see their arms added to the trophies of the conqueror.

The sun was now declining, and the innumerable spectators were beginning to give signs of impatience; there appeared no paladin so daring, or so little acquainted with the achievements of the Count de Foix, as to enter the arena and endeavour to carry off, at a single triumph, the accumulated laurels of the unconquered prince of Navarre. The old men murmured at the want of spirit in the young of those degenerate times; while others exalted the display of bravery and adroitness made by the maintainer of the field, above all the feats of arms which they remembered; and the ladies remained silent, although their eyes did not fail to express with mute eloquence

the love and admiration inspired by the gallant youth, who with folded arms, continued pacing to and fro before his tent.

At length, when the appointed term of the tournament was near expiration, the trumpets announced the appearance of a new competitor. The latter entered the palisade, and was hailed at once with applause, his gallant aspect furnishing clear evidence of his valour; and all inquired of one another who was the rash knight who did not fear encountering the disgrace of discomfiture.

No one knew him. It was merely ascertained that he had just that moment arrived in the city, and that attracted by the fame of the tournament, he had, without even alighting, hurried to the field in his eagerness to break a lance with the first who should present himself. This ignorance explained his audacity.

With the shaft of his lance he struck three times the shield of the prince, who immediately mounted his steed. It was a combat with blunted weapons, or arms of courtesy, as was the custom on such festive occasions, and nothing more serious usually occurred to the combatants than the shame and confusion of defeat; the struggle was therefore at the outset rather one of display than of courage. Nevertheless, they

gradually became heated at the prolongation of the contest, for each had flattered himself with a rapid and easy triumph; and their mutual irritation was increased by expressions and exclamations which were lost amid the shock and clash of their arms.

The spectators trembled between fear and admiration at beholding such unusual spirit and vehemence on both sides. They had already fought half an hour, and neither had yet obtained any advantage. Ten lances were broken by this time, and when Gaston saw himself deprived of his in the last encounter, he asked the eleventh from his squire, and attacked his antagonist with extraordinary fury, aiming at his breast, and charging impetuously in order to overthrow him in full career. The eye of the unvanquished prince did not deceive him, his aim was true, and the blunted head of his lance struck the newly arrived champion's cuirass exactly below the rest; the iron weapon could not glance off, the unknown knight must have inevitably fallen backwards from the force of the shock, unless the lance broke in shivers, and he who grasped it remained at fault. This was what did occur; Don Gaston's adversary resisted the tremendous shock, keeping his seat in his saddle as firmly as if he and his horse were all one piece, while the former's lance flew in pieces, one of

which, rebounding from the cuirass of the stranger knight, pierced in its recoil the visor of the prince, who fell heavily from his horse with the splinter fixed in his forehead.

The assembled multitude, not suspecting any greater disaster than the overthrow and humiliation of the prince of Navarre, applauded the conqueror with the same enthusiasm that they had a few minutes before extolled the vanquished knight. The ladies emptied their vials of orange perfumes, and threw down bouquets of flowers in honour of the conqueror, who was summoned by the Queen of the tournament, to receive from her hands the guerdon, which had been won with so much glory; but the victorious paladin thought more of assisting his fallen adversary, and, quickly alighting, ran and drew out the splinter, which had penetrated between the bars of his visor, inflicting a mortal wound.*

“It was not you,” said the prince to him, still proud in his disgrace, “it was not you that conquered me; I have been vanquished and slain by myself alone.”

“Gaston!” exclaimed the knight with deep emotion, in seeing his antagonist’s countenance.

“Who are you? Tell me your name; I would wish

* An historical fact.

at least to know the name of him who has been the cause of my defeat and death."

"I am Ximeno! I am the scourge of your family—I am the avenger of Doña Blanca of Navarre! I fought without knowing you. Ah! you are right; I have not slain you, but Divine justice which chose me as the instrument of its high behest."

"Ximeno, Ximeno!" exclaimed the dying prince; remove this gauntlet, take off this ring, and carry it to my mother—"

"To Leonora! I present myself to the Countess!"

"Yes; for my mother also—like me—must see you in her presence when her final hour shall come."

Ximeno, with the prince's ring in his possession, again mounted his charger, and instead of going to the Queen of the tournament, left the palisade, and bade adieu to the city, without resting in it a single instant.

When the conqueror had disappeared, the eyes of the multitude were turned towards him who lay prostrate upon the earth. His squires hastened to undo his helmet, but no sooner was his face uncovered than they uttered a cry of terror. Don Gaston de Foix had expired.

A few days afterwards he was interred at Bordeaux with royal pomp, and his unhappy fate was long deplored throughout Navarre, and in the south of

France; but the name of him by whom he was slain was never known. The people generally attributed the unexpected catastrophe to accident; but history, and those who knew the horrible secrets of the house of Foix, regarded it as the righteous vengeance of heaven.

This event confirmed Ximeno in his stedfast purpose, inasmuch as it convinced him that he had rightly divined, so to speak, the designs of Providence, and he spent many years waiting anxiously, until God should summon him to stretch forth his arm, and smite the chief author of those crimes.

He sometimes made his appearance in Navarre, not only to watch over Catalina de Beaumont, to instruct her, and form her mind after the model of Doña Blanca, who was never absent from his thoughts; but to acquaint himself with the political situation of the country, and to learn what hopes, whether well or ill founded, Doña Leonora entertained of girding her brows with the crown of Carlos and Blanca of Navarre.

At the beginning of the winter of 1478, when Juan the Second had entered upon his eighty-second year, Ximeno saw him at Barcelona, and perceived in his countenance evident symptoms of his approaching end. He hastened to Navarre, clad in complete armour, and provided with squires and chargers, which would enable

him to enter, according to the fuero, into the enjoyment of the privileges and distinctions belonging to an Infanzon of Navarre.

He solicited permission to serve in Leonora's body-guard, although he declined the salary which was due to those who held such an office, and it was not till then that he presented himself before the Countess for the first time. He was certain that he should not be recognized by her. She had only seen him once, and that too with his vizer closed, when she affronted him with such indignity in the castle of Orthez before her assembled guests, before his beloved, driving him from her castle as a base-born knave, although she knew his illustrious descent better than any one else. Besides, Ximeno's countenance had undergone a great change in the fifteen years of gloomy thoughts, of complete isolation, which had since elapsed, and, more than all, his character and manners were no longer the same; instead of being abrupt, frank, and impulsive, he had become gentle, cold, and reserved; his then uncultivated mind was now adorned with the flowers of science. The countenance of Ximeno, nevertheless, made a profound impression in the Queen's heart; a strange and indefinable impression, which seemed at first to arise from fear or aversion, but which soon declared its true character, being distinctly stamped with the seal of the

most powerful sympathies which ardent passion can awaken.

The first bound of joy which Ximeno's heart gave since the death of the Princess of Viana was when his penetrating glance fathomed the heart of the vice-regent's, and discovered how deeply it was enamoured. Love had hastened Ximena's melancholy end, and love must be the instrument which should avenge her. Thenceforward the Infanzon became a thorough seducer. If any exploit was extolled at court its author was Don Alphonso of Castille ; if magnificence or gallantry became the subject of conversation, it seemed as if this were done expressly for the exaltation of Don Alphonso ; if learning and science were discussed, the very abbots recognised Don Alphonso as their superior. The heart of Leonora, besieged so closely and so artfully, surrendered at last—surrendered unconditionally, a few days before the death of the King.

Ximeno, as we have seen, abused his victory ; it is true that he had striven not to capture a prisoner, but to secure a slave, whom he might torture capriciously, and then cast into the circus as food for wild beasts.

The history of Ines will be much shorter ; it may be comprised in a few words. To cause herself to be forgotten by the ungrateful—the world and Ximeno—

and never to forget Ximeno or the world ; to reward good for evil. Such was the generous practice of Ines during fifteen years, as indeed it had been ever since the fatal hour when she first met the captain of the *Bárdenas*.

On hearing of the calumnies circulated in the castle of Orthez, she fled trembling for refuge to the bosom of her beloved Rachel, where she expected to find Ximeno ; but Ximeno, her betrothed, had disappeared without leaving for her a single word of consolation, abandoning her, as well as Rachel and Chafarote, as if he wished from that moment to break entirely with the past, and to float without compass at the mercy of the world's tempestuous waves.

The afflicted maiden, not venturing to remain in the Jewess's cabin, where she might have been easily found by the satellites of the countess, went forth and wandered along the banks of the river, a prey to the most cruel anguish of soul, when her eyes chanced to light on an object which was carried along by the current, and at length arrested among clustering reeds and bulrushes. It was the body of a woman who had been drowned, and whose countenance was horribly disfigured. A dark thought then occurred to her ; she saw perhaps before her an example of the effects of despair ; she was crushed beneath an intolerable

load of misery ; there was an abyss at her feet, and with a single step her sufferings would be at an end. But Ines had also the heavens above her head, and she had before her eyes the image of Ximeno, to whom she might be useful in his solitude, in his sorrow, and in his revenge. She needed nothing more to make her shudder at that temptation, and falling on her knees she asked pardon of God, and strength to bear whatever sufferings awaited her.

She then embraced the irrevocable determination to separate herself from the world for ever ; that corpse suggested to her the idea of dying completely to the world, so that the pitiless Leonora might cease to persecute her, and mankind to pronounce her name. She waited till night closed in, took off her veil and kerchief, left them on the banks, not far from the drowned woman, and returned to Rachel's cottage to communicate her design. She did not wish to enter into a monastery, because she did not, since her union with Ximeno, consider herself at liberty to pronounce the sacred vows ; besides, she wished to live for him and favour him unseen amidst all the dangers and vicissitudes of his life, and aid him in carrying out his good designs. Her fertile imagination immediately suggested to her the idea of a solitary cave, and a life dedicated to prayer and works of charity—a life which would give her a certain

influence of which she might avail herself in behalf of her ungrateful husband. But this plan could not be carried into operation so long as the life of Rachel was preserved. Ines was too generous and delicate not to sacrifice her own tastes and projects, when incompatible with the care and attention which the old woman, who had been as a mother to her, required. Both departed that very night, accompanied by the squire, in order to escape from the effects of Leonora's rage; and they lived together in one of the most sequestered valleys of Navarre, under assumed names until the death of Rachel, which took place not very long after their flight.

Ines now freed from this care was enabled to pursue her scheme. She obtained permission from the abbot of Irache to occupy an old hermitage near the sanctuary of our Lady of Rocamador, to whose service she consecrated herself with the purest and most fervent devotion. Nor did Chafarote desert her in her new mode of life, although, as regards penance, he followed his mistress's example only so far as to adopt the gown of sackcloth; hair shirts and fastings, the latter especially, were modes of testifying piety which the old warrior of the Bardenas could never be prevailed upon to practise. Rachel had bequeathed to her adopted daughter a considerable sum in florins, and moreover she had recommended her to the Jews so strongly that

she was enabled by their means to obtain information from all quarters, and to place money when she chose in the hands of persons travelling or residing in distant lands. In this way she had the power to protect Ximeno wherever he went, and commissioned sojourners in foreign countries to observe all his movements. From the recesses of her darksome cell she followed like a mother the steps of that wandering child; divined his thoughts, warded off a thousand dangers by her advice and warnings, and, persuaded that it was a noble and holy undertaking to chastise the Countess de Foix, by employing terror in order to rouse her from the deep lethargy of guilt, she did not scruple also to associate herself with the projects of Ximeno, from the moment she caught the first glimpse of them.

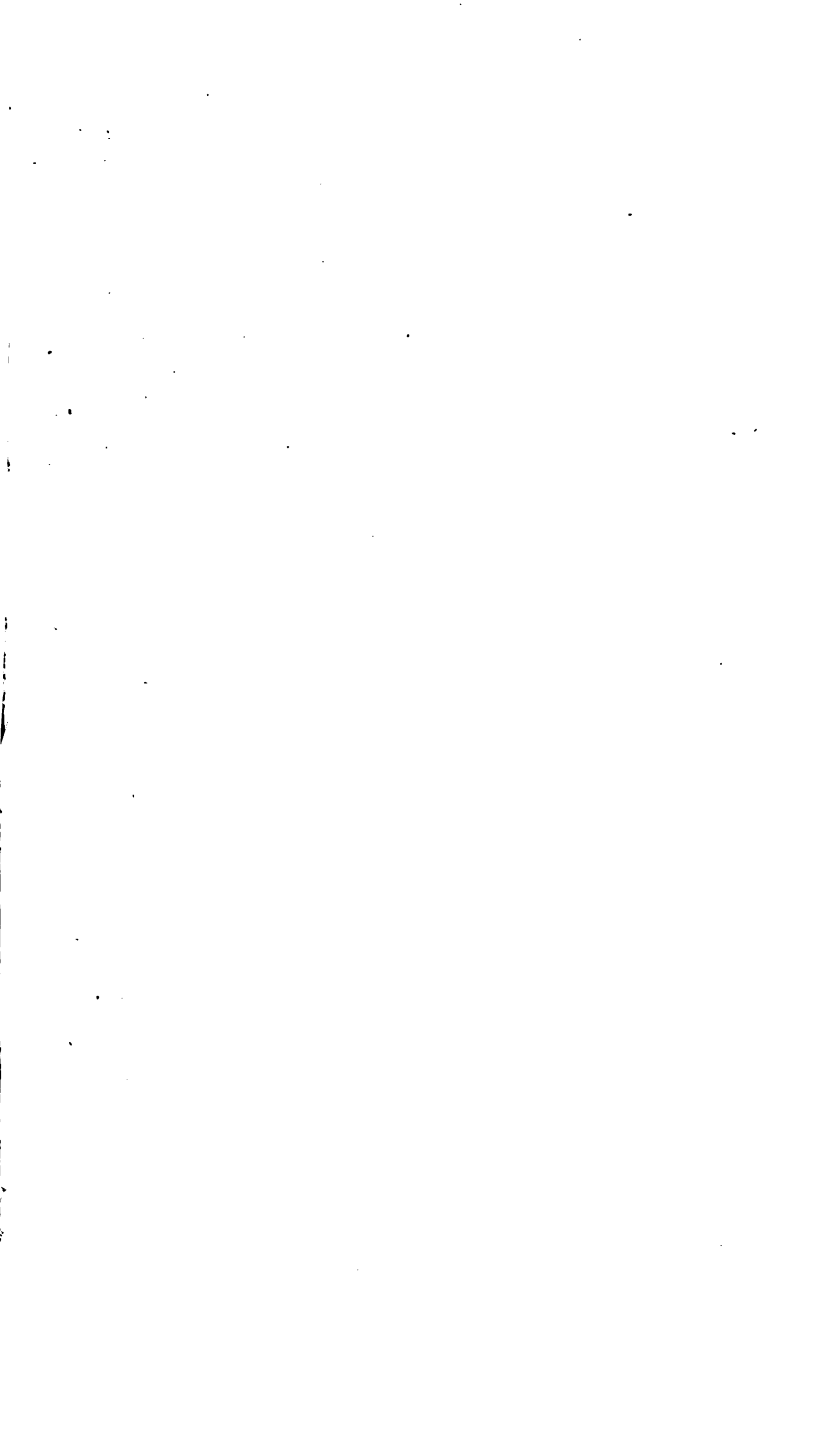
Now she saw clearly what they were. In his delirium Ximeno had revealed all. Ximeno, when on the very point of putting in execution the cherished plan of a whole life, was laid prostrate on a bed of sickness, and incapacitated from taking a single step. What ought she to do, but to hurry forth from her hermitage, and absorbed in the designs and means of execution conceived by Ximeno, act as if she were Ximeno himself?

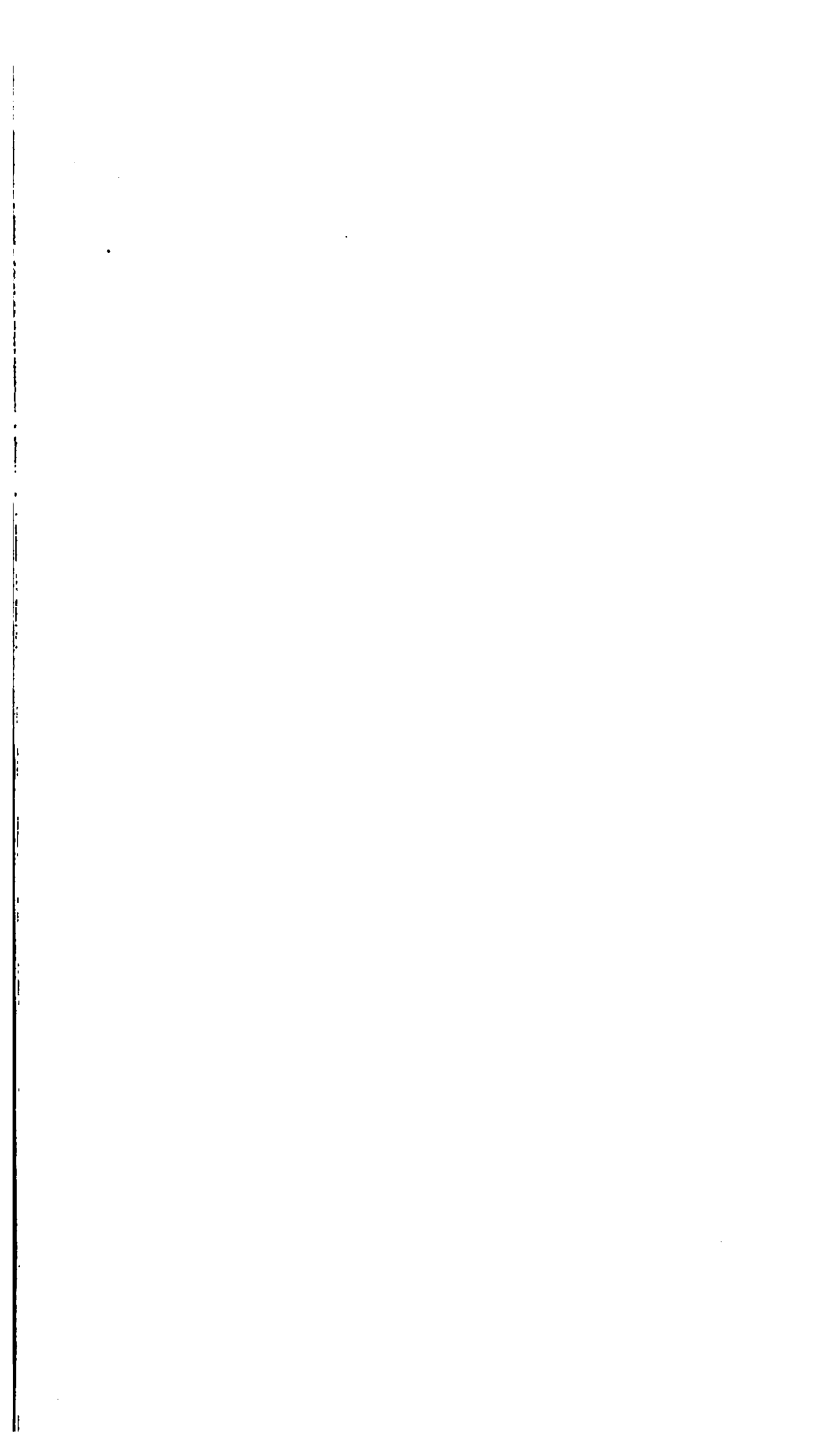
It is true that the ill extinguished flame of her love had suddenly sprung up from its ashes at the presence

of her lover, and that this love was accompanied by her ancient pangs of jealousy ; but Ines had not forgotten the sublime lessons of abnegation which she practised fifteen years before. Ines, after so many sacrifices, did not now sigh for the love of man ; although that man were called Ximeno, it could not be a recompense for so noble, pure and exalted a passion. Ines had suffered so much, that she now felt a pleasure in suffering ; her bosom was nurtured with sorrow, because her soul, chastened and purified by affliction, was soon to leave its corporeal prison, and ascend spotless to the throne of God.

Ines rushed forth to prevent the marriage of Catalina with the Marshal, that is, to favour, as she imagined, Ximeno's passion.

END OF VOL. II.





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