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THE
ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

Spain.

BY DON T. DE TRUEBA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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THE
ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

Spain.

BY DON T. DE TRUEBA ^{de los foros} y Cosío

WITH TWENTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY J. K. MEADOWS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
EDWARD CHURTON, HOLLES STREET.

1834.

PREFACE.

IN presenting these volumes to the public, I am anxious to establish the fact, that the tales contained in them are founded on events admitted as authentic by Spanish historians.

With regard to Pelagius, Bernardo, the Cid, and other romantic personages who figure in the earlier portions of the work, neither their existence, nor the principal incidents of their lives, can for a moment be questioned, although some of their extraordinary deeds and adventures may have been subject to controversy.

The poetry embodied in many of the tales is uniformly extracted from Mr. Lockhart's most graphic and excellent translation of ancient Spanish ballads ; and as it serves to throw a glowing charm over my illustrations of romantic history, the reader, I am confident, will thank me for the liberty I have taken. To Mr. Lockhart, himself, I owe an apology, for the very free use I have

made of his versions ; but I could not forbear securing so great an ornament to my work, and I humbly hope, that the strength of the temptation will diminish the extent of the offence.

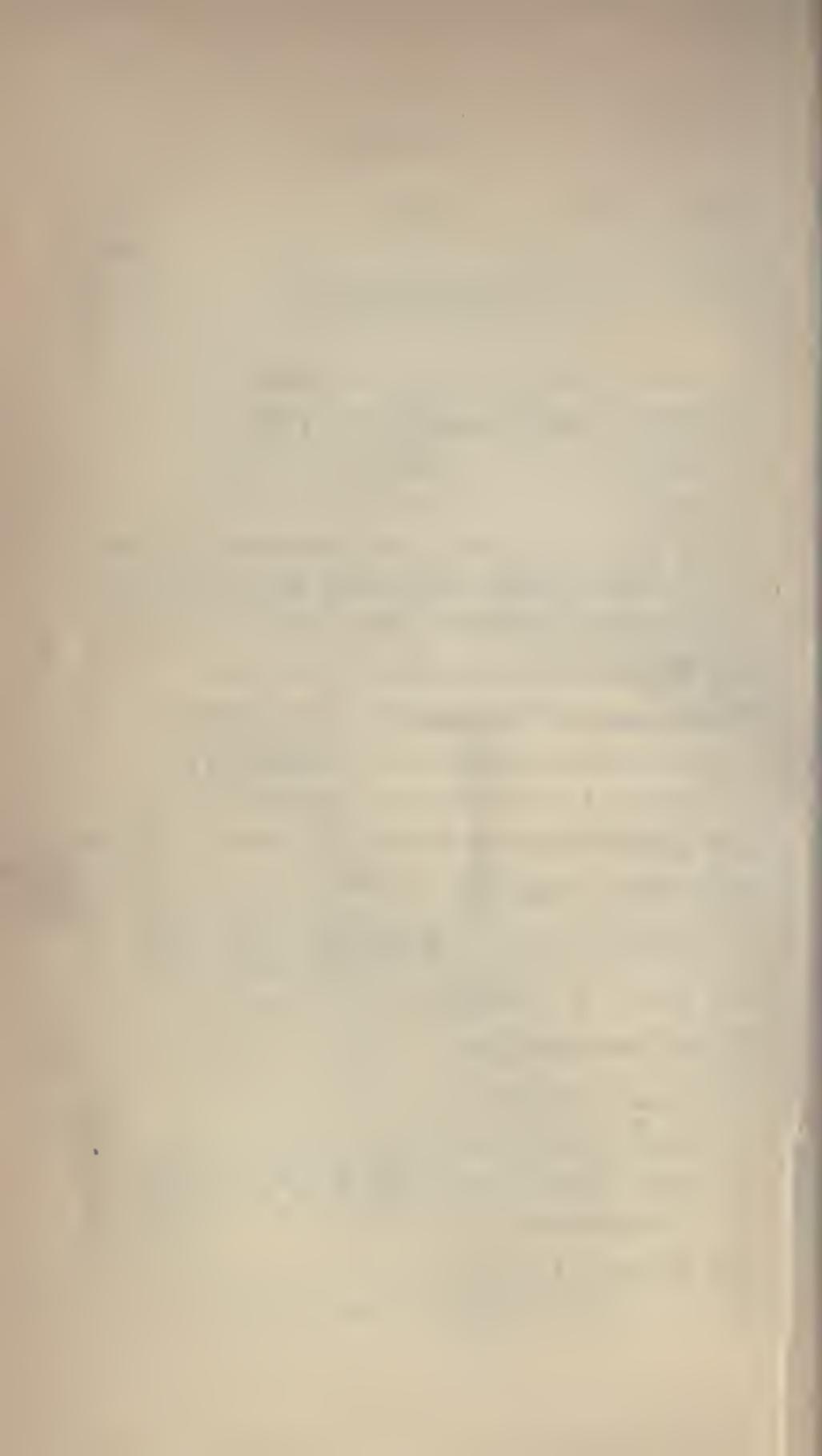
Some difficulty has been experienced in arranging the Historical Summaries. The multiplicity of small independent states into which Spain was divided after the Moorish invasion, rendered an attempt to connect their several histories almost impossible. The direct line of Castilian Kings has been followed, commencing from the Gothic stock of the sovereignty of Asturias, the first Christian state in Spain after the invasion, and the parent of all the rest. This circumstance, and the necessity of conforming with the plan observed in the First Series of the Romance of History, have obliged me to discard altogether from my work the annals of Arragon and Navarre, except when they were closely connected with the events which it was my object to illustrate.

But, whatever trouble I may have encountered in the execution of my task, my labours will be amply compensated, should the SECOND SERIES of the Romance of History afford the public some portion of the pleasure which it has derived from the FIRST.

TELESFORO DE TRUEBA Y COSIO.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

The Gothic Dynasty.

THE dominion of the Goths in Spain lasted for a period of nearly three centuries—from the year 415 to 711.

Ataulph, the first king of this line, succeeded Alaric in his dominion over a considerable portion of Gaul. He married Placidia, a Roman princess, and sister of the Emperor Honorius. At her instigation, he entered into an alliance with Honorius, and was persuaded to invade Spain for the purpose of wresting that Empire from the barbarians that oppressed it. He crossed the Pyrenees, and conquered the greatest portion of Catalonia; but, after a short reign of one year, was treacherously murdered at Barcelona, by one of his domestics.

The line of Gothic Kings was very numerous: no less than thirty-four sovereigns ruled Spain during the above-mentioned period. The greater number of these Kings suffered violent deaths; they either died in battle, or were assassinated by their successors, who seized upon the crown as the recompense of their deeds.

710. Roderick, the last King of the Goths, dethroned Witiza, and assumed the diadem, to the exclusion of that Monarch's sons. The reign of Roderick was as short as it was stormy and unfortunate. He persecuted the heirs of Witiza, who, in conjunction with their relatives, Count Julian and the prelate Oppas, entered into a plan to betray their country to the Moors. The violent and licentious conduct of Don Roderick accelerated this crisis. He had seduced Florinda, surnamed La Cava, daughter of Count Julian; and the indig-

nant father, boiling with revenge, invited the Moors into Spain.

711. Tarif, at the head of an army of twelve thousand men, after various skirmishes, finally met Don Roderick near the town of Xeres. The famous battle of the Guadalete was then fought, when the Goths were completely routed, and the fate of Spain decided in favour of the Moors.

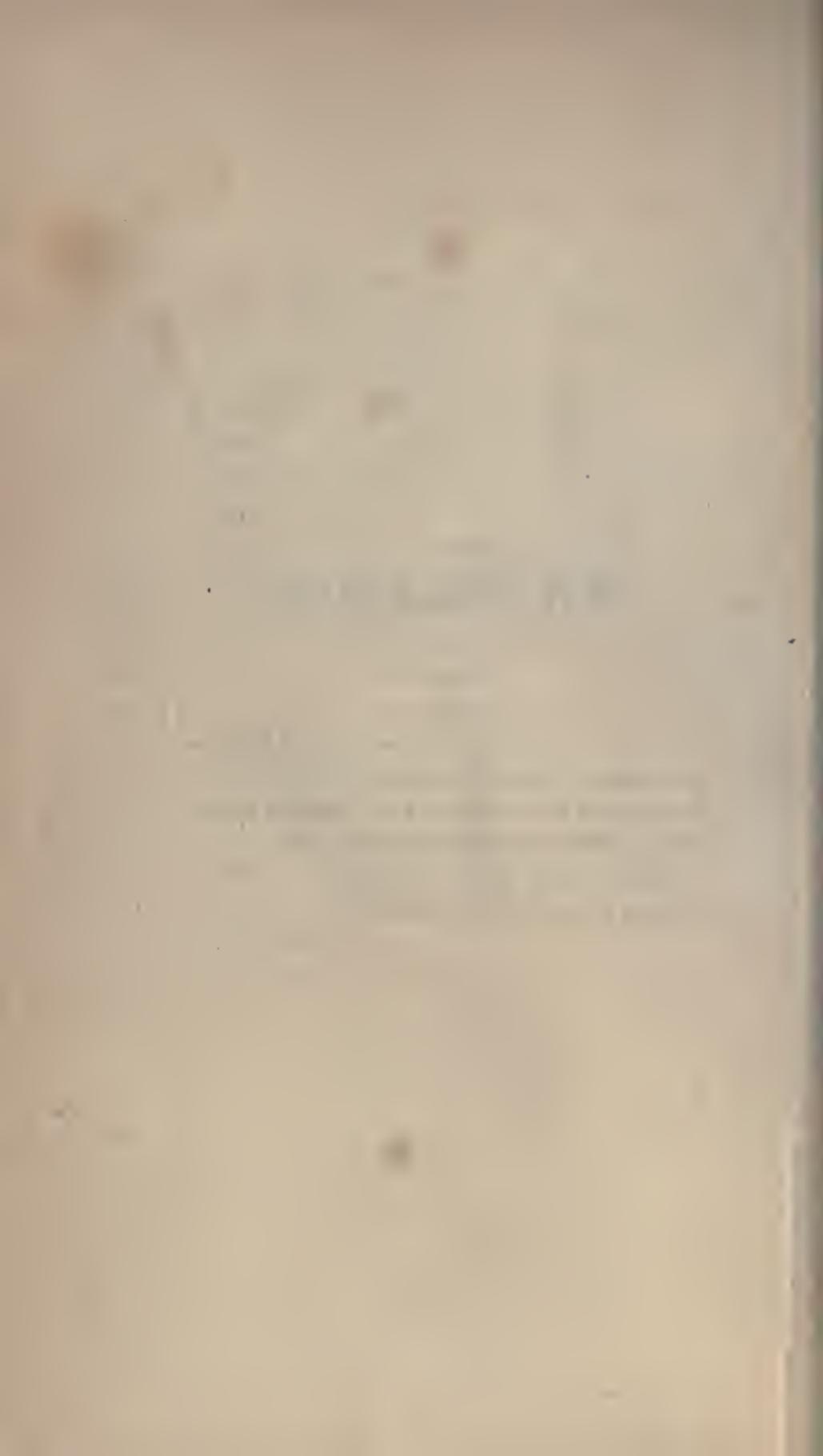
The conquest of the country was rapidly effected ; but Don Pelayo, or Pelagius, a Gothic prince, and cousin of Roderick, retired to the mountains and wilds of Cantabria, and there resolved to make a stand against the invaders. He was elected King by his limited and poor followers, and established his head-quarters in the wild cavern of Covadonga, from which he frequently sallied, and caused great havoc amongst the Moors.

718. Don Pelayo was elected King of Asturias, notwithstanding the poverty and narrow limits of his dominions. He was the founder of that long succession of kings and rulers, who, by gradual but valorous exertions, effected ultimately the expulsion of the Moors from the country.

The Gothic King.

“Count Julian call'd the invaders ; not because
Inhuman priests with unoffending blood
Had stain'd the country ; not because a yoke
Of iron servitude oppress'd and gall'd
The children of the soil ; a private wrong
Roused the remorseless Baron.”

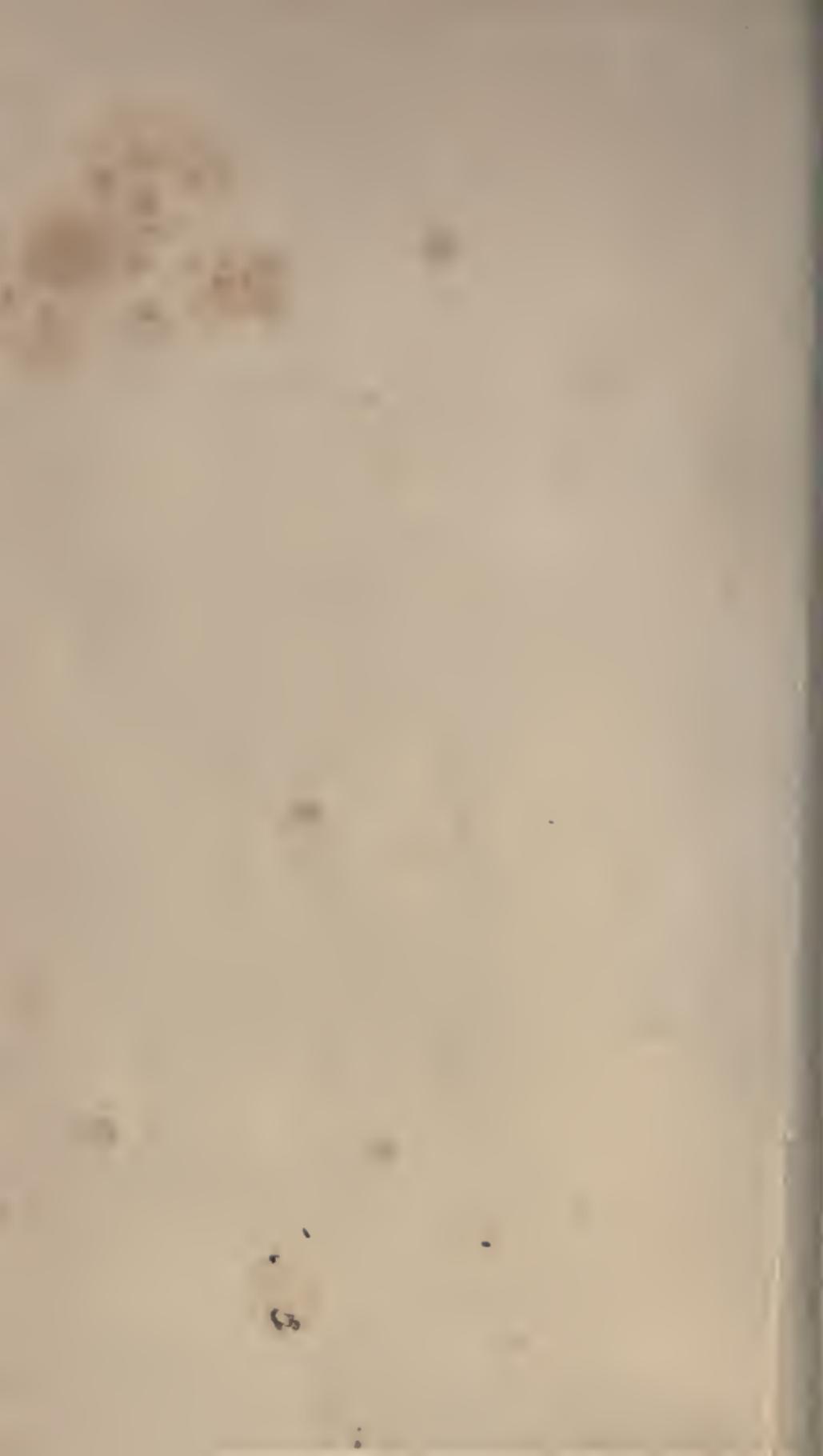
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ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE GOTHIC KING.



The Gothic King.

“ WOE, woe to Spain ! Years of unsparing war shall deluge her smiling dales with a crimson flood ; the weight of hostile footsteps shall crush the flowers that spring from her bosom, and her scant harvests shall grow and be gathered in fields wet with the best blood of her bravest sons ! Slavery, the bitterest of human sorrows, shall fiercely press its iron grasp upon her ! Woe to Spain ! for a heavy and abiding curse is upon her children. Deeply shall the crime of one false King be visited upon his country.—Oh, Roderick ! Roderick ! many are the evils thou hast heaped on thy land ; a dark inheritance of misery and horror hast thou bequeathed to thy descendants ; but darker and more full of horror the awful malediction that shall be borne with thy ominous name to the latest posterity.”

Don Roderick started from his couch in wild dismay. The boding sounds still rang in his ears, and his fixed and glaring eyes sought in vain the reality of the shapes that had visited him in a disturbed dream. But the solemn monitor who had

struck terror into his slumbers, had fled; that venerable figure clad in white, and whose mournful visage betokened the sorrows of his breast, had vanished. Roderick gazed around his dimly-lighted chamber; but the image of Ataulph, the founder of the Gothic kingdom of Spain, was no longer visible.

“It was a dream,” said Roderick, while his checked respiration and quivering limbs evinced the agitation under which he laboured; “but such a dream as might chill the stoutest heart.—The fatal prediction entails a lasting curse upon my kingdom and my name.” He paused; and as the conviction that he was under the influence of a dream became stronger, his self-possession returned. He smiled in scorn at himself, and added aloud, “Why should a delusion thus appal me? That prophecy can never be fulfilled.—Hence womanish fears! ye shall not sway the heart of Roderick the Goth.”

The King strove to banish the impression which the fearful images presented by his half-waking dream had made; but in spite of his courage, which had never yet failed, and of the most powerful efforts of his stubborn will, he could not dislodge from his bosom an undefinable sensation of dread and awe. Determined to suffer this oppression no longer, he resolved to mingle with his followers, and to drown in noisy revelry

the voice of remorse, which was heard too plainly in solitude, He was on the point of putting this resolve into execution, when a deep sigh caught his ear and arrested his progress. In the further corner of his chamber sat a young female, whose appearance bespoke the bitterest affliction. Loosely her superb silken tresses flowed over her white and polished shoulders; and her bright eyes, more brilliant through her tears, were fixed upon Roderick with an expression in which pain and resentment were mingled. The King started with surprise, but instantly composing himself, approached the fair mourner in a soothing and affectionate manner.

“Nay, nay, Florinda,” he said, taking her tenderly by the hand, “this must no longer be; thy sorrow is unreasonable.”

“False King!” she answered, in a tone of bitterness and scorn, “what but sorrow, the deeper that it is unavailing, is left to the wretched, the degraded Florinda! Am I not the mark of contempt to thy profligate Court? Can I expect aught in this life but the bitter misery and shame to which thou hast unmercifully condemned me? Talk not to me of consolation or of happiness. From thee, such words are but an insulting mockery, and only add to the wrongs thou hast already heaped on me.”

“How have I deserved these reproaches from

thee?" inquired Roderick; and there was a coldness and indifference in his tone infinitely more cutting than open unkindness.—“Does not the King love thee as devotedly, as tenderly as ever?”

“No!” cried Florinda with emotion. “In vain he labours to speak of a sentiment which he does not,—he cannot feel! Satiety has succeeded to the fierce and lawless passion he once experienced; and he has nothing now to expect from La Cava but complaints and lamentations.”

“You wrong me, Florinda. I love you as passionately as before, though the duties and burthens of my regal state—”

He stopped; and a flush of crimson overspread his countenance. Florinda cast upon him a look of mingled rage and scorn.

“Ah! why,” she exclaimed, “were those duties entered upon, if they forbid the performance of others more binding to a loyal mind, and more solemnly contracted? Where is the redress due to my injured honour? Where the truth of those vows by which you pledged yourself to restore me to that fair fame of which your violence bereft me? Why am I duped, and treated like a slave?”

“A slave!” cried the King; “thou’ hast ever been, and shalt ever be my Queen.”

“No!” indignantly exclaimed La Cava; “I

have never been a Queen but in thy false words, and now that empty pageant is ended ; for Egilona becomes thy lawful and acknowledged bride. Is this the return for my credulity ? Is this the just reward of all my sufferings ? Is this degradation to which thou hast brought the daughter of Count Julian, such as befits her lineage, or thy knightly faith ? Was it not enough that, having plunged her so deep in sorrow and shame, that nothing but conferring on her the lawful title of thy wife could redeem her, thou hast delayed and baffled the hopes which thy oft-repeated oaths had raised ? Did it need that thou shouldst utterly destroy those hopes, by marrying another ? Is it even manly, that, having done this, thou shouldst now insult her with professions of affection which your conduct belies, and which both by right and inclination are wholly devoted to another ? But beware, perjured as thou art ! do not imagine that my wrongs shall go unrevenged. If I stood alone in the world, I have a heart bold enough to conceive, a hand firm enough to act my own redress ; but the task shall not be mine. I have a father still—a man so powerful, that even the Gothic King may well fear to wake his vengeance. The injury which has been done strikes his honour and happiness as well as mine, and the retribution shall be as deep as thy offence has been unpardonable and unprovoked.”

Roderick had listened to the former part of Florinda's reproaches unmoved; but the intimation which her concluding words conveyed, were of too dangerous import to pass unnoticed. He knew the wrongs he had done her; he knew, too, her father's implacable spirit, and his power, to execute any design he might conceive; but he had believed that Florinda was too much interested in keeping secret the tale of the injury he had done her, that he had little to fear from her father's vengeance. Her menaces alarmed him; but without seeming to attach as much importance to them as, if they were earnest, he knew they deserved, he said coolly,—

“What words are these, Lady? Prythee tell me what I am to understand from these boding threats?”

“That which my words express,” answered Florinda, with more composure than she had before evinced. “My plans are formed, and must be executed. It is no idle threat that my tongue utters; Count Julian is apprised of my wrongs and of the dishonour of his house.”

“Madness alone could impel thee to such an act,” said the King. “What satisfaction canst thou derive from hearing thy dishonour bruited throughout Spain? As to the vengeance which thou invokest, that I laugh to scorn; for even Count Julian, proud and arrogant as I know him to

be, can do nought to assail his king and liege lord.

“You reckon too hastily, Sir King,” exclaimed a loud voice, and at the same moment a warrior completely armed strode into the King’s chamber. Florinda uttered a faint shriek—Don Roderick looked aghast, as he recognised in the intruder the Count Julian.

“False King! unworthy of the Gothic crown,” cried the veteran fiercely, as he advanced towards Roderick. “Look on me—look on the dishonoured father of yon trembling wretch! behold the injured Count Julian! and while your heart quails at the sight, as, if you be a human thing, it must, hear him invoke Heaven’s deepest curses on you—hear him devote you to his direst vengeance.”

“Begone, rebellious Count!” answered the King with mounting rage; “hence from our presence! I defy thy threats; but I may not tamely brook thy insolence if too far prolonged.”

“If proclaiming a degenerate King’s falsehood and tyranny be that which thou callest insolence,” continued the Count, “you are like to endure much more of it; and your bidding will scarcely suffice to silence the cry of my affronted honour. You affect to scorn my threats; see how much more profoundly do I despise thee. Even now thou art in my power; a single blow of this,—

and as he spoke he bared his sword—"this, which was never yet disgraced but when it was drawn in thy cause, would relieve my sight from a recreant unworthy the dignity he holds. But thy life were slight compensation for the blasting injury thou hast done Count Julian."

Don Roderick felt instinctively for his sword, and found he was unarmed. The Count stood still in the attitude he had assumed, and continued his threatening strain.

"Thou art for this time safe; I will not harm thee now. Enough that I show Roderick how much he is in my power, and that I forbear to shed the blood for which my heart thirsts. The hour is not yet arrived: again we shall meet; and then one of us shall look upon the other for the last time. Ere that fatal moment, many shall be the curses which Roderick shall, in bitterness of soul, bestow upon his crimes; deep, but unavailing, shall be his regrets, that he ever dared to sully the honour of Count Julian."

He then turned towards his despairing daughter, and in a stern tone proceeded:—"And thou, poor ruined wretch! once my all of earthly happiness, now the cause and the partner of such sorrow as I never thought would have fallen on these grey hairs, follow me hence, and seek with me such redress as a signal vengeance may afford us."

The Count took, as he spoke, his daughter, by

the arm, and in great agitation quitted the presence of the King, before Roderick could recover from the emotion which Julian's speech had excited in him.

Roderick remained for some time a prey to conflicting and anxious thoughts. The bold bearing of the Count had inflamed him to a high degree of resentment, and at one moment he resolved to alarm the palace, and order the daring intruder to be arrested; but the consciousness that he had deeply outraged one who had been his firm adherent, and whose valour had helped to seat him on the throne, suspended that determination. In the insolent subject, he could not but behold the injured father, the disgraced knight; and his better feelings suggested, that if the words of the Count had been severe, he had also laboured under a provocation which almost excused him. The Gothic King was besides uncertain how far he might succeed if he should attempt a decided movement against the Count. He held his crown by the precarious tenure of an usurpation; and although his pretensions had hitherto been supported, he knew that there was a powerful party against him amongst the Gothic nobles, many of whom, in secret, harboured schemes of placing a son of Witiza, the last King, upon the throne. These considerations induced Roderick to check the first impulse of his wrath against the father of

Florinda ; and happy had it been for himself and for his country, if they had exercised the same influence over him ere he ventured upon the flagrant violation of his honour and duty, with the punishment of which he was now threatened.

King Roderick, even before his usurpation of the crown, burned with a violent passion for the daughter of Count Julian. To the declarations of his love, as they were uttered in equivocal terms, the noble maiden had constantly refused to listen. Roderick, nothing daunted by repeated repulse, continued his unremitting attentions to Florinda. She was not proof against the ardent vows, the promises, the devoted manner, and thousand arts of her gallant admirer, who soon, to his other attractions, added that of a crown. She began gradually to relax her former unbending resolution. A repetition of vows began to wear, in her eye the aspect of sincerity. The glitter of a court dazzled her reason, and the hopes of becoming a Queen flattered her ambition. The King made the deluded maid a formal proffer of his hand ; but added, that reasons of state would forbid the wedding ceremony to be celebrated with a quickness suitable to his love. Florinda had already allowed her lover to gain too great an ascendancy over her heart. She feebly combated his unwearied and fervent appeals. His perseverance acquired fresh vigour as her resistance

began to weaken. The reasons of the King for delaying the nuptials, though inadmissible, bore so specious an aspect to a mind already strongly bent on self-delusion, that they stood in the place of unanswerable arguments. Florinda at length became the victim of her love—the dupe of her vanity—and she soon, too soon, alas! received the award that generally attends a deviation from female purity.

With possession came coldness. This engendered an ill-disguised indifference, paving the way to total neglect. If the lively fancy of women is always on the alert on subjects of interest to their feelings, how much more jealous do they grow when conscious of having compromised those interests by an imprudent act! Florinda was not slow in perceiving the difference between the expectant and the already favoured lover. The passion of the King, from being one of the most ardent, was not proof against the ungenerous and selfish sentiments which too much confidence in the heart of woman creates in that of man. The tender expostulations of La Cava soon wore the semblance of fretful importunity, and the recapitulation of past promises, of unjust presumption. Roderick was willing to continue his plan of deception, rather than rudely to disturb the golden dream of his unfortunate victim. But this was an arduous task: the acute sensibility of a loving and

jealous female is not easily to be deceived. The King grew impatient. In formal violation of his sacred promises, he bestowed his hand upon another lady, the beautiful Egilona, who having had sufficient strength of mind to avoid becoming a dupe, was now recompensed by becoming a Queen.

Florinda at length perceived the full extent of her misfortunes. It was in vain that Roderick endeavoured to heal the wounds he had inflicted on the pride of his mistress, by lavishing upon her protestations of everlasting love. He pretended that he was compelled to give his hand to Egilona, whilst his whole heart was devoted to her rival. This paltry subterfuge met with all the scorn it deserved. Florinda perceived the depth of her fallen state;—tears were of no power to remedy her misfortune; supplications could now neither recall the lost affections of her undoer, nor blind her reason to the shame that henceforward must attach to her name. Her feelings were wrought up to frenzy. One melancholy consolation still remained,—the dark enjoyment of revenge! Florinda disclosed her sad story to her absent father. He hastened to the court of the profligate King; and the meeting that has been described, was the first presage of that vengeance which was afterwards to pour woes unnumbered on all his countrymen.

Upon his retiring from the presence of the King, Count Julian repaired with all speed to the mansion of his brother, Don Oppas, Archbishop of Toledo, a man of vast influence in the kingdom. This unworthy prelate required no stimulus to induce him to enter into any schemes against his sovereign. Devotedly attached to the interests of Witiza's sons, and having himself received some slight offence from Roderick, he longed for an occasion to exercise the powers of his revengeful disposition. He embraced therefore, most readily and joyously, the proposals of his brother, to plan the destruction of the King. The result of their speculations was truly diabolical:—a treachery unparalleled till then in the annals of guilt, was resolved upon by the conspirators. Count Julian, as governor of Ceuta, possessed the key of the entrance into Spain. He determined to violate the trust reposed in him, and betray his duties, by inviting the Moors to come over and take possession of the kingdom. Such were the criminal views of Count Julian. Nothing, indeed, seemed to this proud and criminal man sufficient compensation for his private wrongs, but the total ruin of his country.

The views of the two wicked brothers were further strengthened, by the concurrence of many nobles who joined their party. Though they were actuated by very different motives, they still har-

boured the hope of placing Witiza's heir on the throne: and this they considered a favourable juncture to effect their purpose, should the Moors prove inclined to lend them their support. The conspiracy gradually ripened, and Count Julian entered into a formal, though clandestine, negotiation with Muza Ben Nazir. This general, with the approbation of the Caliph Walid, despatched to Spain his lieutenant Tarif, with a considerable body of troops. This chief landed at Tarifa, and proceeded to reconnoitre the country. He was exceedingly as well as agreeably surprised at the fertility, richness, and numerous advantages possessed by the land which he was invited to subdue. The accounts he sent over to Muza were dressed in all the metaphorical pomp of Oriental exaggeration. The conquest of Spain was therefore finally determined on; and towards this design both the Moors and their treacherous allies now directed their whole powers and interest.

King Roderick had flattered himself that the menaces of Count Julian would remain without effect, or, at least, that any evil arising out of them could easily be counteracted. He was accordingly thunderstruck, when the first intelligence of the landing of Tarif was brought to Toledo. The Count had made no secret of his treason, and immediately upon the arrival of the Moorish chief,

had hastened to join him, attended by a numerous party composed of the most singular ingredients. In this heterogeneous mass was to be found a strange medley of Gothic knights and peasantry, Jews, and Arians, the last two of which had of late caused no small mischief and confusion in Spain. The worthless Oppas, however, remained quiet at Toledo, maintaining every appearance of fealty to the King, the better to conceal his detestable designs.

Roderick collected in all haste what forces he could command, and ordered Edeco, one of his generals, to advance against the invaders; but before this troop was put into motion, news arrived that Tarif had returned to Africa. This caused the apprehensions of the King to subside, and he arrogantly flattered himself that the Moor, upon a close inspection of the kingdom, and its great powers of defence, had, from motives of prudence, retraced his steps. Considering, therefore, that Count Julian was the only enemy with whom he had now to contend, he resolved to attack his castle in Algeziras, or the Green Island; but the whole place was so strongly fortified, and so covered with soldiers, that the King was advised not to attempt its reduction, without first taking every precaution to insure success.

There was at Toledo at this time a Gothic nobleman, endowed with all the qualities that

constitute a good and gallant knight. This was the King's cousin, Don Pelayo, who afterwards became so justly celebrated for his deeds and magnanimity. The conduct of this warrior was on all occasions the opposite of his royal cousin: the vicious disposition, the prodigality, misrule, and other bad qualities which marked the actions of the former, were, in the latter, strikingly contrasted by a noble manliness of character, and an integrity truly heroic. Pelayo seemed to have united in his person the stern and warlike virtues of his Gothic ancestors, with a polish and grace which certainly did not characterize that age.

The King and his cousin, though fondly attached to each other, were yet seldom without having some cause for altercation. Pelayo saw much to reprehend, and was not sparing of rebuke; and Roderick could but ill bear remonstrances, which were not the less galling to him because they proceeded from a relative. On the present occasion, there was abundant reason for animadversion on one side and resentment on the other. Pelayo had approached his sovereign with indignation, and had fearlessly vented his reproaches.

“Shame on thee, Don Roderick!” he cried. “Could there be a more humiliating cause for war than the gratification of a paltry vice? But since the evil is done, why not provide against its at-

tendant dangers? Instead of using your utmost efforts to place the nation in a warlike and imposing attitude, you shamefully give yourself up to the pursuit of boundless dissipation and enervating pleasure. How will your limbs, accustomed to the softness of silken attire, endure the roughness of a warrior's garb? By what miraculous process can a man, plunged into the blandishments of a corrupt court, summon the strength and resolution necessary to prosecute the fatigues of war? A curse on thy guilty passion! A curse on the woman whose pernicious charms have brought such a calamity upon the land! We are compelled to take up arms, not in a glorious cause, but to rescue, if possible, the criminal weakness of our King, and to defend him against the vengeance of a justly-irritated father."

The news of a second arrival of Tarif had drawn these bitter remonstrances from Pelayo. Alarming accounts had been received of the enemy's forces, as well as of the state of the country around. The King had rendered himself hateful to a great portion of his subjects by his excesses, and a considerable number also had willingly embraced an opportunity of exercising a factious disposition. The King, after the first departure of Tarif, had again given himself up to dissipation, unmindful of dangers which must constantly recur, as long as Count Julian, the cause of them,

was allowed life and liberty. Pelayo had boldly delivered his sentiments; but Roderick, impatient of control, and willing to destroy the power which daring virtue always possesses over irresolute vice, spoke in such terms to his relative as to produce an immediate rupture.

The Gothic Knight, in a fit of uncontrollable anger, made an oath never to return to the Court of King Roderick; and then suddenly took his departure for his castle. His absence from Toledo was the cause of much confusion and depression among the Spaniards. He was considered by all ranks of the people as the bravest and most deserving of the Gothic race, and, accordingly, the man whose assistance ought chiefly to be courted at the present calamitous period; for Edeco, the favourite of Roderick, was not thought capable of conducting the army to victory.

Spain was, at the time to which we allude, filled with soothsayers, who ceased not to predict the impending destruction of the Gothic power. Various awful prophecies and forebodings were then in circulation, concerning the precise manner in which this ruin was to be accomplished; but it was a generally received opinion, that the guilty excesses of the King would be the immediate cause of the downfall of that mighty empire. Witiza had been equally distinguished with his successor for the absolute profligacy of his con-

duct, and yet the Gothic kingdom existed. This precedent might be adduced in favour of Roderick, but the prophets had grown more numerous and earnest in their predictions, and evil omens were everywhere found, which tended to confirm the superstitious belief of the people.

It might reasonably be supposed, that there were individuals interested in keeping the nation imbued with this mania ; for, if a thorough belief in this predestined fate could be firmly established, the discouragement which it would infuse into the hearts of the Goths would facilitate their ruin, by lessening the effect of their valour. The King himself began to feel uneasy at the increasing presages of calamity, and at length resolved to learn in person the decree of his destiny. His anxiety grew into a restless agony, and the repeated predictions that his downfall was approaching, made him eager to consult those oracles from which he could ascertain the truth. Acting upon this feeling, he determined to visit a spot so full of horror, that even the mention of it made the stoutest Gothic heart quake with fear the moment its name was pronounced.

At a short distance from Toledo, there was a deep and mysterious valley, situated between two steep and frowning rocks, which was never approached by the traveller without a shudder. In this dreary place was situated an ancient fabric

of splendid construction, and though much dilapidated by the inroads of time, its remains exhibited a most singular style of architecture, having the appearance of a fortress and a palace. No one could tell who was its founder; but a generally received tradition stated that it was the work of supernatural agency, and that the fate of the Gothic kingdom was intimately connected with its miraculous structure. Below this mansion there was a spacious cavern, the entrance to which could only be effected by a vaulted roof made in the solid rock, and closed by a door of adamant. Upon this door were three locks; one of gold, another of silver, and a third of iron; and the whole surface of it was covered with hieroglyphics, promising, according to tradition, wonderful communications to him who should venture into its dark recesses. It was also generally believed, that formerly various kings, in hopes of finding a treasure, had ventured to visit the fearful valley, and had been emboldened to attempt an entrance into the cave, by endeavouring to burst open the door; but neither by time nor force could they effect their purpose. They had also applied keys to the locks, but without any other effect than that of producing mysterious noises, and sounds like human groans, which drove the intruders in dismay from the awful valley. The superstitious feelings produced by this singular

talisman, had prevented the late kings of the Gothic race from repeating the experiment made by their ancestors ; so that the place had been left to the undisturbed possession of all its solitary grandeur.

It had so increased in importance in the minds of the people, that it was a favourite topic of conversation during the reign of Witiza ; and since the accession of Roderick to the throne, its wonders were continually dilated upon by the vulgar. Indeed, since the first landing of Tarif, it was asserted, that at night the marvellous tower was surrounded by a supernatural brightness, and that a vast banner of crimson, emblazoned with a fiery crescent, was seen waving to the winds until the approach of morning, when it disappeared, together with the light that had illumined the building.

This was, naturally enough, interpreted as an indisputable presage of the downfall of King Roderick, by means of the followers of the Crescent. The alarm therefore produced by the Moorish invasion was by this means greatly augmented ; and a presentiment of evil was depicted in every countenance. The gross ignorance of those times was such, that this superstitious belief was admitted even by a great number of the nobles and knights, who were but a few degrees removed from the barbarous state of the lower orders. The horrors, therefore, of the supernatural valley,

with its cavern and tower, became almost the exclusive subject of conversation; and the King, upon the news of the return of Tarif, resolved to visit that place of fearful and marvellous report. Pelayo, whose strong mind was superior to these chimeras, had dissuaded him from the attempt, urging, that in nowise could it be productive of any good. He had advised him, that, instead of going to consult his fate, he should exert all his powers to repel the invasion, by the human means of a good army and deeds of courage.

The absence of Pelayo from Toledo, and the morbid state into which Roderick's mind had sunk, when he began to reflect on the calamities which threatened his people through his own fault, increased his eagerness to visit the dreadful oracle, and left him at liberty to put his wishes into practice. He communicated his design to three or four of his most faithful adherents, who, though they heard the proposal with a sensation of fear, yet resolved to accompany him on his adventurous expedition.

In the stillness of night, and with the utmost secrecy, the Gothic King and his slender party left the palace of Toledo, and directed their course towards the valley. The darkness was intense, and though scarcely ten o'clock, in those times of early hours, all the inhabitants were buried in

slumber, and a breathless silence reigned around. The distance being short, they soon arrived at the destined spot, though their path was one of extreme difficulty, owing to the studious care with which every avenue leading to the valley had been avoided.

“Heaven, for its mercy!” ejaculated Suinthila, one of the party; “I discover, in sooth, the supernatural light, and by its fearful reflection I can also see the bloody banner of the fiery Crescent.”

“On, good Goth,” said Roderick firmly; “I came to learn my fate, and we must not so soon let the chill of horror creep into our hearts and unman our courage. Dreadful omens we come to seek; let us, therefore, be prepared to view them dauntless and unappalled.”

They proceeded on their way; but as they approached nearer to the tower, the attendants, and even the King, felt a consciousness of supernatural awe. The building, and the adamant door of the rock stood before their sight; but they observed as they advanced, that though the top of the tower seemed to be brilliantly illuminated, yet below, the surrounding objects were enrobed in deepened shadows. The torches which they carried to light their steps seemed scarcely sufficient for their purpose, and they had almost to grope their way to the entrance of the cavern. They at length reached the fatal spot, and Rode-

rick advanced boldly to the door, when, upon slightly touching the iron lock, it suddenly flew open, and a thundering sound was heard, accompanied by a strong blast of wind, which extinguished the light that the King held in his left hand.

A prolonged moaning now filled the air, when the companions of Don Roderick, unable any longer to conceal their terror, fled from the spot in the utmost dread and precipitation. But the Gothic King, neither daunted by these fearful signs, nor by the flight of his attendants, resolutely seized another torch, and penetrated with intrepidity into the mouth of the cavern. He found no impediment to arrest his progress: a long vaulted passage led him, by a gentle ascent, to a spacious hall of most singular appearance. The walls seemed of a transparent white marble, and upon them were engraved, in large crimson letters, many prophecies and omens unintelligible to the King. But his attention was most deeply and fearfully excited by various gloomy figures, clad in complete armour, and mounted on chargers, which stood around the place. They bore a foreign aspect, and their costume and arms were certainly not such as were worn in Spain. Roderick advanced now to the centre of the hall, where the principal object of attention presented itself.

This was a colossal statue painted over in fantastic colours ; its large fiery eyes seemed to roll in savage wildness ; its left arm rested on a heap of armour dripping with blood, at the foot of which several gory heads of Gothic warriors were seen strewn about, while its right hand struck the ground at intervals with a ponderous club, which caused the place to shake, and the echoes to resound with a loud and overpowering noise, like hoarse thunder, mingled with the roar of the ocean. On the expanded breast of this miraculous statue was this inscription, in Gothic characters : “ I proceed in my task ; but the moment will arrive.” The statue now ceased beating for some time ; and Roderick perceived another inscription, more ominous than anything he had yet seen. These were its fearful words :—“ Thou shalt be disinherited by a foreign people, and thine own nation conquered and oppressed.” The cavern again resounded with a terrific uproar, and Roderick retreated from the hall full of wonder and bewilderment. He had no sooner regained the open air, than the enchanted door suddenly closed upon him with a deafening clangor.*

The Gothic King moodily and disconsolately retraced his steps to Toledo. Having communicated to his companions the fearful things which he had witnessed, he gave strict commands that

* Mariana.

they should maintain an inviolable secrecy, since disclosures of such a terrific nature, in the present state of the people, would be productive of the most disastrous results. Roderick, despite of the dismay which his adventure had excited in his heart, was resolved to fight desperately against fate in defence of his crown. Cowardice was certainly not among the vices and defects of the King ; on the contrary, he was remarkable for bravery, activity, and perseverance. Previous to his accession to the throne, he had been noted for these qualities, and many other equally laudable. The dissipations of his court might have caused them to lie dormant, but had evidently not destroyed them ; and now that an imperious necessity occurred to call them again into action, Roderick resolved to exert them to the utmost of his power.

He began by affecting to treat the superstitions of the people with scorn, and ordered the entrance of the magic cave to be obstructed, apparently to show his contempt, but in reality to prevent any other individual from witnessing those ominous inscriptions which threatened such calamity to the kingdom. After this, he issued commands to the nation for a general rising in arms ; and Knights soon crowded to his standard from every part, to assist the efforts of Edeco, who had already been sent against Tarif. A battle ensued, in which the

Goths were completely routed, in a mountainous place,* to which Tarif afterwards gave his name, in commemoration of the victory. The news of this defeat, which soon reached Toledo, tended to increase the fears of the inhabitants; but the King, paying no regard to the popular alarm, repeated the most vigorous orders for the defence of the country. Happy for Spain had he been as careful of its safety from the beginning. His commands, however, were generally obeyed; prelates, and dukes, and nobles, and knights, together with their vassals and retainers, daily flocked to his standard, so that in a very short time he found himself at the head of a formidable army, consisting of above a hundred thousand men.

This force soon dispelled his apprehensions, and the fearful visions of the cavern no longer disturbed his mind. He summoned his reason to refuse credence to the chilling sentence he had received, and flattered himself that the whole might be a contrivance of his secret enemies; or, at all events, that if the prodigy he had seen were real, the award of the awful fate might be reserved for some other monarch. With this soothing impression, he prepared himself to meet the invading enemy. The numerous host being assembled in the plains of Toledo, the King harangued them in an animated tone, and promised to lead them to certain victory.

* Gebal Tarif, the mountain of Tarif, and now Gibraltar.

Yet the absence of the greatest warrior spread so much discontent amongst the troops, that Roderick repented the untoward altercation which had deprived him of the assistance of Pelayo.

The army began to march towards the South, but they had scarcely proceeded a league from the district of Toledo, when they came in sight of a gallant body of horsemen. Their approach surprised the King, who expected not to see the troop.

“They must be friends,” he said. “They are Goths in their outward appearance; besides, the enemy could not have advanced with such rapidity.”

Shortly after, a mighty shout of joy resounded through the whole army; and the cries of Pelayo were received as the harbingers of hope and victory. It was indeed that noble Goth and his party that now joined the King; and he approached him with a frankness which showed that every symptom of anger had vanished from his heart. As Roderick advanced to welcome his relative in a friendly manner—

“I made a vow,” Pelayo said, “never to enter the Court of Toledo whilst Roderick was king, and that vow I shall religiously observe; but I never made a vow, and God forbid that I should, to refuse my aid to Spain in the hour of peril. My personal grievances shall never interfere with the affairs of my country. A curse on those traitors

who satiate their revenge in the ruin of their native land !”

As he uttered these words, he cast an expressive glance towards the prelate Oppas, and his nephews, Witiza and Sisibuto, who rode near the King, and were lavish of their display of zeal for the cause of their country. Pelayo had always looked upon them with a distrustful eye; and he was not deceived by their present show of patriotism. Indeed, he would have been better pleased to have seen them with all their adherents quit the army, and return to their castles; but he was compelled to smother his suspicions, lest, by evincing any ill will towards them, he should create disagreement and confusion in the army. The warriors now joyfully resumed their march, which, in sooth, had rather the appearance of a triumphant procession than a warlike expedition. The progress of the troops was hindered with too many useless individuals and baggage. The King and his courtiers indulged in as much pleasure and luxury as if they were still at Toledo; and the whole army partook of the spirit that ruled their chiefs. Nothing could be more uncongenial to the nature of the undertaking into which he had embarked than the pomp and equipage of Roderick himself. Instead of bestriding his powerful charger, he was carried in a litter glittering with gilded ornaments, and placed on

an ivory car, drawn by beautiful mules. His attire was in strict keeping with the rest, for he was clad in a superb habit of cloth of gold, sparkling with jewels, and richly embroidered. Soft strains of music accompanied his car; and every speech he uttered expressed his confidence of success.

In this manner did the Gothic King continue his march till he came to the plains of Xerez, where the Moorish army was first descried. Here Roderick resolved to pitch his camp; and on the following day, having harangued his troops, gave the command to attack. Suddenly the air was filled with the brazen voices of numerous trumpets, which signal of hostility was answered by the enemy with an equally loud noise of drums and cymbals. Both armies now rushed furiously to the onset. While an equal degree of animation seemed to pervade the ranks of either, the superstitious fears of the Goths had greatly decreased; and when they perceived the inferiority of the enemy's forces, compared with their own, they began to entertain sanguine hopes of success. This prospect made them fight with redoubled resolution; and the contest was continued with unrelenting animosity. The air was darkened by flying clouds of arrows and other missiles; groans and piercing cries announced the havoc caused by these weapons of destruction; but they were

soon drowned amidst more animating shouts and the clangor of martial instruments. Thus a desperate engagement was continued, without any apparent advantage on either side.

When night at length came to separate the combatants, both armies resolved to indulge in a rest necessary to recruit their exhausted strength, and enable them to renew the contest on the morrow with fresh vigour. At the dawn of day, the combat recommenced; but for the javelins and arrows the King, by the advice of Pelayo, resolved to substitute the sword and the lance, as being more favourable to an army which had such an advantage in numbers. This was accordingly done; and the mail-clad knights rushed impetuously to the charge, committing the direst carnage upon the foe. A slight advantage began towards evening to be perceived on the side of the Christians; but the darkness of night came again to stop their exertions, and probably to prevent them from obtaining a victory.

On the third day of this memorable and sanguinary struggle, Roderick intrusted the command of a very important post to the prelate Oppas and his nephews, who had till now, by the counsel of Pelayo, fought in the centre of the army, where any treachery, if such was in contemplation, could not be easily accomplished. But the King, relying on the fidelity which they had evinced during the two

previous days, and partly to relieve Edeco from his fatiguing duties, followed a lamentably generous impulse, and consented to the proposal of the false Don Oppas. In the beginning of the fight, there was a decided advantage to the Goths; and Tarif, alarmed at the probable issue of the contest, now strained his every effort to retrieve the nearly lost fortunes of the day, and in a powerful voice rallied his sinking troops.

“Whither would you go, Moslems?” said he; “there is no safety in flight, for the sea is behind us. Victory then, or a glorious death, with the joys promised to the faithful in Paradise, awaits you. Follow me, and imitate my example.”

Saying this, he plunged headlong into the thickest of the fight. His brothers and chief adherents followed his brave example, and by their magnanimous exertions soon began to change the aspect of affairs. At this moment, the traitor Oppas and his nephews suddenly deserted from their post, drawing away with them the greater portion of the men placed under their command. This proved a fatal blow to the Christian army: confusion began to spread around. The fortunate position which the Moors had assumed discouraged the Goths; and the Chief, with sorrow and anger, perceived that a battle so manfully disputed, and with the almost certain hope of victory, was now to be lost, through the treachery of their own

countrymen. Terror speedily pervaded the ranks ; in vain Pelayo, with his cheering voice and gigantic exertions, endeavoured to raise the drooping spirits of his men. The fortune of the day was irretrievably lost, and the whole field of strife was soon converted into a scene of unparalleled confusion and horror. The Gothic King viewed the melancholy catastrophe with looks of stupified dismay. To his heated imagination, some of the more ferocious of the enemy wore the features of those whom he had seen in the magic cavern. He considered his crown as about to abandon his brow for ever, and a thrill of agony shot through all his veins, as he reflected on the crowd of calamities which his inordinate desires had brought upon his unhappy land.

He beheld on every side his affrighted soldiers flying in the utmost consternation ; and the barbaric shout of triumph uttered by the conquerors rang in his ears the knell of all his hopes. The unfortunate Don Roderick looked aghast on the desolate scene, where his valiant men were stretched lifeless on the field. The waters of the river Guadalete ran reddened with the bravest blood of Spain ; its current was obstructed by confused heaps of helmets and broken armour, horses, shields, pennons, lances, and warriors. It was indeed a sickening sight ; and the King, perceiving that all hope had now vanished, betook himself to flight, but

the course of his car was every moment impeded by the bodies of his bravest soldiers, so that he was compelled to mount his famous horse Orelia, and endeavour to retreat from a scene of so much misery. A throng of gloomy ideas pressed upon his mind; shame, remorse, and sorrow tore his bleeding heart; and he wandered about that field of death and desolation like a wretched being abandoned by God, and devoted to all the miseries that can afflict mortal man. His appearance was in accordance with the agony of his mind: —

I.

All stain'd and strew'd with dust and blood,
 Like to some mouldering brand
 Pluck'd from the flame, Rodrigo show'd
 His sword was in his hand;
 But it was hack'd into a saw
 Of dark and purple tint;
 His jewell'd mail had many a flaw,
 His helmet many a dint.

II.

He look'd for the brave captains
 That had led the hosts of Spain,
 But all were fled except the dead, —
 And who could count the slain?
 Where'er his eye could wander,
 All bloody was the plain;
 And while thus he said, the tears he shed
 Ran down his cheeks like rain —

III.

“ Last night I was the King of Spain,
To-day no king am I ;
Last night fair castles held my train,
To-night where shall I lie ?
Last night a hundred pages
Did serve me on the knee ;
To-night not one I call my own,
Not one pertains to me.”

Roderick, in his wandering course, had reached a little eminence, from which he could behold that vast scene of gloom and desolation. The last rays of the sun were sinking into the ocean, and gilded the smiling landscape around with their parting splendour. That landscape, save in the dismal field of battle, looked serene and tranquil. The King with poignant agony beheld all these objects, for the beauteous land which he surveyed was lost. No more could he call any of that land his own ; and he shuddered when he thought of the misery and slavery into which he had plunged its people. The idea of falling alive into the hands of the enemy, haunted his fevered imagination, and increased the distress of his mind. A thought of self-destruction for a moment occupied his gloomy speculations : he soon, however, discarded the idea ; but, unable to support the load of anxiety and doubt which oppressed him, he hastened from the spot, eager to ascertain if among the fugitives was

yet to be found Pelayo, Edeco, Suinthila, or any other of his principal nobles.

At length, exhausted with fatigue, he halted under some trees that stood in a retired spot, and there resolved to rest a few moments, and allow his faithful steed some time to recruit his strength.

He was soon startled by the noise of approaching footsteps; a man advanced towards the place: but the fears of the unfortunate King were soon dispelled by a glimpse of joy,—for it was a Goth, the best, the bravest of the Goths,—it was Pelayo that stood before him. The surprise of the kinsmen was as great as their melancholy pleasure at this unexpected meeting. Each had numbered the other with the dead, especially Pelayo, who had had many reasons to form such an opinion.

“Alas! Roderick, unfortunate King, how do I meet thee!”

“Call me no longer King,” returned the desponding Goth; “my power ended this disastrous day.”

“Still thou livest,” said Pelayo, “and God will not abandon the Christian. His wrath for thy guilt must be appeased, by the misfortunes which this day has brought upon thee.”

Pelayo had for some time entertained but few doubts that Roderick had fallen. He had seen his ivory car unoccupied; and having received no favourable answers to his inquiries respecting him,

he concluded that the King was to be counted amongst the numerous victims of the dreadful conflict. Yet he met Roderick the Goth; but, alas! how did he meet him? Not, as a few days since, dazzling with ornament, and immersed in the revelry and noisy pleasures of his court. Not beaming with joy, and surrounded by a numerous host of sycophants and gaudy attendants. Not the absolute ruler of a mighty and rich empire,—the first amongst a splendid cortège of Knights,—the head of a powerful army. Alas, no! Pelayo met the unfortunate King, panting for breath, solitary, brooding over his woes, his past glories, and present misery. His visage was squalid; his eyes deeply sunk in their blood-shot sockets; his hair dishevelled and clotted with gore; his garments torn and defiled with the marks of the sanguinary strife; his fine beard, on which he had in former times bestowed such care, was now hanging in locks glued with blood,—his whole person was in the wildest disorder, and presented an awful lesson to the potentates of the earth.

Pelayo for some time contemplated, in speechless agony, the mournful object before him, when the King, in a broken tone of voice, thus addressed him:—

“Fly, my kinsman, fly! thou alone canst in part recover the lost empire of the Goths. Thou art an object of general regard and admiration, and the

best rallying point that the Christians can find in their calamitous situation. For myself, if an escape with life from this disastrous field be granted me, some monastery shall bury in its obscurity the wretched remainder of my days. My good Pelayo, the welfare of our unfortunate country requires that my instructions be obeyed."

"What! shall I abandon thee, my King, to an untimely fate?" cried Pelayo. "Forbid it, Heaven! Rather let me perish by thy side!"

"I cannot follow thee,—in sooth, I cannot," replied Roderick, in a very weak voice. "I sink with fatigue. Fear not for my safety: night with its protecting darkness, is rapidly approaching; and by remaining here, I may perchance find a greater probability of escape than by venturing into more frequented paths, which are now occupied by fugitives and their relentless pursuers.—Go, Pelayo; to-morrow thou shalt meet me at the monastery of Xerez."

Pelayo found, in reality, that the exhaustion of the King was such as to preclude the hope that he would be enabled to effect a speedy flight. The retired situation where he now reposed was not likely to be visited by the conquerors. Pelayo therefore resolved to try if he could rally a few of the flying Goths, and bring them to the aid of the King in his last emergency. With these intentions he quitted Roderick, pledging himself to a prompt return.

But no sooner did the gallant Gothic Knight leave his afflicted Sovereign, than the gloom of the latter increased; a dark cloud of despondency spread over his heart. He fancied he beheld his relative for the last time, and a host of distressing thoughts came to perplex him, and add to the mental agony under which he laboured. He grew restless and uneasy, and once he almost determined to quit his lurking-place, and meet death by the arm of his enemies. At this moment, he fancied he heard the tread of horses' hoofs, and he advanced into a thicker part of the forest. Near its skirts he perceived a troop of cavaliers halt, and dispose themselves to lie down. Presently they spoke: he lent an eager ear to their discourses, when, to his dismay, he perceived that he was himself the subject of conversation.

“This way he must have taken,” said one, in the Gothic tongue. “If our information is right, he must have sought refuge in the forest, and must still linger here.”

“The Moors will not tarry long to join us,” said another in an exulting tone. “We must guard this place, and distribute ourselves around, lest we permit the false King's escape. Thank Heaven! the measure of his iniquity is full, and my wrongs are about to be most amply avenged.”

With the deepest indignation, the King discovered that the speaker was no other than the traitor

Count Julian, who came in pursuit of him with his adherents. The situation of Roderick was now truly distressing. He did not fear death; nay, he would willingly have encountered his fate at the hand of Tarif, or any other Moorish chief; but he shrank with dismay from the idea that he should fall the victim of his own treacherous subjects; and still more dreadful was the thought, that the hated Count Julian should witness his downfall, and insult him in his last moments. The perilous crisis at length arrived: the followers of the Count began to search the forest, and fortune favoured their endeavours. In a few instants they discovered a man crouched beneath a clump of trees and furze, when a burst of savage joy announced to their companions the success of their chase.

“The fugitive is here,” cried one. “Carry to the Count the welcome intelligence.”

The unfortunate King had now nothing to hope; but the desperate nature of his situation roused his energies to a prodigious effort. He fiercely bounded upon his faithful and powerful horse Orelia, and rushed with resistless violence through the three or four men that opposed his passage. His intention was only to gain the open field, and sell his life at the dearest price.

This design he carried into effect: but when he had cleared the forest, he perceived all the avenues leading to it filled with soldiers, both Gothic and

Moorish, all in anxious expectation of accomplishing his capture. The wicked Count Julian soon presented himself to his indignant sight.

“Oh, base and ruthless King!” he exclaimed with a horrid joy, “thou art at length in my power. Behold the injured father of the undone, the dishonoured Florinda. Remember my threats. You see that I can religiously keep my vows. Thy ruin is now complete. Thou hast lost a kingdom and gained a nation’s curse. Thou shalt lose thy life, and inherit a name of reprobation. ’Tis by the hand of the injured Count Julian that thou shalt fall; for this is a satisfaction that I will yield to none, whether he be Goth or Moor.”

As he said this he furiously charged the King, who now collected his remaining strength to sustain the attack. The unfortunate Roderick, faint as he was, and oppressed with a load of anguish, still summoned his strength to desperate exertion. Rage and resentment powerfully seconded his efforts, and Count Julian soon perceived that the enemy he had engaged with, was not likely to yield the easy victory he had anticipated. The contest was long and doubtful. Count Julian aimed a terrible blow with his sword, which the King dexterously parried, inflicting a wound which, had strength seconded the consummate skill with which it was aimed, would have proved fatal to Florinda’s father. But the weakness of

the King was becoming more distressing every moment ; and his adversary, seeing the advantage he was gaining, redoubled his exertions. Roderick tottered on his charger,—another blow, and the unfortunate King of the Goths was levelled with the ground.

A deafening shout of savage exultation burst from the spectators of this sanguinary scene. Roderick, though mortally wounded, had yet some moments to live. His ungenerous enemy, swiftly bounded from his horse and placing his foot on the body of the fallen King, began to pour forth the vindictive expressions of his still unsatiated revenge. The unmanly insult embittered the last dying moments of the wretched Gothic King ; and Count Julian, with glistening eyes and beating heart, contemplated the mighty effects of his wrath.

“Roderick ! Roderick !” he cried, with a grim smile : “Behold the grovelling situation to which thy wrongs towards Count Julian have brought thee. Die, abandoned by God, and accursed by men ;—die, and descend to that sulphurous abyss to which thy abominable vices have rendered thee heir.”

“Exult not, Count Julian,” faintly murmured the prostrate King. “I die not in despair. Great as my offences are, my punishment is such as to calm the excited wrath of Heaven.—But what

retribution can, oh, traitor ! be commensurate with thy guilt ? That curse which you invoke against my name, shall constantly be upon your own ;—to the remotest posterity, Count Julian shall excite the scorn of the sons of Spain !”

Count Julian heard these words with a thrill of painful impatience. He could not deny their truth ; and, now that his savage wrath had been fully sated, a pang of remorse for his crime came over his heart, and for a moment he stood wrapt in gloomy thought over the dying Don Roderick. He watched in unconscious stupor the impress of death upon that countenance. Gradually the paleness of the grave overspread the hollow cheek and noble brow, contrasting sadly with the crimson tints with which the whole body of the prostrate Goth was profusely spotted. The last spark of life was still lingering in the half-closed eye ; the stiffened arm was already nerveless ; then one short convulsive groan was heard, and Don Roderick, the last of the Goths, was no more ! With his death the angry feelings of his enemy subsided, and even the Gothic warriors were affected by the fate of that King, whom they had treacherously abandoned, to serve the private revenge of an arrogant nobleman. A moment of awful silence ensued.—There is something so solemn, so touching in death, that the most hostile feelings sink when we behold its mournful work. Such a sen-

sation did Count Julian and his adherents experience at this time ; but they were soon roused from their moody reverie by their new allies, the Moors, who had approached to rifle the remains of the fallen King. His jewel-hilted sword, and other costly ornaments, were taken from him ; but his garments, though extremely rich, were so torn and stained with the sanguinary tints of the battle, that they offered no temptation to the cupidity of the Moors.

But they now proceeded to seize the most valuable and gratifying prize of the contest,—a spoil which enhanced the victory, and would afford the most lively satisfaction to the Conqueror ;—the head of the Gothic King was immediately severed from the trunk, and, being placed upon a spear, was carried to Tarif, who ordered the bloody trophy to be immediately embalmed, that it might be sent as a present to the Caliph of Damascus.

On the morning following the day on which this memorable battle was decided, amidst the various loiterers, who visited that field of death and desolation, there was a female whose appearance excluded the idea that she came there instigated by feelings of avarice. She was of graceful carriage, and remarkable for her beauty, though the fire of her brilliant eye was much dimmed by corroding sorrow, and her lovely features bore the

iron mark of deep and absorbing distress. She wandered amidst the heaps of bleeding corpses and broken armour, eagerly intent on an interesting search. The field was slippery with blood, and oft her delicate and trembling tread betrayed her into fearful contact with the frightful objects that strewed the ground.—But things made to chill the female heart with horror and dismay, seemed to have no influence over hers. She appeared almost unconscious of the sad paraphernalia of death that incumbered the dismal scene, so busily was her mind engrossed by its own distressing thoughts.

This forlorn female was the wretched, the guilty Florinda. Yes, Florinda wandered in that field of death, where thousands and thousands of mighty warriors had paid with their lives the forfeit of her weakness. Florinda, the immediate cause of that wild scene of devastation, loitered there, unheeded by the greedy wretches who were eagerly engaged in despoiling the dead.—Poor helpless Florinda! what sorrow was ever equal to thine!—Cursed by thy father, and pursued by the maledictions of a whole nation, whose misery thou hast accomplished; spurned, despised, hated by all, thou hast the additional trials to undergo of thine own guilt-embittered feelings.

Florinda, despite of the wrongs she had suffered—despite of the sentiment of wild revenge which

had so absolutely engrossed her mind,—despite of her avowed hatred and scorn of the King, was still a woman under the dominion of an ill-extinguished flame. Alas! during the battle she trembled for the life of one whose ruin she had eagerly sought, and felt a throbbing anxiety for the man who had wrought her misery and shame. The moment the issue of the battle was known, she came to seek a mournful and chilling gratification; for she wished once more to behold him dead, whom alive she had once so devotedly loved, and, as *she thought*, so fiercely hated. So many rumours of his death had reached her ear, that she had resolved to ascertain the fatal truth herself.

The whole world was now indifferent to her; images of sorrow, and shame, and disappointment, presented themselves wherever her eyes turned, and every one conspired against her in marked feelings of hatred. She had fled from that paternal roof where love no longer existed; she avoided every spot that spoke to her of happiness for ever past,—of sorrows to endure eternally. In this miserable mood of mind, she perambulated the ensanguined field, and oft, alas! recognised warriors, and young and gallant knights, now lifeless burthens of clay, whom in happier days she had seen as gay attendants at a splendid court. With the feelings of dejection and despair which such sights were calculated to inspire, Florinda conti-

nued her melancholy search for the dead Don Roderick.

For a long time her endeavours proved fruitless. After much fatigue she saw the ivory car on which the King had fled from the field. It was deeply stained with blood, and much damaged. Florinda uttered a painful exclamation, and proceeded in her task with the expectation that this well-known object would tend to the discovery of the fallen King. She eagerly examined every corpse near the car; but though there were many countenances not unknown to her, the one she sought was not to be found. She had strayed into a narrow path, and there met a shepherd, who told her that a man answering completely the description of the King had accosted him the evening before, to inquire for a path that would lead him out of the reach of danger.

A beam of hope dawned upon Florinda's mind, but it was too soon dispelled by the account she received from a sturdy beggar, who was leisurely stripping one of the King's attendants of his costly habiliments. This busy despoiler of the dead informed her, that Roderick was drowned in the Guadalete, into which he had plunged with his horse, to avoid falling a captive to the pursuing Moors.—Florinda heard this intelligence in musing sadness; then bent her steps in hasty anxiety towards the fatal river. Her sorrowing eyes

turned, in a fearful scrutiny, to every side. She saw the waters of the Guadalete even purpled with the blood that had swelled them in their course. She approached in a thrill of excitement; when to her horror she found, not far from the banks of the river, part of the royal mantle of the King, together with his crown, which it was difficult to recognise through the blood and dirt.

Florinda, upon the discovery of this dreadful confirmation of the fate of Don Roderick, gave free vent to the expression of her long-checked sorrow. Her tears began to flow in streams, and her labouring bosom to swell with sighs and groans. She stood for some time fixed in her affliction.—“ Oh, Roderick! Roderick!” she cried, in an affecting tone of voice, “ thou art then really dead! No hope is left for me; and thou art gone to thy terrible account, with the curses of those whom thou hast wronged upon thy head. O that we had met but once, before this dread separation! Peace rest upon thy soul! May Heaven forgive thy sins as freely as I forgive thy injuries to me!”

Her agony at this moment impeded her utterance, and she bestowed mournful kisses on those sad memorials of her unfortunate King and lover; and then with a bleeding heart disappeared from the field. Her fate is not ascertained:—whether

she plunged into the Guadalete, or whether she retired into solitude to bewail her sorrows, and do penance for her sins, remains, and will remain, a matter of doubt. But the fatal name of Florinda, or La Cava, was ever afterwards pronounced with feelings either of reproach or pity.

Tarif and his victorious army soon overran Spain; and the followers of the Crescent finally gained that firm possession of the land, which, in the sequel, produced a continued series of battles and was a prolific source of violence and bloodshed.

The head of the unfortunate Gothic King was sent to Damascus, and exposed to view on one of the gates of the Caliph's palace. With Roderick, surnamed "The last of the Goths," ended their mighty empire. Spain was soon dismantled into various independent states,—partly Christian, and partly Moorish, which waged war against each other. In this condition did the Peninsula remain, until by unwearied exertions, in after years, it was finally re-united into one kingdom.

The Cabern of Covadonga.

No holier spot than Covadonga, Spain
Boasts in her wide extent, though all her realms
Be with the noblest blood of martyrdom
In elder or in later days enrich'd.

SOUTHEY.



ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

The Cabern of Cobadonga.

“AND does the rebellious maiden still persist in her obstinacy?—will she still oppose my power?—fears she not my revenge?” said the Moor Munuza, as his confidant Kerim returned from delivering a message with which he had been intrusted.

“Neither prayers nor threats make the least impression upon her mind,” answered Kerim; “the invincible pride and fearless resolution of Pelayo find a kindred habitation in the bosom of his sister. She rejects with scorn the offer of your hand.—Great Allah! what a degradation for the Moors. We have conquered the vast regions of the Christian empire; our will is imperious law; our wretched enemies tremble at the wrathful glance of our eyes; and yet a Christian slave, whom her vanquished countrymen still foolishly address by her former title, dares to treat with contempt the honour of an alliance with Munuza, the powerful Governor of these provinces of the North. I marvel that our magnificent Chief ever condescended to make so great an offer, or that,

having made it, he tamely suffers a rejection, when by a single word he can bring the maid to his palace,—and even enforce his will, should gentle persuasion prove unavailing.’

“By our Prophet! thy council is good, Kerim,” said the Governor. “I have too long endured the slights of Ormesinda; my forbearance is exhausted, and it is time that force should obtain what love, constant attention, and kindness, have endeavoured in vain to procure. To your fidelity and zeal I intrust the charge of bringing the haughty beauty to this place; but to prevent any disturbance, it would be well to fulfil your commission by night. Though the Christians are utterly destitute of the means of attempting any rescue with probability of success, yet their love and respect for a woman, whom they still consider as a princess, might tempt them to some desperate undertaking. Their deep-rooted aversion for us only wants an occasion to burst forth with all its fury. Not that I fear that aversion, or the results it may produce; but so desirous am I to spare Moorish blood, that I would not waste one drop of it in private feud, when it can be so much better employed in conquering more provinces. In the silence of night, therefore, proceed to the dwelling of Ormesinda, with a suitable escort, and convey her hither with secrecy and precaution.”

“Your pleasure shall be obeyed,” said Kerim, and withdrew.

The situation of the Goths at this period was deplorable in the highest degree; the conquest of Spain had been as rapid as the battles through which it had been obtained were sanguinary and numerous. The North of Spain held out to the last, owing to its remote situation and the stubborn courage of the inhabitants. The mountainous provinces of Asturias and Cantabria were still unsubdued; for, although Munuza was Governor of Gijon, the capital of the former, and the Christians were put down and watched with suspicious vigilance, yet their spirit was unconquered, and they seemed only to wait for a fit occasion to rise in arms against their oppressors.—But the uncertainty of Pelayo’s fate proved a great impediment to their earnest desires. This prince had for some time quitted the North of Spain, with the intention, as it was supposed, of imploring the assistance of the Duke of Aquitaine, in order to engage successfully against the invaders of his country, and effect their expulsion. But, from the moment of his departure, no certain news had been received from him. A variety of reports circulated amongst his followers,—all however, rather discouraging than otherwise to their prospects.

Some said that Pelayo had died by the treachery of Don Oppas, the prelate; others that he had

fallen in battle ; almost all concurring in the opinion of his death. This persuasion damped the enterprising courage of the Gothic nobles, who still cherished in their breasts the hopes of asserting their independence. The most daring had proposed to revolt, and proclaim Ormesinda their Queen ; but in these views they were opposed by others, who, more prudent, considered that a rash attempt would only serve to increase those difficulties, which would prove formidable even to a more mature and well-arranged plan of operation.

Such was the posture of affairs at Gijon and the rest of the province, at the time that Munuza determined to follow the advice of his creature Kerim with regard to the Gothic princess.

Night came, and Kerim proceeded on his iniquitous mission. In a retired mansion Ormesinda was conversing with her friend and foster-mother Elgira. She was lamenting the misery of her fate, and devising a scheme to fly from the town, in which the pressing importunity of Munuza rendered a longer stay dangerous to her honour.

“ Yes, my faithful Elgira,” she said, “ the barbarous Moor will dare all, and I am now determined to fly from this odious town.”

“ And what place can we select for our retreat,”

demanded Elgira, "that can be secure from the research of the Moors?"

"What! dost thou forget the vale and cavern of Covadonga—that secret, wild, and almost inaccessible spot, in which my brother Pelayo once took refuge, after a disastrous attempt to assert our liberty? The accounts of my brother's death are every day increasing my apprehension, and affording just cause for my sorrow. You know that upon his return I was to be united to the brave Alonzo. Perhaps the perils of my situation will justify me in choosing him, with a troop of devoted and brave Goths, for the companions of my flight. He will soon be here to concert measures for that purpose.—But, hark! methinks I heard a noise.—'Tis he!—Rise and bid him welcome."

The faithful Elgira opened the door, when, to the astonishment of the female, instead of Don Alonzo, in rushed a troop of fierce-looking Moors. Ormesinda, with feelings of dread and abhorrence, soon recognised in their leader the odious Kerim, the favourite and vile minister of the Governor. She rose from her seat, and with an imperious tone of voice inquired the reason of so untimely an intrusion. Her cheek was flushed with indignation, and the sense of wrong gave her strength to stand dauntless before the savage Moor. Kerim, however, neither moved by the majestic deport-

ment of the Princess, nor by the alarm depicted in the countenance of her attendant, with impassive coolness proceeded to unfold the purpose of his mission.

“Lady,” he said, “it is the pleasure of the Governor that you should accompany me into his presence; therefore, without farther delay, be prepared to follow me.”

“Follow you? miscreant!” indignantly exclaimed Ormesinda. “The base intentions of Munuza are too well known ever to induce me to appear before him, unless I am dragged thither by force. Therefore desist, and return to thy master. Tell him that, however unconquerable his hatred to the Christians, if he has a single spark of manly feeling in his heart, he will shrink from offering any violence to a female who looks upon him with dread and disgust.”

“That message, Lady,” said Kerim with a sarcastic smile, “you can deliver in person; and no doubt the Governor will pay due regard to your angry words.—You mentioned force as the only means that could succeed in bringing you to the Governor. Look around, Lady, and see if such a requisite is wanting, should words of persuasion prove unavailing in influencing your determination.”

As he spoke, he pointed insolently to his followers, who seemed indeed but too well disposed

to obey the instructions of their leader, however ruthless and unmanly they might be. Ormesinda cast around a look of despair, and soon perceived the utter hopelessness of her situation, and that opposition would be vain. In the confusion of her grief, she reluctantly entreated the pity and generosity of the barbarous Kerim, who, instead of lending a pitying ear to the thrilling voice of her affliction, contented himself with reiterating his commands in a sterner tone. Elgira, in the mean time, was filling the house with more clamorous lamentations; but neither the prayers of the mistress, nor the cries of the attendant, had the least influence upon the Moor.

“Enough, Lady, enough,” he cried impatiently. “Time presses, and you must either resolve to follow me without resistance, or submit to be carried by force into the presence of my master. Decide, therefore,—and decide quickly.”

In the height of despair, and terrified at the dishonourable fate which awaited her, Ormesinda flew to the casement, with the intention of precipitating herself from it, and of preventing, by a frightful death, the disgrace which she so justly apprehended. But the vigilant Kerim, as if divining her intentions by the agony of her looks, was prepared for this alternative, and stopped her desperate resolution. He seized the unfortunate Princess rudely by the arm, and, without the

least pity, desired one of his attendants to bind with cords her delicate limbs.—At the announcement of this cruel insult, the feelings of Ormesinda found a vent in a storm of indignant reproaches. She fiercely struggled with the cowardly Kerim, and had almost succeeded in her desperate attempt, when she was mastered by his attendants, who, unmindful of her entreaties, proceeded to bind her; and then to carry her, like a lifeless burthen, to the Governor. At this moment the door flew open, and a Christian warrior suddenly presented himself in the apartment. The two females uttered cries of joy at the prospect of a release; but the feelings of Ormesinda were thrown into a stronger excitement, when, in the person of the knight, she recognized her betrothed, the gallant and beloved Don Alonzo.

“ Oh, my friend! my own Alonzo!” she exclaimed in a tumult of joy, “ you come in time to rescue thy Ormesinda.—Save me from the abhorred grasp of these hardened wretches.”

Don Alonzo needed no stimulus to impel him to a desperate attempt; for such a one was that of venturing to free the Princess, surrounded as she was by numerous foes, all equally determined and well-armed. But to the impetuous valour and enthusiastic love of the gallant knight, no undertaking appeared too difficult, that tended to serve the object of his devoted attachment.—“ Base

Moors!" he cried aloud, in a fierce tone of voice, "relinquish your prey. You shall trample upon my lifeless and bloody remains, ere you accomplish this work of iniquity. Unhand that injured lady immediately; for, though I stand alone against such fearful odds, some of you at least shall rue the moment you ventured upon so dastardly an attempt."

A loud laugh of derision was the only answer he received from the insolent Moors. Don Alonzo's indignation was wrought to a degree of rage bordering on frenzy. Without uttering a word more, he rushed against the miscreants, and soon laid the foremost prostrate on the ground. Regardless of the imminent danger, and instigated by vengeance and indignation, the young warrior charged his numerous enemies, and a most desperate and unequal contest was commenced. But though the courage and skill in arms of Don Alonzo might delay defeat, he could not prevent it. He was at length overpowered by his foes, and fell covered with wounds, though, to his sorrow and despair, none of them was mortal. Death would, in the present circumstances, have been most welcome, as it really was the best alternative that offered itself to his desponding thoughts. But even this consolation was denied him; and to the horror of seeing his betrothed torn for ever from his embraces, was added the

mortification of considering his wretched existence protracted to view the disgrace of Ormesinda, whilst he, unable to strike a blow in her defence, was reserved to be an object of derision to his barbarous foes.

In a state of the most poignant despair, the Christian Princess was quickly borne away from the sight of her agonized lover, whilst he himself, strongly secured, was carried from the place, with blood streaming from his numerous wounds, and farther tormented by the taunts and insults of his enemies. Until his fate should be decided, he was thrown into a dungeon. The Moors, after this achievement, hastened to communicate the tidings to the Governor. Kerim had by this time presented himself to Munuza with the wished-for prize.

“Kerim,” quoth his master, in a congratulating tone, “thou art, in truth, a zealous servant. Thy commission has been satisfactorily discharged; but say, didst thou find resistance in its execution?”

Kerim gave the Governor a detailed and circumstantial account of the adventure, not forgetting to dwell with peculiar emphasis upon the zeal and dauntless courage which he, as well as his companions, had exhibited in the discharge of their duty. Munuza was well pleased that Alonzo had thus, of his own accord, rushed headlong into his

power, for he had long wished to find a specious pretence for seizing his person, and had only been deterred from offering open violence, by considerations of prudence and policy. The young Christian was particularly hateful to Munuza, for the latter could not but view him in the light of a successful rival. The obnoxious individual being now under his control, he secretly resolved that he at least should offer no farther obstacle to the fulfilment of his unruly desires. The doom of Don Alonzo was from that moment decided on; and the Governor's mind being settled on this point, the whole of his attention was turned towards the afflicted Princess, who had been so barbarously forced into his presence.

The savage Moor now softened his features into something like human feeling, and in a gentle voice began to offer consolation to the unfortunate Ormesinda. But she recoiled with horror and disgust from his loathsome endearments. Her mind was worked up to desperation, and it was evident that she was deeply meditating on some dreadful means of avoiding the calamity which threatened her future destiny. The black phantom of dishonour stood before her sight in its most hideous form; and the image of her bleeding lover next filled her mind with intense anguish. Munuza beheld the dreadful workings of her soul, and determined no longer to torment his victim

with his importunities in her present distracted state, but to postpone his odious schemes to a future opportunity. Having secured his prey, he was willing to delay his designs, in the hope that the overpowering grief of his victim would gradually subside.

Ormesinda was accordingly released for a time from the hateful presence of the Moor. A suite of apartments, appropriately decorated, were selected for her use; and under the pretence of treating her as became her rank, Munuza took especial care to have her constantly surrounded by Moorish women, who had strict orders to report the most trifling circumstances to their master. Ormesinda was deprived even of the consolation which she might derive from the company of her faithful Elgira. That old attendant had been dismissed from her service, in order to deprive the fair prisoner of any prospect of planning an escape. But these odious proceedings only served to strengthen the deeply-rooted aversion which Ormesinda felt for her oppressor. In every succeeding interview, Munuza found that the hatred and grief of his captive, instead of being softened by time and importunities, seemed, on the contrary, to acquire additional force. He was so enraged to observe he made no progress in conquering her abhorrence, that he turned in fierce anger from her presence, and began to ponder on some other

more efficient plan of operation, before he resorted to actual violence.

The idea of Don Alonzo suddenly crossed his mind. That noble Christian, lingering from the effects of his wounds, had, by a refinement of cruelty, been spared, that he might suffer death when he was completely re-established in health. With a ferocious joy, Munuza now considered that the unfortunate lover might be made a most effectual agent to work upon the feelings of the proud beauty. The fear of seeing him die might have more influence upon her heart than the most dreadful threats which Munuza could invent. Under this impression the wily Moor again presented himself to the Princess, with greater confidence than he had ever yet experienced.

“Ormesinda,” he said, “the prosperity of this infant kingdom, together with my most ardent passion, requires that your destinies should be united to mine. For the last time, I come to make a proffer of my hand; and, being fully determined to carry my views into effect, it is for you to decide whether you prefer the condition of a slave, suffered to live merely to satisfy the pleasures of a master, or the honour of sharing all the transports of love, as well as the power of a tender and affectionate consort.”

Ormesinda preserved an unbroken silence. Munuza again and again urged all the arguments

he could devise. He threatened and implored; whispered caressing words, and spoke with horrid curses. But he exerted himself to no purpose. Neither his soothing attentions, nor the wildest storms of his rage, could draw from her other acknowledgment than the silence of disdain, or phrases expressing every loathsome feeling towards him.

“Lady, lady!” exclaimed the Moor, convulsed with passion, “you know not how far you are in my power,—how boundless, how harrowing is the vengeance I can take, for this opposition to my wishes, and the unseemly scorn which you are continually heaping upon me. Cease, lady, ere the full weight of my accumulated wrongs fall, like a mighty ruin, upon your head.”

“Moor,” answered Ormesinda resolutely, “experience ought to have instructed you how fruitless is the attempt to awe my resolution by menaces which I fear not. Think you that death has any terrors in my sight?”

“Not your own, perhaps,” observed Munuza with a malignant smile. “But what, if I can take away another life to you a thousand times dearer?”

He paused for a moment, and whilst the unfortunate Ormesinda trembled lest her fearful surmises should be realized, the cruel Moor proceeded, in a vaunting manner, to unfold the dread-

ful calamity which alone might have the power to shake her heroic resolution. Her agony, after the Governor had revealed his barbarous design, is not to be described. But still the distressing exhibition of her overwhelming sorrows did not soften the heart of the Moor. He remained inflexible. To her pathetic appeals, and tears, and painful entreaties, he coldly answered, by observing: "It is your turn to supplicate, and mine to deny. You are now acquainted with my fixed determination, and either you must accompany me to the altar, or your beloved Don Alonzo dies an ignominious death. For the present, farewell; and when next we meet, it must be to decide upon one of those alternatives. This day shall be granted you to consider them; therefore bear well in memory my words; for no power on earth, no calamity, no device, shall compel me to deviate a single step from the path I have resolved to follow."

Saying this, he left the Princess to ruminate upon the hopelessness of her situation. The alternative left her was as dark as the heart that framed it. To be the wife and companion of Munuza was a fate so dreadful, that she was fully conscious she did not possess sufficient strength to support it. But, on the other hand, the death of Don Alonzo filled her heart with dismay. Ormesinda, to the tender feelings of a woman, added

the noble sentiments of a patriot; and in Don Alonzo she not only beheld an adored lover, but a warrior most useful to her country—the only one perhaps that could supply the place of her glorious brother, Don Pelayo. These painful thoughts combined to throw the unfortunate Ormesinda into a state of the utmost alarm. She combated alternately with the predominant feeling; for she considered the last choice which she made as the most terrible and insupportable. In this torturing suspense, in this wavering of despair, she remained the whole of the day allowed her to decide her choice. The night was passed in the same excitement; and the dawn of the fatal day found Ormesinda more wretched than she conceived it was in the power of fate to make her.

Munuza was not slow in demanding her resolve; and the distressing scene of the preceding day was renewed, but with as little success. The Governor, boiling with rage at the stubborn perseverance of his prisoner, called Kerim, and gave orders for the immediate execution of Don Alonzo. The detestable favourite seemed eager enough to obey them, and the crisis of Ormesinda's fate had arrived. The present chilling calamity made her momentarily forget every other misfortune. She could only see her beloved Don Alonzo murdered before her eyes. His pallid spectre seemed to

rise from the tomb, and accuse her as the cause of his untimely end. The image, indeed, was so fearful, that she could not summon strength to bear with it; and in a mixed paroxysm of terror, pity, and despair, she murmured out her consent to the wishes of the abhorred Moor.

“It is well,” cried the exulting Munuza. “You have chosen, lady, the most reasonable part. To-morrow you shall be mine, and rule with me in these dominions. Our union may create more friendly feelings between Moor and Christian. Kerim, go thou and order the most splendid preparations for to-morrow’s festival: at the same time, give liberty to Don Alonzo.

The news of the approaching union between the Moorish Governor and the Christian Princess soon spread over the city, and created the deepest sensation of horror and surprise amongst the true Goths. They considered so odious an alliance the most dire calamity that could befall them, as all their hopes and affections had been centred in their idolized Princess Ormesinda. These fond hopes vanished; their affections withered when they considered the object on whom they were bestowed so totally unworthy of them. Alas! the multitude so liberal of their reprobation, were ignorant of the trial to which the unfortunate Princess was subjected. They knew not the poignancy of her sorrow—the hopelessness of the situation

in which she had been placed. The shame and distress which fell to the share of each Christian was a trifling evil, when compared to the abject state of wretchedness that weighed on the victim of the approaching sacrifice. For sacrifice indeed it was, though to the deluded people it appeared to be the result of her free and uncontrolled consent.

Meantime, Don Alonzo was released from his prison; but it was to curse his life, when he learned the horrid price at which that life had been purchased. The truth of the affair was soon known, and fully canvassed amongst the Christians; and the greater portion began to relax in their condemnation of Ormesinda. Many excused her weakness, and all felt pity for her misfortunes. Don Alonzo alone could find no palliation for an offence which he considered as the deepest and most degrading that could be committed by a Christian maiden—a princess—the sister of the great Don Pelayo—the betrothed of Don Alonzo!

The fatal day came, and the Christians, with looks of shame and sorrow, began to assemble in groups to discuss the topic that filled them with so much emotion. The sight of the preparations for the approaching ceremony only served to augment their distress and indignation, and not a few proposed some desperate attempt to impede the odious

nuptials ; but the stoutest heart sank, when they reflected how destitute the Christians were of all resources, and how rash and unavailing would prove any such attempt. An universal bustle now announced that the Governor and the forlorn bride were proceeding to the altar, when a murmur of disapprobation and disgust ran through the assembled crowds. The Moors were on the alert. Numerous troops of horsemen paraded the town, so that it would have been next to madness for the Goths to essay the rescue of their Princess. On a gentle eminence that commanded a full view of the mosque, and separated from every group, stood a man absorbed in the deepest reverie. His pallid cheek and sunken eye but too plainly denoted the weakness of his frame ; and the deep anguish of his fixed look, and the cloud that darkened his manly forehead, bespoke him labouring under strong mental affliction. It was Don Alonzo, the most interested in the approaching ceremony which was to seal his irrevocable misery, who, scarcely recovered from his wounds, and a victim to the most exquisite torture, stood there a fearful picture of overwhelming despair. Whilst his countrymen, in various groups, vented their sorrow and indignation, he, the most wretched of them all, in confused murmurs and smothered imprecations, preferred to riot in his misery, thus solitary and unconsoled.

Whilst the thoughts of Don Alonzo were bent on the theme that solely occupied his mind, and his glazed eyes fixed on the detested mosque, a stranger, closely enveloped, approached him unnoticed.—“Don Alonzo!” said a voice that thrilled to the desponding lover’s heart,—“Don Alonzo! I did not expect to find you thus inert. Fie, noble Goth, fie! This is a day for action, not for meditation:—for blood, and not for tears!”

“Who art thou, stranger?” exclaimed Don Alonzo in surprise. “Thy words, thy noble enthusiasm bespeak thee a Goth.”

“I am a Goth—one perhaps not undeserving of that name, in these days of shame and degradation. Look on me well. Has a short absence so altered me, that you fail to recognize a brother?”

As he said this, and threw aside his cloak, Don Alonzo uttered a wild cry of surprise and joy.

“Heaven be praised! Pelayo! Pelayo!—my friend, my brother! Thou art alive! Is this no dream of my fevered fancy? Let me press thee to my burning heart! Oh, my God! thou art merciful. In the midst of my sorrows, thou hadst comfort in store for the wretched Alonzo!”

Tears of mingled grief and joy poured down his cheeks, as he was locked in the arms of Pelayo;—tears that, instead of disgracing his manly heart, served only to enhance its value. The emotion of

the two friends was so powerful, as for some time to impede their utterance.

“ Yes, it is Pelayo! your unfortunate friend. 'Tis Pelayo that proffers this brotherly embrace. Oh, noble Goth! what dreadful times are these! How severely is the guilt of Don Roderick visited upon his people! But wherefore waste these precious moments in unavailing complaints, when the most bitter, the deepest of our calamities is at hand,—when the measure of our degradation will be filled to overflowing!”

“ Then, my noble friend, thou knowest already——”

“ Yes,” interrupted Pelayo, in a stern voice. “ Yes, I know that I have a sister unworthy of the name. Curse on her degraded heart, that it should bring such foul dishonour upon her glorious race!”

“ Blame her not rashly, oh, my friend! Her condition ought rather to excite our compassion.”

“ Heavens! What words are these? Do I really hear the voice of a friend? Can it be possible that Don Alonzo of Cantabria—that a noble Goth can seek to palliate a deed of foul dishonour—a degradation so overwhelming, that it is the only calamity that could break the stout, the unbending heart of Pelayo? But enough! You are changed, Alonzo. In the weakness of the lover, you sink the character of the Goth, and you forget the

duties of the patriot. A curse on the puny passion that could so far transform the bravest of the Christian knights!"

"Hold, Don Pelayo!" proudly exclaimed his friend. "You wrong me deeply by these ungenerous surmises. I am still a Gothic knight—still Don Alonzo of Cantabria. You see me weak, wronged, overpowered with affliction, worn out by suffering; but wasted as is my frame, and lacerated as my heart must be, my courage is unimpaired, my resolution entire, my hatred to our foes fiercer than ever. Speak! command! What is it you require to prove me the true friend of Spain? Put my honour to the test: you will then be convinced that I am still the worthy friend and brother of Don Pelayo."

"Listen, Alonzo," resumed Pelayo in a more tranquil tone. "My arrival at Gijon is a secret. Last night I was privately introduced into the town, and I entered it full of sanguine hopes; but how were those hopes blasted, by the direful news that welcomed my return! Yet, I thank Almighty God that He has permitted me to arrive before the sacrifice is consummated. Something can still be done—shall soon be done. The thought that occupies my mind is the offspring of desperation; yet it must be followed, for it is the only alternative that is offered us in this dreadful crisis. My application to the Court of Aquitaine has not

been wholly unsuccessful ; for though the Duke has proffered me no assistance, I have succeeded in rousing the dormant energies of many brave Christians. To avoid suspicion, I have gradually sent them in small detachments to the wild mountains of Asturias. The darksome cavern of Covadonga is the place of general rally, as it soon must be the seat of our new-born empire. Fruela, Feudes Rucesvinto, and other noble Goths, are already waiting my instructions in its solitary and sombre valley. Such was the cheering state of our prospects, when I secretly arrived last night, in order to lead my sister and you, with the rest of our noble brethren to the mountains, whence I expected soon to return and wage implacable and unsparing war against the hated destroyers of our independence. Such were my plans upon revisiting Gijon. A few moments elapsed ; my hopes were blighted, and a different course rendered imperiously necessary.

“ And now my noble friend, what hast thou in contemplation ? ”

“ A deed chilling and desperate,” answered the Goth with enthusiasm. “ A deed that will freeze with horror the tame hearts of vulgar men, but a deed of magnanimity in the estimation of great and heroic minds.”

“ Name it, Pelayo. In life, in death, you know you can command me. Keep me not in suspense.

Your destiny, however awful and terrific, shall be mine."

"Can I firmly rely upon your aid, Alonzo?" demanded the Gothic hero in a fearful tone.

"Brother, you affront me," said Alonzo with some degree of warmth. "I never gave you cause for these ungenerous doubts."

"Pardon me, Alonzo, pardon my hesitation," continued Pelayo, in a deep and impressive tone of voice. "It is natural in a man whose mind is labouring with such desperate thoughts. For, mark me well, O noble Goth! 'tis no common sacrifice which will be required of us. The mention of my design will chill thy blood with horror. Now, tell me in truth, Alonzo——"

"Speak. I will in all sincerity answer you."

"I know the loftiness of thy mind. I have had full proof of thy dauntless courage. But say, Alonzo, couldst thou behold a son,—wert thou a father,—crushed, torn, and bleeding in the agonies of death, ere thou wouldst consent to foul dishonour?"

"I could," resolutely answered Alonzo.

"And couldst thou see all the tenderest ties that bind mortal man broken asunder, ere thou wouldst submit to be covered with shame?"

"Yes; and to these dreadful suppositions, add every calamity that can befall human nature—I will still be Alonzo."

“It is well, my noble friend,” quoth Pelayo. “Now I can unfold my design. My arrival here, as I have told you, is a mystery to all but yourself and two other faithful friends. The moment of the sacrifice approaches, and we must be present at the ceremony.”

“You mean to attempt a rescue?”

“No,” mournfully answered Pelayo. “Such hopes are vain. Had the wedding been delayed but a few days longer, we might with justice have indulged such flattering expectations; but as it is, we cannot. Our present honour and future independence must spring from a different source. It is the blood of my sister that must make it flourish.”

“In the name of Heaven!” cried his friend in amazement, “what mean you, Pelayo?”

“Ormesinda must die,” resolutely, but mournfully, replied the warrior; “and die by the hand of her own brother!—Yes, my unfortunate friend, this weapon, so often bathed in the blood of our enemies, is soon to be crimsoned by that which is to me dearer than my own. The sacrifice is dreadful, but imperious.—Does this announcement unman you? Ah! think, my trusty Alonzo,—think of my agony, my despair; it is more intense than thine. Oh! could you but know the full measure of my love for that sister whom I am now hastening to destroy! That sister was my delight, my

pride, my all: in her, were centred all the affections of father, brother, lover, and friend. She was deserving of more than human love; an angel might have been proud of her form; her mind would have honoured the most exalted man; of her courageous heart, I myself would have boasted: but all these perfections perished the moment she consented to her degradation. How this dark miracle was wrought I cannot surmise; whether it was accomplished by sorcery, or by the simple instigation of a fiend, I know not; but this I know, that the horrid, the degrading change has been wrought, and now, before the sister of Pelayo is locked in the swarthy arms of a Moor, she must descend to the cold embraces of the tomb. Yes, the tomb—an unpolluted tomb—shall be her wedding couch; and by the sacrifice of her life, I shall free the better part of herself, her unsullied honour, from the shafts of scorn and shame.—But, hark! dost thou hear tumultuous sounds? they proclaim the momentous crisis:—follow me, and lay to heart my words. Soon as you see me strike the fatal blow, summon with loud voice the assembled crowd to arms:—the sight of the bloody tragedy will rouse their courage to a holy enthusiasm; and my weapon, reeking with the blood of my murdered sister, shall then aim its avenging blows against the tyrant himself. In this undertaking, it is probable that I shall be obliged to lay

down my life; but this will be no sacrifice, if I achieve my purpose. Should I fall, you must, Alonzo, lead your slender troop to the cavern and wild passes of Covadonga. There let the memory of Pelayo and Ormesinda stimulate you to new exertions, and constantly feed the holy flame of hatred against the Moor. Now follow me, Alonzo, and may just Heaven protect our cause!"

As he delivered these words in a tone of enthusiasm, he resolutely directed his steps towards the mosque. Alonzo, amazed, but not intimidated, followed his heroic friend silently and fearlessly. In their course they observed the deep emotion exhibited by their brother Christians; and Pelayo interpreted the looks of grief and indignation which they cast around, as highly favourable to his hopes. The bridal procession meanwhile entered the mosque; and among the promiscuous throng which followed, Pelayo and his friend found it no difficult task to enter unobserved. They approached the altar in a tumult of emotion, and their eyes soon encountered a scene of maddening interest. The odious Munuza seemed lavishing his tender caresses on the Princess, who stood in gloomy tranquillity, totally unconscious of the preparations around her. The whole powers of her mind seemed bent upon some deep and important thought. Her cheek was very pale, and her eyes shone with an unnatural

light. Ill indeed did the expression of her countenance accord with the splendour of her dress, and the emblematical chaplet of roses that encircled her brow!

When the ceremony commenced, the agitation of Ormesinda was so excessive, that she became gradually weaker. Munuza, alarmed at these symptoms, strove to calm her emotion; but she repulsed his tenderness with a withering smile.

“Heaven be blessed!” muttered Pelayo softly, “she hates the Moor now, I see: a load of misery is removed from my heart.”

He continued to advance towards the altar. Alonzo stood beside him, and two or three trusty followers were close behind.

A mournful cry now burst from Ormesinda; her haggard eyes had caught those of her lover, and she trembled violently. Munuza and his attendants turned to learn the cause of her emotion.

“By Allah!” fiercely cried the Moor, “if my eyes deceive me not, the hated Don Alonzo obtrudes his presence on this holy ceremony; guards, seize the traitor, and drag him hence!”

“Oh, Munuza, remember your promise,” cried Ormesinda in alarm.

“Shame! Ormesinda, shame!” exclaimed a powerful voice, that awed the assembled Moors and Christians. “Dost thou demean thyself to

sue for pity of the tyrant! whither has thy pride fled? canst thou forget the noble race from which thou art descended?"

All eyes were now turned on the speaker; and a murmur of astonishment suddenly filled the place,—“Pelayo! Pelayo!” cried a thousand voices. The Governor shook with anger; Ormesinda uttered a scream of joy, and the Christians sent forth a shout of congratulation; and as Pelayo advanced close to the altar, a scene of confusion ensued.

“Yes, Pelayo is here!” quoth he in a firm but melancholy voice. “Pelayo comes to be a witness of the last and most galling misfortune that can fall upon his head. Ormesinda, could I ever have expected this from thee? What diabolical witchery has turned thy better judgment to the prejudice of thine honour?”

“Do not, my brother,” said she in a thrilling tone,—“do not increase the torments of my wretched state by your killing rebukes; for it is to save the noblest of the Goths—thy dearest companion, that I have sacrificed myself! Ah! could you suspect that aught but what was noble could influence thy sister?”

“It is well,” said Pelayo in a more tranquil voice, “that I hear this intelligence from thee, for it lessens my misery.”

“Oh! did you then consent to this hateful

union to save my life?" interrupted Alonzo in a tone of overwhelming grief.

Ormesinda's feelings were becoming more excited every moment, and every one imagined that the ceremony would bear down her strength, and that she would sink to the ground ere it was completed. Don Pelayo summoned all his courage for the horrid crisis, and he advanced a step with the firm resolution of plunging his weapon deep into the heart of his sister; but he wanted some pretext for approaching near enough to strike the blow with fatal success.

"Munuza," he said, essaying to compose himself, "let me press my poor deluded sister to my sorrowing bosom. It is the last time I shall see her; relentless as thou art, thou canst not deny me this request."

"Oh! you speak truly," said Ormesinda with a feeble voice; "it is indeed for the last time you see me, for I have but a few, very few moments of life remaining."

"What mystery is this? Whence the horrid paleness that overspreads thy countenance? the livid colour of thy lips? the tremor of thy enfeebled and sinking frame?"

"Alas! Don Pelayo," answered his heroic sister, "knowest thou so little of thy sister, that thou canst not divine the cause of her present state? Could you for a moment suspect that Or-

mesinda would survive even a single hour of degradation? Oh, no! you have wronged me. To save the life of Don Alonzo, I consented to follow my persecutor to the altar; but at the time I made that resolution, another occupied my thoughts. Both have been fulfilled, and I die as becomes a noble maiden, and a sister of Pelayo."

"Bless the Providence!" cried her brother with wild enthusiasm, "that made thy mind so noble—thy heart so magnanimous; thanks, merciful Heaven! for thus releasing me from my dark resolve.—Ormesinda, I have injured thee; I thought thee guilty, and came to shed thy blood in the scene of thy disgrace. Oh, pardon, pardon my error!"

"My strength, alas! fails me—I feel the unrelenting grasp of death—the corroding poison bursting in my veins—it consumes me—I can no more—Where art thou, Alonzo?—cherish my memory!—It is done!—Farewell, Pelayo—Mercy, mercy, oh, God! for this act of desperation!"

The amazed spectators of this dismal scene could not for some time form any resolution; but Don Pelayo, more collected, though as deeply affected as the rest, with a furious impulse rushed against Munuza; and before the Moor could stir in his defence, he lay whelting in his blood. Pelayo, brandishing aloft his bloody weapon, loudly exclaimed—

“Christians ! strike for liberty. The tyrant has fallen ; let the fate of my noble sister stimulate your courage, and impel you to deeds of heroism.”

Don Alonzo nobly seconded the exertions of his friend. The Christians rose in a mighty body ; and, though most of them were unarmed, they grappled with their enemies, and soon supplied themselves with weapons.

The mosque became a scene of indiscriminate carnage and confusion. The news of the extraordinary event spread quickly through the town. The rising of the Christians became as universal as it was sudden. Every street was converted into a scene of strife. Blood flowed in streams ; the noise, disorder and devastation were astounding and terrific. The voice of Don Pelayo now rallied around him the Christian combatants ; the Gothic standard was unfurled ! and the cry of liberty resounded on every side.

“To the mountains, Christians ! to the mountains !” cried Pelayo. “There lies our stronghold. Let every true Goth follow me to that cradle of our new-born independence.”

At his command every one was ready to depart. The body of the unfortunate and heroic Ormesinda was carried on a couch, and the whole mass of Christians retreated from the town into the wild mountains of Asturias. Don Pelayo and his glorious followers, were joyfully greeted by their

brothers in arms; and immediately upon their arrival at the valley of Covadonga, the mortal remains of Ormesinda were interred in the cavern, and a chapel was there dedicated to the Holy Virgin, in commemoration of the signal event that accompanied the death of the maiden.

After the funeral obsequies had been performed, the nobles assembled to give some form of government to the infant colony. Don Alonzo proposed that the magnanimous Don Pelayo should be elected king, as having, by right of birth and great services, the best claim to that distinction. Fruela, Tendis Rucesvinto, and the rest of the nobles, received the proposition of the Prince of Cantabria with acclamations.

Pelayo then addressed the assembled warriors as follows:—

“ My noble companions! I readily accept your trust:—not for the sake of the dignity which the crown confers, but because, in becoming your King, I accept a post of the greatest toil and danger. ’Tis not a crown of gold that I place on my head, but one of iron. The attributes of my sovereignty shall not be ease, wealth, and pleasure, but constant peril, poverty, and privations: these alone shall make the difference between me and my subjects. And here I pledge my honour to guard the interests of my sterile and wild dominions. My pursuit of the Moors shall be as active and un-

relenting as my hatred is deep and lasting. They shall curse the day when Pelayo was proclaimed King at Covadonga. Here a Christian nation commences, that will, with God's assistance, achieve the recovery of the land. Yes,—the valley of Covadonga shall be renowned among posterity, and the children of Asturias and Cantabria, shall, to the remotest ages, derive a virtuous pride from the place of their birth.”

A burst of enthusiastic applause followed the speech of the patriot monarch.

Alonzo and Fruela now produced an enormous shield, on which the new King was requested to sit ; and then, being lifted from the ground, he was borne aloft through ranks of the assembled Christians. The Gothic banner was carried before him, while the nobles marched in order with their heads bare, and their swords unsheathed.

In this manner Pelayo was paraded round the cavern and solitary passes of Covadonga, which reverberated with the shouts of the people who had taken refuge in its solitude. How the infant colony procured a subsistence, historians do not mention. Their manner of living must have been as rude and hardy as the site of their kingdom was rugged. It is said that there were many caves which served the Christians of those times for resting places during night, the day being spent under the canopy of heaven, either in waging

relentless war against their enemies, or in procuring such sustenance as the neighbourhood afforded.

It is, however, no less certain, that from this place they sallied forth continually, causing great havoc amongst the Moors, and gradually extending their dominions. In a terrible battle, the Moors were completely routed, and their chief Alcama slain. The traitorous prelate, Don Oppas, who had previously been sent into the mountains, to enter upon terms of negotiation with his kinsman Don Pelayo, was found amongst the prisoners taken in the field. The Christians were filled with rage at the sight of the traitor. He was immediately put to death, and his memory condemned to lasting shame. The battle of Covadonga was decisive. Tradition has connected the valley and cavern of that name with the most glorious as well as most romantic associations. The spot displays a range of wild, but sublime and picturesque scenery. No Spaniard, especially if he be a native of those parts, can behold the place without emotion. The remains of a rude chapel are still discernible in the cavern, which has remained an object of veneration since the memorable rule of Don Pelayo, whose name, to the ears of every true Spaniard, is synonymous with all that is good and heroic.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Kings of Oviedo.

A PERIOD OF 156 YEARS.

A. D. 757. Froila the First assumed the title of King of Oviedo and Galicia.

759. He assembled a Council of Bishops, which forbade the future marriage of priests, which had been permitted by a law of Witiza. Froila was a courageous king, and often vanquished the Saracens. He tarnished his victories by the murder of his brother Vimarano.

768. He was himself put to death by Orelia, or Aurelio, his cousin, who succeeded to the throne. His reign was not remarkable for any striking event. He lived in peace with the Mahomedans.

774. Don Silo, a man very much advanced in age, was his successor.

783. Mauregat, with the assistance of the Moors under Abdulrahman, usurped the throne, to the prejudice of his nephew, Alonzo the Second, the rightful heir. In consideration of the aid afforded by Abdulrahman, Mauregat agreed to pay to the Moorish Chief a tax of a hundred maidens, who were yearly sent to the Caliph's court at Cordova.

788. Mauregat was succeeded by Bermudo, surnamed The Priest.

791. Alonzo the Second, known in history by the title of

The *Chaste* and The *Victorious*, enjoyed a long and prosperous reign. It was during his rule that the famous Bernardo del Carpio achieved the romantic exploits, which have been the theme of so many Spanish ballads. The Spanish chronicles relate that Alonzo, having no heir, invited the Emperor Charlemagne into Spain, and offered to settle the succession of the crown on him. Bernardo del Carpio, and a great number of knights, resisted an arrangement so detrimental to the independence of the country. The King himself repented; and when Charlemagne came over into Spain, he found both Christians and Moors prepared to repel him. In the celebrated Pass of Roncesvalles, a terrible battle took place, in which the French were totally routed, and the famous Orlando, or Roland, killed by Bernardo.

842. Alonzo, after a fortunate reign of 53 years, during which he had considerably extended his dominions, died, having appointed Ramiro, son of Bermudo, his successor.

844. In this year the famous battle of Alveida, or Clavijo, which lasted two days, was fought. Ramiro obtained a signal victory over the Moors, under Abdulrahman the Second, and the tribute of the hundred maidens was abolished.

850. Ramiro died after a glorious reign, and was succeeded by his son, Ordonio the First, who inherited his father's warlike properties, and was conspicuous for animosity against the Moors.

866. Ordonio died this year of the gout. His son, Don Alonzo the Third, surnamed The *Great*, inherited the crown. The Spanish historians are prodigal in their praise of this king. He gained the battles of Orbigo, Pancorvo, &c.; repaired several towns, and founded many churches and monasteries. Don Alonzo the Great is the author of a chronicle of his predecessors.

910. Garcia the First succeeded to the throne, upon the death of his father Alonzo. His reign was very short, but

was profitably employed in adorning his kingdom by the erection of useful buildings.

To the beginning of this century are to be referred the adventures of Ferman Gonzalez, who was the first sovereign of Castile, under the modest title of Count. In process of time his little sovereignty became the most powerful and glorious of the various independent kingdoms, both Christian and Moorish, into which the Spanish peninsula was for a long time divided.

The Pass of Roncesvalles.

The day of Roncesvalles was a dismal day for you,
Ye men of France, for there the lance of King Charles was
 broke in two.
Ye well may curse that rueful field, for many a noble peer,
In fray or fight, the dust did bite, beneath Bernardo's spear.

The Pass of Roncesvalles.

IN the kingdom of Leon, the Christian knights were in a state of angry excitement, and their looks indicated that their hitherto concealed indignation would soon burst forth uncontrolled. Some paced the court of King Alonzo's palace, and some in disgust were hastening to their castles.

“By the rood,” fiercely muttered Favila, “let the King dispose of the Leonese empire at his good pleasure,—I, for one, will stoutly defend my castle, and shake off the allegiance I owed till this disgraceful moment. — What a degradation is this, my noble sirs! Is the kingdom of Leon, with all its warriors and nobles, to be given over to a foreign prince, as ye would transmit a flock of sheep? What right hath this Alonzo to the spoliation of our property?—should I not rather say of our liberty—the very best of our treasures!”

“Right!” cried another. “None, unless it be the right of necessity, since he hath no heirs to inherit the kingdom.”

“Ay certes!” quoth a third, with a sarcastic smile. “No fault that of ours. Confusion on

that virtue which hath given the King the surname of Chaste, if it is to deprive us of our independence.—A pleasant reason this, my nobles, and a most marvellous conclusion to boot, that because a king chooses to play the ascetic, we, who are not equally blessed with his virtue, should share the fine effects it is likely to produce.”

“Good knights and brave,” said Favila, “let us mount to the royal chamber and remonstrate with the King.”

“A bootless task, by my troth!” exclaimed another. “Charlemagne is already marching with all his knights and vassals, and will soon make his appearance in these territories, to accept the gracious boon of our generous sovereign.”

Whilst they were yet debating, a young knight, completely clad in armour, and grasping with fierce resolution a ponderous lance, approached them. The gallant bearing of this youthful warrior pleased the nobles, and they welcomed him with friendly greeting. He returned their courteousness in a hurried manner, for his mind was too deeply engaged at the time to pay much regard to ceremony.

“It is the young Bernardo, if my eyes deceive me not,” cried one.

“The same,” answered Bernardo. “A true knight and good Leonese, though now almost ashamed of the name.—By your looks, Sirs, I

can easily discover that you are fully acquainted with the disgrace which threatens us, if we provide not instantly against the evil. But your looks are also good security that you behold the King's intention with all the indignation it deserves. Why tarry you here then? Is it not time to act? Buckle on your armour, and let us march to meet Charlemagne and his proud peers. Let us show them that our soil is as favourable to the growth of chivalry as their own. I will to the King Alonzo, and speak with that sincerity which best befits a warrior."

He now hastily ascended to the palace. The knights were pleased at his department, though his boldness in running to remonstrate with the King was an implied rebuke of their own tardiness.

"He is a gallant boy," quoth Don Recaredo, "and the honour of knighthood sits easily and gracefully upon him. It is a pity that his origin is so obscure.—Hath any of you, Sirs, heard aught of his sire?"

"Not I for one," answered an old Leonese warrior, "though, for my long life and sojourn in this court, I may truly boast of knowing the genealogies of all our best knights. But to trace that of young Bernardo would call for the powers of witchcraft. Yet he is in much esteem at Court."

"Ay! Sirs," said Recaredo with a smile, "that esteem might form a clue to our surmises. The

King loves this Bernardo. What if the Chaste Alonzo should be a father, despite of all his virtue!"

"Hold, Sir Recaredo," quoth Favila. "The sin of hypocrisy was never our monarch's offence. His titles he well deserves. Let him still be Alonzo the Chaste. Would to Heaven! he were as jealous and mindful of his other surname—the Victorious, since he has now an opportunity of showing himself worthy of the appellation."

Bernardo had presented himself before the King, and, with a fearlessness of voice and manner which was peculiar to his dauntless character, remonstrated with him on the injustice and ignominy of his design.

"What, Sir King!" he cried with warmth, "if your virtue or scruples deprive you of a successor to these realms, can that justify the shameful act you hold in contemplation? Are there not men in Leon, who well deserve to wear your crown? Why then search for such an one in foreign lands? A courage equal to that of Charlemagne, great as he may be, beats high in a thousand hearts among your subjects, who blush and grieve to see their King less courageous than his people."

"Enough, rash boy!" quoth Alonzo in anger. "Thou seemest to forget the presence of thy King, and to rely too much upon the kindness he hath constantly bestowed upon thee."

“ I know full well that thou art my King,” said Bernardo with firmness, “ nor am I forgetful of your bounties. But neither the crown you possess, were it ten times more powerful, nor your bounties, had they been a hundredfold more plenteous, would deter Bernardo from speaking his thoughts, or induce him to lay down his independence. Look to it well, Sir King. You have given us over to Charlemagne ; but, before you ventured upon so generous a gift, our acquiescence was requisite. How you will fulfil your promise to the French ruler is now to be seen. That superb King and his renowned peers, and all the flower of his chivalry, of which Fame never tires in speaking, though we are full weary of hearing, instead of a golden crown, and a dutiful herd, ready to welcome them as masters, will find a host of mail-clad knights prepared to defend that independence of these territories, which King Alonzo, forgetful of his duty, has so shamefully compromised.”

As he delivered these words in an emphatic tone and daring manner, he turned abruptly, and left the presence of the sovereign. But Alonzo, though offended at the arrogant way in which the young knight had delivered his sentiments, was yet obliged to grant their justice. He now began to feel a sensation of shame for his inconsiderate proceeding ; and as he was a man of true valour and spirit, he was not displeased to see that his

knights would find a remedy for the mischief which he himself had caused. In appointing Charlemagne as his successor to the throne, Alonzo had certainly not been guided by mercenary views, or by treasonable designs. A misdirected zeal had influenced his determination. As he had no heir to the crown, he thought he might prevent the mischief and confusion likely to ensue upon his death, by choosing a successor, during his life. Charlemagne was a Christian King, and the most renowned warrior of the age. Where could a better ruler be found to lead the warlike Leonese to victory? Besides, Alonzo, in his invincible hatred to the Moorish name, had solicited the assistance of the French King to carry on his wars with prosperous issue against the infidels. But, alas! Don Alonzo was not politician enough to foresee the great danger and disastrous effects of calling foreign aid to settle intestine commotions.

Bernardo, on leaving the palace, was joined by a great number of knights, all burning with the same patriotic spirit which had actuated him when rebuking his monarch. They ranged about the town, filling the air with cries of independence, and summoning their countrymen to join them in their glorious undertaking. The effect produced by the Leonese warriors was as instantaneous as it was honourable and gratifying. The name of Bernardo ran from mouth to mouth, and his behaviour

to the King was extolled even by those who held their sovereign in the greatest dread and veneration. The patriotic flame operated like an electric spark. The whole city was in commotion, and the spirit of enthusiasm spread as rapidly through the country. On every side were heard shouts of liberty and independence, and Bernardo's heart beat high with hope, when he witnessed the ardour of his companions.

“Free we were born,” ’tis thus they cry, “though to our
King we owe
The homage and the fealty behind his crest to go ;
By God's behest our aid he shares, but God did ne'er
command,
That we should leave our children heirs of an enslaved
land.”

On the following morning, Bernardo sallied from the city, accompanied by three thousand warriors, all animated with the same resolution. Their shining helmets gleamed in the sun, and the brazen trumpet sent forth a spirit-stirring blast that would excite the most timid to arms. The peasant quitted his team, and grasped a spear. The shepherd and the pacific monk hastily assumed such weapons as they could most easily find, and hastened to increase the gallant army of Bernardo. The glorious banner waved in the wind, bearing a rampant lion, in a field of blood, and offering a just emblem of the spirit most befitting a warlike people. King Alonzo, ashamed of exhibiting less

patriotism than his subjects, mounted a powerful steed, and wielding his trusty sword, rode through the city, vowing by his honour to show himself worthy of the crown he wore.

He was immediately joined by those who, from a want of resolution, had hitherto loitered behind; and with this accession, as well as his courtly train, he left the city, and speedily followed Bernardo and his brave companions. He was not long in overtaking them.

“I see a troop of knights galloping in this direction,” quoth Don Recaredo. “Now, to guess, brave Sirs, be they friends or foes?”

“Foes, Sir Knight!” answered Bernardo with a smile of scorn. “Methinks you are but a sorry diviner, if you can suppose that yonder handful of men would dare to provoke our courage.”

“The King!—the King!” now reiterated several voices.

“In truth, it is Alonzo!” exclaimed Bernardo, well pleased. “Yes, I know him by his radiant armour and his fiery steed. It is the King. Heaven bless the King! He sees his error, and is willing to repair it.”

Don Alonzo was greeted with an universal shout; and if the spirit of the army was great before his arrival, its enthusiasm scarcely knew any bounds now that the King had espoused the glorious cause of independence. Alonzo embraced Bernardo in

token of reconciliation and oblivion, and then assumed his post among the group of knights, where the banner of Leon waved its majestic folds. The army with the greatest order directed its march towards the Pyrenean mountains,—those natural barriers of Spain, which the children of the soil ought for ever to preserve unprofaned by the foot of an invader.

Charlemagne, at the first news of the march of Bernardo and his companions, treated the matter lightly, relying upon the good fortune which had hitherto so invariably accompanied his arms, and on the unrivalled bravery and renown of his knights. But his sanguine hopes gradually died away, as every fresh messenger brought alarming accounts of the strength and gallant bearing of the approaching army. The Emperor of the Franks cursed the King of Leon for his changing mood, and quickly disposed himself to advance and meet the foe. Around him was assembled a mighty concourse of knights, than whom the annals of chivalry present none braver, none more justly celebrated. With Charlemagne to the conquest of Spain, came the inflexible Admiral Guarinos, the ferocious Ferragul, the good Sir Oliver, the handsome Gayferos, and the redoubtable Roland, and a host of gallant knights, each bearing a reputation in arms scarcely inferior to the warriors we have named.

The high mountain of Pyrene rang with the din of martial sounds, that filled the echoes of the place, and burthened the air with the strains of chivalry. Trumpets and clarions poured forth their animating blasts; and the voices of the warriors and the joyous laugh came swelling in the stilly midnight breeze, till they died away in the distance.

When the two armies came in sight of each other on the following morning, they presented a most gorgeous sight. For a vast space around, a forest of spears seemed to shoot from a plain of burnished gold and silver,—such was the effect produced by the glittering helmets as they appeared from afar, bathed in the radiance of the morning sun. The two mighty adversaries advanced to the charge, and met in the renowned Pass of Roncevalles. Never did a single field enclose such a host of gallant warriors; never were so many warlike deeds performed. The air at first became darkened by a cloud of arrows and javelins: but soon that shadow disappeared, and the combatants closing their ranks, mingled in fearful contest. There was a terrible but picturesque confusion of quivering lances and flying penons, falling men, and prancing steeds, the blasts of the trumpets, the cries of the wounded, the cheering voice of command; all tended to present a scene of striking sublimity!

For a long time the warriors fought with equal

animation. But the mighty knights of France assembling in one strong body, resolved to break the line where the King of Leon commanded. Their attack was, in its effects, like the fall of a tremendous avalanche. The Spaniards were cut down like so many ears of corn. The doughty Sir Roland cheering his men, advanced boldly in search of Alonzo. At length, having found him—

“False King!” he proudly cried, “now commend thy soul to heaven, for thy hour is come. Death shall reward thy perfidy.”

Saying this, he closed in combat with Alonzo, and would certainly have laid him low, had not one of his good knights suddenly advanced to his aid. This warrior was no other than Bernardo.

“Avaunt, Sir Frenchman!” cried he in wrath. “Leave the King, and turn thy fury upon me. I am Bernardo.”

Having said this, he furiously attacked Sir Roland. Each sustained the shock immoveable on his powerful charger. They repeated their thrusts, the steeds tottered and fell. Sir Roland and Bernardo then took their swords, which were soon shivered by their repeated strokes. It was then that Bernardo, suddenly seizing a battle-axe which belonged to a warrior that lay lifeless at his feet, with one tremendous blow drove the terrible weapon, through helmet and skull, down to the neck of the renowned French knight. After this

feat, Bernardo went on performing prodigies of valour, and being well seconded by the other warriors of Leon, a splendid victory was obtained; and the Emperor Charlemagne, with the remains of his shattered chivalry, returned to his country, never to forget the fatal and memorable Pass of Roncesvalles.

From this moment the name of Bernardo became glorious in Spain; and his great achievements at Roncesvalles were loudly and lastingly proclaimed. Yet in the enjoyment of so much glory the hero did not appear happy, a gloomy frown instantly usurping the place of his former frankness and manly serenity. Wandering in this dark humour along the garden of the palace, he thus gave vent to his feelings.

“What avails the splendour of my deeds,” he said, “when I am continually haunted by the obscurity of my origin? Why comes not my father to own a son whose achievements are celebrated by all? Can he be so dead to all the sentiments of nature as to remain unmoved by the glory which I could confer on his name, were I so blessed as to possess it!—Cruel father!—No, perchance I wrong you. Perchance the ignominy of your own birth makes you shrink from a painful disclosure, which may throw a shadow over the brilliancy of my deeds.”

“Oh, Bernardo! wrong not thy father,” cried a

voice. "Alas! it is not his fault that thy birth has so long been kept secret."

Bernardo turned in surprise, and beheld Dona Arboyna, an old gentlewoman of the palace, standing close beside him.

"Heaven bless thee, Lady!" said Bernardo, "thrice welcome, if thou canst tell me aught on a subject that disturbs all my thoughts."

"I can unravel the whole mystery;—but," she added, looking round in alarm, "are we safe from intrusion? Alack! should I be suspected of having told this secret to Bernardo, misfortune, punishment, perhaps death, would be the consequence of my compliance. Let us withdraw to a more retired spot."

Bernardo obeyed in a thrill of expectation. The duena, in a more steady tone of voice, continued:

"Yes, Bernardo, a great mystery is attached to thy birth; thou dost not indeed spring from base blood, as in thine indignation thou hast been led to suppose. No knight in Castile can boast of a nobler descent, be he the proudest of them all."

"Proceed, gentle lady; my impatience can scarcely brook thy temperance of tongue."

"Be calm, Bernardo, and thou shalt hear that which will amaze thee," continued the Lady Arboyna. "I said that the blood in thy veins was as good as that of the best of Castile's knights,—I should rather, perhaps, have said better."

“ Better ! lady, how is that possible ? ”

“ Bernardo,” said Arboyna in a low but congratulatory tone, “ what if those veins were nourished by the blood of kings ! ”

“ Merciful Heavens ! ” cried Bernardo in amazement. “ Should my ambitious surmises prove just—yes, it must be—the especial regard with which the King looks upon me—the deference of his most favourite courtiers, and many other tokens, justify the presumption of my hopes.—Is then the King Alonzo—” Here he hesitated ; but Dona Arboyna had guessed his thoughts, and resumed—

“ No, the King is not your father, and yet his blood runs in your noble veins. Listen, Bernardo, to the story of your birth—it is, alas ! a story full of woe and horror. Fear has obliged me, until this moment, to keep the secret undivulged ; but I would neither be unjust to you, nor ungrateful for the bounties of your mother.”

“ My mother ! who is she ?—where is she ? ”

“ Alas ! ” quoth the duena, shaking her head despondingly, “ she died a few months since : poor lady, her sorrows were long and deep : but now she is in heaven, and enjoys the reward due to her virtue and her sufferings.”

Here tears for a few moments impeded the faithful creature's utterance, after which she proceeded :—

“ Dona Ximena, thy mother, was the only sister

of King Alonzo, and cherished by him with all a brother's fondness, until the fatal moment when she rendered herself hateful in his sight, by entertaining a passion of which he highly disapproved. Amongst the gallant knights in the court of this cruel king, there was one more gallant than them all,—the first in prowess and in feats of arms—the first also for his courtesy and graceful carriage. In sooth, so perfect a cavalier might well awaken the love even of an infanta. And so it happened. Dona Ximena soon conceived a strong affection for the Count de Saldana,—such was the name of the knight. Nor was he on his side less captivated with the great beauty of the Princess. The King, however, who is most pure in all his thoughts, and greatly averse to love, had determined to endow a nunnery, over which his intention was that Dona Ximena should preside as Lady Abbess. These speculations, as you may suppose, were in ill accordance with the lady's taste and inclination, attached as she was to the gallant Count de Saldana. And here the great mischief commenced: the Infanta, knowing full well that the King her brother would no more consent to an union between her and the Count, than he would to an alliance between himself and the evil one, resolved to keep the secret of her love most inviolable—she married the knight clandestinely, and then those results took place which are generally prejudicial

to such female secrets. You were born, and concealment was no longer possible. The King was mightily wroth, and then threatened to kill the Infanta and her husband, and their innocent son and me also, though I was as innocent as the child, save and except that I was confidential to their amours, marriage, and perplexity. Bless my kind soul! I had no easy part to bear in the whole business."

"Well, well," impatiently interrupted Bernardo; "but did the merciless King put his threat in execution?"

"Not quite; for, as you see, *I* am not dead, nor are *you*, nor was your mother in sooth, until she died a few months hence; and as for the Count, your noble sire, he is still alive, though, alas! a lamentable life does he lead, for the King was not over-lenient in his vengeance."

"What course did he adopt?"

"Not a kind one, certainly;—but what else could we expect? indeed, when I found that I had escaped whole, I forthwith said my prayers to the Holy Virgin. But you must not suppose that we were all equally fortunate; for no sooner were you born than you were taken from your unfortunate parents. This was Alonzo's first act; and the second, you may be sure, was quite as cruel. He immediately confined the Count to the castle of Luna, where he has lingered ever since. And

what think ye, was the lot of your sweet mother? none the better, I trow. But that did not surprise me. The King, who had so great a desire that his sister should be a nun before she was married, had that desire ten times increased as soon as he found that she had bestowed herself on the Count without asking his consent. But why did she not ask it? Poor lady, not because she was deficient in respect for her royal brother, but because she well knew that the consent would never be granted. And so Dona Ximena was shut up in a nunnery, and there, alack! she lived, sorrowful enough, I suppose, and there she died."

Bernardo was so amazed at the recital of Dona Arboyna, that for some time he remained undecided as to what plan he should adopt. Meantime, the selfish and timorous duena was uttering all sorts of ejaculations, and beseeching the knight not to compromise her by any rash act. Bernardo, wholly absorbed in the important discovery which he had made, paid no attention to the matron, but in a paroxysm of sorrow and indignation, he resolved to present himself before the King, and upbraid him with the cruelty of his conduct towards the Count and Dona Ximena.

With the fearless impetuosity which was congenial to his nature, he rushed into the presence of Alonzo, without any announcement or ceremony. Alonzo started upon his feet, highly displeased

at the intrusion and haughty carriage of the knight.

“What now, Sir Bernardo, have thy triumphs at Roncesvalles inflamed thy pride so much, that they make thee forgetful of thy respect to the King of these realms?”

“My respect for the King of Leon,” replied Bernardo with indignant scorn, “cannot be justly demanded, when the baseness of his conduct has once come to my knowledge. Where is my injured sire? Doth his offence—if offence it were—deserve so unrelenting a punishment? Remember the Pass of Roncesvalles—there, my services were as great to you as they were undeserved. You promised a boon when I saved your life from the grasp of Roland. Now is the hour to keep your royal word, if indeed the word of that King is not valueless, who can be so unmerciful to his kindred and so unjust to all.”

The King was in a furious agitation at the demeanour of Bernardo.

“A curse upon the traitor!” he cried. “What arrogance is this! But what could I expect from the offspring of a traitor?”

“My father was no traitor. Blighted be the slanderous tongue that has uttered the calumny! Let any other, save the King, speak the word, and, by Heaven, he shall join the number of those who felt the strength of my arm at Roncesvalles.

And now, Sir King, ere the day expires, I demand the fulfilment of the promised boon. Liberate my noble sire from the castle of Luna, where he has been so cruelly and unjustly confined. This is my request. Grant this, and Bernardo's wrath will cease; for he would sooner love than hate. Give me my father, and my arm—my life's blood—shall again be thine."

"The proffer so arrogantly made, I scorn," cried the King. "It would be prudent in Bernardo not to provoke the anger, or tempt too far the forbearance of King Alonzo."

"Thy forbearance and thy hate I equally despise," fiercely interrupted the knight. "You, false King, shall soon rue your injustice and cruelty. I depart now; but woe to the day when Bernardo returns to the court of Leon."

"Seize—seize him!" loud the King doth scream.

"There are a thousand here.

Let his foul blood this instant stream.

What! caitiffs, do ye fear?

Seize—seize the traitor."—But no one

To move a finger dareth.

Bernardo standeth by the throne,

And calm his sword he bareth.

The admiration and respect in which Bernardo was held by the knights and people of Leon, were such, that, despite of the King's commands, no one attempted to arrest his course. Without opposi-

tion, therefore, he quitted the town, and retired to his castle of Carpio. There he summoned all his vassals and retainers to appear in arms, and invited his brother knights to espouse his quarrel against the cruel King. His orders were obeyed, his invitations answered, his vassals flocked to his standard ; and gallant knights, attended by their squires and yeomen, were daily seen riding towards the castle of Carpio.

Bernardo being thus enabled to contend against the King, commenced hostilities with the most disastrous results to the Leonese. He plundered the villages of Alonzo, and seemed indefatigable in his pursuit of vengeance. The King sent a body of cavaliers against the rebellious knight, but this troop was ignominiously driven back into Leon. Bernardo, thus, for a long time carried on a most vexatious war against his sovereign, who resolved at last to besiege the castle of Carpio, and for this purpose commenced the most active preparations. He swore that he would not return to Leon without levelling the castle with the ground, and humbling its proud lord. Bernardo, from the high battlements of his castle, surveyed his infuriated enemy, but defied his power.

The siege was prolonged for some time, but without the least prospect of success to the besiegers. At last, the King proposed to negotiate,

to which Bernardo readily consented. It was stipulated that Alonzo should deliver the Count de Saldana to his son, upon which the castle of Carpio would surrender, and become the property of the King. This treaty being made, the royal uncle and his dauntless nephew had a meeting, and embraced each other in token of reconciliation. Meantime messengers were sent to Leon with instructions from the King, relating to the conveyance of the Count de Saldana to the camp ; after which the besiegers and the besieged resumed their hostile attitude until the subject of contention should appear, and the fulfilment of the treaty take place.

In the anxiety of a generous heart, yearning to indulge in filial feelings hitherto ungratified, the brave Bernardo waited the arrival of his parent. Day after day, and hour after hour, he paced the battlements of his castle, that he might descry from afar the approach of the cavalcade. It at length came in view, and the heart of Bernardo felt a throbbing emotion hitherto unknown to him. All the knights in the castle hastened to the battlements. " He comes ! He comes ! my noble sire comes !" joyously exclaimed the heroic son.

And forthwith a glorious blast of trumpets announced the fortunate event, and the castle was covered with the flags and pennons of the

various knights who had engaged in its defence. In the camp of the besiegers an equal veneration was observable. The whole army prepared to receive the long-imprisoned Count de Saldana with becoming honours. The King sent a splendid train to invite Bernardo and his knights to advance and meet his father. Bernardo del Carpio, glittering in polished mail, and attended by the martial array of burnished helmets, gay pennons, and sounding armour, sallied from his castle. They approached the King, and mutual vows of amity were renewed. Bernardo, in respectful gratitude, kissed Alonzo's hand. "This is a joyous day, my good Bernardo," quoth the King; "our disputes, so hurtful to Leon, are now brought to a prosperous issue. Eternal Providence be three times blessed!"

"The castle of Carpio, which my prowess in the field won for me," said Bernardo, "most willingly and joyously I bestow upon you, Don Alonzo. Let your knights and yeomen forthwith take possession of a fortress, which perchance experience hath told you ought to be considered as no slight boon."

"Coming from thee, sweet nephew," answered the King with a placid smile, "it is most welcome. Go thou, Sir Garci-Nunez, with thy men, and occupy the castle in my name."

The delivery of the castle was then effected,

and Bernardo, with his glorious train, rode in advance to meet his long-expected parent. As the parties approached each other, the brave knight observed that the Count sat very uneasily on his horse, apparently through feebleness. "Alas! most noble Sirs," exclaimed Bernardo, affected almost to tears, "see to what a pitiable state the cruelties of the King of Leon have reduced a stout and valiant knight."

He now quickened his pace, and his heart beat rapidly as he came closer to the object of his tenderest cares. He bounded briskly from his charger, and rushed to kiss his father's hand. To his surprise, he found that the Count, despite of all those tokens, did not seem to recognise his son. But the astonishment and horror of young Bernardo exceeded all bounds, when upon seizing the yielding hand of his sire, he found it hang heavily and coldly upon his own. He looked affectionately towards a countenance upon which he expected to see the smile of parental fondness; but in its stead death had fixed his impress. There was the livid face, too deeply to be mistaken; the livid lips, the sunken eyes, and hollow cheek, sadly told the agonized Bernardo a tale from which his manhood shrank.

"He is dead!" he cried in bitterness of grief, "and the false King adds this disgusting and frightful mockery to all his dastard cruelties."

Then, addressing the mortal remains of the Count, he proceeded in a tender and awful voice :

“ Ah ! Don Sandiaz, in evil hour was I born ; my very anxiety to help you has shortened the term of your wretched existence. My misery is indeed complete ; I cannot ever revenge this foul deed. Thou art basely murdered, I have surrendered my castle, and all is now for ever lost.”

His companions were struck with surprise and indignation at the King's duplicity, and were loud in pressing him to return and fall instantly upon Don Alonzo and his army. But the stronghold of Bernardo was lost, and his last filial duty now occupied his sorrowing heart. He determined to perform with becoming pomp the obsequies of that father, whom, despite of all his endeavours, he had not been able to protect when alive.

“ My brave and true companions,” he cried, “ the day will come for vengeance ; and here I swear on the cold remains of my butchered sire, that the retribution shall be as ample as the offence is dark. So help me Heaven, as I keep this vow !”

The Count de Saldana was consigned to the earth with funeral rites suitable to his rank and the glories of his son. This mournful ceremony excited the most lively sensations among the brother-knights and liegemen of Bernardo del Carpio, on whose countenance the expression of sorrow

was ever and anon superseded by a flush of wrath. He then left the church, and in the company of a few of his most staunch and resolute adherents, bent his course to the palace, where the King was then holding his court in state. Bernardo burst through the crowd, and advanced to the very foot of the throne.

“Art thou, in sooth, a man?” he indignantly cried, “or hath nature put a mockery upon us in presenting a foul demon in the image of a King? False Christian and recreant Knight! the taunts and rebukes of Bernardo thou must patiently hear, unless, indeed, there stands a man amongst this mighty crowd willing to take this quarrel on his hands.”

Bernardo contemptuously threw his gauntlet on the ground, but no knight offered to take up the hostile pledge. With a smile of contempt, Bernardo continued:—

“Look, Sir King! amidst thine own sworn liegemen there lives not one willing to do combat for thee! By a false and vile stratagem thou hadst my castle of Carpio; but learn, Alonzo, that whilst Bernardo wields his weapon, he needs no castle to make his name a sound of terror to dastards and cravens such as the King of Leon. I come to renounce all allegiance, all amity to thee henceforward: not the infidel Moor shall be a more bitter and terrible enemy to thy king-

dom than Bernardo. Farewell, and never more attempt to meet me except with helmet and spear. Come, my brave liegemen, and let us quit a court where the dark fiend himself hath given lessons of rankest deception."

Upon this he suddenly withdrew, leaving the spectators of the scene astonished at his boldness.

"What!" cried the King in indignant vexation, "is there no knight to espouse the quarrel of Alonzo?"

But the assembled nobles preserved a profound silence.

Bernardo and his friends never again appeared at the court of Leon, during Alonzo's life. He spent his time in achieving those deeds of arms, which have made his name so famous in history and romance. An account of the manner of his death has never descended to our times.

The life of Bernardo del Carpio is so full of romantic, and, in some respects, incredible adventure, that it has caused some historians to treat his whole story as fabulous. In this, however, they are not justified, as there is no sufficient reason to doubt either his real existence or the occurrence of many of his extraordinary adventures.

The Maiden Tribute.

“ The blessed Saint Jago,
They called upon his name ;
That day began our freedom,
And wiped away our shame.”

SPANISH BALLAD.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE MAIDEN TRIBUTE.

The Maiden Tribute.

KING RAMIRO was sitting in state, when a deafening clamour rang through the air. Mournful lamentations, mingled with deep curses, the tolling of bells, and the sounds of martial music, shook with jarring discord the large hall of the palace. The King turned to the Prince his son, to inquire the reason of so extraordinary a confusion.

“Ordonio, what means this noise? Is my kingdom to be continually alarmed and disturbed by factious churls and unruly subjects? It is but two years since I succeeded to the royal crown of Oviedo, yet in that short period I have known as much discontent and turbulence as would satisfy the entire lives of twenty ambitious princes, who eagerly thirsted for the enjoyment of regal power.”

Ordonio spake not, neither did he by the smallest sign give indication that he had understood the sarcasm levelled by his father. Conscious of his innocence, he considered that silence was his best defence, and that any attempt at vindication would but injure his cause. Ramiro cast a withering look around him. The courtiers received that

herald of royal indignation with those tokens of humility, which so well become sycophants on similar occasions. The King could thus enjoy the pleasure of frowning, without any bold interruption from the objects of his indignation. The respectful silence of the Prince, and the servility evinced in the demeanour of the rest of the assembly, might soon have conciliated the good graces, or at least obtained the pardon of the wrathful sovereign ; but, fortunately, amidst the slaves who contributed to swell Ramiro's court, there were a few composed of materials not quite so pliant. As the King ventured upon a second and still more bitter inculcation, one man, by the majestic boldness stamped on his brow, and the unquivering fire of his eye, seemed to be endowed with courage enough to stand the brunt of royal displeasure. Ramiro observed the obnoxious individual. His fretful uneasiness increased, and a bitter smile curled his lip. Yet he appeared unwilling to thunder out the storm of his indignation against him who could thus stand collected and unappalled at the sight of his offended sovereign. The King turned in his royal seat, and, in his tumultuous passion, muttered a deep curse, which redoubled the anxiety of the throng of courtiers around.

“ Hold, Don Ramiro, hold !” loudly and boldly cried the person mentioned above. “ Do not ex-

cite the wrath of Heaven by thy profane language; do not tax our merciful God and the holy saints with those unhappy disturbances which are occasioned by thine own indifference and inconsiderate conduct. The cries of desolation that now filled the air, and which, in lieu of revengeful sentiments, ought to awaken feelings of grief and shame in the heart of a virtuous King; the sounds of despair, the dreadful maledictions poured from the burning breasts of thy suffering and indignant subjects, are the abhorred signals of the Moslems' insulting triumph, and our degradation and dishonour. Hear the piercing cries, Ramiro! Hark to the tolling of the bells, which now summon the Christian, not to the devout occupations of religion, but to witness an act of infamy; and let those sounds rouse thy dormant soul, and nerve thy arm to deeds of honour, such as become a good King and a Christian Knight."

The man who uttered this bold rebuke against his sovereign, was not a mailed warrior, mighty in the consciousness of his own strength; but an aged man, clothed in coarse attire, and apparently the most insignificant of those who surrounded the throne. He was a poor monk, whom his acknowledged virtues and supposed sanctity had elevated to the dignity of Confessor to the King. Yet in the midst of the court, he had rigidly

preserved the humility of his former state, and was conspicuous only for manly severity and acts of self-denial, which contrasted strangely with the blustering insolence of the warriors, and the debaucheries of the profligate courtiers. Don Ramiro seemed to bow in reverential awe before his ghostly father; and the glittering train of attendants contemplated, with a mixture of anxiety and surprise, the churchman's boldness, and the forbearance of the King.

The heart of the holy man was waxing warmer with animated zeal, and in a more impassioned tone he continued:—

“ Yes, Don Ramiro, it well behoveth me, in this hour of disgrace, to raise my voice, when I see thy councillors and grandees deaf to the cries of shame. It well beseemeth a poor and humble minister of the Lord, to stir up thy heart to those sentiments which ought to be excited by the defenders of thy crown, if, indeed, they be true and valiant knights. But, alas! the truly valiant, the good Christians, are absent from the city on a day set apart for foul dishonour. They will not witness our disgrace—they leave the enjoyment of so vile and degrading a sight to their indolent King, and the shameless herd of his pernicious councillors.”

As these rash words were pronounced, a murmur of astonishment, mingled with rage, ran

through the assembly. The King appeared powerfully affected; he started fiercely from his seat; his eyes flashed with passion; and in a throbbing tone, he cried:—

“Enough, Veremundo! thy bold speech savours too much of sedition and disrespect. Confiding in the sacredness of thy character, tempt not my forbearance too far. My regard even for thee may be exhausted, when I perceive that an arrogant zeal prompts thee to utter the factious language of a traitor, instead of the good advice of a ghostly monitor.”

Veremundo preserved his lofty composure, and in a subsided but unfaltering voice, resumed:—

“There is no treason in the language of truth, however galling it may be to the sensitiveness of human pride. Thou art my king and liege lord, Don Ramiro; fealty and obedience I owe thee; nor would I attempt to divest myself of the respect and duties incumbent on a good subject;—but far more sacred are the duties which I have to fulfil towards the great Lord of the world, as one of his humble ministers; His high behests I will utter frankly and fearlessly, and with undaunted heart will expose myself to the mighty effects of thy wrath,—happy, thrice happy, if, even at the expense of my life, I succeed in awakening a Christian King from the baneful lethargy into which he has fallen. Don Ramiro,

I call upon thee in the name of God, from this moment, to burst the ignominious bondage of Moorish power, and boldly refuse to pay the Maiden Tribute. That shameful tax, awarded by Mauregat, the bastard offspring of a Moorish woman—himself a Moor in heart—ought such a tax, so revolting, so contumelious, to be tolerated by Don Ramiro, who has already given such ample proof of his prowess in arms? Remember, Senor, the glorious Pass of Roncesvalles, where you fought by the side of the great Bernardo, almost his equal, inferior to no other knight: shall it then be said that Ramiro, who beheld unappalled the formidable host of Charlemagne, with all the most renowned paladins of France, crouched to the wrath and indignation of the Caliph of Cordova? Oh! let this never be said of a King who lives under the especial protection of the apostle Santiago. From this day, let the demand of the hundred maidens be answered by the indignant voice of as many thousand valiant Christians, ready and willing to repel the aggression of the infidels, should they venture to come and exact the odious tribute by force of arms."

The noble warmth and zeal which burnt in the heart of this holy man had conveyed a generous glow to his expressive countenance; and in proportion as he proceeded in his speech,

the fire of his eye flashed more intensely, and his whole manner acquired redoubled animation. His words seemed to have produced a powerful effect upon the King. The still increasing clamour from without contributed also to heighten the sentiments awakened by his unanswerable appeal; and Don Ramiro, as if actuated by a sudden impulse, exclaimed with a burst of enthusiasm:—

“By the blessed Virgin! you speak most justly, father; and bitter as are the words in which you have conveyed your admonition, yet do I cordially pardon them in favour of your candour and piety. Caballeros, speed ye to exchange your courtly garments for the mail and helmet of the warrior, and stand you ready for the first summons;—but we must proceed with prudence as well as resolution. A great number of our best knights are absent from Court, for a life of sloth agrees not with their ardent dispositions. Before we defy Abdulrahman, and provoke hostilities, we will invite him to recall the odious grievance. Should he refuse our just demand, your lances and swords must establish our right.”

Whilst this affair was debating in the palace of Don Ramiro, the passions of his subjects were strongly excited by the insolent deportment of the Moorish officers intrusted with the commission of the Maiden Tribute. But their arrogance

did not perhaps tend to exasperate the people so much as the apathetic indifference and want of proper feeling displayed by those Christians, upon whom devolved the charge of collecting the obnoxious tax. Every town was obliged to supply a number of maidens in proportion to its population. The victims, however, generally belonged to the peasantry and the plebeian classes. Every head of a family was summoned to bring forward his daughters or sisters on the day appointed for the general muster, when their fate was decided by ballot.

Early in the morning the bells announced the hour for the ceremony; and at the sound of drums and clarions, the Moorish tax-gatherers proceeded to a large open space near the town, where they were to receive the tribute. A vast concourse of people had followed these officers on the present occasion; many stimulated by idle curiosity, but the greater number actuated by far different feelings. Here, the fond parent, with agony of heart, embraced his unhappy child for the last time. Here too, the favoured lover beheld the blasting of all his glittering hopes, and turned from the scene in bitterest despair. But besides the many who were personally interested in the approaching transaction, there were others who, though not wounded in the tender feelings of father or lover,

yet evinced a deep sorrow upon beholding a ceremony which cast so foul a reflection upon their country.

The procession had arrived at the spot appointed for the balloting, and until now the lamentations of the sufferers were uttered in gentle murmurs, as their fate was still undecided; but at the sight of the wooden stage, upon which the directors of the scene were seated, and where the delivery of the maidens was to be effected, a shout of indignation burst from the surrounding throng. The officers proceeded to the discharge of their functions, unmindful of the vituperative cries uttered against them. A party of about twenty Moorish warriors surrounded the stage, and twice as many Spaniards occupied the same station, to preserve order among the people. Presently, the weeping maids were led to the place, and snatched from the embraces of their disconsolate friends. The charms of the fair mourners gleaming through their tears, and acquiring a more soft and touching beauty from sorrow, instead of awaking sentiments of pity in the hearts of the Moors, tended only to inflame their desires, and kindle their eyes with an unholy fire. A variety of feelings were portrayed in the anxious and expectant countenances of the degraded Christians who stood around. Pity

and sorrow gleamed in the tender glances of some; strong grief was impressed on the agonized looks of others. Many a brow was darkened with a gloom of despair — many a breast throbbed with the heaving of indignation. The whole mass presented an animated picture of human misery, in its various shades and expressions.

But amidst the crowd of spectators whom the occasion had assembled, there was a man, in the bloom of life, whose countenance evinced deeper emotion than the rest. It was neither grief nor pity, despair nor indignation, that filled his soul, and imparted such strong expression to his features; but an overwhelming sensation, produced by the combination of them all. His dark and brilliant eyes were riveted in eager gaze on one of the maidens who were about to cast lots for a life of slavery and dishonour. He seemed to follow her every motion, and watch with fond and mournful enthusiasm her every turn and look; nay, it might appear that he caught the breath of her sighs, and that her warm tears had a magnetic influence in producing his own. At length the moment arrived when the fate of his beloved was to be decided. The trembling maid advanced, supported by an aged woman, who vainly endeavoured to administer words of consolation to one who appeared unconscious of passing objects, and whose

whole soul was absorbed in the contemplation of her present calamity. The roses of her cheek had faded, and a sad paleness had usurped the soft and lovely spot where they had bloomed. The fire of her eyes was quenched, save that which sparkled from the tears that hung on her long silken lashes. Excess of terror and disgust seemed to have paralyzed her exertions, and deprived her of the powers of volition. Motionless, like a beautiful statue, she stood till she was led, or rather dragged, to receive from the fatal urn the sentence of her future irremediable misery.

The feelings of her afflicted lover at this terrible crisis were wrought to a pitch of delirium. His frame shook convulsively. The flush of indignation gave place in his countenance to the paleness of fearful suspense. All his thoughts and feelings were closely concentrated in one object. His soul seemed to hang upon a thread—every feature and limb partook of the painful character of that deep absorption of agony. He earnestly watched his destined bride—she tremblingly drew the decree of her wretchedness, and uttered a piercing and agonized shriek. The nerves of her unfortunate lover relaxed from their unnatural tension, and he appeared suddenly to gain composure and tranquillity. That shriek rang the death-knell of all his happiness. He had nothing now to fear; whatever else might happen would

be an immeasurably smaller evil than this ; and secure in the recklessness of despair, he experienced that sort of gloomy joy and ferocious satisfaction which are sometimes the attendants of supreme misery.

He now approached nearer to the stage, with a degree of calmness that astonished those who were acquainted with the secret of his love. The lot of most of the maids had by this time been fixed. Wailings and lamentations incumbered the air. The curses of despairing fathers were united to the tokens of distress uttered by their children. The murmur of indignation was ripening into confusion—symptoms of opposition and revolt were discernible in the assembled crowd. It was a mine which only needed a spark to cause its explosion. The functionaries concerned in the disgraceful business of the day began to look around them with fear and anxiety, and the troop of Moors appeared to be preparing for approaching danger. The moment of awful suspense between the gathering and bursting of a popular storm is dreadful, and not easily described. The Christians gazed on each other ; and their expressive glances betokened a consciousness of uniformity, feeling, and resolve ; but yet they were motionless, for the want of one to give an impulse to the bursting of their fury.

The Moorish leader began rudely essaying to

separate the victims from their friends who clung round for a parting embrace.—“Where art thou? oh! Ansuress—where art thou in this moment of terror?” frantically exclaimed one of the devoted fair ones.—“Oh! free me—free me from these ruffians.” Her impassioned appeal was heard; but what help could the unfortunate lover afford?

“I am here, my love,” exclaimed young Ansuress, who was now close to the spot. “Yes, I am here, my own Orelia, to die in attempting to rescue thee from these barbarians; for death is the only satisfaction and comfort I can now expect.”

With this he drew his weapon, which till that moment had been concealed, and furiously attacked the Moor, who was struggling to separate Orelia from her relatives. The Moor reeled and fell. This was the signal for the rising of the crowd. A tumultuous shout rent the air, and the motley throng, the greatest portion of them unarmed, rushed impetuously to effect the rescue of the maidens, so gallantly begun by young Ansuress. He was already surrounded and closely pressed by his enemies, who aimed many a blow to level him with the ground. But the prize for which the young Christian fought was too great, not to stimulate him to almost supernatural exertions. His friends meantime came to his aid, and a skirmish commenced, in which the Christian combatants, though far superior in number, seemed scarcely a

match for their adversaries, who were on horseback and completely armed, while they, on the contrary, were on foot, subject to no discipline, and but indifferently equipped for battle. The conflict, however, was continued with equal vigour and hatred on both sides. The Christian functionaries, and the men under their orders, refused to interfere in a quarrel which had not the sanction of the King, and seemed only solicitous to retire unhurt from the field of strife, on which two or three Moors, and twice as many Christians were already weltering in their blood.

By this time Ansures had extricated himself from his foes; but in the confusion, his sword was lost. This accident, however, served neither to damp his courage nor check his impetuosity. One of the Moors, who saw him unarmed, rushed against him, willing to remove by any means, the first cause of the disturbance; but Ansures, who possessed an agility inferior only to the strength of his arm and the resolution of his heart, ran swiftly to a fig-tree that grew near the place, and, with a vigorous exertion, wrenching one of the boughs from the parent stock, prepared to renew the combat.

The din and uproar had meantime continued unabated. The number of combatants increased every moment. In the confusion, many of the maidens effected their escape. Amongst the first

of these was Orelia, who, filled with alarm and affright, ran swiftly towards the palace of the King, as the fittest place for shelter. When out of the place of strife, she was pursued by some unworthy Christians, who considered her the cause of a revolt, which they imagined would be severely punished by Don Ramiro.

The King, who was still sitting in council, after he had resolved to refuse the Maiden Tribute, was surprised to find, that the noise which had startled him in the first instance, was growing more overpowering every minute, and approaching nearer to the entrance of his royal mansion. Suddenly, the very door of the council-chamber was flung open, and a girl, scarcely sixteen years old, rushed in, and panting for breath, sank exhausted at the feet of Don Ramiro. For some time she could not speak, but remained trembling in the posture she had assumed. Two or three of her pursuers were now ushered in, and with officious zeal proceeded to lay their complaints before the King.

“What maiden is this, and what boon hath she to crave of our kindness?” demanded Ramiro, moved at the sight of the poor girl.

“Senor!” answered a man, “she is one of the maids destined for the tribute of the Caliph of Cordova. The lot fell upon her; but, instead of submitting to her fate, she has been the origin of

great confusion and much bloodshed amongst the people."

"Sir King!" cried Orelia with eagerness, "perhaps I am guilty of disrespect; for a poor girl, as I am, is not well versed in the usages of courts; but you are the father of your people,—to you therefore I fly for protection. Oh, deliver me not up to those barbarous Moors, the sworn enemies of thy country! Can it be, that a Christian King will consent to pay tribute to any infidel,—a tribute, too, so disgraceful as this?"

"Fair maid," quoth Don Ramiro, "calm thy fears; for, by our holy Dame! this unworthy tax is now abolished for ever. You, Don Alonzo, and you, Don Fruela, go to my discontented people,—tell them my resolution. Enjoin them, in my name, to keep the peace. The cause of their discontent being removed, let them resume the character of dutiful subjects. Bring the Moors into our presence, that they may hear our resolves, and report them to their master."

Order was soon restored upon the announcement of the King's determination; and those of the Moors who survived the skirmish, were brought before Don Ramiro, according to his desire.

"King Ramiro" said one of the Moslems in an angry tone, "we came into your kingdom in the spirit of peace, to collect a tribute granted by one

of your predecessors for services rendered to him. In the fulfilment of our charge, we are attacked by an unruly rabble, and the greater part of our troop slain. Instead of visiting your rebellious subjects with the punishment due to their crime, you send heralds to announce, that to please them you are willing to violate a sacred treaty."

"Holy saints of Heaven!" ejaculated Father Veremundo. "Sacred treaty, call ye this most infamous transaction?—Moor! profane not that word in a Christian country, and in the presence of a Christian King. Vows and promises, and treaties, which are in themselves unlawful, cannot be kept. It is not a sin, but a virtue to break them. By what right could a shameless monarch thus dispose of the honour of future men? If cowardice or infamous sentiments prompted Maurgat to adopt a conduct unworthy of a king—of a man,—is it an imperious consequence that every one of his successors must act in a manner equally disgraceful?"

"Our holy confessor hath spoken well," cried Don Ramiro; "his words express our sentiments most becomingly. Amongst other deeds, my reign shall be known to posterity by the abolition of the Maiden Tribute;—my royal word is passed; and if Abdulrahman will not desist from his pretended right, let him support his claim by arms, I will dispute it in the field as best befits me; and may

God withhold His mercy from me, if, during my life, another Christian maiden shall quit her home to satisfy the wishes of an Infidel."

"And is this the message we are to carry back to the Caliph?"

"It is," answered the King; "and nothing now impedes your departure."

"The Christian King may, perhaps, too late repent this violation of a treaty, and the destruction of so many gallant Moslems."

"Infidel, begone!" cried the King with warmth. "What! dares a Moor attempt to intimidate me, and utter threats within my very court? Begone! or death shall be the reward of thy insolence. Begone! and bid Abdulrahman assemble his forces and meet me in the field."

Ramiro, courageous, and enterprising by nature, now turned his thoughts towards the preparations for a war, which appeared inevitable to all. He issued the necessary orders to collect men, as well as means, to begin a campaign. The people received the intelligence with enthusiasm; and every one burnt with impatience to signalize his courage against the Moor.

Abdulrahman, in the mean time, indignant at the refusal of the Christian King to fulfil the treaty, resolved to exact the Maiden Tribute by force of arms; and to this effect, his lieutenants, with much zeal and activity, in a very short time

collected a numerous and gallant army, far superior to any that Ramiro could then bring into the field. News was soon received that Abdulrahman in person was advancing, at the head of a formidable army, to meet the Christians. Don Ramiro hastily assembled such forces as he could command, and ordered them to hold themselves in readiness against the morrow. He then retired to rest, overpowered by the fatigues of the day, and with his mind wholly bent upon the approaching contest. He was aware of the disadvantages under which he laboured, but scorned to harbour a single idea derogatory to the noble sentiments which had prompted him to provoke the wrath of the Moorish chief.

Don Ramiro was visited, in his slumbers, by a very singular vision. A venerable person, with a long silvery beard and pilgrim's staff, appeared to stand before him, surrounded with the brightness of a celestial light. The King contemplated the venerable man in silence and surprise, till at length the pilgrim declared himself to be the Apostle Santiago, the tutelar patron of Christian Spain, and said that he came to encourage the King to persevere in his good intention of waging war against the Infidels. Having promised him the aid of God in this undertaking, as well as his own help during the contest, the vision vanished; but it was only to make room for another still

more singular and propitious, in appearance, to the Christian. Ramiro thought himself suddenly transported to the field of battle, when, in the midst of a furious engagement, he perceived a tall warrior riding a milk-white charger, and bearing a red cross on a banner surmounted by the arms of the Kings of Oviedo, sweep by with overwhelming impetus, and falling upon the Moors, cause a terrible carnage amongst them, and at length completely put them to the rout. Ramiro, astonished at the superhuman prowess of the mysterious knight, rode up to thank him for the great service he had rendered the Christian army. But his bewilderment increased when, in the strange warrior, he recognised his patron Saint, Santiago.

“I promised thee my help, Ramiro,” quoth the Saint, “and behold how I have kept my word. Always put your trust in God, and never submit to vile conditions with the Infidel.”

Upon this he suddenly vanished from the sight of the astonished Don Ramiro, who, meeting the usual fate of less dignified and heroic dreamers, soon after awoke, and was for some time puzzled to find himself tranquilly reposing on his couch.

On the following day, the King communicated his dream to Veremundo, his confessor, who drew from it the most favourable omens. Whether the monk's skill in the interpretation of dreams was equal to the other qualities which rendered him an

object of veneration amongst the people, or whether it was only on a par with that of other dream-expounders, he nevertheless produced a most marvellous effect on the minds of the soldiers, by the explanation which he gave. Full of flattering hopes, and impatient for the fight, the army began its march amid the strains of martial instruments, and the cheering shouts of the multitude. Every one appeared confident of victory, and began to speculate within himself concerning the spoil laden with which he would return to his home. The hundred maidens, in whose honour this perilous adventure was to be encountered, came in front of the army, and poured forth their ardent vows for the success of their champions. If any thing can rouse the courage of man to heroic deeds and daring exploits, it is the sight of lovely woman arrayed in all her charms, and bestowing upon him smiles of approbation. Woman has often been stigmatized as the cause of much mischief in the world ; but who can recount the blessings she has heaped on man? Virtue, valour, talent, all his noblest, all his best qualities, have been called forth and fostered by the smiles of woman.

Previous to the departure of the army, it was blessed by Veremundo, who, in despite of his advanced age, resolved to follow it to the field, and contribute to the victory by his best exertions. His presence would, indeed, be of essential service,

in animating by his eloquence the hearts of the soldiers ; and, aware of this, Don Ramiro was nothing loth to have the man of God by his side. As both Abdulrahman and the Christian King were equally eager for the conflict, the armies soon came in sight of each other. The Moors presented a formidable appearance, exceeding in numbers the army of Don Ramiro, by at least one-half. A furious engagement then commenced. Abdulrahman gave out the Moorish cry of "Allah, illah Allah !" and Ramiro in an animating tone and confiding manner, exclaimed "Santiago !" which from that moment became the war-cry of the Spaniards.

The onset of the Moorish cavalry was fierce and impetuous, and was met with equal resolution and animosity by the Christians. The ground was disputed for a long time without any sign of superiority on either side ; but the discipline and gallantry of the Saracen horse at length began to prevail, the Christians gave ground, and had nearly lost the battle, when the darkness of night fortunately came to their aid. Veremundo ran through the ranks, exhorting the soldiers to do their utmost, and assuring them that Heaven and Santiago were on their side. To a keen observer, the countenance of the Christian King would have given sure indication that a feeling of despondency occupied his breast. He endeavoured to conceal

his emotion ; but it was no less certain that he expected the complete rout of his army, as soon as the light of day should second the exertions of the Moors. In this emergency, a retreat would, perhaps, be the only alternative that prudence could suggest ; but this was not practicable, from the number of the enemy, who were now endeavouring to surround the Christians. Some desperate resolution was therefore advisable in this crisis ; for nothing short of a miracle could retrieve the fortunes of Don Ramiro. The night was now completely closed, and the fury of the contest was relaxed ; as the Saracens, confiding in the certainty of victory, were willing to employ the hours of night in gaining some repose from their fatigues. The moon poured a flood of silvery radiance over the field of battle ; and a scene of dismay presented itself on every side to the Christians. They beheld the heaps of slain and wounded that strewed the ground, and awaited with trembling anxiety a fate similar to that of their companions. Don Ramiro, in this desperate moment, communed for a short time with his confessor ; and then, with a more animated countenance, proceeded to address his dispirited followers :—

“Christians !” he cried with fervour, “shall we offend the Majesty of Heaven by doubting a protection promised by such undoubted tokens ? The superior number of our enemies has given

them a temporary advantage ; but this shall little avail them. It will only pamper their insolence and expectations, that they may afterwards feel more bitterly their disappointment. My dream shall be accomplished, if we have faith enough to confide in the mercies of God, and the protection of the Apostle Santiago."

Father Veremundo next spoke in an impassioned tone and enthusiastic manner, asseverating that, ere long, palpable proofs of the intervention and protection of Santiago would be visible to all. These harangues revived for some time the drooping spirits of the soldiers, and they resolved to exert their utmost efforts, and renew the fight. At this important moment, a gallant knight, in complete armour of radiant mail, suddenly made his appearance in the field of battle. He bestrode a beautiful white charger, and carried in one hand a large white flag, on which was displayed a bloody cross, surmounted by the arms of Oviedo. This mysterious warrior, whose unexpected appearance astonished the wondering Christians, rode furiously across the field of battle, and alone, as if inspired by a superhuman impulse, plunged headlong and confidently into the thickest of the Moorish ranks.

Don Ramiro recognised the celestial knight of his vision, and sent forth an enthusiastic cry of—"Santiago ! Santiago !"

This cry operated like an electric shock in the hearts of his followers. The presence of such a warrior amongst them was the certain forerunner of victory. With one accord, the rest of the Christian army, imitating their Heavenly leader, rushed impetuously against the Moors. The King, his son Ordonio, and young Ansures, were amongst the first. The onset was desperate, and partook more of the character of madness, than of rational courage. A tremendous shout of Santiago! Santiago! was raised on all sides, and the stillness of night sent back a cheering echo, which acted as an irresistible stimulus to the Christians.

The Moors were thunderstruck at so furious and unexpected a charge. They rallied, however, and with fierce animosity received the attack of the foe. Perceiving that the powerful knight on the white charger was the object that stimulated the Christians to such gigantic exertions, they directed against him the principal portion of their rage. They tried to unhorse him, but in vain. He appeared to be impassive to the numerous blows aimed against him, whilst, on the other hand, he caused a prodigious devastation in the Moslem ranks. The white banner, with the bloody cross, was the beacon that guided the Christian warriors to certain triumph. Wherever the redoubtable knight directed his headlong

course, the terrified Moors dispersed. King Ramiro achieved wonders on this memorable field, and whilst his vengeful sword inflicted such disastrous blows upon the Moslem, his voice loudly and exultingly encouraged his soldiers to follow and trust in their patron saint.—“Santiago! Santiago!” was the universal cry of the Christians. With as much religious devotion as military courage, they accompanied the Saint, fighting joyfully by his side, and falling contentedly at his feet. Those who perished were considered as so many martyrs; and this persuasion, kept alive by the monk Veremundo, tended not a little to produce the unwearied and almost incredible exertions displayed by the Christians in this memorable battle.

The morrow’s sun discovered a scene far different from the one which had been illumined by his parting rays. The Moorish army was completely routed, and a most signal triumph crowned the valour of the Christian. But with the dawn of day the celestial warrior had vanished, like a phantom of the night. No one could tell how his departure had been effected. His mission on earth had been fulfilled. The rest was a mystery too sacred for the grateful and conquering soldiers to speculate upon. Soon after the battle, King Ramiro, in acknowledgment of the signal assistance which his troops had received from San-

tiago, assembled his principal chiefs, and, in the presence of his men, confessed all the obligations which he owed.

“My good knights, ye have witnessed,” cried he, “the manner in which this wonderful victory has been achieved. It behoveth us now to testify our gratitude as best becomes a Christian people. We will therefore build a monastery, which shall bear the name of Santiago, in commemoration of this memorable battle. On this monastery shall henceforth be duly bestowed a knight’s share of the prizes and spoils taken from our enemies in war ; and furthermore, every part of my kingdom, and in time, it is to be hoped, the whole of Spain, shall contribute a portion of bread and wine towards the maintenance of the said monastery of Santiago of Compostella. I myself, immediately upon my return to the palace, will draw out the deed of these grants.”*

These words were welcomed with shouts of approbation by the Christian nobles and the rest of the troops, who now retraced their steps homewards, rich with the spoils of the Moors, and conducting a considerable number of prisoners, whose ransom would increase the prizes obtained by the victory of Alveida.

But King Ramiro having shown his gratitude, in the first instance, to Heaven, as in justice and

* This deed is called “*Privilegio de los Votos.*”

piety bound, turned his thoughts to the recompense due to such of the knights, squires, and others who had most conspicuously distinguished themselves during the battle, and to whose prowess and resolution, next to the miraculous interposition of Santiago, he stood indebted for his triumph. Amongst the many warriors who had vied with each other in deeds of valorous achievement and surpassing intrepidity, there was an unknown youth, who had most particularly attracted his notice. The habiliments of this warrior denoted an humble situation in life, though his heroic acts rendered him well deserving of the honours of knighthood.

“By Santiago!” said the King, addressing his nobles on the subject, “I have never seen so noble a display of courage, intrepidity, and strength, since the memorable Pass of Roncesvalles; and in good sooth, Sirs, I think that this youth promises another Bernardo to our land.—Who is he? and whence comes he?”

The young hero being totally unknown to the nobles, no one could afford an answer. With a gentle smile, Father Veremundo then addressed the King:—

“Senor, the man of whom you please to take such notice, is one who indeed deserves much of his country. He was the first who repelled the insolence of the Moors when they came, for the last time, thank Heaven! to exact the Maiden Tri-

bute. It is the same gallant person, who, having lost his weapon in the scuffle, attacked his enemies with the branch of a fig-tree."

"Indeed!" quoth the King. "I rejoice in the knowledge of this; for to this same warrior I already owe a debt of gratitude which it would be as well to discharge without delay.—What is his name?"

"Ansures," replied Veremundo.

"Let him be summoned into our presence."

Ansures came before his sovereign with that modest demeanour which is the usual concomitant of merit.

"Ask any recompense within my power to grant," said Ramiro.

"Senor," returned Ansures, "if the recompense of 'serving my good King, and the consciousness of having done my duty, were not enough, I have still, in addition, that of having preserved the honour of my betrothed wife, and of paving the way to our mutual happiness."

"These are, indeed, a good man's best guerdons," said Ramiro; "but I can confer upon thee an honour which will sit well and becomingly on a man of thy deserts. This day, the order of knighthood shall be conferred upon thee; for it would be a shame to our Court, that such as thou should be lost in mean pursuits of toil and labour, who art born to grace the nobler avocations of man."

Ansures fell on his knee, and gratefully kissed the hand of the King, who soon conferred upon him the promised boon.

On his shield the heralds permitted him to bear five fig-leaves, which emblem he also wore on his crest. Ansures took the surname of Figueredo, in commemoration of that tree which was of such service to him in the most eventful moment of his life.

It is needless to add, that he was soon rendered supremely blessed by his union with the fair Orelia, who became one of the greatest ornaments of Don Ramiro's court. In commemoration of the abolition of the Maiden Tribute, a procession of young women was instituted, which took place on every anniversary of the famous and miraculous battle of Alveida.

With regard to the apparition of Santiago in the field of battle, each reader may account for it in his own manner. Those, however, who will only see a stratagem in the transaction, will at least concede, that it was a successful inspiration of genius, commendable for the glorious results to which it led.

The Maiden Tribute was thus finally abolished; for though some of the successors of Abdulrahman demanded it, they never afterwards found a Christian King weak enough to grant it; nor were the Moors, on their side, disposed to refer the debate to the event of a second battle.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Kings of Leon.

FROM ORDONIO THE SECOND TO FERDINAND OF CASTILE
A PERIOD OF 123 YEARS.

A. D. 914. Ordonio the Second succeeded his brother Garcia the First, and united in his power the kingdoms of Galicia and Leon. The same year, Abdulrahman the Third, justly entitled to the name of Great, ascended the throne of Cordova.

918. Ordonio marched, this year, into the Caliph's territories, and took and burned Talavera to the ground, after having butchered women and children without distinction. Ordonio, in the intervals of peace, occupied his time in improving and fortifying his towns. He removed the seat of government from Oviedo to Leon, and from that moment his successors were styled Kings of Leon.

920. Ordonio stained his reign by the treacherous murder of the five Counts of Castile, whom he invited to a council, and then ordered to be killed.

923. The Castilians, indignant for the atrocious deed, resolved to assert their independence. They appointed two Judges, one to lead the armies, the other to regulate the affairs of the State. The two first judges were Layn Calvo, and Nuno Rasura. This event happened in the short reign of Froila the Second, who had succeeded Ordonio.

924. Alonzo the Fourth reigned six years, and then re-

tired to the monastery of Sahagem, whence he derived the surname of The Monk.

927. Upon the abduction of Alonzo the Fourth, his brother, Ramiro the Second, ascended the throne. Alonzo, however, repenting his determination, wanted to resume the crown ; but Ramiro, strong in his army, seized him, threw him into prison, and ordered his eyes to be put out. This horrid punishment was much in practice for many successive centuries.

939. Ramiro was a warlike prince. This year the great battle of Simancas was fought, in which more than 40,000 Moors were slain. Both parties claimed the victory ; the Christians, however, with greater reason.

950. The reign of Ordonio the Third was very short, and remarkable chiefly for the rebellion of his brother Don Sancho, which, however, was soon quelled.

955. The beginning of the reign of Don Sancho, surnamed The Fat, was disturbed by the pretensions of Ordonio, the son of Alonzo the Monk. It is believed that Sancho was poisoned with an apple, by Count Gonzalez, a petty sovereign of the Lusitanian frontier.

967. Ramiro the Third, Sancho's son and successor to the throne, was only five years old at the time of his father's death. The Queen, Dona Teresa, assumed the government of the kingdom : but the prelates and the nobles were indignant at the power of an imperious woman, and were the cause of continual dissension. A party was formed to place Bermudo on the throne ; but Ramiro died soon after, leaving his competitor undisputed possessor of the crown.

982. The reign of Bermudo the Second, surnamed The Gouty, was remarkable for the disastrous victories of Almanzor, who advanced to the very city of Santiago. He burnt the church, and sent the bells to serve as lamps in the palace at Cordova. It was about this period that Castile was divided by the quarrel of Gonzalo Busto de Lara ; and then happened

the tragic death of his seven sons, known in history by the name of the Infants of Lara.

999. Bermudo died of the gout, and was succeeded by Alonzo the Fifth, towards the latter part of whose reign the Christian towns began to recóver from the disastrous results of Almanzor's victories. Alonzo rebuilt the walls of Leon.

1028. Alonzo was killed by an arrow while besieging Visco. Bermudo the Third, who succeeded him, greatly enlarged his dominions, both by power and policy. At his death, in 1035, by far the greater part of Christian Spain was subject to his dominion.

The Count of Castile.

“ They have carried afar, into Navarre,
The great Count of Castile ;
And they have bound him sorely,—
They have bound him head and heel.”

SPANISH BALLAD.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE COUNT OF CASTILE.

The Count of Castile.

“SHE never loved me!—Cruel and deceitful as her father, she hath deluded the hopes of a loyal and renowned knight. A curse on her baneful charms and female arts, that could reduce the great and powerful Count of Castile to this degrading situation!—Oh, ungentle Sancha! heartless Infanta! could I expect this treachery from thee? Well hath my faith in woman’s sincerity been requited. Fool! dolt! madman that I was, thus, from a fit of chivalrous humour, to place myself in the power of my sworn enemy. I ought to have known, that the sense of honour which strictly guides the actions of a true knight, could have no control over the selfish views of a despot King. But the day of retribution will yet come. My faithful vassals will fly to my rescue. Yes,—Fernan Gonzalez will at last shake off these odious irons, and then, woe to the false King of Navarre!—woe to the traitorous Don Garcia! for he shall feel the weighty vengeance of the wronged Count of Castile.”

Such were the complaints that occasionally burst from the indignant bosom of a knight loaded with shackles, and confined in a strong and darksome prison. The captive was in the full bloom of manhood: his frame was slender, but strongly knit; his features replete with masculine beauty, and his whole deportment indicative of rank and importance. His captivity seemed to affect him with the impatience of indignation, rather than the despondency of grief. An ardent desire of revenge made him callous to the bodily suffering occasioned by his chains; and except when he burst into exclamations of wrath, he appeared devising some method of escape, and maturing some plan of vengeance when that should be effected. But, alas! both escape and vengeance were now completely out of his reach. The indulgence of distant hopes was the only solace he could pretend to in his dismal solitude and wearisome captivity.

The Count Fernan Gonzalez had been most shamefully treated by Garci-Sanchez, the King of Navarre. This ruler saw with jealous eyes the ascendancy which Castile was daily acquiring by the talents and achievements of the Count. He wished to check the progress of that state, but dared not accomplish his intentions by arms, being in awe of the redoubtable courage of Fernan Gonzalez. These hostile feelings were farther heightened by his nephew, Don Sancho, King of

Leon, who was also unfavourably disposed towards the Count. The two monarchs, therefore, conspired his ruin, and formed a most treacherous plan to carry it into effect.

The King of Leon sent a message to the Count, earnestly requesting his attendance at the ensuing meeting of the Cortes,* alleging that affairs of the utmost importance to the Christians were there to be treated and discussed. Fernan Gonzalez obeyed the invitation; but came accompanied by so numerous and imposing a retinue, that he completely frustrated the ininical designs of the King. Don Sancho, therefore, by the instructions of his mother, Dona Teresa, showed the most friendly conduct towards the Castilian; so much so, that having taken a strong fancy to a beautiful steed and a hawk, which the Count had brought with him, the owner was induced to offer them freely to the King. Don Sancho refused the gift. A price was then fixed upon them; and it was decided, that, if not paid by an appointed day, the sum should be doubled every succeeding one. With the view, as Dona Teresa pretended, of forming an alliance that might prove advantageous to the three ruling powers of Leon, Navarre, and Castile, it was proposed that the Count should marry Dona Sancha, the Infanta of Navarre; and that,

* A legislative assembly.

for the celebration of this joyful event, he should set out for that court.

The unsuspecting Fernan Gonzalez readily accepted the proposal, and took his departure from Leon, not accompanied by a warlike train, as he had entered it, but attended solely by a gorgeous retinue, as more befitted the occasion which called him to Navarre. He was cordially received by the false King, and was allowed several interviews with Dona Sancha, in which a mutual exchange of vows took place. Fernan Gonzalez, captivated by the charms and accomplishments of his intended bride, gave himself up to the most delightful anticipations; when, as he was one beautiful evening walking in the garden with the Infanta, he felt himself suddenly seized by a powerful grasp. He turned to defend himself; but it was too late. He was instantly surrounded and mastered by a troop of soldiers, who bound his arms, and hurried him to a deep dungeon. The treason was so dark and unexpected, that the Count, even for some time after he was confined to his prison, still doubted whether the disastrous adventure were not the delusion of a wild dream.

But, alas! his misfortune was too real, and he soon poured forth the bitterest curses against his cowardly enemies.

“As coming from the false King of Navarre,”

the Count muttered with strong resentment, "this foul act does not surprise me. His previous conduct ought to have put me on my guard against trusting too implicitly in the demonstrations of his friendship.—But, oh! Sancha! Sancha! how could I ever suspect a young maiden of thy angelic form to be capable of so much deceit and baseness?—Could I surmise that those soft and tender glances were the treacherously fascinating looks of the serpent?—Ought I to have expected that the sweet smile which graced thy lip, was the herald of the darkest deception?—Ungrateful, unfeeling Infanta! Heaven, in thy beauteous exterior, has enclosed the spirit of a fiend!"

This toilsome day, like many preceding ones, had been spent in forming plans of revenge, and in the utterance of unavailing complaints. Night came at length to increase the horrors of his cheerless prison, and redouble the misery of the Count, who dreaded those slumbers which were always attended by the most discouraging dreams. But the prisoner could not control the powers of nature, and his exhausted frame sank into a feverish sleep. Scarcely were his eyes closed, when he thought that the silence of his dungeon was broken by a confused and gentle sound. He started with surprise and dread.

"Ah, by the rood!" he muttered in a tone of desperation, "my hour has arrived. The satel-

lites of the tyrant come with stealthy pace into my prison, to inflict that death upon me which they dare not attempt in open field."

The glimmer of a lamp, which now threw a partial and comfortless light over the gloom, came to confirm his suspicions. The light approached like a buoyant speck ; and Fernan Gonzalez summoned his resolution to meet his fate, as became the glorious Count of Castile.

"It is fruitless to repine," said he. "I must die, and die without the means of attempting revenge. Ah, Don Garcia! is this the faith of a Christian King—the honour of a knighted warrior? Shame on the craven heart that could conceive such deeds!—But wherefore this amazement? The darkness of night, and the stealthy arm of the assassin, are in true keeping with the whole conduct of the false King. Ay, by my troth! the villains proceed most cautiously. I can scarcely hear their steps, despite the awful stillness of this place.—It is well, it is well. They hope to find me asleep, and thus easily accomplish their base design; for, even strongly secured as I am, they would quail before the glance of Fernan Gonzalez."

He ceased, and seemed collecting his powers for some desperate effort, when the light came so near, that he could dimly perceive the person by whom it was carried. He eagerly strained his eyes, in anxious doubt of the reality of the

vision that stood before him. Could he believe his sight!—a female, a young and lovely female! The Infanta was beside him, unaccompanied by a single attendant, and exhibiting in her looks the most overwhelming solicitude.

“Sancha, my sweet Sancha!” whispered the Count, throbbing with emotion. “Can it be thou, or is this an illusion of my tormented brain?—Then thou art not false to thy vows!”

“And could you, Sir Count,” exclaimed the Infanta reproachfully,—“could you entertain such base suspicions of my honour and faith? Shame on the heart that could cherish such thoughts! Shame on that judgment which could so wrongly estimate the ardour of a woman’s love!”

“I have injured thee, Infanta,” said her lover; “and most earnestly do I crave thy forgiveness.—I thought thee false;—but it is the privilege of the unfortunate always to apprehend that evil which would be the most galling,—the most overwhelming.”

“Thy offence is forgotten, Fernan; my love is more absorbing—my devotedness to thee more boundless than ever. Of the sincerity of my vows I came to offer thee a sure pledge.”

“What!” said the Count, “does thy cruel brother relent? have thy tender supplications made him conscious of his injustice, and willing to repent it?”

“Alas! no,” replied Dona Sancha with a sigh.

“His hostile feelings to thee burn as fiercely as ever. Thy deliverance must be accomplished by different means. Ah! Sir Count, you can depend upon nothing in Navarre except on the love and courage of your betrothed. She, alone, is anxious for your liberation; and that object has brought her to this gloomy place.”

“Heaven reward the act, O noble Infanta!” said the Count in transports of joy; “but how are thy generous intentions to be fulfilled?”

“Ah! Senor, what obstacle was ever insurmountable to the woman who loved truly—devotedly, as I do? My jewels, money, promises of more lucre when we are free and in Burgos, have seduced the avaricious jailer from his duty: but our flight must be prompt; few moments are allowed me by the timid keeper of the prison.”

The Infanta then, with her own delicate hands, freed her lover from his irons; and with the utmost caution they left the dungeon. A single faithful attendant, at a short distance from the town, waited for them with horses, which the fugitives mounted, and, elate with hope, directed their course towards Castile. They encountered no impediment to their escape during the night; and when the morning came, as they were already far from the Navarre court, and had so great a start of the Count’s enemies, they considered themselves safe, and accordingly slackened their pace. They

were approaching the skirts of a little wood, when they perceived a horseman drawing towards them. He was a priest, accoutred for the chase, and presented a strange mixture of the man of God and the stout huntsman. He bestrode an ambling palfrey, and was duly equipped with a bugle and a hawk. He now halted opposite to the fugitives.

“Good morrow, Sir Priest,” quoth Fernan Gonzalez. “It seems you have well chosen the time for your sport—the morning could not be more inviting.”

“Holy Virgin!” cried the Priest, without heeding the Count, “do my eyes deceive me? No! by my hopes of salvation, it is the Infanta! Hollo! Sir Knight, what unlawful game dost thou pursue? Dismount, most gallant runaway, and surrender the prize.”

“Grammercy for the proposal,” said the Count, smiling in derision. “By my troth, the lordly priest is mad.—Come, Senor, remove from our path, or, by the Lord, whose unworthy minister thou art, the tonsure shall not save thy insolence from its due.”

“Thou art mettlesome, Sir Thief,” cried the huntsman-priest; “for thou canst be nothing better, in the fashion that I see thee. But since the Infanta seems to have yielded to gentle, not violent means, I shall not meddle with your affairs, if you are disposed to pay a ransom.”

“Pay a ransom!” answered Gonzalez; “thou art a most seemly knight, truly, to make the demand. I do not remember ever being the prisoner of so gallant a personage, nor can I see that thou hast the power of enforcing thy demand.”

“My power lies here,” returned the priest; and as he spake he touched the bugle-horn. “Make demur, and a few notes from this dangerous instrument will call those around me who will soon check your farther progress.”

“Do thy worst, false canon,” indignantly cried the Count; “it shall never be said that Fernan Gonzalez was compelled to aught by a pilfering priest; who, instead of saying his mass, thus goes early a-hawking.”

“Fernan Gonzalez!” ejaculated the priest; “in evil hour, imprudent Sir, didst thou declare thy name; for now, so help me God! no ransom in the world shall prevent the fate of the Count of Castile.”

With that he blew a loud and prolonged note. Fernan Gozalez, enraged at the act, rushed fiercely against the priest; but this personage seemed to be in no hurry to come to closer terms with the furious Count. He set spurs to his nimble palfrey, and galloped down the plain, blowing with all his might—so that if not the most gallant of knights, he evinced good proof of his aptitude as a trumpeter.

“The craven escapes without his reward!” quoth Fernan Gonzalez in a tone of disappointment. “Fear seems to have given him wings.”

The galloping priest continued to blow with undiminished vigour, till at length he appeared to have sounded his bugle to some purpose, for a gallant troop of horsemen were discerned afar, obeying the summoning blast with headlong speed. The reverend trumpeter then ceased, and, uttering a cry of joy and exultation, advanced towards the Count in a threatening attitude, relying, it would seem, upon the aid which he saw approaching. The Infanta trembled at the sight of such danger, and mournfully expressed her fears of the impossibility of evading such a troop of well-mounted soldiers.

“Let them come,” answered Fernan Gonzalez with fortitude; “your good squire and I will face the cruel partizans of Don Garcia. I shall at least gain an honourable death in defending you, since a happy life is denied me.”

The troop now approached, when, to the Count’s great surprise, he perceived that the priest, instead of joining the horsemen, was speeding fast in a contrary direction; but his wonder increased, when, upon a closer inspection of the advancing party, he saw that they carried the glorious pennon of Castile. He was not deceived, and he uttered a shout of congratulation.

“Come forth, come forth, Infanta! mine own true men they be:
Come forth, and see my banner, and cry *Castile!* with me;
My merry men, draw near me, I see my pennon shine;
Their swords are bright, Infanta, and every blade is thine.”

The flying priest having excited the suspicions of the troop, and some of them having taken a fancy to his palfrey, a very vigorous chase commenced, which terminated much to the sorrow of the scampering reverend, who was at length captured, and brought before Fernan Gonzalez.

The joy of the men of Castile, upon beholding their beloved Count, was equal to his own at considering himself out of all danger. For with that gallant party, slender as it was, he would not have hesitated to encounter any odds.

“Ah, brave Nuno Ansués,” cried Fernan Gonzalez, addressing the leader, “you come most seasonably. Your leader was in sore danger from the bugle of that mischievous priest.”

“Heaven be praised! we find you at last, Sir Count,” answered the knight; “for many a day have we been scouring these parts in search of our noble chief, whose destiny was a secret to all. Your disappearance some ascribed to witchcraft; others to an ambuscade of the Moors; and not a few to the treason of the King of Navarre.”

“And those, in sooth, were the soundest surmisers,” said the Count. “But how is this, Sir Priest? Fortune hath played thee a frolicsome

turn. Thy ransoming humour shall be tickled now, but in a different way. The ransom must be paid to me. And, hark ye! when you next say mass, offer prayers of thanksgiving to the patron saint of my sweet Infanta; for, in courtesy to the nobleness of her heart, I let the baseness of thine escape thus easily.—And now to Burgos, my brave companions.”

The Count and his gallant escort arrived at that capital without encountering any adventure, and they were welcomed with the joyous acclamations of the Castilians, who had almost despaired of ever again beholding their lord. In a few days, the marriage between the Infanta and Fernan Gonzalez was celebrated with the greatest pomp and splendour; and the hunting-priest, having paid his ransom, was allowed to depart for Navarre, to carry the news of the wedding to the false King.

The rage of the Kings of Leon and Navarre, at the news of this union, knew no bounds. They burnt with shame, that all their plans should thus have been defeated by the very one whom they had considered as the instrument of their base machinations. The King of Navarre, under pretence that the Count had feloniously carried his daughter from the court, took the field with a powerful army, and provoked his son-in-law to an unnatural contest. Fernan Gonzalez used all his endeavours

to dissuade Don Garcia from his hostile designs ; but all his efforts at reconciliation proved ineffectual ; and the depredations which marauding parties of the Navarrese were continually committing, at length obliged the Count to take up arms in his own defence. In an excessively dark night, the army of Don Garcia was surprised before they had time to provide the means of resistance ; and the King himself, with many principal knights, were taken prisoners. The Count upbraided his cruel father-in-law for his repeated offences against him, and, in a moment of anger, had him shut up in close confinement. The Infanta interceded for her father ; but Fernan Gonzalez was too exasperated at first to listen even to the supplications of that voice which was dearest to him.

“ No, by my honour !” he wrathfully cried, “ the treacherous King shall at length meet the reward due to his numerous delinquencies. He shall not return to Navarre, until he pays a full ransom, such an one as may be adequate to his rank, as well as commensurate to my wrongs.”

The Count seemed inflexible in his resolution ; and Don Garcia accordingly lingered a year in prison. But at the end of this protracted period, the importunities of Dona Sancha, added to the generosity of the Count, induced him to liberate the King without any ransom. Indeed, the ran-

som which the Count had asked, in the first instance, had been so exorbitant, that unless Don Garcia had pawned half of his kingdom, it would not have been easily supplied. A reconciliation, most sincere to all appearance, now took place between the parties. A grand entertainment was given by the Count to his father-in-law, after which the latter returned to Navarre. The evil passions, if once they take a deep root in a female heart, keep their hold with a tenacity rarely met with in man. Dona Teresa cherished in her bosom the same hostile feelings which had actuated all her previous conduct towards Fernan Gonzalez. Nothing could soften the asperity of her unnatural hatred. Neither the generosity of the Count, nor the abatement of rancour in the sentiments of the Kings of Leon and Navarre, made the least impression upon this vicious woman.

Dona Teresa was unremitting in her endeavours to rekindle the aversion of her son for Gonzalez, and at length succeeded in engaging him to lay another snare for his former enemy. By her advice, after several marks of kindness had been exchanged between the two courts, Don Sancho invited the Count to the Cortes that were to be celebrated at Leon, which all the Christian powers in the peninsula were to attend, in order to determine some efficacious means of waging destructive war against the common enemy—the Moors.

As a lapse of many years had intervened since the first treachery of Sancho, the Count, in the generosity of his character, could not conceive that a new treason was in contemplation. He therefore repaired to the Court of Leon, utterly regardless of any consequence. Don Sancho received him most cordially; but in the behaviour of Dona Teresa, there was something so expressly kind and courteous—so directly opposite to her general character, that Fernan Gonzalez began to entertain strange misgivings of a fresh affront. His fears were soon confirmed. He was arrested whilst at table with the King and his mother, who exulted in her dishonourable schemes.

“Ah, Sir Count,” quoth she with a malignant smile, “who ever heard that the bird who had once escaped from his cage, would again rush blindly to his perdition?”

“Lady!” firmly replied the Count, “the shame is not to him whose generosity makes him think well of a woman nobly born, but to the baseness of that woman, who thus sullies the dignity of her station, and reflects disgrace upon her sex. I know that it is to your unconquerable hatred I owe this misfortune; for see, your son casts down his eyes, and despite of his efforts, cannot blind himself to the iniquity of this proceeding. But though you may exult in seeing the Count Fernan Gonzalez in your power, you shall never enjoy

the more gratifying triumph of humbling his heart, or of making his unbending spirit do aught unworthy of his name."

The satisfaction of Dona Teresa was in a great measure lessened by the unconquerable fortitude exhibited by Fernan Gonzalez. He was thrown into prison, and loaded with irons, but he gave no sign of dejection. Though convinced that he was doomed to linger the rest of his existence in that gloomy confinement, he would not allow his enemies the additional joy of receiving from him any token indicative of sorrow or despondence.

Time wore away, and to the anxious Countess of Castile no tidings came of her dear lord. She began to apprehend what was really the case, and sent messengers to Leon to solicit the liberation of the Count, upon the payment of a noble ransom. But there was no treasure in the world that could bestow such gratification on Dona Teresa as the indulgence of her rancorous feelings towards Fernan Gonzalez. The offers of the Countess were accordingly rejected with scorn. So far, indeed, from acceding to any amicable arrangement, the Kings of Leon and Navarre disposed themselves to seize on the territories of Castile, and make an equal division of them. For the successful accomplishment of this iniquitous plan, they made the most extensive preparations for war. Every Suzerain lord—every knight subject to the crowns

of Leon and Navarre, was summoned to appear in the field with his vassals. A numerous army was soon levied; and the Castilians, deprived of their chief, beheld with dismay preparations which threatened inevitable destruction to their liberty.

Whilst Leon was ringing with sounds of approaching war, the King, who had a particular devotion for Santiago, often besought the aid of this saint, in his unlawful schemes upon the sovereignty of Castile. One day, a pious pilgrim craved admission into the royal presence. "Good pilgrim, what wouldst thou of the King of Leon?" quoth Sancho.

"Sire," humbly replied the pilgrim, "I am bound for Compostella, to fulfil a holy vow, in which that bad Count of Castile is concerned. He hath been the cause of much sorrow to me. In days of wrath, I called the curse of the blessed Santiago upon his head, and made a vow to undertake a pilgrimage to the church of the patron saint. Scarcely had I uttered my prayer when I received the joyful news of the capture of my enemy, and I am now on my journey to Compostella, for I know that the destruction of the Count is at hand."

"By Santiago!" cried the King, "should thy prophecy be fulfilled, good pilgrim, the King of Leon would not prove ungrateful to the saint.

But what omens bringest thou to make me rely on the sincerity of thy predictions?"

"Omens of great import, Sir King," replied the pilgrim. "The Apostle himself has appeared to me in a holy vision, and has unfolded deep mysteries concerning these kingdoms. The time will come when Castile and Leon shall be united, and effect the final ruin of the Moorish empire. The captivity of the Count Fernan Gonzalez, and these warlike preparations, clearly tell that Don Sancho will soon add Castile to his dominions."

"With the aid of Heaven, that shall be," cried the King in a tone of congratulation.—"Proceed, holy pilgrim."

"That shall be in very sooth," repeated the pilgrim; "but ere that fortunate moment arrive, it is necessary to remove an obstacle that might mar these glorious prospects."

"What obstacle?" demanded Sancho.

"Dost thou think the life of Fernan Gonzalez no impediment in thy path? So long as that Count draws breath, the subjection of the Castilian cannot be completely effected. Wild hopes will still animate them to powerful exertions, and even when conquered, they will wear the character of domestic enemies rather than of dutiful vassals. But this evil is one of easy remedy, which, with your sanction, good King, I will essay."

“ Explain—thou speakest mysteriously,” said Don Sancho.

“ I have a phial,” continued the pilgrim in a low tone, “ of most marvellous power. It takes life away without causing the least havoc in the human frame; but this liquid, to produce the desired effect, must be properly administered. Lead me to the prison of the Count, and send him forth—with a meal,—for the rest, I will answer with my life.”

The King, however ambitious of possessing Castile, was horror-stricken at the proposals of the pilgrim. He hesitated, and appeared inclined to deny himself the aid of such odious treason, when Dona Teresa burst into the apartment.

“ How is this, my son?” cried the female fury. “ Dost thou despise the prudent counsel of this good pilgrim? I know his intentions full well; and I know likewise, that he is actuated by the most laudable motives. It is necessary that one man should die, to prevent the miseries and deaths of a multitude. You can accomplish as much by the quiet agency of this inspired man, as three sanguinary battles would effect. Fie on thy craven heart! to quake like a puny urchin at a deed that comes arrayed in black! Art thou my son? I blush that I should be called the mother of such a trembling coward.”

The King of Leon was at length persuaded to

acquiesce in the treacherous scheme ; and the pilgrim was forthwith conducted into the prison of the Count. Fernan Gonzalez gazed on the stranger with surprise.

“ Who art thou ? ” said he. “ Dost thou come in friendship, or as a foe ? though methinks I should scarcely ask that question, if, as I suppose, thou art a subject of the King of Leon.”

“ I am thy friend,” answered the pilgrim,—“ thy best, thy dearest friend, Fernan Gonzalez ; let me cast off this protecting disguise, and appear to my beloved lord such as I am.”

“ Propitious Heaven ! ” exclaimed the Count. “ And can this really be Sancha !—my own Sancha !—noble, magnanimous woman ! How couldst thou summon courage for this act ?—how couldst thou delude the alertness of my merciless keepers ? ”

“ My duty gave me courage ; my love, sagacity. The King imagines that I am what I seem ; nay, at this very moment he hopes you are breathing your last ! ”

“ What say you ? ”

“ Dona Teresa,” resumed the Countess, “ and her ill-advised son, firmly believe that I am come to administer poison to their prisoner ; but they have defeated their schemes by excess of prudence. Their anxiety to murder the Count with the utmost secrecy, hath procured the means of his liberation. But time speeds, and our moments

are counted. Castile has urgent need of your presence, Fernan Gonzalez. The mighty preparations of Leon and Navarre have damped the energies of thy good Castilians. The presence of their brave Count alone can stimulate them to fresh exertions; despatch therefore, for you must quit the prison immediately."

"In broad daylight? Is the King so careless of his enemy, that he would suffer him thus easily to escape?"

"No; his fear is as watchful, as his treachery is dark; but yet thou canst effect thy escape in perfect safety. Here we must exchange clothes; this pilgrim's habit will afford thee free egress from the prison. Speed then to Castile: thou canst hereafter liberate me from this dungeon."

"Heaven bless thy worth, my Sancha!" exclaimed her lord; "but whilst I venerate thy intrepidity and affection, shall I be weak enough to avail myself of means of safety, which may prove so fatal to the generous being who risks so much for my sake?—No, my beloved, return to Castile, and leave me to my fate."

"Never! If love had not counselled my present act, the duty which we owe to Castile would have suggested the attempt. Think, Fernan Gonzalez, that the independence of that sovereignty is for ever lost, unless you fly to its aid. Besides, what have you to fear from my assuming your place?"

The ingenuity which has conducted me in safety to this place, will lead me back unhurt to Castile. Danger to my life there is none ; for you cannot suppose my own mother so unnatural as to decree the death of her daughter. Haste then, and let us execute our plan, ere some fatal accident deprive us of the power to do so."

The expostulations and arguments of his heroic lady at last persuaded Fernan Gonzalez to follow her advice. The imminency of his danger, and the certainty that his noble Countess would not be exposed to any evils, but such as could easily be supported by her generous nature, induced him quickly to equip himself in the pilgrim's habit. This done, he imprinted fervent kisses of love on the beauteous forehead of the Countess, and, with promises of a speedy return to her rescue, cautiously left the prison.

Night was approaching, and the King was strangely surprised that the pilgrim should be so long delayed about his business. Not being able to restrain his impatience, he determined to ascertain the reason of this delay. A treacherous mind is continually dreaming of treason, and Don Sancho now felt some misgivings, that the specious pilgrim might have deceived him.

"Bring the pilgrim to my presence," he sternly said to one of his attendants. But the pilgrim did not make his appearance. At length one of the

guards of the prison, with looks of terror, informed him that the pilgrim was gone.

“Gone, without waiting my commands! there is some plot here. Art thou sure the prisoner is safe?”

“Safe!” quoth the surprised guard, “I saw him crouching in his dungeon but a few moments since.”

“Did he seem to suffer; was he——” the King hesitated, but he soon continued—“was he dead or alive?”

Another look of surprise from his informant.

“Sire, he appeared as well as ever; though certainly much shorter in my eyes. Yes, he certainly has decreased six inches in height.”

“Fool, fool!” cried the King angrily: “what words are these?—But I must look into this affair myself.”

Don Sancho then hastily repaired to the prison; the supposed Fernan Gonzalez rose at his approach.

“By Heaven! exclaimed the King, “he does look much shorter; no, it is idle imagination.” He advanced nearer.

“Well, Sir Count, are the prisoners of Castile so closely kept?”

“Much better, Sir King,” answered the Countess. “Shame, Don Sancho! for a man so accustomed to plots and contrivances, you show a marvellous lack of penetration.”

She then altered her tone of voice, and, with much merriment, continued:—

“Now, you cannot, surely be so ungallant as to permit a lady to remain any longer in this dismal place?”

“Ah! a woman! what mischief is this?—am I then deceived—cheated—made a butt—a fool!—Who art thou?—hag! fiend!”

“Nay, nay, Don Sancho, not so bad as that, however near akin I may be to deception:—in a family in which that art is practised so well, no one should wonder at my proficiency.”

“Does my sight mock me? is this a dream?” cried the King in utter amazement; “what! art thou my sister?—the mischief-working Sancha—the false Infanta?”

“To some of those appellatives,” answered the Countess, “I claim a title. I am, in sooth, Sancha;—not the false Infanta, but the loyal Countess of Castile.”

“A curse upon thy title, and thy head, woman!—Where is thy hated husband?”

“The noble Count of Castile is far away; but fear not, he will soon return to acknowledge the favours he has experienced from the King of Leon.”

“False sister; accursed woman! what hast thou done?” exclaimed the King, convulsed with passion. “Dost thou think that this deception shall escape unpunished? Dost thou not tremble at the prospect of my vengeance?”

“Tremble!” cried the Countess firmly, “why should I?—what have I to fear, now that my dear lord is free? My life! ah, that is secure, were you ten times worse than you are. You dare not injure me as long as Fernan Gonzalez can lead his gallant men to the field.”

“Ah! false one! trust not too much to my pity, or our relationship; you may perchance be deceived.”

“No, no, I trust neither thy pity, nor any other kindly feeling of thine; but I put full faith on thy fear.”

“Let this woman be watched with the utmost vigilance and rigour. Guards, should she escape, you shall answer with your lives for the neglect of your duty.”

With the most violent sensations of rage and disappointment, the King now returned to the palace to consult Dona Teresa on the line of conduct most proper to be adopted under existing circumstances. But a new source of anxiety soon came to disturb his speculations. Alarming reports were heard of the enthusiasm with which the Count had been received by the Castilians, and the wondrous effect which his unexpected appearance amongst them had produced on their drooping spirits: the whole country rang with the voice of war, and it was conjectured that Fernan Gonzalez, instead of acting on the defensive, was preparing to come and attack the King of Leon

in his own territories. These rumours soon ripened into a certainty.

The Count, in a few days, sent a formal embassy to Don Sancho, demanding that the Countess should be immediately conducted to Castile with all the attentions and respect due to her dignity, and exacting, furthermore, the emoluments arising from the sale of the horse and hawk, the price of which had not yet been paid. The King was amazed at the second demand, and resolved not to comply with it. To the liberation of the Countess he consented, provided Fernan Gonzalez sent forthwith a competent ransom. With this answer the messengers were sent back to their lord. The Count then lost no time in putting his army into motion, and advanced with boldness and confidence towards Leon. The approach of the Count spread a salutary fear among the partizans of the King. Some of the grandees, who, while the Count was closely imprisoned, were so very importunate in urging the invasion of his territories, had suddenly been converted from this opinion the moment that Fernan Gonzalez became free to oppose the projected attack. Others conceived that the Count was the injured party, and, as he had now the means of resenting the injury, they thought very properly that it was high time for them to become just.

On the other hand, the King of Navarre, on whom he had counted for aid, had entered into a

truce with his son-in-law, so that Don Sancho was left alone to stand the brunt of the Count's indignation. The King, finding himself comparatively devoid of the means of resistance, felt well disposed to enter into a negotiation; but his implacable mother used her utmost efforts to infuse into the heart of her son the rancorous flame by which she was consumed. Torn, therefore by these conflicting sentiments, the King remained for some days undecided as to the course he was to pursue. This state of irresolution, however, could not continue long. Fernan Gonzalez soon made his appearance in Leon, and, in a true warlike spirit, was not particularly gentle in his treatment of the King's subjects. He advanced, pillaging and demolishing to such an extent, that whole villages fled at the bare mention of his approach. This was, in sooth, an incentive to induce the most irresolute man to make up his mind. The King's doubts and waverings suddenly vanished, and he signified his readiness to enter into a treaty.

Dona Teresa felt highly indignant at this determination, and was most liberal of her reproaches to her peace-loving son. But Don Sancho at last recovered from his complaisant and yielding disposition to his mother's will.

“By Heaven, Lady!” he resolutely cried, “this must no longer be; I can see neither good sense nor policy in having whole armies routed, blood spilt in profusion, villages demolished, and nations

thrown into disorder, merely to satisfy the strange caprice of a woman. What have my people to do with your private hatred, that they should be butchered like sheep? This must have an end: continue to hate the Count as much as may be convenient, but look to other means of indulging that passion; for I am King of Leon, and my will shall be obeyed."

It has been decreed, time immemorial, by most provident Nature, that as soon as man firmly resolves to be his own master, woman shall speedily abdicate the throne of oppression. It was so in the present case. Dona Teresa stormed and wept, but without making any impression upon the relentless Don Sancho, who immediately set the Countess of Castile at liberty, and entreated her to use her influence with her lord towards an amicable arrangement. But the greatest impediment to this desirable conclusion came from a quarter which most certainly the reader would never have dreamt of. The personages who stood in the way of a termination of the war, were a horse and a hawk, which the reader, unless lamentably deficient in memory, will remember were sold by the Count to the King, but had not yet been paid for. The price had been accumulating so much, according to the stipulations made at the time of the purchase, that the King found himself totally unable to discharge the debt. He cursed the horse and the hawk, and offered to return them to their for-

mer master ; but the master very courteously observed, that he should be much better pleased with the glorious price they had procured.

In this dilemma, the King left it to the good pleasure of Fernan Gonzalez, to settle the conditions upon which he would forego his right to claim the debt incurred on account of those most unpropitious animals. It was at length finally arranged that Sancho should keep the horse and the hawk, and that, from that moment, Castile should be an independent state, free from tribute or any other duty towards Leon or Navarre. The Count and his heroic consort returned joyfully to Burgos ; and from that moment began the series of triumphs which have distinguished the Castilian name. Then was laid the firm foundation of that sovereignty which, though small in its commencement, became the most powerful in Spain, and the most effective in achieving the expulsion of the Moors from the land.

The name of Count Fernan Gonzalez accordingly ranks high amongst those of the ancient Spanish heroes.

The Infants of Lara.

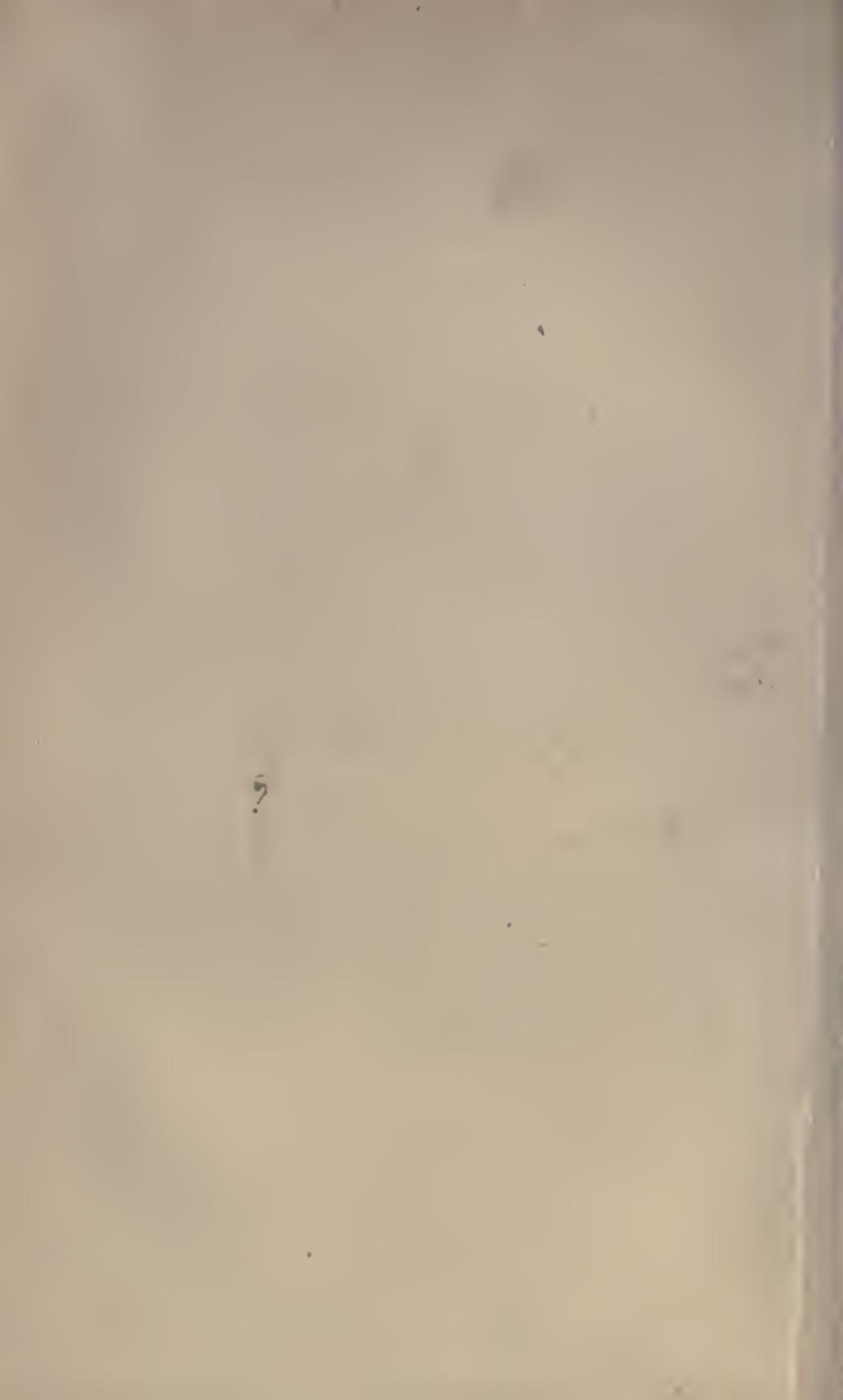
“ My gallant boys,” quoth Lara,
“ It is a heavy sight
These dogs have brought your father
To look upon this night.”

SPANISH BALLAD.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE INFANTS OF LARA.



The Infants of Lara.

THE Lady Doña Lambra was sitting at a casement that overlooked the garden. She was in a thoughtful attitude, and appeared indulging in the deepest meditations. On her countenance there was nought indicative of that pleasure and tranquillity which are expected to illumine the features of a lady during the joyous continuance of her marriage festivities, for the nuptials of Doña Lambra with Ruy Velazquez, Lord of Villaren, had been celebrated at Burgos, a few days since, with the greatest pomp and magnificence.—But the lady did not wear the smiling aspect of a happy bride. Was her husband an object of dread, or dislike to her? No! this had been an union of inclination as well as of policy. Her emotion had been roused by a supposed insult; and the schemes which now occupied her mind were those of dark and signal revenge.

The palace of the Lord of Villaren was crowded with visitors, and in his extensive grounds various sports and games of strength and agility were carried on. But the lady in whose honour all this

was done, took no delight in the general rejoicings. Her dark piercing eyes were often bent towards a group of young and gallant cavaliers, and in glances of deepest anger proclaimed the horrid workings of her mind. The cavaliers who in so painful a manner attracted the notice of Doña Lambra, were seven brothers, sons of Don Gonzalo Bustos, Lord of Salas de Lara, and related by blood to Ruy Velazquez. They had excited the wrath of his lady, by a circumstance which, though apparently of slight import, led, in the sequel, to the most disastrous results. When the nuptial retinue was proceeding to church, a trifling quarrel arose between Alvar Sanchez, the bride's cousin, and Gonzalez, the youngest of the seven brothers, the Infants of Lara. The difference, by the interposition of the friends of both parties, was soon adjusted; but Doña Lambra, a haughty and vindictive lady, considered herself deeply injured, and from that moment resolved to seek an opportunity of revenge:—this object it was which now drew a gloom over her fair brow.

The lady, no longer able to restrain her rancorous sensations, instructed one of her menials to go and insult the brothers. The method hit upon for this purpose was one of the most degrading that could be offered to a knight at that period. It consisted in filling and soaking a raw cucumber with blood, and throwing it at the obnoxious in-

dividual. This was considered the greatest possible affront to a man of gentle birth. The menial, confiding in the protection of his mistress, readily proceeded to fulfil her wishes. He approached the Infants of Lara, and taking aim, hurled the disastrous emblem of affront at Gonzalez. The brothers were struck with astonishment and indignation at the deed, and turned fiercely upon the offender, who now trembling and disconcerted, fled to his mistress for shelter.

“By Heaven!” cried Gonzalez, “this injury hath been devised by thee, false Lady Doña Lambra; the slave would never have dared to commit so desperate an act; besides, his seeking refuge with his mistress clearly proves that my surmises are just. But the wretch shall not escape his punishment.”

The seven brothers now rushed sword in hand towards Doña Lambra, who, in a tone of fierceness and anger, cried out,—

“Beware, Sirs! for what ye attempt in haste, may be repented at leisure. Keep aloof! this man is under my protection; and any arm which may fall upon his head shall be esteemed a direct insult offered to my person.”

“Lady,” exclaimed the brothers with one accord, “you threaten in vain, for the craven shall die.”

The attendant sought for protection in the very

folds of Doña Lambra's flowing garments. But even that sanctuary the enraged brothers had no idea of respecting. Despite of the attendant's piercing cries, and his lady's threats, Gonzalez dragged the culprit by the hair from the refuge he had taken. The wretch was then speedily put to death—he was literally covered with wounds, and his blood spurting stained the bridal robes of Doña Lambra,—a fearful omen, in sooth, but one which the seven Infants of Lara heeded not at the time, so intent were they on the gratification of their revenge.

The confusion which followed the sanguinary scene, drew to the spot many cavaliers, and, amongst others, came Ruy Velazquez, the husband of the lady.

“Ah! my Lord!” she exclaimed in bitterness, “see the affront committed on us by those false brothers. If thou hast the feelings of a man, they must, ere long, receive the guerdon due to this outrage.”

The Infants of Lara sent forth a loud laugh of scorn, and wiping their weapons, still reeking with the blood of their victim, turned away, paying no regard to the fierce indignation which they had produced. When the first ebullition of wrath had abated, the Lord of Villaren and his exasperated bride began calmly to deliberate on the means of pursuing the most signal revenge. The

first impulse of Ruy Velazquez was to invite six of the most gallant and brave of his friends and kinsmen, and then send a challenge to the brothers. This was certainly the more manly and honourable way of proceeding; but Doña Lambra dissuaded her lord from such thoughts, by urging the uncertainty of a vengeance prosecuted in this manner.

“Those base men,” she fiercely exclaimed, “deserve not to be treated like true and noble cavaliers,—their act renders them worthy of the chastisement that would be dealt to the meanest felon. No, my Lord, not arms, but stratagem must be employed in this fatal business. Besides, would it be just to expose your valuable life, and the lives of your brave kinsmen, against such recreants as these detested Infants? No! let them meet a retribution in accordance with the foulness of their deed.”

The Lord of Villaren suffered himself to be persuaded by the arguments, or rather importunities of his lady, and determined to follow her advice. There was something specious in the words of Doña Lambra, which, added to the blind indignation of Ruy Velazquez, made it no difficult matter to induce that cavalier to enter into schemes of revenge unworthy of a nobleman. Deceit, one of the most detestable of paltry arts, was the means resorted to under the present circumstances;

but as there is always a more gentle name for the worst vices, deceit, in this instance, acquired the appellation of policy. The Lord of Villaren, feigning great concern for the unfortunate occurrences which had marked his wedding, sent to Gonzalo Bustos de Lara a message, testifying his sincere wishes to see this disagreement amicably arranged, and the two noble families living on the same cordial terms as before. The Lord of Lara, believing that the message was sent in perfect sincerity, most willingly acceded to his treacherous enemy's request. He signified his sorrow for the impetuous conduct of his sons, and even went so far as to counsel the Infants to keep a better watch on their passions for the future. The Lord of Villaren then gave a banquet, and a reconciliation, most cordial in appearance, took place between the parties. Doña Lambra embraced young Gonzalez, who was the most obnoxious of the seven brothers; and every thing proceeded from this moment as if nothing had happened to irritate the families against each other.

Some time was suffered to elapse in this manner, after which Ruy Velazquez sought the father of the seven Infants, with the object of imparting to him an affair of importance.

“My noble friend, Don Gonzalo,” he said, “nothing can more strikingly prove the sincerity of my esteem for you, and the high opinion I en-

ertain of your worth, than my entrusting to your care the fulfilment of a mission of the greatest consequence to me. You are aware that the Moorish King of Cordova owes me a large sum of money. This sum no one could be more competent to claim from the infidel than Gonzalo Bustos de Lara; his virtues and his talents offer the surest tokens of success in the negotiation. This embassy, I am sensible, you will the more willingly undertake, as that money I destine as a dowry to my sister Doña Urraca, whom, in order to strengthen the ties of amity that bind our families, I should like to see betrothed to your eldest son."

Gonzalo Bustos did not hesitate to charge himself with the false Lord's commission. He made ready for his departure; and having received a letter written in the Arabic tongue for the King of Cordova, in a few days set out for that court, attended by a very slender retinue. In this treacherous letter, Ruy Velazquez requested the Moor to put the bearer to death, adding, that this act would cancel the debt which the unfortunate Don Gonzalo was sent to require. No sooner did the Lord of Lara present himself in the Moorish court, and deliver his despatches, than he was violently secured, and thrown into confinement. He felt highly indignant at this abominable act; but, alas! he had no means of redress, and was obliged to devour his vexation in cheerless solitude.

The Moorish King was not barbarous enough to comply with the wishes of Ruy Velazquez, to their fullest extent. The life of Gonzalo was spared, though at the same time his eternal exile from his country and home was resolved upon. Nevertheless, the Moor sent to inform the Lord of Villaren that his desires had been fulfilled, and that henceforth he would never again be tormented with the sight of his enemy.

The ferocious Ruy Velazquez and his unworthy spouse felt highly gratified at this intelligence, and, secure in the enjoyment of part of their revenge, now turned their thoughts towards the prosecution of it as regarded the seven brothers. The young cavaliers were, for a considerable period of time, kept in total ignorance of the fate of their sire. They began to think that his sojourn at Cordova was protracted too long, and the most unfavourable surmises troubled their minds. It was, indeed, strange that no news should be received from Gonzalo Bustos, and more strange still, that not one of those retainers, who had accompanied him in his mission, should have returned to Castile. Very serious alarms were now excited in the bosoms of the Infants of Lara. They gave hints of setting out to Cordova to inquire the fate of their father; and the cruel Lord of Villaren thought this opportunity highly favourable to the furtherance of his revengeful schemes.

With looks of deep sorrow and indignation, he one day approached the anxious sons, and in an agitated tone of voice began to unfold the most disastrous information.

“Alas! my noble youths,” he said, “how weighty is my misfortune in being obliged to communicate such melancholy intelligence! The fate of my good friend, your illustrious parent, is at length ascertained.”

“Lord of Villaren,” cried one of the Infants, “what means this agitation? Explain quickly this dread mystery.”

After some hesitation, the false Lord proceeded.

“Would to Heaven, I had never thought of so fatal an embassy! It has cost me my best friend, and that, too, without even attaining my object. Your noble father has been treacherously slain by the barbarous King of Cordova. This avaricious infidel, unwilling to pay the sum which he owes me, has, no doubt, sacrificed my excellent friend, on account of the warmth with which he must have urged the justice of my claim. But the base murder of the gallant Gonzalo Bustos shall be amply avenged, and for each drop of his, streams of Moorish blood shall flow. My brave Infants, we must now prepare for war; go, summon your retainers, and get your armour ready, for ere three days be passed, we must be on our march towards Cordova.”

The astonishment of the seven brothers, at the news of their father's untimely doom, was as great as their affliction was intense. They gave full credence to the Lord of Villaren's version of the story, and never suspected that the least alloy of treachery was mingled with the feelings which he exhibited. On the contrary, grateful for the eagerness which he evinced to chastise the atrocity of the Moor, they showed great deference to his command, and expressed their willingness to follow his advice in every respect. After this, in a mood of sorrow and wrath, the Infants quitted Ruy Velazquez, and applied themselves to get every thing in readiness for their hostile expedition against the Moorish King.

Doña Lambra, exulting in the success of her diabolical plans, lost no opportunity of strengthening her husband in his wicked resolves, and was equally assiduous in adopting that line of conduct towards the Infants, which was best calculated to remove the slightest shadow of suspicion. Thus, with the greatest cordiality, did the executioners and their victims labour conjointly to accomplish the destruction of the latter. The Lord of Villaren's schemes were as cowardly as they were cruel. It was planned, that, at the approach of the Moor, Ruy Velazquez, with all his followers, should abandon the Infants, that they might be unmercifully sacrificed by their enemies. The King of

Cordova was secretly apprised, that, if his army took the field, it would obtain an easy and decisive victory.

Moors and Christians now prepared for battle. The seven Infants collected about two hundred devoted followers, who, though few in number, were a formidable host in themselves. Besides, as the Lord of Villaren had promised to bring two thousand well equipped warriors to the contest, they felt confident in the possession of a force almost sufficient to ensure success. The day of departure arrived, when, burning with the thirst of vengeance, and elate with hopes of victory, the Infants of Lara, attended by their followers, drew up in front of the Lord of Villaren's palace. The army soon put itself in motion, and, after marching for some days, at length came in sight of the Moors, who presented a most fearful array. The King of Cordova, justly conceiving that the promises of a traitor might be as fallacious on one side as another, had prudently resolved to bring into the field as great a power as he could collect; and trust, for the hopes of victory, more to the exertions of his own men, than to the plotting of his iniquitous ally. Under the command, therefore, of the most experienced and bravest leaders, he sent to meet the Castilians a force at least double that which they could produce.

The sight of this superiority in the enemy did

not, however, dishearten the Infants of Lara. To their impetuous courage and thirst of vengeance, no obstacle appeared insurmountable. They were eager for an engagement, and Ruy Velazquez promised that the Moors should be attacked on the morrow. But amongst the followers of the seven brothers there was an old man, who, instead of exhibiting looks of hope, constantly preserved on his countenance a most desponding and ominous expression. This individual, though apparently of subordinate rank, seemed to be treated with great confidence and affection by the Infants. To this privilege he had a just claim, since he was their foster-father, and had always been distinguished for the warmth of his devotion towards the family of Gonzalo Bustos.

Nuño Salido—for such was the name of this faithful retainer—on the night previous to the battle, came secretly to the Infants, and with much emotion advised them to decline the contest, and commence a speedy retreat into Castile.

“Heaven forgive thee, Nuño Salido!” said the eldest of the brothers. “Canst thou really counsel such dastardly conduct to the Infants of Lara,—upon an occasion too when they are impelled to the field by the most sacred cause? Fie, if age hath chilled the blood in thy veins, attempt not to damp the ardour of our youthful spirits. If thou tremblest for thy life, return to Castile; no one

will oppose thy secession from the approaching contest: but to dissuade the Infants of Lara from their glorious enterprise, is an undertaking full of madness and destitute of hope."

"Alas! my children," quoth the sorrowing old man, "ye do no justice to my sentiments. It is no apprehension for my life that induces me to speak thus. My days must now be few; but were they still as numerous as blooming youth could promise, I am not such a craven as to spare them in a good cause."

"What then has prompted your expressions of fear?" inquired Gonzalez.

"To your generous and unsuspecting nature," resumed Nuño Salido, "the idea of treason is revolting; and being yourselves incapable of the crime, your hearts refuse to suspect it in another. I am old, and sad experience has taught me to distrust the world, and to look with a natural jealousy upon most of the actions of men. Trust me, my noble children, there is no faith, no sincerity in the friendship of the false Lord of Villaren. I have watched him carefully, and there are too many signs of duplicity in his words and looks, to let me put implicit trust in his actions. Besides, I have had an awful dream, which portends a dreadful catastrophe to the house of Gonzalo Bustos de Lara, if the battle of the morrow should unfortunately take place."

The brothers treated the fears of their foster-father with indifference, and his expostulations were totally thrown away. They ascribed to the timidity and the suspicious nature of old age, that caution which was in reality the offspring of prudence and affection. They accordingly prepared themselves for the ensuing contest with undiminished resolution, and equal expectation of success.

With the first rays of the morn, the Castilians had assumed their arms. They advanced gallantly to the charge, and the Moors prepared to resist them with the same fearless spirit. Ruy Velazquez rode near the Infants, and congratulated them on the approaching opportunity of fully revenging the death of their father. The seven brothers, with their faithful followers, took their station in front of the army, and calling loudly on the protection of Santiago, rushed impetuously against the enemy. It was at this crisis that the fears of Nuño Salido were verified, and the deep treachery of Ruy Velazquez fully confirmed. No sooner did this base lord behold the gallant brothers closely engaged with the Moors, than, instead of supporting their efforts, he gave the signal of retreat to his men, and the whole Castilian army retired from the contest. Nuño Salido uttered a groan of agony, and the Saracens, now certain of success, surrounded the devoted victims with the whole power of their army. The Infants with horror

perceived the treachery ; but it was too late to effect a retreat.

“ Ah ! we are betrayed ! ” cried one, “ we must fall ; but let our death be as honourable as our lives have been unimpeachable.”

They fought with the courage of desperation. Many a Moor that day felt the vigour of their arms. All were astonished at the undaunted spirit that animated them. Their two hundred followers were actuated by the same noble and heroic feelings ; there was not a single man amongst the gallant troop who thought of abandoning the ill-fated brothers, in order to save himself. But what could the valour of two hundred men do against the overpowering force of four thousand ? The contest raged fiercely, though the number of combatants visibly decreased : the troop of devoted Christians was becoming smaller — cavalier after cavalier fell covered with wounds, and died with a spirit worthy of a more prosperous fate. Two of the brothers had already bitten the dust ; but the sight of their lifeless corpses stretched bleeding on the ground, instead of damping the fierce resolution of the survivors, served only to increase their intrepidity, and stimulate them to fresh exertions. The savage Moors, ashamed that the contest should remain so long undecided, redoubled their vigorous attacks, and after a long-disputed, though unequal combat, acquired a complete tri-

umph. The seven Infants of Lara, together with Nuño Salido, were stretched lifeless on the scene of strife, and most of the gallant troop shared the same melancholy but glorious fate ; the rest, some thirty in number, were made prisoners, and not a single man escaped to carry back the news of this disastrous tragedy.

The leader of the Moors now ordered the heads of the seven Infants of Lara to be severed from their bodies, that they might, according to the barbarous usage of those times, be presented to the King as a trophy. This order was speedily executed ; and carrying the bleeding trophies of their victory on the points of long spears, the conquering army retraced their steps to Cordova.

At this court, various interesting events had taken place since Gonzalo Bustos was first confined in prison. The Moorish King had relented somewhat of his severity, and the lot of the captive had been considerably ameliorated. His misfortunes attracted the pity of a Moorish maiden, the sister of the King, and the tender sentiment was soon matured into a deeper feeling. A mutual attachment ensued, which, though kept with rigorous secrecy in the first stages, could not elude detection in the end. The suspicions of the Moorish King were ultimately confirmed, and his rage was equal to his astonishment at the conduct of his sister. He only waited for the offspring of her guilty weak-

ness to be born, to put the helpless Princess to death ; Gonzalo Bustos, together with his guiltless child, were reserved for some more terrible fate, the planning of which now engrossed every thought in the mind of the cruel Moor.

On the very day that he received the news of the signal victory obtained by his lieutenants over the Infants of Lara, his unfortunate sister was brought to bed of a son, and shortly after she was privately strangled. The life of the son was however, for the present, spared, not through any feelings of pity, but because he might prove the means of increasing the torments preparing for his wretched father. The King received the sanguinary present of the seven heads with a ferocious joy ; and he now arranged a plan of revenge truly diabolical. He ordered a magnificent banquet to be prepared, and pretending to be softened by the miseries which Gonzalo had suffered in his horrid dungeon, since the secret of his amours was known, he ordered the prisoner to be unshackled and brought into his presence. When the Lord of Lara appeared before him, he pretended that he was disposed to grant him his freedom, in consideration of his many troubles and sorrows, and in compliance with the dying request of his sister. He then invited him to the banquet which he had caused to be made ready.

Gonzalo Bustos, completely ignorant both of the

fate of his sons and of that of his mistress, whom he supposed to have died a natural death, saw no reason to doubt the Moor's sincerity, and expressed himself in words of deep gratitude for his generous determination. Full, therefore, of the most flattering hopes, he followed the King into the banquet-hall. The preparations for the feast were splendid. The eyes of Gonzalo were dazzled by the profusion of gold and precious stones with which the convivial board was ornamented. When the guests had taken their seats, the King ordered the covers of some dishes in the middle of the table to be removed. A sight of horror was presented to the eyes of the company: the dishes contained seven bloody heads—the eyes wide open, in the fixed stare of death; the hair clotted with gore and dust. The King turned to Gonzalo Bustos, and, pointing to the frightful spectacle, said in a tone of savage exultation,—

“ Look, Gonzalo, look well ! Behold the banquet which the King of Cordova has prepared for thee. Does it not excite thy wonder and admiration ? ”

The unfortunate Lord of Lara, having gazed for a moment on the gory heads, uttered a wild shriek of dismay. Notwithstanding the mangled state of those sanguinary trophies, the wretched Gonzalo soon recognised them ; for what in nature can deceive the eyes of a father ? His agony was so pow-

erful, so intense, as to awaken a sentiment of pity even in the vindictive heart of the Moor. Gonzalo Bustos was carried almost senseless to his prison, where his incoherent language and demeanour soon gave evidence, that the anguish of his mind had been fatal to his reason. The King, relenting at the sight of this overwhelming calamity, resolved to pursue his vengeance no farther. He spared the life of his infant nephew, to whom he became insensibly attached. Mudarra—for such was the name given to the child—was allowed a free intercourse with his wretched parent, who, about two years after the horrid banquet, was liberated from prison, and permitted to wander about the halls and gardens of the palace in a state of gloomy idiocy.

Despite, however, of the miserable state of his mind, he enjoyed some lucid intervals, during which he lost no opportunity of speaking to Mudarra on a subject which absorbed his every faculty. Gonzalo had been made acquainted with the base atrocities of the Lord of Villaren; and the details of these dreadful events were strongly dwelt upon by the wretched Lord of Lara, when addressing his son. Meantime Mudarra grew, and gave early evidence of those great qualities which were to distinguish his future career. He had scarcely attained his twentieth year when his father, worn out by continual and hopeless sorrow, descended

to the grave. His dying injunctions were carefully treasured up in the bosom of young Mudarra, who made a sacred vow to fulfil them even at the cost of his life.

Two years more elapsed, when Mudarra, considering himself capable of the boldest undertaking, resolved to depart for Castile, and seek out the murderer of his father and brethren. He imparted his determination to those faithful Castilians who had been made prisoners in the engagement which proved so fatal to the Infants, and whom a feeling of devotedness to Gonzalo Bustos had induced to remain at Cordova, notwithstanding the liberty which the Moorish King had granted them to depart for their country. The Castilians having applauded the intentions of young Mudarra, and sworn to follow his destinies to the last breath, quitted Cordova under the command of this spirited boy, and advanced boldly into the bosom of Castile.

They made no secret of the object of their coming, and the chivalrous nature of their enterprise soon drew all the adherents and retainers of the family of Gonzalo Bustos to their standard. This determined band was farther strengthened by the liberal supplies sent by Doña Sancha, the widowed mother of the seven Infants, who had anxiously awaited an opportunity of avenging the dreadful fate of her sons. Besides this, the Count

of Castile pledged his word that he would not interfere in the quarrel, but suffer the two parties to settle it as they might.

Ruy Velazquez, at the rumour of the near approach of his enemy, advanced to meet him, and an engagement soon took place, in which he was completely defeated, notwithstanding the superiority of his forces, and compelled to retreat hastily to Burgos. Thither he was closely pursued by the implacable Mudarra, who, upon his arrival, sent a challenge to the foe of his father, to meet him in single combat. The Lord of Villaren laughed scornfully at the presumption of the Moorish bastard, as he called him, and contemptuously declined the contest.

“By the rood!” he cried, “this passes all credence; here is a renegade—a bastard of Moorish woman born—an unknown churl come to beard the Lord of Villaren in his very palace!”

Doña Lambra counselled the old way of removing their enemies, but the trick was too stale to succeed, and Ruy Velazquez, little aware of the dangers to which such carelessness exposed him, took no farther notice of the threats of young Mudarra. One day, when returning from the chase alone, having left his companions far behind, he was surprised by the sudden appearance of a stranger, who rapidly approached him. He soon, however, recognised his inveterate foe.

“What! the base renegade here again?—Begone, miscreant! or the sound of my bugle shall call hither those who will chastise your insolence. Begone, I say! Let my sight be no more offended by your odious presence.”

“Your wish, proud Sir, may perchance be fulfilled,” said Mudarra in a sarcastic tone, “for you or I must be a lifeless corpse ere many moments be elapsed.”

“Thou darest not raise thy arm against me.”

“Put yourself on your guard,” replied the young warrior. “My resolution is fixed—draw your weapon, unless you mean to be slain without attempting a defence.”

The Lord of Villaren was startled at the dauntless perseverance of his rancorous foe; yet he could not persuade himself that he would venture to attack him if he refused to fight.

In an imperious voice he again exclaimed—“Avaunt, thou detested bastard! Insult no longer the noble cavaliers of Castile.” Mudarra answered his arrogant language with noble disdain:—

“I behold the disgrace of thy lineage! with joy
I behold thee, thou murderer!” answer’d the boy.
“The bastard you curse, you behold him in me;
But his brothers’ avenger that bastard shall be.
Draw! for I am the renegade’s offspring,—Mudarra;
We shall see who inherits the life-blood of Lara!”

Mudarra then fiercely attacked the Lord of Vil-

laren, who, despite of his skill in arms, was soon stretched on the ground a corpse.

“ Oh, my sire !—oh, my slaughtered brothers !” cried Mudarra, “ ye are partly avenged ; but the tigress, the female fury who was the primary cause of your misfortunes and untimely end, is still alive.—My duty is not yet fulfilled.”

He hurried to Burgos, and summoning all the friends and relatives of his family to a meeting, asked their advice respecting the most desirable way of proceeding, with regard to the cruel Doña Lambra. Opinions were divided. Some thought that she should be immured in a dungeon, and starved to death. Others, that she should have her eyes put out, and be kept in confinement to the end of her days. Not a few were for burning her alive ; and many proposed that she should be stoned to death. But though there was such a diversity as to the means, all concurred in the opinion, that some barbarous punishment or other ought to be inflicted on the wretched Doña Lambra.

After much deliberation, it was determined, that the victim should be brought out very early in the morning, stoned to death, then burnt, and her ashes scattered in the air. The assembled partizans of Mudarra next devoted their thoughts to the accomplishment of their barbarous purpose. Night came, and more than three hundred men assumed their arms, to be ready, in case the friends

of Doña Lambra should attempt any defence of her person. When all the city was buried in awful silence, Mudarra, and about a dozen of the most devoted of his party, began to distribute their men about the streets along which the victim was to pass; and having taken these precautions, and perceiving that every thing seemed to favour his horrid purpose, he advanced, with his staunch adherents, to the mansion of Doña Lambra.

The terror of the unfortunate woman, when she was startled from her sleep by the presence of her enemy, was expressed in the wildest manner. She soon perceived that she had no mercy to expect from Mudarra; and the utter desolation of her state filled her heart with the keenest agony. She however endeavoured to avert her doom, by appealing to the manly feelings of her foes. Her pride and haughtiness fled, and she humbled herself to an abject and supplicating posture. But it was in vain.

“No, tigress!” fiercely shouted Mudarra, “expect not that mercy which thy implacable nature never showed. Thy doom is fixed—make therefore dispatch, if thou hast prayers to utter.”

The miserable Lady of Villaren was dragged into the street, when day began to shed its first glimmer over the slumbering city. It was a soft hour, which spoke of repose and promise. What a contrast with the state of Doña Lambra! Her

eyes rolling in wild agony—her hair flowing in disorder—her feet bare—her person almost in a state of nakedness—the proud, the magnificent Lady of Villaren stood now a hapless supplicant, without power to awaken one spark of pity in the breasts of her numerous enemies. There was something unnatural in the assembling of so many warriors against the life of a single unprotected female. Her fate was terrific, and her shrieks brought many to their windows to gaze on the horrid scene. But enough: she was soon after burnt, and her ashes thrown to the winds. Such was the dismal fate of the haughty Doña Lambra, the instigator of all the treacheries of which her husband had been guilty.

Mudarra, soon after this catastrophe, was baptised, and received into the church with great pomp and rejoicings. On the same day, he was made a Knight by the Count of Castile, Garci Fernandez, and declared lawful heir to the estates and honours of his father, Gonzalo Bustos. The widow of this cavalier, much pleased with the unwearied perseverance with which her late lord's natural child had pursued the vengeance of her own foes, the destroyers of her offspring, now resolved to adopt Mudarra for her son; and, accordingly, the ceremony of the adoption took place soon after the youth had been made a Christian.

Doña Sancha attired herself in a very ample frock of silk, and, in the presence of her nearest relatives, Mudarra was drawn into her wide sleeve; then he put forth his head near the lady's neck, and she kissed him on the forehead, and presented him to her family as her own son. A splendid feast crowned this curious and singular ceremony. The Count of Castile was present at the banquet, and evinced much goodwill towards the new made Knight and Christian.

From that moment Mudarra showed himself worthy of the honours conferred upon him, no less than of the illustrious race from which he was descended. The obloquy of his birth was completely removed by his adoption into the family of Lara; and his after-life proved that he was well deserving of all the favours bestowed upon him; since he was equally distinguished for his valour in the field and for his friendly nature and good qualities during peace. Mudarra was the founder of the family of the Manriques, one of the most noble and glorious in Spain. His mortal remains were interred in the monastery of St. Peter of Arlanga.*

* Mariana.

The Poisoned Goblet.

“ Oh ! speak no more,
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul ;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.”

SHAKSPEARE.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE POISONED GOULET.



The Poisoned Goblet.

THE name of Almanzor, the Moorish King of Cordova, was for a long time a by-word of terror to Christian Spain. That warrior's progress was marked no less by the rapidity of his movements and impetuosity of his attacks, than by the merciless devastation which accompanied his victories. His views of ambition and conquest were as high as his valour was great, and his exertions unremitting. Insatiate in his thirst for power, the kingdom of Cordova presented but a limited arena for the exercise of his enterprising spirit. He had it in contemplation to bring the greater portion of Spain under his dominion ; but numerous were the obstacles which presented themselves to the accomplishment of his design.

The Christians had at this time become very powerful ; and the boundaries of their territories had been progressively extending. They were no longer a nation of poor adventurers confined to the mountains of Asturias and Cantabria ; for the splendid victories achieved by the Alonzos and the Ramiros had strengthened their dominion, as well as given lustre to their names.

Their towns were gradually increasing in population, and the numerous fortresses and castles which met the eye on every side, gave indication of growing power and ample means of defence.

Under these circumstances, great as were the military talents and resources of Almanzor, he prudently considered, that to attain the height of his ambitious schemes, the instrumentality of arms merely would scarcely be sufficient. He knew that policy, and that too of the deepest description, was essential to the furtherance of his plans. The Christians were not easily to be deceived. However slow the progress they had yet made in civilization, when compared with the Moslems, a natural jealousy and deeply-rooted mistrust supplied in them the want of policy and mental cultivation. With them, it was an established axiom, that there was no sincerity, no friendship to be expected from the Moor, whom they had always been taught to consider as a natural foe to the Christian. Hence they proceeded with the greatest caution in all their treaties with the Moslem, and thereby gave him very little opportunity for deceit.

But Almanzor resolved to employ other engines, which were likely to answer his expectations. He had observed that the Christians were afflicted with the malady which usually attaches itself to small independent nations living in the vicinity

of each other. They were jealous of the aggrandizement of their neighbours, and continually watching their motions. Thus, though they always united against the common enemy, it was nevertheless no unusual thing to see them turn their arms against each other, when unemployed against the Moors.

The sovereignty of Castile, governed by counts, had awakened the jealous fears of the kings of Navarre, who beheld the preponderance and importance which that state was assuming, if not with real alarm for the present, at least with feelings of anxiety for the future. Nor were the Castilians, on their side, less tormented by the dread of seeing their rights invaded, and their independence annihilated. The superior power of the kings of Leon and Navarre was constantly before their eyes, and engendered in their minds many doubts and apprehensions. Should those two nations conspire against the independence of Castile, they could scarcely hope that it would be able, successfully, to contend with its two rivals in the field. Almanzor was aware of this perilous situation of the Castilians, and had inwardly resolved to turn the circumstance to his advantage.

The present juncture was particularly favourable to his designs. Castile was at this time governed by the Count Sancho Garcia, a mere boy ;

who, on account of his minority, allowed the reins of government to be held by his mother, the Dowager Countess Doña Ava, — a woman as remarkable for the charms of her person, as she was distinguished for the powers of her mind. She was still at an age when it is no more difficult to inspire a passion, than to feel it. Her union with the late Count had not been very fortunate ; and her affections, therefore, might be said to be entire. A woman, unless she be an imbecile, or a religious fanatic, loves, has loved, or will love. Doña Ava was doomed to experience the mournful results of a violent passion — a passion not the less powerful, because unfelt in the first stages of youth.

The Countess of Castile had, since the death of her husband, fixed her whole thoughts on the enjoyment of power. In her ardent mind, the pride of dominion supplied the vacuum occasioned by the absence of more tender feelings. But in this happy state she was fated no longer to remain, having, at length, beheld the man destined by nature to awaken those long dormant emotions, and to destroy her peace of mind. To add to the torment of conflicting passions, and increase her misery, this man was the enemy of her country, — a man whom, in one of her subjects, it would have been barely excusable to love ; but whom in her, a sovereign, it was a bounden duty to discard

from her thoughts and affections. Doña Ava had seen the Moor Almanzor, and from that moment had become the slave of a powerful and most distressing passion. The gallant deportment, insinuating address, and manly appearance of the Moor, were fearful odds for a woman to cope with, when they were farther seconded by the glory of an illustrious name, and the splendour of numerous achievements. The Countess accordingly loved—loved deeply; and it seemed that her long-subdued affections had caused her present sensation to be the more intense and absorbing. Shame alone induced her to confine the new-born feeling to the inmost recesses of her heart; but, even despite of her utmost exertions, how could it be long concealed from the object that inspired it? What enamoured female can keep so strict a watch over her words and looks, as to afford no glimpse of the fire that consumes her? What man is there so utterly devoid of self-love, so destitute of natural perception, as to let the favourable symptoms he has produced, pass by unheeded?

Considerations of policy had instigated Almanzor to visit the court at Burgos, the seat of the Castilian government, in order to enter into a treaty of alliance with its sovereign. He was led to suppose that the Castilians, who dreaded the ambition of their neighbours, would readily listen to arrangements which offered them a protection from the

apprehended danger ; while at the same time this alliance would be of the most essential service to the Moors, by reducing the number of their enemies. Such were the speculations that engrossed the mind of the Moorish chief upon his entrance into the Castilian court. A few days of sojourn there, however, gave a wider scope to his ideas, and heightened the prospects of his ambition. He perceived the sentiment which he had unexpectedly engendered in the heart of the Countess, and from that moment he determined unreservedly to avail himself of the power which such a sentiment must give him.

With regard to himself, he did not feel a single spark of the fire which burnt so fiercely in the bosom of the unfortunate Doña Ava ; but this want of reciprocity in love was the more favourable to his ambitious projects. The complete freedom of his heart aided most efficiently the operations of his mind ; and thoughts which sprang uninfluenced by any feelings for another, could not but be advantageous to him who conceived them. Yet Almanzor, though a stranger to the reality of a passion which was so intensely felt for him, knew but too well the expediency of adopting its outward show. Accordingly he was unremitting in professions of unalterable attachment ; and the deluded Countess, blinded by her own infatuation, easily fell into the snare. She believed the

Moor ; and her love, if violent before, increased tenfold in its power, when she considered it fully requited.

It was then that a project, as diabolical as it was daring, first entered the mind of Almanzor. The absolute dominion which he had over the mind of the Countess, made him anxious to exercise the same control over Castile. To render himself master of that territory, and to annex it to the crown of Cordova, was the theme of his waking dreams and fondest speculations. Towards the attainment of this object, an union with the enamoured Countess appeared to present the easiest as well as the shortest way. But though the passion of that lady made him confident that his offers would be accepted, there yet remained another obstacle to be removed in Don Sancho Garcia, the rightful heir to the sovereignty of Castile. To usurp his throne whilst he lived was a hopeless undertaking. He was too fondly cherished by his subjects, for them tamely to permit the spoliation of his inheritance ; and though the Countess might succeed in her endeavours to raise a party to support her claims, yet by far the greater portion of the nobles, as well as of the people, would embrace the cause of their lawful prince, and that too with additional ardour, when opposed to an unnatural mother and a Moorish paramour.

So strongly was this conviction impressed upon

the mind of Almanzor, that it at length gave birth to the horrid idea of removing, by a treacherous murder, the impediment presented by the Count Don Sancho. He accordingly resolved upon his death ; but, to insure the success of his plans, it was necessary to make the mother, not an accomplice merely, but a principal in the fearful crime. So completely to annihilate the feelings, even of a bad mother, as to render her capable of such a deed, must ever be a task pregnant with difficulties ; for, of all repulsive and unnatural crimes, such an one strikes the mind as being the most repulsive and unnatural. But of what crime is not the phrenzy, the delirium of an overpowering and guilty passion capable?

Upon the overwhelming nature of Doña Ava's infatuation, the Moor founded the most sanguine expectations of success. He had commenced his fiendish machinations by throwing out occasional hints of his wishes. He had pictured, in the most seductive colours, the advantages of an union between the two crowns of Castile and Cordova by marriage, and had made the most dexterous use, which a daring and talented man could make, of specious reasoning, which unhappily assumes the garb and aspect of solid argument, when addressed to a mind thoroughly prejudiced in the speaker's favour. And, alas ! what mind can be more prejudiced than that of an ardent and impassioned

woman! But, despite of her doating attachment to the Moor, she had still the feelings of a mother; and the first hint of the projected murder filled her heart with horrid disgust. She recoiled with abhorrence from her lover, and rejected the abominable proposal with resolute indignation. Almanzor was prepared for this opposition, and accordingly felt neither surprised nor alarmed at the repulse. He merely suffered the first gust of feeling to blow over, and then renewed the attack with more art and intrepidity.

The conflict of passion in Doña Ava's heart was dreadful; but though the combat was strong and protracted, the Moor did not forego his hopes of victory. On the contrary, in such cases, to combat at all is almost a sign of ultimate defeat. The black phantom of guilt loses part of its gigantic proportions by being continually dwelt upon, and contrasted with the glittering reward which it holds out to its followers; and in the conflict of two passions, the more violent will too often gain the victory over the more just. Reason, man's sure guide, is lost amid the darkness of such untoward storms—feeling alone can save the wanderer in this peril; but good feelings are apt to undergo the fate of reason, when opposed to more powerful rivals.

The Countess, from the decided abhorrence with which she had at first received the treacherous

words of her lover, had gradually slackened into tame opposition. She had the weakness to reason with Almanzor, instead of flying from his attacks. The insinuating Moor thus gained all the strength that his opponent lost in each succeeding struggle, till by degrees he had worked up the mind of the wretched woman to a state bordering on frenzy—a state the most befitting for a sudden and desperate resolution. There are two roads to crime; the smooth one of calculating and callous villany—the rugged and irregular one of stormy passion. The Countess was not depraved enough to follow the former, and her tormentor determined to compel her to the latter.

Doña Ava was a prey to increasing anxiety—to a turmoil of emotions, which converted each moment of her life into a century of misery and wretchedness. In a retired apartment of the palace she was indulging in one of her deepest moods of gloom, when the door gently opened, and offered to her aching sight the form, at once dreaded and adored, of her favourite Moor. She started from her seat, and anticipating the renewal of a horrid subject, her bosom began to beat violently; her eyes shot forth the chilling radiance of terror; her whole frame trembled, and, after a short interval, she tottered into her chair. Almanzor remained for some time motionless,—his arms crossed, his eyes fixed upon the Countess; but he neither

spoke in the accents of tenderness, nor did he again attempt to urge the meditated murder. He stood collected and composed ; but his countenance indicated that some powerful emotion was working in his mind. Doña Ava, surprised at a conduct so different from his behaviour on former occasions, when every moment was spent either in tender professions of regard, or in dreadful importunities to crime, gazed intently on her lover, and soon perceived with dread and fear, an unusual coldness stamped upon his countenance. She awaited in suspense the communication of some distressing intelligence, and her fearful surmises were but too soon realized, when, with an affected calmness both of voice and manner, Almanzor began :—

“ Lady, dismiss your apprehensions ; I come neither to urge you to reward my sincere love, nor to torment you with vows of a passion, the end of which is now at hand. I merely present myself before you to fulfil a common duty of civility.”

He stopped.—The Countess, alarmed at this announcement, again rose from her seat, and advanced two or three steps towards her lover. She then halted, and looked tremblingly on his face,—all her colour fled, and she appeared the very image of agonized fear and suspense. The Moor continued.

“ Yes, Doña Ava, I come to take a final leave of you.”

“ Heavens !” cried the astonished Countess, “ what

mean you, Almanzor? Come you to increase my anxiety and torments, by threats of such dreadful import? Take leave of me! no, no, you cannot contemplate so hasty a departure?"

"I do," replied Almanzor with chilling calmness,—“by Allah! I do. What is there to detain me in Castile? Your love? No. I am, alas! but too well convinced that such a love, if it ever really existed, was not of that absorbing kind which alone could satisfy the heart of Almanzor. There was much of pride, lady, in the composition of the sentiment you felt towards me; but little, very little of genuine affection, much less of deep, intense, and overwhelming passion. No! you wished to ascertain how far the power of your charms would go in enslaving the first amongst the Moors. The man whom your countrymen beheld with terror, you were ambitious to disarm—the warrior who made the Christian armies tremble, you longed to see prostrate at your feet. Such was the aim of your desires—your arts succeeded—your triumph was accomplished—your vanity satisfied. This was enough for you; and from the moment that your pretended love was put to a severe test, it soon gave evident proof how widely different the reality was from the profession.”

“Hold, Almanzor! you cannot mean what your tongue now utters. You know full well, that, if ever woman loved devotedly, enthusiasti-

cally, I am that woman. Of my ardent affection for you, alas! I have given irrevocable proofs,—such proofs as no virtuous and noble Castilian lady ever gave before. If you abandon me now, it is not you, but *I*, that ought to assume the right of complaint.”

“Your sex, even when they wrong us most deeply, will ever find the means to exhibit themselves as the injured party. But I came not to bandy words with you: I now see you for the last time.”

“Almanzor! my own Almanzor!” cried the Countess in bitter affliction, “speak not thus. I have not deserved this from you: your heart cannot be so callous to the voice of pity as to render you forgetful of all my love for you, and the great sacrifices which that love has prompted me to make. No! you do not, cannot mean to depart?”

“I do,” sternly answered the Moor. “Tomorrow I return to Cordova. My longer stay at Burgos is useless, perhaps dangerous: the Christians already look upon me with eyes of jealousy and mistrust. Don Gonzalo, the tutor of the young Count, cast such suspicious glances at me, as no Moor, and least of all Almanzor, ought to brook. This want of respect, I should rather say these injuries and insults, I might overlook, in consideration of a devoted woman, and as a reward for her deep and absorbing passion; but

when such an one is not to be found, it would be the height of ridicule and folly to sink the glorious character of a Moorish conqueror into that of an idle dangler about a petty Christian court. I have spoken my mind freely—nothing now detains me.—Farewell, Doña Ava!”

As he said this, with a freezing composure he turned to depart. The Countess was petrified at the indifference evinced by the man of her idolatry. So far was she sunk in her infatuation, that the very idea of a separation, and that, too, in coldness and neglect, made her startle with dread.

She flew after the Moor in the disorder of overpowering grief, and in the thrilling accents of despair.

“Barbarous man!” she cried, “what can you require of me? You have made me unutterably wretched—you have degraded me even in my own estimation. Report says that my husband fell by your hand! and yet his widow, who ought to wage interminable war, and cherish unconquerable hatred against his enemy—his widow, a true Castilian matron, a descendant of a long line of noble Goths—the Countess Doña Ava, has, instead of hate and abhorrence, bestowed her unbounded affection on the Moor! She has fallen from the height of resplendent honour into the abyss of shame; and yet, when you have made her guilty, you mercilessly abandon her to the torture of her

remorse, because she will not proceed in the career of guilt, and add the most unnatural of crimes to the sins she has already committed for your sake! Cruel! ungrateful Almanzor! Of my boundless affection for you, the proofs have been too strong and unequivocal easily to be obliterated from your mind. No! You do not apprehend a want of love, a coolness in attachment from me; for it is, alas! the sincerity, the blindness, the prodigality of that love which now renders it so valueless in your eyes! Had I been less kind and infatuated, I should not have experienced the unmanly cruelty of your present conduct."

The overwhelming sorrow of the unfortunate Doña Ava now found a free vent in tumultuous sobs and a shower of tears. Despite of her haughty character, the fond woman stood confessed in the intensity of her affliction. The Moor was a little moved at the exhibition of her lively sorrow,—for though he had never felt for her more than the evanescent regard, which had expired from the moment that the desire which produced it was satisfied, he yet could not view with complete indifference the despair of one whose affection for him was of a most overpowering description. He softened, therefore, the tone of his voice, and threw some show of affection into his words and demeanour. Happy would it have been for the Countess had he pursued a different course! But

the wily Moor was fully sensible of the influence which the present critical moment would give him, if properly managed. A reconciliation, after words of unkindness, binds a devoted woman more firmly to the object of her affection. Doña Ava was wrought to a paroxysm of love and remorse. A conviction of the degradation into which she had plunged—the desire of uniting her destinies with those of her lover—the fearful image of a final separation from him—all these ideas, and others equally distracting, rioted in her mind, and threw her heart into a turmoil of excitement and agony. In the midst of this direful conflict, frenzied by guilty love, almost bereaved of the power of reason, she nerved her soul to the accomplishment of a horrid crime, and promised her lover the sacrifice of her own son, as the reward of his hand and affection.

Meantime, the zealous and faithful Don Gonzalo, and other good Castilians, murmured significantly enough at the protracted stay of Almanzor at Burgos. They considered that the object of his visit could be fulfilled without occupying so long a period of time; and indeed, the signing of a truce was not a matter of so dilatory a nature in those times, when the science of diplomacy was very little advanced, and people thought how soon an affair could be arranged, not how much time it was possible ingeniously to throw away, without

coming to any arrangement at all. The ancient Castilians, therefore, not being initiated in the mysteries of this modern science, conceived it very strange that the Moor should continue in their court half a dozen months, to do that which could be done in as many hours.

Almanzor perceived what was passing in the minds of his allies, and in order not to excite more jealousies, or confirm their fears, he had determined to depart. He announced, therefore, his intention,—and the young Count, in the spirit of hospitality, ordered that a sumptuous banquet should be prepared to celebrate the signing of the treaty. A perfect good-will and mutual friendship seemed now to exist between the Castilians and the Moors; and for a few days previous to their departure, the latter were courted, honoured, and regaled in every way that hospitality could suggest. But the Castilians were far from suspecting the foul and frightful treachery premeditated by the Moor, on whom they so liberally bestowed their kindness and regard. The noble and generous Don Sancho Garcia, little aware of his approaching doom, was the first to set the example in honouring the traitor Moor.

Meantime, the Countess Doña Ava seemed studiously to avoid the presence of her fated son. She could not encounter his looks, much less receive the tokens of filial love and respect of which

she knew herself to be totally undeserving. Still was she obliged to go through the routine of her courtly duties with apparent cheerfulness and composure, lest she might heighten the suspicions which had already but too plainly taken root in the mind of Don Gonzalo. This noble Castilian had watched the conduct of the Countess, and reasonably suspected, that the change which was of late discernible in her character and deportment could not but be the work of some very powerful cause. His natural sagacity and good judgment conducted him through the labyrinth of conjecture, till, at length, he fixed his thoughts upon the true motive of Doña Ava's anxiety and strange behaviour. This suspicion having once entered his mind, he found an additional reason for urging the departure of Almanzor and his train.

The farewell banquet was prepared on a scale of regal magnificence and splendour. The most costly ornaments were collected from every part to adorn the convivial board, and an invitation was sent to all the principal Castilians to be present at the feast. Every one looked forward to the appointed day with joyful expectation—every one but the Countess, whose anxiety and agitation seemed to increase in proportion as the time approached. It was a moment of fearful importance, and pregnant with tremendous results. The sacrifice which was then to be consummated required

a degree of fierce calmness, of heartless ferocity, to which the wretched Doña Ava, far as she was advanced in the career of guilt, could lay but little claim. It had been decreed, by the treacherous Almanzor, that the young Count should receive his death by poison,—a death which he considered the least likely to excite suspicion. To his other accomplishments, the Moor added no small knowledge of the nature and properties of plants; and he had himself prepared a venomous distilment of so pernicious a description, that it produced death without causing any visible traces on the human frame of its clandestine workings.

The sacrifice required of the mother was appalling; but yet, in some measure, it appeared indispensable. It would have been madness to intrust any other with its commission. Almanzor was well aware that the deepest prudence and dissimulation are often not sufficient to evade detection in such deeds:—it was therefore imperious that the horrid secret should be confined to the two principal and only actors in the dismal drama. The Countess had consented to perpetrate the chilling murder. She had already received the deleterious agent by which it was to be committed, from the hand of her treacherous lover; and this tormenting fiend was continually strengthening her in her horrid resolves, by his assiduous importunities, as well as by the baneful influence of his destructive endearments.

There was a large golden goblet, of rude but curious workmanship, in the palace, which had ever been held in a sort of veneration by the Counts of Castile. This vase was rendered sacred to the Castilians, by its presenting a constant memento of their liberty. Out of this goblet Nuño Rasura and Layn Calvo, the first two judges of Castile, had drunk, when they pledged themselves to defend with their lives the independence of that state over whose destinies they were appointed to preside. From that moment the golden goblet was set apart to be used exclusively by the sovereign of Castile, upon days of grand ceremony, or other important occasions: it was therefore of inestimable value, and considered one of the greatest treasures of the Castilian crown. Into this goblet the Countess had consented to pour the few drops of murderous liquid, presented to her by Almanzor.

The portentous day at length arrived. Burgos was thronged with visitors; the mansions of the nobles and principal knights were hung with costly draperies, festooned with flowers. The olive branch and laurel leaf were gracefully entwined in the arms of Castile and Cordova. And the Crescent, without shocking the eyes of Christians, was displayed in various parts of the city, as much ornamented as the Cross. Banners and pennons waved on the turrets of the palace. The street leading to the principal entrance was

strewed with odoriferous shrubs; the people were dressed in the gayest attire. Strains of music floated along the air—enlivening peals of bells mingled their cadence with the stirring blasts of trumpets, and the equally animating noise of drums; in fine, every thing indicated a festival as magnificent as it was universally enjoyed.

Previous to the regal banquet, all the noble guests, Castilians and Moors, paraded the city in a splendid cavalcade, each vying with the other in the richness of his equipment and goodness of his steed. The troops went through various evolutions in the principal square; and the young Count, by his presence, added to the joy and animation of his devoted subjects. Almanzor did not quit his side for a moment, but strained every endeavour to testify the deepest respect and sincerest friendship for his ally. The noble-minded and unsuspecting boy received all these tokens of regard with a warmth of gratitude deserving a far different return. Indeed, the attentions of the Moor appeared so genuine, that even the shrewd Don Gonzalo was, in a great measure, their dupe. Hence the most perfect cordiality seemed to exist between both parties; and that joyful morning was unmarked by any events save those of an agreeable description.

While the court and the people were thus resigning themselves to the enjoyments of the festival, the Countess was a prey to the most racking

and tormenting feelings. The terrible moment was fast approaching when she was to renounce her title to the sweetest appellation conferred by nature,—when she was to render herself unworthy of that name of which woman ought to be the most proud. The wretched lady paced her apartment in the wildest disorder—her heart was a furnace of dark consuming fires—her brain a chaos of tumultuous and distracting thoughts. In vain she nerved herself to the direful deed, by trying to smother the swellings of feeling and remorse which agitated her bosom. In vain she endeavoured fiercely to repel the instigations of lingering nature, and to drown, in the wild voice of passion and crime, the awful voice of conscience. But its chilling notes rose higher than every other sound, and the Countess was cursed in the despairing conviction that she could not deceive herself for one single moment—that she was a wretch unworthy the sacred name of mother, and doomed to all the tortures of remorse.

But it was now too late to retreat—she was spell-bound by an infernal power. She knew the immensity of her guilt, and yet had not the courage to shrink from it. A fatal charm urged her blindly on: she was immersed in appalling darkness, and yet turned away from the glimmer of light which pointed out a better path. She ferociously combated the last warnings of her heart,

and seizing the poison, madly proceeded to the banqueting-hall, firm in her resolution, unconquerable in her frenzy and despair!

As she entered the place, a freezing chill shot through her hotly-raging veins—an invisible hand seemed to impede her progress, and she stopped—a heavy weight pressed painfully upon her heart. She beheld with horror the splendid preparations:—the golden ornaments, the magnificent draperies sparkling in brilliancy, and all the gaiety of vivid colours, seemed, upon her arrival, to lose their gaudy and festive appearance, and to be suddenly converted into an appalling darkness. For some time she contemplated, in horrid suspense, the seat of the fated victim, and that of the traitorous Almanzor, the cause of all her guilt, and all her misery. A host of racking thoughts rioted in her excited mind: she trembled in the convulsion of overpowering feelings—the conflict was tremendous, and she was compelled to lean for support against a wall before she could proceed to the accomplishment of the fearful deed!

At this awful moment her ears were startled by the joyous clamour proceeding from without. It announced the approach of the Count and his splendid train. The crisis was arrived—not a minute was to be lost.

“It must be done!” muttered the Countess in an awful tone of voice. “Avaunt, womanish fears!

—avaunt, whisperings of pity!—avaunt! ye have no power over me!—It *shall* be done, and then let all the curses of God fall thickly upon my guilty head!”

With the resoluteness of desperation, she flew towards the table, cast a hurried glance on the goblet, and again paused. Her hand was steady:—in a second the fearful deed might be accomplished; yet that fleeting second was like an eternity of horror to the criminal mother. A withering sensation came over her heart—the outstretched hand stood motionless in the air—a shadow fell heavily on every object around. Her eyes were dimmed; she could see nothing—the golden goblet and all the paraphernalia of the feast had disappeared. The workings of her mind were amalgamated into one vast overwhelming sensation of horror—her throat seemed to be tightened by a gigantic grasp. Her knees trembled—her eyes were glazed with terror. The suspense of this chilling moment, and all the awful tokens by which it was attended, were the last warnings of the unfortunate woman’s heart, the last struggle of her guardian angel against the fiend that urged her on! But, alas! it was too late: the extended hand had loosened its grasp—the poisonous preparation had fallen into the goblet!

The Countess now acquired a dreadful composure: it was the calmness of reckless guilt,—

the tranquillity of despair! The joyous shouts approached nearer—the air was deafened with tumultuous sounds of minstrelsy—the tolling of the bells redoubled—all betokened the glories of the approaching banquet—all gave evidence of the hilarity and contentment both of Christian and Moor. Every thing without bespoke unmingled delight and noisy happiness. What a contrast to the banqueting-hall, paced cautiously by a solitary woman!—a mother crushing all the tenderest feelings of nature to obtain the damning title of murderess of her son! The voice of joy was heard without. That silence of death and guilt reigned within. The fatal apartment re-echoed the last steps of the retiring criminal, hastening from the perpetration of a deed of sin,—then for a moment it remained in profound silence, and in the next it was suddenly filled with the boisterous mirth of the approaching guests!

Don Sancho, the devoted victim, led the way, attended on one side by his faithful Don Gonzalo, and on the other by the instigator of his approaching murder. Then followed a crowd of knights, both Moorish and Christian, mingled together in the closest fellowship and amity. The young Count took his seat, placing the barbarous Moor on his right hand. He next inquired for the Countess, his mother; and considering it was but meet that she should be present at an act of hos-

pitality which ratified the friendly treaty entered upon between Castile and Cordova, he sent a message soliciting her gracious presence at the convivial board. Doña Ava could not refuse this invitation without, perhaps, creating strange surmises amongst the assembled nobles. When the mind is conscious of guilt, it sees the phantom of detection in every omission as well as in every incautious act ; and sometimes the very excess of prudence leads to that detection which it is intended to avoid.

The Countess, having regained her composure, arrayed herself in her most splendid attire, and appeared in the banqueting-hall with her usual dignity of manner. She then took her station at her son's left hand, and summoned all her resolution and energy to undergo the dreadful trials of the moment. Her presence at the feast, at first, gave much uneasiness to Almanzor ; however resolute she might have shown herself in committing the fatal deed, he yet apprehended the danger arising from the least whispering of female pity and maternal feelings. But when he perceived the composure of aspect and deportment exhibited by his accomplice, the Moor's fears gradually vanished ; and he even congratulated himself upon her attendance at the feast, since she showed herself possessed of more coolness and nerve than he had supposed congenial to her nature.

The banquet began: Don Sancho and his guests appeared, by their words and look, to consider the present day as the most happy of their lives. Every thing seemed to favour the dark and cruel designs of the Countess and her lover, when a new subject of fear disturbed the heart of the latter, and cast a gloom over the vista of his joyful anticipations. When he reflected on the very strange coolness and tranquillity of the Countess, he began to doubt of the success of his scheme. A galling misgiving troubled his mind, that she had not fulfilled her pledge: the more he gazed upon her countenance, the more his suspicions were confirmed. At the same time, Doña Ava seemed studiously to avoid encountering his glances; and this circumstance, which was in reality the surest token of her guilt, he interpreted as the most unfavourable omen to his expectations. Then every moment his anxiety increased,—an anxiety rendered doubly poignant by the necessity of exhibiting unalloyed cheerfulness, and paying due attention to the words of compliment and kindness addressed to him by the Prince against whose life he conspired.

Don Sancho Garcia now rose from his seat, and the murmur of hilarity was hushed into a respectful silence. The Prince took the golden goblet in his hand, and seemed preparing to address his guests:—this was the decisive moment for the

Moor, who watched with intense attention the countenance of his mistress; this was the time to ascertain if the deed were done. He observed a slight emotion ruffling the features of the Countess—the token was small, but yet it was sufficient for the Moor. It gave ample evidence of guilt, and sure promise of its odious reward. Almanzor was tranquil; and he now, with unmingled satisfaction, awaited the catastrophe of the horrid drama.

“ Noble Castilians !” said Don Sancho, holding the goblet in his hand, “ this joyful day ratifies our friendly treaty with the gallant King of Cordova, our noble guest ; and in this goblet, rendered most sacred to our eyes, I pledge myself in wishing good health and all prosperity to my valiant ally.”

During the short speech of the Prince, the feelings of his mother underwent a fearful revolution. That calm atrocity which had marked her first entrance into the hall had quickly given place to powerful excitement. Her eyes were wild with fearful expression ; her bosom rose and fell with painful rapidity ; and on her varying and distracted features the traces of most overpowering emotion were discernible. The evidence of her conflicting passion attracted the notice of her son. He quickly put down the goblet, which he had just raised to his lips, and, with tender solicitude, inquired

the cause of her unusual agitation. The filial tone and feeling manner in which the question was put augmented the disorder and agony of the Countess. She felt all the throes of exquisite torture; and amidst the thronging pangs of dark remorse, fear, pity, horror, and despair, it was not easy to frame an excuse suitable to the occasion. She, however, in a few broken sentences, gave her anxious son to understand, that she was visited by a sudden indisposition, which would, no doubt, subside, upon her withdrawing to her chamber.

“Your just desires shall be fulfilled,” said the Prince in a soothing tone. “It would be refinement of cruelty to make you attend the banquet under the present circumstances. Yet, my dear lady, in honour of our royal guest, you will exert yourself to be present whilst I pledge myself to him in the sacred goblet.”

As he spoke, he again took up the poisoned goblet, and repeated his pledge of friendship to the Moor. Almanzor, in the most artful manner, expressed his acknowledgment, his eyes, which glistened with ferocious satisfaction, alternately directed towards the goblet and the despairing Countess. The unsuspecting candour of Don Sancho, and the cruel duplicity of his guest, increased the bitter agony of Doña Ava. Her mind appeared worked up to a degree of frenzy; her eyes glared around in the wildness of horror; the

assembled guests were chilled with amazement. The Prince raised the fatal cup to his lips; the awful crisis had arrived. A piercing scream was heard; every eye turned towards the Countess, who, in a wild delirium, cried out,—“Drink not, my son; there is murder in that treacherous draught!”

At the same moment, with a wild effort, she snatched the goblet from the Prince's hand, and with desperate resolution swallowed its noxious contents. This act was done with the swiftness of lightning; and the appalled courtiers had scarcely time to collect their ideas upon an event so singular and unexpected, when they perceived the wretched Countess immersed in a flood of tears. The dreadful conflict of struggling nature was over,—affliction had assumed the place of convulsive emotion,—the dupe of criminal passion had fled, and in that shower of sorrow the woman and the mother stood confessed. The Countess then threw her arms around her son, and with all the eagerness of maternal fondness, pressed him to that bosom which had premeditated his murder, and which was soon, alas! to receive its guerdon for the guilty thought.

“Oh, my son! my son!” she cried with throbbing affliction, “before I quit this world, and my wretched soul takes its flight to appear before the awful tribunal of eternity, let me receive the sooth-

ing conviction of your pardon for my unnatural crime. In a moment of infatuation and frenzy, I yielded to the base suggestions and importunities of your treacherous guest. Let the horror and shame of my death atone for my sins. Oh, Sancho ! my dear, my injured child ! trust not the Moor,— he conspired to defraud you of the crown ; and I— oh ! bitter, bitter recollection—consented to be his partner in the crime!—But my moments fly rapidly ; I feel already the corroding draught burning in my veins. Pardon me, my son ; oh ! let me hear that consoling word ere I expire !”

The afflicted and astonished Don Sancho bestowed the tenderest attentions on his wretched mother ; but all help was unavailing ; the progress of the poison had been rapid as its effects were sure. The disconsolate Prince afforded the dying Countess the only consolation in his power, and with the most soothing and endearing expression he granted the desired forgiveness. But whilst the attention of the young Count was exclusively taken up by his unfortunate parent, his faithful Castilians, alarmed and horrified at so deep a treachery, turned their furious glances against Almanzor, and gave every token of hostile intentions.

The Moor, in a paroxysm of rage and disappointment, had started from his seat, and apostrophized the unfortunate Doña Ava in terms of bitter reproach and indignant scorn. He even car-

ried his unmanly cruelty so far, as to heighten the misery of the deluded woman's last moments by a declaration, that he had never felt for her the love which he professed.

"It is well," murmured the Countess in a weak tone, whilst a sad smile curled her blanched lip; "it is well I should experience this unkindness from you: your ingratitude is one of the keenest of my dying pangs; and if this conviction can give pleasure to your merciless heart, you may abundantly enjoy it. My guilt is thus amply requited, and the lesson I leave behind is dreadful and complete. Farewell, my son! Pray to Almighty Heaven for thy sinful but unfortunate mother! —Mercy! mercy! oh, my God!"

The struggles of death now overpowered her, and, after a few seconds of strong convulsion, she breathed her last.

The tragic end of the Countess, and the unpitiful behaviour of the Moor towards his victim in her last moments, augmented the indignation of the Castilians, and added strongly to their desire of revenge. With a simultaneous movement they started upon their feet, and laid hands upon their weapons.

"What!" fiercely exclaimed Don Gonzalo, "shall such atrocious crimes pass unnoticed and unpunished? Forbid it, Heaven! Let the traitor pay with his dastard life the forfeit of his baseness."

“Proud Christian!” answered Almanzor with equal animation, “dare not to raise your hand against me, or you and all Castile shall rue the moment of such temerity. Moors, stand upon your guard! Our blood shall not be shed in vain.”

The enraged foes were on the point of commencing a furious contest; and that place but lately the scene of conviviality and friendship, was now to be changed into the sanguinary arena of strife. But Don Sancho Garcia, with a prudence and resolution superior to his years, boldly interposed his authority amidst the infuriate opponents.

“Hold Castilians!” he cried. “Hold! Respect the sorrow of an orphan son! Disgrace not this scene of hospitality with violence and bloodshed. We are superior to the Moors in arms, but not in treachery; in this, forsooth, the Castilians will never emulate them. Let them, therefore, depart unmolested from a court at which they were received with hospitality. Let them depart, with the galling conviction of the disgrace which their chief has heaped upon them; and let them prepare to meet us in the field. Castilians! delay but for a few days the retribution due for the injuries we have suffered from the traitor Almanzor; and I shall be the first to lead you to the field—the first to prove that my animosity and indignation are not the less powerful for having been thus delayed. Moors, begone! for purposes of friend-

ship and alliance we met—in a settled resolution of hostility we part. Henceforward, bitter and irreconcilable shall be our hatred. This I vow by Santiago, and the honour of all the Counts of Castile, my noble predecessors.”

This address was received with the warmest approbation by the Christians. They would not be undone in generosity even by their sovereign; and violent as was their thirst of revenge, and easy as it would have been to satisfy it, they obeyed the Prince's invitation, and deferred the contest. The Moors were then suffered to depart from Burgos, without molestation. Don Sancho Garcia, with feelings of the deepest sorrow and regret, paid the last obsequies to his unfortunate mother; and as the earth hid her remains for ever from mortal sight, he renewed his vow of war and vengeance against the Moor who had caused her untimely death.

But amidst the tragic and striking scenes which had signalized that memorable banquet, there was a most grateful recollection in the minds of Don Gonzalo and some others of the most daring and unbending Castilians. They had never given their approbation to the treaty with perfect freedom and good-will, and they were well pleased that it was thus dissolved. “Noble Castilians!” said Don Gonzalo, “Heaven watches over our destinies, and would not sanction a treaty con-

ceived in a spirit of opposition against *our* brother Christians of Leon and Navarre. Our jealousy of independence has nearly proved our ruin. Believe me, how great soever the injuries we may have received from other Christian powers, we ought never to forget that we make but one people, however divided by faction. The Moor is our common—our natural foe. No treaty—no fellowship with him, until we drive him from our native land. Union amongst the Spanish Christian states is indispensable: and far, far better that some or all of those states should be subjected to one Christian rule, than that we should, by jealousies and disunion, endanger our hopes of ultimate success against the Moors, or protract the period of their expulsion from Spain.”

The words of the noble Don Gonzalo were received with universal marks of approbation by his brother nobles, and every Castilian was confirmed in his previous resolutions against the Moor.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Kings of Leon and Castile,

FROM FERDINAND THE FIRST TO ALONZO THE EIGHTH :
A PERIOD OF 121 YEARS.

A. D. 1037. Ferdinand having conquered his brother Bermudo the Third, in the battle of Tamara, and by his death, which happened in the field, rendered himself the undisputed possessor of the Kingdom of Leon, (the title bestowed on the sovereignty of Castile,) which had till then been governed by Counts, he is to be considered the founder of the dynasty of *Castile*.* In Bermudo the Third ended the second male line of the Gothic Kings, which traced its descent from Pelayo.

1042. It was about this period that the renowned Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar, known as the *Cid Campeador*, rendered himself conspicuous.

1054. Garcia, King of Navarre, was killed in the battle of Atapuerca, fought against the Castilians. Fernando, however, did not deprive Sancho (the son and heir of that King,) of the crown, which this victory had placed in his power.

1065. Ferdinand died this year, after having committed the flagrant error in policy, of dividing his dominions between his

* The name of Castile is supposed by some historians to be derived from the many castles which that territory contained, and which were so useful to the Christian Lords.

sons. He bequeathed to the eldest, Don Sancho, Castile; Leon, to Don Alonzo; and Galicia with part of Portugal, to Don Garcia.

1067. Don Sancho waged war against his brothers, and compelled Don Alonzo, the King of Leon, to take refuge first in the monastery of Sahagun, and then in the Court of Almamun, the Moorish King of Toledo, where he was hospitably treated.

1073. Don Sancho was treacherously killed by Vellido Dolfos, with some suspicion that Dona Urraca was privy to this death. Don Alonzo was called from his retreat to take the crown of Castile.

1085. Toledo, after a siege, surrendered to Don Alonzo; and thus, after a long lapse of time, was the ancient capital of the Gothic empire recovered by the Christians.

1091. The Castilians lost a signal battle near Badajoz; King Alonzo himself was wounded, and had a narrow escape from the hands of his enemies, who had already seized him, when his soldiers came to his rescue.

1092. This year was rendered memorable by the conquest of Valencia, achieved by the Cid. That great warrior retained this city during his life.

1099. This year died the Cid. A singular circumstance is related of his having gained a victory after his death. By his instruction his corpse, arrayed in full armour, and bestriding the famous horse Babieca, was conducted amidst the army. The Moors fancying that he was really alive, afforded an easy victory to the Christians.

1109. This year the aged King Alonzo died, and was succeeded by his daughter, the Infanta Dona Urraca. The Queen by her misconduct, and the open favour she showed to the Counts of Cadespina and Lara, was confined by her husband in the castle of Soria, whence she escaped to Burgos; but was again taken, and placed under the power of her hus-

band. A bloody battle took place near Sepulveda between the Castilians and Arragonese, in which the latter were victorious.

1120. Calatayud fell into the power of the King of Arragon.

1126. Queen Urraca died, leaving her son, Alonzo the Seventh, her successor. He united the crowns of Leon, Castile, and Galicia.

1157. Alonzo the Seventh died, after having conquered Cordova, Jaen, Guadix, &c. He was succeeded by his son Sancho. It was during his reign that the famous order of Calatrava was instituted. This had its origin in the heroic defence of that city and its castle, by two monks of the name of Fathers Fitero and Velazquez. Sancho reigned only one year.

The Knight of Bivar.

“ I know he’s born for thriving,—
None like him in the land ;
I know that none in battle
Against his spear may stand.”

SPANISH BALLAD.

The Knight of Bivar.

Two noblemen were coming out of the palace at Burgos, whose animated gestures seemed to intimate that the subject of their conversation was not of a very amicable nature.

“The King doth wrong,” quoth the younger of the two, “in thus arrogantly treating the Emperor of Germany and the Holy See.”

“The King doth right,” replied the other with warmth. “No terms can be bold or arrogant enough, when they are meant to express the indignation of an independent King at the presumption of foreign Princes, who claim power to which they cannot have the shadow of a title.”

“Yet a little gentle courtesy might be used on the occasion,” returned the first speaker. “But you, Don Diego Laynez, will naturally enough defend the sentiments and manner exhibited in council by your young son Rodrigo, who, upon the reputation of great courage, presumes to be as competent as any experienced greybeard, to advise his sovereign.”

“Señor Don Gomez,” replied Don Diego in a

contemptuous tone, "fully certain am I that grey-beards have not the privilege of conferring wisdom on their possessors, or we should see a very different conduct in those who can offer advice derogatory to the honour of a free and independent nation."

The tone in which these words were pronounced, and the expressive glance which accompanied them, operated strongly on the already excited feelings of Don Gomez, Lord of Gormaz.

"What mean you, Don Diego Laynez?" he cried fiercely. "Do you intend to put an affront upon me?"

"I never condescend," proudly replied Laynez, "to become an interpreter, to suit the narrow understandings of ——"

"Take that, old dotard," angrily exclaimed Gormaz, striking a blow on the face of Don Diego,— "take that, and learn a little more wisdom yourself, than imprudently to provoke the wrath of Don Gomez Gormaz."

"A blow! a vile degrading blow!" exclaimed Don Diego in the utmost consternation. "Merciful Heavens! why have I lived till this hour?— why have I not fallen in the field against the Moor?—by foul treason, poison, or the plague? Any fate would have been welcome which could have saved me from this degradation. Don Gormaz, how could you disgrace yourself and me in

this unknightly fashion? Do you trust in the weakness of my arm, bent down as I am with years, and exhausted by infirmities? If the power to resent your base affront be wanting, I have still the resolution to attempt the deed."

As he spoke he laid his enfeebled hand upon his weapon, and advanced in a hostile manner towards his aggressor. The Lord of Gormaz laughed scornfully at the attitude of the aged cavalier, and in an insulting tone desired him to put up his sword.

"No, false knight!" indignantly cried Don Diego, "after such an affront, life is a disgraceful burthen. Don Diego Laynez and the Lord of Gormaz must not both remain in this world one hour longer. Draw and defend yourself, ere my aggravated feelings induce me to attack you thus unprepared."

The determined manner of the old man showed that he would keep his word; and his aggressor was at length compelled to assume his weapon, and place himself in a posture of defence.

"Since your temper is so irritable, proud Sir," said Don Gomez contemptuously, "I will condescend to gratify it. Foolish old man! your rashness is unparalleled; but if, as you prate, life is so disgraceful a burthen, in the spirit of commiseration, I will soon disincumber you of the odious load."

The two noblemen now commenced a combat

too unequal to be of long duration. The valour and resolution exhibited by Don Diego was but badly seconded by his nerveless arm. His blows fell harmless on the younger and stouter Don Gomez, who parried them as a man plays with the puny attempts of a child, and in a short time wrested the sword from his opponent's hand.

“ Now, Don Diego,” he said in a vaunting tone, “ to grant thee a boon of death would be an easy task ; but I spare thy life, that thou mayst learn lessons of prudence, and teach them to younger men.”

He then threw the old man's sword on the ground, and turning, with a stately and proud step, left the place. The feelings of Don Diego Laynez were excited to a degree of terrible agony. He had been foully affronted, and to this offence was added the aggravating circumstance of his having been baffled in an attempt to seek redress. In a melancholy mood he took up his sword from the ground, and casting a desponding look upon it, in a thrilling voice of sorrow exclaimed—

“ Alas ! the time was when thy aid was not so unavailing to Don Diego Laynez ! Many a doughty Moor has experienced the keenness of thy edge, directed by the power of a trusty arm. Woe is me ! that time is gone ! I am now a poor nerveless old man, exposed to the insults of the arrogant and ungentle. A curse on my fate ! a curse on

my heart, that renders me an object of shame and sorrow to myself! Why does not that fate which deprives a noble mind of the means of redress, at the same time take away the power of feeling an affront?"

The weak and helpless cavalier was now moved even to tears, and the drops of anguish trickled down his blanched cheeks, and bedewed even his venerable beard. After a moment of moody gloom, he continued in a more cheering tone:—

“ But kind Heaven hath given me a son, who, with the feelings of a noble knight, inherits all the strength of his father’s younger days. To him shall I appeal in my misfortune. He will not prove unworthy of the heroes from whom he derives his glorious descent—he will not tamely see his aged father foully insulted, and the aggressor walking at liberty in the square of Burgos.”

Don Diego, full of contending emotions, went in search of his son the gallant Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar, who afterwards became so celebrated under the name of the Cid Campeador. While the foregoing painful scene was taking place, the young Rodrigo had been enjoying the greatest bliss that mortal man can enjoy on earth. The warlike youth having laid aside the martial aspect that generally accompanied all his movements, was sitting at the feet of the beautiful Lady Ximena, the object of his fondest affections. His

eyes were kindled, not with the fierce fire of anger or the spirit of war, but with the softer flame of love. His suit had been crowned with success. Ximena, with blushing smiles, had consented to bestow her hand upon her illustrious admirer, and she had already pronounced the promise that was to unite them for ever.

Rodrigo, in a tumult of hope and pleasure, took leave of his future bride, and promising a speedy return, withdrew from her presence, with the intention of communicating to his father a project to which he well knew the old nobleman would offer no impediment. At length he perceived Don Diego approaching him with a haste incompatible with his years. Rodrigo advanced to meet him, and was on the point of disclosing his prospects when he was prevented by the expression of his father's countenance. With filial solicitude the son perceived that the breast of the sorrowing old man laboured under some oppressive weight. He therefore, before he spoke of his own affairs, resolved to await the communication which Don Diego was apparently about to make.

"My son, well met!" quoth the father in an afflicted voice.

"The blessings of Heaven on thy head, good Sir!" answered Rodrigo.

"Rodrigo!" continued Don Diego, in a more affecting manner,—and he paused, looking stead-

fastly in his son's face,—“Rodrigo! does thy heart feel the courage of a true knight?”

“Sir!” proudly replied young Rodrigo, “my father alone hath the privilege of asking that question with impunity.”

“Dost thou well know,” resumed Don Diego, “the glorious blood that runs in thy veins?”

“I know, Sir, that the son of Don Diego Laynez has nothing to envy of the proudest Lords of Castile.”

“In sooth, he has not,” proceeded the father with warmth: “it is from the glorious founders of this kingdom, from the justly renowned Counts of Castile, that we claim descent. But, would to God I had been the offspring of a base-born peasant, if by this means I had escaped the degradation which now weighs me down with sorrow and shame!”

“What words are these, oh noble sire?” inquired Rodrigo in surprise.

“Oh, my son!” replied Don Diego with overpowering grief, “thou seest thy poor father cursing the day on which he was born; yea, so covered is he, so tainted with affronts, that he stands in deep humiliation even before his own child!”

“And can this be!” exclaimed Rodrigo in alarm. “Can, in truth, Don Diego Laynez, the worthiest noble in Castile, be an object of so much pity and compassion? Oh, father! thou speakest

enigmas!—this is a mockery!—hath age so far impaired thy faculties as to prompt thee to utter these sad words?”

“Alas! my own Rodrigo,” returned Laynez, “well and justly are thy wonder and incredulity excited. Yet is not my melancholy intelligence the less true.—Oh! would to kind Heaven that the dotage of years, the delusions of vivid dreams, the agency of magic, or the inroads of fever, had wrung these words from my heart? But, alack! no such consoling illusion is mine; the affront that humbles me—me, Don Diego Laynez, the father of Rodrigo—to the very dust—is so dark, so corroding, yet so true, that nothing but death can obliterate it from my agonized mind.”

“Speak, Sir! speak!” cried Rodrigo in wild excitement. “Unfold this mystery—your ominous words fill me with horror!”

“And well they may,” said Don Diego, “for they are the dismal heralds of the most accursed intelligence. Oh! Rodrigo, that I should be compelled to make the confession even to thee!—my rebellious tongue refuses its office; and yet you must know my grievance, in order to redress it; but for this, the darkness of the tomb would scarcely be sufficient to bury so dread a secret.—Rodrigo! thy father has been disgraced by the rankest offence that can fall on an honourable

man — even by a blow, a foul unmanly blow, inflicted on his till now respected person!”

“Heaven for its mercy! do I hear aright?” ejaculated Rodrigo in incredulous anxiety—“A blow!”

“A blow!” returned the old man, giving vent to tears.

A cloud, black as night, overshadowed the manly brow of young Rodrigo. For a moment he stood fixed in a sort of wild stupor; the disgrace heaped upon his venerable father was so deep, that the bare announcement operated like a terrible charm on the feelings of the son. He cast another look on his aged parent, and as he perceived the tears of grief and shame furrow his pallid countenance, his passions were fearfully excited. After a short lapse of overpowering emotion, Rodrigo, striving to compose himself, proceeded to inquire the detail of this distressing affair.

“When did this affront take place?” he anxiously asked.

“Not an hour hence.”

“Saw any mortal man, knight or squire, or base-born churl, the degrading act?”

“No, Heaven be thanked! that addition to my sorrows was spared me. We were alone when the insult was offered.”

“ It is well. Now name the base offender.”

“ He is powerful and mighty.”

“ It is well. I am glad of it.”

“ His name will——”

“ Hold, Sir,” cried the young knight impatiently—“ hold in the name of honour. Who, under the canopy of high heaven—who, among the crowd of mortals, however puissant he may be, can screen himself from the pursuit of my vengeance? By the rood!” he added fiercely, “ should the King himself have been the aggressor, he shall answer to Rodrigo for the foul offence.”

“ Heaven bless thee, my good Rodrigo!” cried the father, a transitory gleam of joy illumining his countenance. “ Heaven and Santiago bless thee for those noble sentiments! My confidence in thy honour and filial duty is fully answered. The name of the offender is Don Gomez, Lord of Gormaz.”

A thunderbolt could not have been more awful and terrific to young Rodrigo than the bare mention of this name. He looked aghast, and seemed for some time unwilling to credit the chilling intelligence. His father, in anxiety, awaited his words; but the unbroken silence which absorbed him, awakened painful misgivings in his heart.

“ At length,” he ventured to say, “ *his* name has excited more than ordinary emotion in thy heart, my son. Does his power——”

“Hush, Sir!” interrupted Rodrigo in bitter sadness. “You cannot comprehend my thoughts; but yet forbear to offend my honour by ungenerous surmises.”

“Thou wilt avenge me then, Rodrigo?” said the father in a thrill of hope.

“Heavens, Don Diego! Could you think otherwise of me?”

“Yet the announcement of the offender’s name seems to have affected thee with sorrow and disappointment.”

“Sir, my good father,” quoth the young warrior with a bitter smile, “that is foreign to the present purpose. Rest satisfied that our enemy shall die. This moment I go to seek him out.”

Upon this, the father and son separated, but struggling, alas! with very different sensations. Don Diego, in the midst of his engrossing sorrow, found a source of comfort in the hope that his wrongs would be promptly and amply redressed. He placed the greatest reliance on the filial love and courage of his son, and his expectations were sure to be fully answered. With the conviction, therefore, that ere the sun went down, the Lord of Gormaz would cease to exist, the injured cavalier directed his steps towards his mansion. But how painfully different were the feelings of Rodrigo upon this occasion! Of all the most dreadful calamities that could exercise their power in bending

a stout heart, the one which now broke in upon the plans of happiness formed by the young knight of Bivar, was the most appalling and distressing. He had bound himself to accomplish a most fearful sacrifice,—for he was engaged by a sacred promise to kill the man, whom, next to his own father, he most respected in the world,—the powerful Lord of Gormaz, the father of Ximena, his fondly, devotedly loved mistress and betrothed bride.—And when was this terrible deed required of him? Even at that very moment, when, full of the most joyful anticipations, his heart came bounding with delight, and his eye glistening with pleasure, to impart the welcome project to his father, and ask his blessing upon the holy ceremony.

The trial to which the stout heart of Rodrigo was now subjected, was such as even to make that heart quake under the load of so great a calamity. In a moment his golden dreams of happiness were destroyed, like the fleecy vapour which is swept away by the sudden breath of a rising blast. A blackened horizon bounded his future prospects, and a renouncement of his fondest wishes was now imperiously demanded of his firmness. But it was not the awful mass of misery which he was heaping upon his own head that chiefly occupied the thoughts of Rodrigo. No,—it was the dire conviction that his own hand was to work the wretchedness of Ximena. To renounce her at all was as

great a sacrifice as filial duty could require; but to renounce her for the reason he was to offer, made him feel a thrill of agony to which his heroic soul had never been subjected until now. Yet, despite of these harrowing reflections, the heart of Rodrigo remained fixed and unconquerable in its resolution. Loud and piercing as were the cries of love, those of nature and blood, and honour, appealed with a more powerful voice to his noble soul, which, though buffeted by contending passions, still, like the sturdy bark amidst conflicting winds and waves, proceeded with unflinching perseverance in its destined course.

Rodrigo, bracing his nerves to his arduous task, now hastened to find his intended victim. Don Gomez no sooner perceived the young Knight, than in the expression of his countenance he read the object of his coming. He advanced, therefore, to meet him.

“Don Gomez, Lord of Gormaz,” said Rodrigo in a sombre and resolute tone, “being, as I am, the son of Don Diego Laynez, and claiming, as I do claim, the right of being esteemed a true knight and an honourable Castilian, the purport of my coming to you cannot long remain a doubt.”

“Something I might guess,” returned Don Gomez, with much coolness and composure, “from the imbecility of the father, and the renowned courage of the son.”

“That courage shall not limp behind report,” fiercely replied Rodrigo, “when it is to be exerted in a good—a sacred cause. Shame on thee, Sir Knight! thou hast done a deed which can never be entirely expiated, even by thy heart’s blood! That blood must flow till the current of thy life be drained; and until this be done, until the foul stain upon our honour be thus washed out, the existence of Rodrigo shall be but a blank in nature.”

“Thou speakest magnificently, boy,” returned Don Gomez, “though this, in sooth, is the language befitting the pride which lavish praise and adulation have accumulated in thy young breast. But trust me, provoke not too closely the prowess of a Knight, who, if less renowned, is not less redoubtable than yourself.”

“Why, Don Gomez,” returned Rodrigo, in bitterness,—“why did Nature, who gave thee the courage of a warrior, withhold from thee the other qualities of a knight? The courtesy which thou hast violated calls aloud for the most signal retribution; the sarcastic tone of thy language affects not me, who, happily, can to the keenness of thy tongue oppose that of my trusty sword.”

“Enough, vaunting boy!” fiercely exclaimed the Lord of Gormaz. “I will no longer brook thy insolent temerity; thy chastisement shall be speedy and ample; nor will my mistaken pity spare thy life, as it did that of thy father.”

“Curse on those false words!” muttered Rodrigo,—“curse on the paltry boon! What! and doth the Lord of Gormaz, the pitiless Don Gomez, blazon forth a generous disposition? Yes, thou didst spare my injured sire’s life,—and wherefore? because thy gift would sink him still lower in the scale of honour; because he might thus continually bleed in never ceasing-pangs, at the sight of that man who first disgraced him by a blow, and then insulted him with the present of a degraded life. But enough; no time is there for debate, when each moment that thou livest is an injury done to my father—a taint upon the honour of his son!”

The knights now withdrew to a convenient place for the combat, which was furiously and equally maintained. The sacred cries of nature animated the heart of young Rodrigo, whilst that of his adversary was filled with a fierce desire of vanquishing a rising warrior, of whose renown he was tired of hearing. Several vigorous blows were accordingly exchanged, without any apparent advantage on either side: but the youthful strength of Rodrigo triumphed at last, and a prodigious stroke of that sword which afterwards became so celebrated,* felled the proud Lord of Gormaz to the ground. Rodrigo plunged his weapon into the body of his

* It was named Colada, and was an object of almost as much respect as Babieca, the Cid’s war-horse.

foe, until it was crimsoned with blood, that he might bear the horrid token of victory to his disconsolate parent.

“Die, thou arrogant Castilian!” said his victor; “thy punishment is complete. Alas! that a knight who can show so stout a heart in battle, should exhibit such base uncourteousness in social life! Farewell, Lord of Gormaz!—far preferable is thy lot to that of thy conqueror. Oh! my noble sire, thou art avenged; and thy son the most wretched of mortals.”

Night had already closed, when the Knight of Bivar presented himself again before his father. The old man had been in vain invited by his attending pages to the evening meal; his thoughts were wholly absorbed with the subject of his wrongs. The protracted absence of his son redoubled his anxiety, for he had relied so confidently on the superiority of Rodrigo in arms, that a speedy victory seemed certain. Paternal solicitude, however, soon mingled itself with his other emotions. He trembled lest, by any possible mischance, his son should have failed in his attempt, and lost his glorious life. When therefore, he saw him return, he uttered a joyful cry, and ran to his embrace.

“My son! my good Rodrigo!” he said with emotion, “thou art safe, thank Heaven!”

“Yes,” replied Rodrigo in a calm tone, “and

thank, Sir, too, that just Heaven which hath granted me victory. Don Gomez fought as became a knight and a better cause ; but he at length received the award due to his offence. Father, thine afflicted eyes shall no more be insulted by his sight. Look on this ;” and as he spoke, he presented the ensanguined weapon,—“ look ! it is the life-blood of the offender. Let the crimson token gladden thy heart.”

“ Oh ! my son,” cried the father affectionately, “ thou art indeed the honour of my house ; and from this moment the head of that house shalt thou be.”

He then led his son to supper, and placed him in the seat of honour, the highest distinction that could be offered in those times, and such a one, indeed, as had never before been done to a son by his father. Don Diego took every means of showing his regard for the young Knight, and the attendants scrupulously imitated his example. But, despite of all these gratifying demonstrations of respect, the eye of Rodrigo told that there was a chord in his heart, which did not strike in unison with the feelings of joy which his father wished him to display. A sad smile curled his proud lip, and his eye sparkled not with the fire of animated pleasure.

Whilst he was thus indulging a mournful reverie, a scene of supreme horror was in prepara-

tion for the orphan victim he had made. On that memorable and tragic night Ximena, in a flutter of expectation, awaited the return of her lover; when was to be fixed the day for the accomplishment of their fondest wishes,—the day that was to bind them in indissoluble bonds. Rodrigo did not make his appearance, and the heart of the enamoured maiden began to nourish some ill-boding apprehensions, though she could not by any possibility surmise how great was the extent of her misfortune. A long and tedious hour passed—another—and yet another; the night was now far advanced, and still no signs were there of Rodrigo's coming. Often did Ximena repair to her casement; and, while the moon flooded the turreted buildings of Burgos, with a pale white radiance, strained her eager eyes to welcome the approach of her lover, but as often were her tender expectations deceived.

But a new source of disquietude increased the agitation of her mind. The hour was unusually late, and her sire Don Gomez did not return. She knew of no cause for this protracted absence; and with every minute that elapsed, her fears were augmented. At length there was a great clamour in the hall, and Ximena, who was pacing her chamber, came with hasty steps to welcome the cavaliers, for she had been informed that they had been seen together. Her heart bounding

with anticipated delight, she descended to the hall: a father—a lover—a dearly-cherished lover—the most deserving of woman's affection,—the young and gallant Knight of Bivar, were there to receive her cordial greeting. And as she came down, she perceived the attendants crossing in haste with their torches to receive their lord.

Ximena reached the hall, and there beheld a great concourse of people, who did not belong to the mansion. Distress and consternation were depicted on their countenances, and there were some men carrying a burthen, towards which the mournful yet eager looks of the spectators were directed. She hurried to meet this object of general interest; she looked earnestly, and saw—Oh horror!—a bleeding corpse—the corpse of her father! His gory locks were scattered over his features; but she saw enough to ascertain the fatal truth. She uttered a wild scream, and would have embraced the lifeless remains of her beloved parent, had not the bystanders, with compassionate violence, forced her from the horrid spectacle.

In the first tumult of surprise and grief occasioned by the unexpected fate of the Lord of Gormaz, no one had been able to obtain any exact information of the circumstances which led to his death. Every one perceived that he had fallen by the hand of an adversary; but who that adversary was baffled the conjectures of all. The quarrel of

the two knights, as well as its cause, was a complete secret. Vows of revenge were made, and dire threats pronounced, by the friends and adherents of the dead Don Gomez; but the object of all this indignation remained to be discovered. The mansion of the Lord of Gormaz became a scene of confusion; and the different accounts which were given of the manner of his untimely end, tended only to increase the disorder, since none of them approached in the slightest degree towards the truth.

Meantime Rodrigo de Bivar had left the table, and, unable to obtain any repose in the present agitated state of his feelings and the wild disorder of his thoughts, had sallied out of his sire's mansion to seek in the coolness of the night-air some solace to the burning flame which consumed him. Like a wanderer accursed by his own deeds, he walked at random through the silent and now solitary streets of Burgos. The stilly calmness and mournful appearance of the city were in accordance with the desolation of his heart. The noble nature of the young knight shrank from the idea of being the cause of a lovely and innocent woman's sorrow. How then must that sentiment have been heightened by the consciousness that the being whom he had thus rendered wretched, was his own Ximena!

But, amidst the corroding reflections which now

assailed his manly heart, there was a proud, a consoling thought which supported that heart in its conflict, and threw a cheering halo over the awful darkness which enveloped his mind. A deep insult had been avenged: a father—a noble, helpless father—consoled in the bitterest affliction, and a noble race redeemed from ignominy. Rodrigo shuddered at the recollection of the deed he had done; but still he did not repent it. In this distressing situation he passed the tedious night, wandering about the streets of Burgos. Who, in this wretched outcast, would have recognised the happy, brave, and dauntless Rodrigo de Bivar?

The first glimmer of morning had begun to overspread the city. Few were yet seen abroad, when the melancholy reverie of Rodrigo was disturbed by the sudden appearance of a female, who approached him in the greatest agitation. The misery depicted in her countenance, the disorder of her dress, and the wildness of her manner, all bespoke her labouring under the strongest mental agony. She uttered a scream as she perceived the knight. He was chilled with dismay at this unexpected vision. Alas! it was the wretched Ximena—the fatherless maiden—who stood before him, and who came, no doubt, to curse him for his cruel deed.

“ Oh! my Rodrigo, my own lord!” cried Ximena in a thrilling tone of sorrow. “ Heaven be

praised! I at length meet thee after a painful search."

As she spoke, she eagerly seized the young knight by the arm. The situation of Rodrigo became one of intense agitation and embarrassment. He preserved, however, a deep silence. Ximena, with increased emotion, continued:—

"Surely thou knowest not, Rodrigo, *our* misfortune? No; thou art ignorant of so dire an event, or thou wouldst have sought me long ere this, and not have waited my appeal to thee. Oh, Rodrigo! how will thy generous heart bleed at the bare announcement of our calamity!"

Rodrigo felt unutterable anguish at these words. His brow was blackened by heavy gloom, and his look was pregnant with the wild feelings that contended within. Ximena gazed upon him with tender earnestness.

"Ah, Rodrigo!" she cried, "do I deceive myself? Whence this fearful emotion? You then know the calamity that has befallen me? That throbbing bosom, those freezing looks, clearly confirm my surmises."

"Yes, Ximena," said Rodrigo in a low impressive tone, "I know too well the whole distressing affair."

"Ah! cruel Rodrigo," returned Ximena; "and you were absent from me, when I needed most thy affectionate solace. Why did Rodrigo avoid the mansion of sorrow, when every other knight

was solicitous to show his zeal and interest for the orphan maiden?—Was this kind, Rodrigo? Speak. Thy dreadful agitation increases! What mystery is this?”

“Force me not to speak on that fearful subject,” said Rodrigo. “It is, indeed, a dire calamity, and its weight falls upon my heart as heavily as it does on thine.—Look, Ximena,—look on this pallid countenance, these horror-stricken eyes. See the agitation of my frame, the agony imparted to my very tone of voice; and thou wilt easily conceive how vast, how unrelenting, is my grief, how deep my despair.”

“Oh! my good Lord, my best beloved Rodrigo,” cried Ximena, with pathetic emphasis, “of thy generous disposition I was fully aware—yes, thou feelest my misery as thine own. I have wronged thee by my doubts; but the extent of my misfortune must plead for me. Rodrigo, we must consign our feelings to the inmost recesses of our hearts, when those hearts require to be differently employed; they must be wholly devoted to the pursuit of vengeance—vengeance such as may appease the restless spirit of my father. I will dash away these intrusive tears that weaken my nature; I will smother the swelling emotion that struggles within my soul. Thy manly nature will easily surmount even this sorrow, when the occasion calls for action.”

“What mean you, Ximena?” demanded Ro-

drigo, in wild amazement; "what hast thou in contemplation that *I* must undertake?"

"Heaven! my noble Knight!" cried Ximena, with equal surprise, "and does Rodrigo Diaz, the glorious Knight of Bivar, speak in this manner? What ails you, my Lord, that you should feel such strange bewilderment, and put so singular a question? To whom, alas! is the orphan Ximena—the hapless Ximena—to appeal in her misfortune, but to Rodrigo, to her betrothed Lord? Who is to protect her, and avenge the death of her father, if he refuses to perform those imperative duties?"

The feelings of young Rodrigo were harrowed up at this announcement; he looked aghast—a tremor shook his whole frame.

"What, Rodrigo!" anxiously exclaimed Ximena, "does the duty I impose upon thee affect thy heart so deeply? Alas! methought that thou wouldst of thy own accord proffer those offices which our relative situation requires?"

"Ximena, you speak daggers to my heart!" answered the Knight of Bivar; "you know not, alas! the horror, the desolation, that fills my soul! And you require of me——"

He was unable to proceed, and his bosom heaved with despair. Ximena, lost in conjecture, intensely gazed upon him; but again she concluded that it was her own distress that worked so fearfully on the feelings of the generous knight.

“What I require of you, Rodrigo,” she continued, striving to show some composure, “is nothing so strange and singular as to call for this amazement. Thou art now, oh! Rodrigo, my best friend and protector: had my good sire lived, we should now have been united; his death will defer, but not prevent our union. Thou art, therefore, his son; and it is thy bounden duty to seek out the murderer of the noble Lord of Gormaz, and inflict upon him the punishment his cruelty deserves. Yes, Rodrigo, he must fall by thy hand—that hand must be stained with *his* blood, ere I can accept it as my own.—Go, Sir Knight,—go, thou bravest of the Castilians, and let my wrongs be redressed. I am confident in thy power to do justice to my vengeance, even should the aggressor be the stoutest knight in all Castile. Go, then, my good Rodrigo, punish the traitor, and bring me his gory head as a welcome trophy.”

“Ximena,” cried Rodrigo with a thrilling voice, “if the gory head of him who killed thy father can afford thee such a satisfaction, that delight is easily procured.”

“What! thou art then acquainted with ——”

“Yes, Ximena,” answered the Knight mournfully, but with firmness.

“Go, then; hasten to find the man.”

“The man is already found.

“Where, where, is the foul fiend, the odious

mortal, the object of my everlasting hatred—where is the man?”

“ I am he !”

“ Heavens !” shrieked Ximena, “ Rodrigo, my kind Lord, what means this horrid language ? surely you intend to mock my misery. Oh ! in pity unsay those words ! Am I not too wretched already ? wouldst thou add to the weight of my affliction ?”

“ Ximena,” replied Rodrigo, “ the fearful truth is spoken : I killed thy father—killed him not by mistake, or under the momentary impulse of headlong passion ; but deliberately in the field, and impelled to the distressing act by duties which, though they sealed my everlasting misery, I was bound to fulfil. The destroyer of your noble sire, the worker of thy misfortunes, is now before thee. Oh, Ximena ! deal with him as the sacred wrath of thy bosom may dictate ; my death will be necessary to thy revenge,—alas ! it is my refuge, for after having deserved the hatred of Ximena, what have I to expect on earth ?”

“ Oh, Rodrigo !” exclaimed Ximena in a tumult of agony, “ dost thou speak truth ? am I then really bound to pursue thee with unremitting hatred ? Cruel man, devoid of all human attributes ! What dark fiend could impel thee to the atrocious deed ? Could neither the age of the venerable warrior, nor the image of Ximena reduced to the abyss of despair, arrest the furious blows of

thy murderous arm? Say, barbarian,—say, what spirit of frenzy tempted thee to woo my hatred by committing parricide?”

“ Ximena, the expression of thy sorrow is just,” said the Knight of Bivar; “ but yet I must repel thy accusations. I am no paltry murderer, no lurking assassin; I killed thy father nobly in open field—in single combat; and the motive that led me to the painful contest was neither jealousy nor revenge, but an imperious, a sacred duty.’

“ Sacred duty! do ye hear, just Heavens!” exclaimed the sorrowing lady,—“ sacred duty! Can aught on earth deserving of that title have required this sacrifice from thee—from thee, the betrothed of the daughter of him whom you have cruelly slain?”

“ Yes, Ximena; ere I was blessed with thy love, I was a son, and bound to the duties of a son. Nay, first, I am obliged to consider the dignity of a man’s honour. This honour, and those filial duties, decreed that I should seek thy father’s life. The offence which brought upon thy father this dreadful retribution, was so deep, so great, that it required the bleeding sacrifice I have made. Enough! this horrid subject unmans me. I have been familiarized with human misery; I have seen thousands struggling in the agonies of death on the bloody plain; I have heard the piercing cries of despair—the groans of the fatherless—the

screams of the widow. Yes! I have been hardened to scenes of woe, yet my heart is not callous enough to see thee suffer,—and suffer, alas! through my act!”

“ Why did not such thoughts occupy thy mind at the moment when a blind frenzy urged thee to an unnatural combat?”

“ Ximena! Ximena! spare me,—in mercy, spare me. Cruel was my act. But oh! couldst thou know the boundless horror I feel; couldst thou read the bloody page engraven in this heart, my agony, deep as is my offence to thee, would find sympathy in thy eyes. But, enough!—it is meet we should part, and part for ever; thou to pursue the man who killed thy father, and I to seek refuge from my misfortune in deeds of arms.—Farewell, thou sweet mourner! May the choicest blessing of Heaven fall on thy dear head! May that kind Heaven soften thy sorrow, and never, never let thee know the corroding pangs which now fill the desolate heart of Rodrigo!”

As he pronounced these words in a tone of deep emotion, tears were starting in his eyes; but he, with indignant firmness, soon dashed away this token of weakness. He cast a melancholy look on the beautiful form he must renounce for ever; and then, with a resolute step, turned from Ximena, and hastened towards his father's mansion. The appalling intelligence which the unfortunate daugh-

ter of Don Gomez had now received, overpowered her senses, and she remained for some time gazing vacantly towards the Knight of Bivar, who was speeding away from her sight. Her affection for him, struggling as it was against the powerful calls of blood and duty, awakened in her a thrill of tender sympathy, as she saw him for the last time as a friend.

Ximena was now imperiously bound to pursue, in the person of her lover, the slayer of her parent ; and when the first gust of womanly feeling subsided, she summoned up all her resolution for the accomplishment of her duty. In those times of cruelty and heroism, of savage deeds and mighty achievements, the heart of woman partook of the sentiments which influenced the actions of the stronger sex. Ximena was eminently endowed with the resolution which characterised the age, and, despite of her devoted love to the Knight of Bivar, she now firmly determined to pursue him to death :—for nothing but blood was considered an equivalent for blood.

Ximena had no brothers, and her nearest relative, a cousin, was an object of dread and abhorrence to her. Don Suero had persecuted her with professions of love, as repugnant as the man who preferred them was false, and divested of knightly qualities. To appeal to Don Suero, therefore, would be folly on the part of Ximena, for that

would give him a sort of right to continue his importunities, and her cause would not be much advanced; when so puny an adversary was brought into the field against so redoubtable a knight as Don Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar. It was therefore necessary that Ximena should intrust her quarrel to a more competent champion; but, alas! when she came seriously to consider who the aggressor was, her hopes of finding a suitable competitor were completely extinguished. What knight in Castile could cope successfully with the mighty Rodrigo?

In this emergency Ximena resolved to lay her sorrows at the foot of the throne, and supplicate the good King Fernando to avenge the death of the Lord of Gormáz. With this intention, she repaired to her mansion, and first devoted herself to the performance of the funeral obsequies of the late Don Gomez, whose remains were consigned to the earth with all the pomp that became his high rank. Most of the grandees and knights of Castile attended the funeral ceremony in complete armour; but every one was surprised that young Rodrigo was not amongst the number. This served to confirm the strange rumour each had begun to circulate concerning the fate of the deceased. The absence of Don Diego Laynez and his heroic son certainly tended, in no slight degree, to confirm the surmises and suspicions of the Castilian nobles.

Whilst this domestic calamity entirely occupied the friends and adherents of the house of Gormaz, matters of great public import engaged the attention of the King and his council. Messengers had been dispatched to Spain by the Emperor of Germany, Henry the Second, and his Holiness Pope Victor the Second, requiring the most extraordinary concessions from the sovereign of Castile. Ferdinand, considering the extent of the territories over which he presided, and actuated by a feeling of pride arising from the number of his victories against the Moors, had assumed the title of Emperor, in order to draw a line of distinction between himself and his contemporary kings. This act excited the deep attention of the Emperor of Germany, who considered himself to have a good claim over the provinces of the Western Empire in right of his being the successor of the Roman Emperor Honorius. At that time, Victor the Second was at the head of the Christian church, and being the friend and countryman of Henry, that sovereign appealed to him on the present occasion.

A council was held at Florence, in which Henry complained bitterly of the conduct of the kings of Spain, who had not only refused to acknowledge his jurisdiction over their dominions, but had even carried their arrogance to such a pitch, that Ferdinand, the present ruler of Castile, had usurped the title of Emperor. The Pope was well-dis-

posed to favour the views of his countryman ; and accordingly an embassy was sent to Castile, threatening its king with the thunders of the Church, unless he would recognise the supremacy of the Emperor and the See of Rome. This message had been repeated, and a debate on the subject now occupied the councils of Ferdinand. His situation was delicate in the extreme, and he was loth to proceed with inconsiderate haste in the affair. The good nobles and valiant knights of Castile felt highly indignant at the acknowledgment required of their sovereign. They spurned with scorn the idea of confessing themselves tributary to foreign powers ; but, on the other side, the awful threat of excommunication made them pause and reflect ere they drew down the heavy curse of Rome upon their heads. Besides, as the kingdom of Castile was surrounded by infidels, sworn and implacable foes of the Christian name, the nobles were willing to keep on friendly terms with the head of their church. This dilemma now absorbed the councils of Castile.

King Ferdinand was sitting in state, surrounded by his grandees and knights. His brow was thoughtful and perplexed. The subject of the Emperor's claims had been debated for several days ; opinions were much divided ; and though most of the nobles inwardly wished for the independence of their country, the dread of the thunders of the Church kept these generous sentiments

confined to the depths of their hearts. The King, in this critical posture of affairs, desired the attendance of a knight at the council, who until then, owing to his youth, had not enjoyed the privilege assigned to maturer years, and to the several heads of powerful houses. The Cortes were on this day just assembled, when the Knight of Bivar, obeying the summons of his sovereign, made his appearance in the council-hall. His entrance created much sensation amongst the deliberating nobles:—for Rodrigo was the theme of universal admiration, and every one looked up to him as the chief support of the country. His gallant bearing and bold demeanour gained the approbation of all, and cheered the heart of his father Don Diego, who had strenuously opposed the pretensions of the foreign princes, and was fully confident that his son harboured the same noble and independent sentiments.

Rodrigo, as he entered, cast a glance of scorn and indignation at the German and Italian envoys, who were sitting, with much haughtiness in their looks and manner, very near the throne. They said that this was the last day they could remain in Castile, and that they came to learn the final determination of Ferdinand. Upon which the King desired the young Knight of Bivar to give his opinion on this momentous subject.

“Can there, my Liege,” cried Rodrigo with

noble enthusiasm, "be more than one opinion in an assembly composed of Castilian nobles? Can there be more than one opinion on so humiliating a subject?—What strange madness directs the councils of the German Emperor and his Holiness? Do they really mean to mock the warriors of this free and independent land? Can they, indeed, suppose that a nation which has coped obstinately with the most redoubtable foes, will now submit to the threats of distant potentates, who have no shadow of right to exact submission from Castile? I hope that the claimants never entertained expectations that their claims would be allowed; and still more anxiously do I hope that the King and Knights of Castile have never harboured, for a single moment, the thought of complying with such preposterous demands!"

A murmur of approbation ran through the assembly as these words were delivered. The messengers started on their feet, with a view of intimidating the Castilians, whom they saw well-disposed to oppose their pretensions. One of them said,—

"Is this, then, the answer that we are to carry to our masters?—Weigh well, Castilians, the subject, ere you rashly determine upon a line of conduct, of which you may too late repent!"

"Holy Heavens!" cried Rodrigo in wrath. "Can this be possible? Do I hear aright? Doth

an insolent foreigner come and beard the King of Castile in the midst of his court, and surrounded by his belted knights? Surely some frenzy must possess these men!—Begone, Sir German, begone, or learn to moderate the licence of thy tongue! for, by the holy rood! and by all the honours of Castile, I swear, that Rodrigo Diaz, the Knight of Bivar, will not, for one, tamely submit to the insult which is now offered to the warlike children of Spain!”

“Rebellious son of the Church!” exclaimed one of the delegates, whose sumptuous dress and scarlet hat designated the messenger of the Pope—“rebellious son of the Church, treat with more respect a mission, in which the Holy Father is concerned. Tremble to incense his wrath!”

“I tremble at nought, Sir Cardinal!” proudly returned Rodrigo. “I know the justice of the cause I defend, and will boldly abide by its result. His Holiness will not be deaf to our remonstrances, and will desist from aiding the pretensions of the German; but should my hopes be deceived in this respect, even the unjust indignation of the Holy Father shall not deter the Knight of Bivar from fearlessly performing the duty which he owes to his country and his King. We are a free and independent people, and, in defence of this freedom and independence, our best blood has for many centuries flowed in streams. By treachery

we were subdued; and it is strange, that when, by unremitting exertions and a crowd of heroic achievements, we began to recover, inch by inch, the territories of the lost land, foreign princes, who have no right whatever over us, should dare to interfere! In our constant struggles against the Moors, did ever any foreign prince lend us his assistance? No. It was Pelayo, and Alonzo, and Ramiro, and Bernardo, and a host of other brave kings and knights, Spaniards all, who achieved our conquests. And though we, as Christians, have fought against the enemies of our holy religion, what Pope ever offered us his aid in our difficulties? Alone we have struggled—alone we have conquered—and alone we shall command! To the Holy Father, as is most due, our veneration and spiritual fealty we will not deny; but let not his Holiness, while we allow these rights, pretend to mingle them with the temporal concerns of our country!”

“Is it a Christian that speaketh thus?”

“Ay, Sir Priest, a Christian, and a good Christian, but one who is resolved to resist to the utmost all unjust pretensions against his country, let those pretensions come from whom they may. Here is my sword, which I draw in token of my resolves; and a curse on all those craven traitors whom religious scruples, or any other cause, can induce to act against their country, and recognise a foreign power!”

As he spoke, he bared his weapon; in which act he was unanimously joined by the assembled warriors, who, with a shout of patriotism, now expressed their approbation of the young knight's sentiments. The King rose from his seat, and, addressing the messengers in a firm voice, said:—

“Sirs, ye have heard the opinion of my true grandees and knights; my own is in happy accordance with theirs. Return to the Emperor and his Holiness, and let them know our resolves. Express to them our deep concern that so unfortunate a difference should have occurred; but say also, that, should they still persist in their unjust demands, the King of Castile, with his knights and vassals, is ready to refer the matter to the decision of arms. Such is our determination, and may Santiago protect our lawful and sacred cause!”

The messengers then withdrew, burning with shame and resentment; and the assembly broke up. The nobles unanimously swore to follow the brave Rodrigo to the field with all their retainers, and forthwith every one was ready to depart and make preparations for war. But whilst these heroic thoughts occupied their minds, a confused clamour was heard without, which seemed every moment to approach the palace. Cries of woe rent the air, and the trampling of horses' hoofs mingled with the general din. A motley concourse approached, and the King and all his attending train

rose, and proceeded to learn the cause of so great a commotion.

The King leans from his chamber,
From the balcony on high :—
“ What means this furious clamour,
My palace-porch so nigh ?”
But when he looked below him,
There were horsemen at the gate,
And the fair Ximena Gomez
Kneeling in woeful state.
Upon her neck, disordered.
Hung down the lady’s hair,
And floods of tears were streaming
Upon her bosom fair.
Sore she wept for her father,
The Count that had been slain ;
Loud cursed she Rodrigo,
Whose sword his blood did stain.

King Ferdinand was astonished at the sight which now presented itself. Affairs of state had prevented him from paying much attention to the untimely death of the Lord of Gormaz, but his kindly feelings were strongly excited when he perceived the woful guise in which the orphan Ximena approached the doors of the palace. She was arrayed in sable attire, and the disorder of her hair, the streams which flowed down her pale cheeks, together with the strong expression of her sorrow, moved the King to listen compassionately to her appeal. The adherents and vassals who attended her were loud in their demands of jus-

tice, and frequently, by their clamours, drowned the more pathetic notes of the weeping Ximena. Ferdinand ordered the fair suppliant to come into the royal hall, accompanied by her nearest relatives, that her complaint might be heard, and full justice done to her. His numerous train of nobles and warriors were then commanded to prolong their attendance, and he resumed his seat of state.

The feelings of the young Knight of Bivar were painfully affected at the distressing scene which he was compelled to witness. Ximena entered, led by Don Suero, and followed by several adherents. She hastened towards the King, and, in the deepest affliction, prostrated herself before him.

“Justice! my Liege, justice!” she mournfully cried. “I am the orphan daughter of Don Gomez, Lord of Gormaz, a brave and good warrior, who hath often done signal service to his Lord and Sovereign, and whose daughter, therefore, ought not to appeal in vain at the court of Ferdinand!”

“ Good King, I am descended
From Barons bright of old,
That with Castilian pennons
Pelayo did uphold ;
But if my strain were lowly,
As it is high and clear,
Thou still shouldst prop the feeble,
And the afflicted hear.”

“ And I will hear thee, sweet mourner !” said the King. “ Don Gomez was, indeed, a brave knight and loyal subject, and his daughter has a just claim upon our gratitude and regard.”

“ Alas ! Sire,” continued Ximena, “ that brave knight was slain by one who ought to have been my protector, not my foe, and who is now proudly standing amidst the great Lords of Castile. His name is one of much repute amongst his compeers, and doubtless there are those who would excuse his crime. Yes ! the voice of the hapless orphan will be but a weak advocate against so powerful an adversary. But let the voice of justice, O King ! rise superior to all other cries.”

“ Name thy foe !” said the King.

Ximena paused for a moment ; vestiges of her unextinguished passion still remained in her heart, and she needed all her exertion to pronounce the name of the offender ; at length, in a broken and wavering voice, she said :—

“ Don Rodrigo Diaz, the Knight of Bivar !”

A murmur of consternation quickly spread through the assembly ; all eyes were turned in eager curiosity towards Rodrigo ; but he preserved a proud composure, giving no sign either of alarm, resentment, or any other feeling, though his manly heart was labouring under a load of oppressive emotions.

“ My gracious King !” said Don Suero, “ the

Knight of Bivar has been guilty of a foul offence. His duel was conducted more like a felonious assassination than a knightly combat. Indeed, no one knows how far the contest was carried on in honourable guise, for no one was there to witness the deed!"

"Base slanderer!" thundered Rodrigo, his eyes flashing with indignation. "I slew Don Gomez as becomes a knight; and if any warrior of gentle birth will dare gainsay it, I am ready to do mortal battle, on horse or foot, with lance or sword, and there is my pledge."

As he spoke he threw his gauntlet on the ground; but no one offered to take up the gage. A pause of awful suspense ensued; the knights looked on each other, in anxiety to see if there were any amongst them endowed with hardihood enough to encounter the Knight of Bivar. The King said:

"Is there any proof that the Lord of Gormaz was not slain in fair and honourable encounter?"

No one presumed to express an opinion derogatory to the honour of Rodrigo. Don Suero alone ventured to remark:

"No, my gracious sovereign, no positive proof; but strong presumption militates against the Knight of Bivar. It is well known that he offered courtship to the daughter of the deceased *Caballero*. He was observed in altercation with him, shortly after he had quitted the company of the

Lady Ximena. I have much reason to suppose that Don Gomez was not favourably inclined towards the pretensions of Don Rodrigo, and from these points some inferences may be drawn which——”

“What! Sir Knight,” exclaimed the King, angrily interrupting him; “is the honour of a true and well-trying Castilian to be questioned upon the strength of such evidence as this?”

“My honoured King,” answered Rodrigo with a scornful smile, “allow that adder to expend its venom—me he affects not. He knows that, at this very moment, he is uttering the rankest falsehood. He knows that Don Gomez was not hostile to my suit. Heaven forbid!—And why should he?” he added with pride. “What father would refuse to bestow his daughter on Rodrigo Diaz del Bivar? No, the false knight, Don Suero, would vent in words—for at such weapons he is most dexterous—the rancour he nourishes in his heart against Rodrigo, in whom he saw a redoubtable competitor, not merely in arms, but in the affections of the Lady Ximena. I slew her father honourably, and this assertion is the sole satisfaction which Rodrigo Diaz would afford to any mortal but his King. In due respect, however, for that King, let it be known, that no feud of mine led to this mournful event, but an unpardonable insult offered to my noble father by the deceased Lord. No

one in this assembly, not even the fair mourner herself, is more painfully affected by this unfortunate occurrence than I am. By the death of Don Gomez I made *her* wretched, whom, next to my honour, I prize most in life, and shut the door for ever upon my happiness."

Don Diego Laynez, still smarting under the sense of the injury done him, now described the beginning of his quarrel with Don Gomez, the violent and flagrant behaviour of the latter, and the results to which it led. The assembled nobles heard the recital with great emotion. The affront offered to the venerable knight, and offered, too, because he gave his opinion warmly in favour of the independence of the land, filled all with indignation; and though they were strongly moved by the sight of the weeping Ximena, yet they could not but justify the conduct of young Rodrigo. Meantime, the crowd of retainers of the House of Gormaz were very clamorous below in their demand of justice; nor were the tears of the afflicted Ximena a slight appeal to the feelings of the King.

"Fair lady," he said, in a soothing tone of voice, "God forbid that Ferdinand should be unmindful of the complaints of his subjects. Rodrigo, like a true and loyal knight, will pledge his word to aright the damoisel to the utmost of his power. Let her bring her champions, and he will

answer the summons. In this case I can no otherwise decide. No treachery, no dastard act, hath been committed. Rodrigo is judged by his peers. I can do nought but pledge my royal word not to interfere in this feud, but to let both houses settle their difference by arms or negotiation, without showing the slightest bent of partiality to either."

A gentle murmur of approbation ran through the assembly at this decision. Ferdinand then continued:—

"The safety of the country, which is to supersede every private and personal interest, requires that the gallant knight of Bivar should take the field ere long against the aggressor of our independence;—this affair must therefore be settled on the morrow, or be postponed until the return of the Castilians from their expedition.—Fair Ximena," he then added, turning affectionately to the suppliant, "in every thing you may command the good-will of King Ferdinand. But the noble loftiness of thy soul will acquiesce in the justice of my decision; for, dear as may be the memory of thy father, and sacred the duty which thou hast to fulfil, thou canst not desire that it should prove detrimental to the freedom and independence of thy country."

After the King had settled the affair in this manner, Ximena retired from the presence; and most of the knights also departed, in order to pre-

pare their retainers for the approaching expedition. When every one had left the chambers, Rodrigo ordered a page to bring back the gauntlet, and, with feelings of deep sorrow at the state in which he had beheld Ximena, withdrew. As he left the palace, he perceived the crowd in front of it in a great fermentation. The partisans of Gormaz filled the air with their cries, and every thing denoted the utmost confusion. No sooner did he come in view than the excitement increased. He stood for a moment in expectation that some one would approach and provoke a quarrel, but his withering glances awed the most determined. His page then came to him, leading his favourite horse Babieca, whose renown was proportioned to the glory of the mighty warrior whom he carried to battle. Rodrigo prepared to mount, not heeding the din that prevailed.

Ximena gazed upon him,
But no reply could meet ;
His fingers held the bridle,
He vaulted to his seat.
She turn'd her to the nobles,
I wot her cry was loud,
But not a man durst follow ;
Slow rode he through the crowd.

The thoughts of the Castilians were now turned to the expedition, which was to set out under the command of the Knight of Bivar and several other

chiefs. An army of about ten thousand men was soon collected; and this force, having crossed the Pyrenees, encamped near Toulouse. The fame of the Cid,—for such was the honourable title given to Rodrigo,—no less than the heroic resolution shown by the council of the King of Castile, acted so efficiently on the mind of the Emperor of Germany, that he very prudently determined to give up his pretensions. The Cid and his gallant companions, therefore, returned joyfully into Spain, where the army, raised to maintain the independence of the country, was advantageously employed against their domestic enemies the Moors.

Whilst these things were transacting, Ximena was fated to undergo the severest trials. She was again persecuted by the importunities of her cousin Don Suero, whose passion for the fair heiress of Gormaz burned more fiercely than ever. There was now an additional inducement to make him anxious for an union with that lady in the estates and signories of the late Don Gomez, which were vast, and capable of exciting the cupidity of ambitious men. Don Suero, seeing a great obstacle to the wedding of Ximena with Rodrigo, considered this a most favourable juncture to prefer his claim. But Ximena was unconquerable in her resolution. One night the insolent Don Suero burst into the mansion of the lady,

and, with the most arrogant demeanour, began to unfold his designs.—“Lady Ximena,” he said, “the welfare of our house requires that we should be joined in wedlock. For the last time I come to prefer that as a request, which, if refused, I shall henceforward enforce as a command. Reflect seriously on your ultimate decision; for a rejection of my suit will entail upon you trials and hardships, of which, at present, you can form no idea.”

“Begone, proud Sir!” indignantly replied Ximena. “Dare you threaten the heiress of Gormaz in her very mansion? Thy vaunts I despise!—do thy worst!—and trust not too deeply to my apparently helpless situation; for though a woman, and an orphan, I have good friends and retainers, who will not suffer the Lady Ximena to be injured with impunity!”

“Lady,” returned Don Suero, “you know not into what an abyss those imprudent words may precipitate you! Learn that my titles to the signories of Gormaz are as good as yours, and that I have greater strength to support them!”

“Usurper!” exclaimed Ximena in astonishment. “And wouldst thou, in very sooth, attempt to despoil me of my inheritance?”

“That inheritance you may still preserve!” returned the ungenerous cavalier with a malicious smile. “Disperse those unseemly frowns,

which so ill become your beauteous brow, and accept the devoted love of the impassioned Don Suero!"

"Don Suero egregiously mistakes my character," replied Ximena with noble pride, "if he supposes me capable of being bribed to submit to the sacrifice of my feelings!—Begone, false Knight, and attempt no longer to intimidate the daughter of the Lord of Gormaz!"

Don Suero retired from her presence in a tumult of anger, rage, and disappointment, which only subsided to make room for dark projects of revenge. His power to create confusion was by no means despicable. He was endued with much shrewdness and a talent for intrigue, which would have done honour to plotters of a more civilized period. Though not possessing any great share of courage, he was not entirely a coward; and, when wrought upon by passion, was equal to any desperate act, if his object could not be attained by more subtle means, which were the arms he always preferred.

Bent therefore on evil, he collected a competent body of adherents, and, ere any one could form an idea of his iniquitous intentions, he seized upon the castle of Gormaz, when that fortress, no danger being suspected, was unprepared for defence. With shameless insolence he then declared himself lawful heir to the late lord, as being the nearest male descendant of the House of Gormaz. The

injustice of such a claim was clearly apparent ; but there were not men wanting to support his pretensions, and Don Suero pursued his career of spoliation without control. Before Ximena could assemble her vassals, her enemy had made himself master of all her possessions. Besides, the lady had no knight capable of conducting her quarrel successfully against the false Don Suero. Don Garci-Gomez, her kinsman, though a man of noble sentiments and courage, was, on account of his weak health and delicate frame, prevented from rendering those services to the injured Lady Ximena, which his generous disposition would have prompted him to attempt. Thus every thing conspired to favour the wicked views of the oppressor.

Don Garci-Gomez, however, gallantly took the field in defence of the rights of his kinswoman. He was attended by three hundred staunch partisans, and the goodness of the cause he maintained imparted to his delicate constitution a degree of vigour unusual to his nature. Despite, however, of the bravery of Don Garci-Gomez, and the courageous devotion of his men, they were totally defeated by the far more numerous force of Don Suero, who had besides the additional satisfaction of seeing the Lady Ximena fall into his power. All his unjust designs were now accomplished, and he took his captive to the castle of Gormaz, where he proposed to her a most distressing alternative.

“ Lady,” he vauntingly said, “ all your flattering

hopes must by this time be dissipated. I am, by right of inheritance and by right of conquest, the acknowledged Lord of Gormaz; but my power and dignity I am still willing to share with you. Should, however, this generous offer be despised, your liberation from this castle shall never be effected, unless you bring forward a competent ransom, and previously make a formal renunciation of all the signories of Gormaz."

The rage of Ximena at these unworthy proposals, knew no bounds; but her unmanly conqueror treated with equal scorn her wrathful threats and her overwhelming affliction. The uncourteous knight felt secure in his violent usurpation. All the most distinguished warriors were absent in the wars with the Moors, against whom the Cid had led them, upon their return from their expedition across the Pyrenees, and from the exertions of the good Don Garci-Gomez he had nothing to apprehend. He was an adversary whose health continually stood in the way of his noble sentiments and courage, while the fatigue of the late engagement, and a wound which he had received, had so far injured his frame, that apprehensions were entertained for his life.

To the surprise of all, however, he signified his determination to do combat *à outrance*, in defence of Ximena's rights. Don Suero heard this intention with a laugh of derision, as the issue of the contest

could not be for a moment doubtful. The superior strength and skill in arms which the aggressor of Ximena possessed over his heroic but enfeebled antagonist, were decided securities of a prompt and easy victory. Indeed, the friends and adherents of the noble Garci-Gomez felt highly displeased at his temerity. They considered him as a victim, marching of his own accord to the slaughter; and they reflected, moreover, that the lady's cause, instead of being advanced by this means, would only be farther endangered.

But the laws and spirit of chivalry forbade any one to interfere in the affair, and Don Garci-Gomez only waited to be a little recovered from his malady and wound, to carry his desperate attempt into execution. The King offered to be present and preside at the lists, and the city of Burgos was intent upon the approaching contest.

Meantime trumpets sounded at the foot of the castle of Gormaz. Don Suero appeared on the battlements, and perceived that heralds claimed admittance into the place; the drawbridge was let down, and the messengers were brought into the presence of the Lord of Gormaz.

“What would ye with me?” inquired Don Suero.

“I come,” said a squire, “on the part of the good and true Knight Don Garci-Gomez, to summon the Knight Don Suero, now falsely styled the Lord of Gormaz, to mortal combat; and

I come also to beg of the Lady Ximena a pledge that she accept the battle that is to be done in her good and right."

"And we come," said one of the heralds, "to summon the knight Don Suero, on the part of the King of Castile, to be present in the lists on the third day from this; and that, in case of default, the knight Don Suero shall be accounted duly conquered, and compelled to renounce his titles to the signories of Gormaz."

"Heaven forefend!" cried Don Suero with a proud smile, "that the Lord of Gormaz should refuse such courteous invitation. Return to the King of Castile, and to the valorous knight Garci-Gomez, the magnanimous invalid," he added in derision, "and let them know, that on the third day from this, I shall appear in the lists equipped as becomes a knight. With regard to the pledge requested of Doña Ximena, the lady shall send that which giveth her pleasure."

Upon this Ximena was conducted into the hall, and made acquainted with the bold task which Don Garci-Gomez had undertaken in defence of her rights. Ximena felt duly grateful for the gallant resolution of her kinsman; but at the same time a melancholy smile sat on her lip, for she was well aware of the desperate nature of the achievement; besides, she loved him kindly; and the untimely doom which awaited him filled her with

gloomy anticipations. Don Garci-Gomez had been unremitting in his efforts to support the rights of Ximena. Had his means of execution been equal to his lofty sentiments and courage, the traitor Don Suero would never have obtained his unjust triumphs. All these reflections awakened in the generous heart of Ximena a mournful feeling for the dangers which threatened the life of her best friend, and she was moved to tears as she sought for the required pledge.

At length she drew forth a beautiful scarf of crimson and gold, and, presenting it to the messenger of Garci-Gomez, said :

“ Take this pledge to the gallant knight and my good kinsman Garci-Gomez, and tell him that I am strongly bound by his generosity, and willingly accept him as my champion. Should he fall in support of the injured orphan’s cause, Heaven will reward his act in a better world, and his memory shall be cherished with tender recollections in this. Should he return a victor from the contest, this scarf is the token by which I vow to grant any boon in my power to bestow.”

After this the herald departed, and the two combatants began to prepare themselves for the ensuing battle. Don Suero was so sanguine of success, that all his words and actions savoured of a haughty and vaunting disposition ; but he was eager for the engagement, as he expected by this means

to remove the only obstacle which now prevented the tranquil enjoyment of his usurpation. For, though the opposition offered by Garci-Gomez was not much to be dreaded, it was still sufficient to annoy Don Suero, and serve to keep alive his doubts and fears, by prolonging the contest as long as the adherents of Ximena found a rallying point and a chief.

The day appointed for the mortal combat at length dawned. The warriors and citizens of Burgos were in a ferment of expectation, but no one seemed to entertain a doubt concerning the issue of the contest. Garci-Gomez was much esteemed on account of his generosity and affability: his danger, therefore, excited feelings of regret, at the same time that every one applauded his noble resolution. But the knight himself appeared in no manner dispirited by the mournful omens which he saw depicted on every countenance; on the contrary, he seemed to entertain the fondest anticipations of success. His enthusiastic imagination had imparted to his weak frame a feverish warmth, which he mistook for the heat of robust health, and in the daring boldness of his soul, he thought that he had a sure criterion of the exertions of his arm.

His good squire and two pages, who were now aiding him to put on his armour, beheld with dismay the debility of his frame, and the pallid tint

that overspread his sunken cheek. The brilliant fire of his eye seemed only to impart a mournful contrast to the fading langour of the rest of his countenance; but taking the crimson scarf, and fervently pressing it to his lip—

“My good friends,” he said, addressing his attendants gaily, “what means this? Your looks are rather those of men preparing for funeral obsequies than for heroic deeds. Cheer up! for a secret voice whispers in my heart that the Lady Ximena shall this day be righted, and her barbarous aggressor numbered with the dead.”

As he uttered these words, an unusual glow flushed his countenance; and he grasped his lance with such firm resolution, that a faint gleam of hope illumed the looks of his faithful attendants; but, alas! they soon regarded that flash of animation as the last brilliant spark of a fire on the point of being extinguished for ever.

The trumpets had sounded, and the King and his retinue had assumed their seats in the lists, which were pitched in a convenient plain at the entrance of Burgos. Doña Ximena was also there; having pledged her word to return to her confinement, in case that the contest should be decided against her. The place was filled with a vast concourse of people; but a melancholy silence pervaded the assembled crowd. Don Suero had already arrived in the lists, and was caracoling

about on a graceful and powerful charger. The trumpets sounded the first summons; but no one appeared. Don Suero continued his evolutions, filled with the most joyful anticipations. The appointed time elapsed in awful suspense; a second summons was proclaimed; but still Don Garcí-Gomez did not make his appearance in the lists. The excitement of the multitude increased; a hollow murmuring sound ran through the place. Don Suero's arrogance was more conspicuous: a look of dismay and sorrow was exhibited by Ximena and her friends, and strange surmises began to circulate amongst the crowd. Some supposed that Don Garcí-Gomez had been incapacitated, by weakness and malady, from attending the summons; others asserted that the unfortunate knight was struggling in the agonies of death, and a few even went so far as to pretend that he was actually dead.

These conjectures were cut short, and the hopes and fears which they created suspended by the third blast of the trumpet. Scarcely, however, had the last brazen note died on the wind, when a knight, in full armour, was seen afar advancing at full speed towards the lists.

“He comes!—he comes!” cried several voices. “Heaven bless the generous Don Garcí-Gomez! the support of the injured orphan!”

The knight now gallantly entered the lists. On

his arm he wore the crimson scarf, and in the armour and horse every one recognised the avenger of Ximena. Yet all were struck with amazement at the strength, ease, and confidence which were discernible in the cavalier's movements. Indeed, those who had reported his death began to look amazed; whilst the gallant bearing of Don Garci-Gomez inspired with new hope the drooping spirits of Ximena and her party.

The combatants took their stations, and, at the signal given, rushed impetuously against each other; the crowd gazed in fearful suspense, when, to the astonishment of all, Don Suero was unhorsed, and hurled to the ground with as much facility as if he had been a puny child.

Some cried out, "Sorcery!—sorcery!" others "A miracle!" But, unfortunately for the lovers of the marvellous, there was neither the one nor the other. Garci-Gomez immediately sprang from his horse, and, placing his foot upon the fallen knight, threatened to deprive him of life, unless he confessed himself vanquished, and gave up all his unjust pretensions. Don Suero, severely hurt by his fall, lay like a lifeless burden on the field, and, in a weakened voice, acknowledged himself conquered.

A shout of joy burst from the crowd; the victor advanced towards the King and Ximena—his visor

fell, and lo! no Don Garci-Gomez was there, but the famous Cid, the mighty Knight of Bivar! This discovery produced an extraordinary sensation. The partisans of Don Suero were highly indignant, and cried out "Treachery!" because their friend had been called to the lists by Don Garci-Gomez, and not by Rodrigo, and this sudden substitution was unlawful. The King seemed disposed to listen to their complaint, when the Knight of Bivar spoke thus in his vindication:—

"God forefend! my Liege, that Rodrigo should attempt aught against the established laws of knightly honour; but in this I have acted according to the true spirit of those laws. Neither Don Garci-Gomez nor myself sought the chance which led me into the lists. He was too noble and gallant a knight to permit another to take his place; nor would I, indeed, have ventured such a proposal.—But the hand of Heaven is visible in this affair. This morning I arrived in secret at Burgos, with the intention of being present at this scene. Alone and disguised, I was tracing my course to the lists, when a group of people, in much confusion, attracted my notice. I advanced to inquire the cause of the tumult, and beheld a gallant knight who had fallen from his horse, pallid and panting for breath, and with all the tokens of approaching death. It was Don Garci-

Gomez. The first summons of the trumpet was heard: that stirring call reanimated for a moment his departing spirit; he opened his languid eyes. I spoke to him; he recognised me, and in a weak voice he said:—

“ ‘ Sir Knight!—good Rodrigo! you hear that blast—alas! I cannot obey it! Receive this scarf of crimson and gold—’tis the pledge of Doña Ximena!—with this pledge, I bequeath to thee the right of doing battle in her support.’

He became weaker—help was afforded, but in vain—the second summons floated on the air. Shortly afterwards the good Garci-Gomez died. I assumed his armour, mounted his steed, bound my arm with this token, from which I derived my right, and hastened to the lists. I arrived just in time to obey the third summons, and conquer the false knight Don Suero.

Loud cries of approbation now filled the air, and the King confirmed the public testimony by his own decision. But it was likewise decided in favour of Don Suero, that he might have the choice of renewing the contest within three days. The roughly handled cavalier, however, declined the desperate engagement, and, supported by his squire and attendants, retired from the lists, full of rage and confusion.

“ Fair Ximena!” said the Cid, presenting the scarf, “ this is a token which is to procure the

bearer a boon. I ask your forgiveness and oblivion for what is past."

Ximena's countenance was covered with blushes as she granted the knight his request, and desired him to keep the proffered gage. The flame of love was far from being extinguished in Ximena's bosom. At the same time that she had been bound to pursue the young Rodrigo with her vengeance, she could not but admire the noble character of his mind, and the courage which distinguished him on all occasions. To him she owed the recovery of her liberty and property. Thus, though she strove to repel the image of the knight from her thoughts, it was continually obtruding itself there; and though she summoned her resolution to dislodge from her heart every tender feeling in his favour, those feelings tenaciously kept possession of their place.

The King then signified his wishes that Ximena should be united to the Cid; they had been already betrothed; and it was clear that, despite of appearances, they still cherished a most tender and powerful affection for each other. The King urged as an additional reason, that Ximena would be freed from all future attempts upon the signories of Gormaz, by choosing a lord so capable of defending them. The spirit of her noble sire would rest tranquil and satisfied; for if the Cid had deprived him of life, he had fought for his family, and de-

fended the interests of his child. In those ages refinement was totally unknown, and a deed which would shock the feelings of any modern female, soon began to wear no very formidable aspect in the eyes of Ximena—three years from the death of her father, and about two from the combat undertaken for her sake, she consented to be the bride of the Cid, after a lapse of three years more.

This period was employed by the Knight of Bivar in rendering himself deserving of the happiness that awaited him. During that time he achieved many of those feats of arms which have rendered his name one of the most illustrious in Spanish history. That name was a sound of terror to the Moor, the sure harbinger of victory to the Christian. At length, sated with glory and conquest, the Cid returned to Burgos, to claim performance of the promise made by his loved Ximena.

The King of Castile graciously offered to stand sponsor at the ceremony of the nuptials, which were to be celebrated at Burgos on a scale of princely magnificencé. Indeed, the preparations made for the occasion were such as had never been witnessed before, and the people were in the most joyous expectation of feasting and merry-making. The Cid liberally distributed the great wealth which he had amassed in war, and the numerous spoils taken from the enemy were reserved to grace the festival. Burgos was thronged with visitors ;

a constant din of pleasure prevailed in the streets ; and the inhabitants testified their satisfaction by a thousand quaint devices.

The auspicious day arrived, and the noise of bells, the strains of music, and the joyous cries of the crowd, were overpowering, as the bridal procession proceeded to the cathedral.

Layn Calvo, the Lord Bishop,
 He first comes forth the gate,
 Behind him comes Ruy Diaz,
 In all his bridal state ;
 The crowd makes way before them
 As up the street they go ;—
 For the multitude of people,
 Their steps must needs be slow.
 The King had taken order
 That they should rear an arch,
 From house to house all over,
 In the way where they must march.
 They have hung it all with lances,
 And shields, and glittering helmets,
 Brought by the Campeador,
 From out the Moorish realms.
 They have scattered olive branches,
 And rushes on the street,
 And the ladies fling down garlands
 At the Campeador's feet ;
 With tapestry and broidery
 Their balconies between,
 To do his bridal honour,
 Their walls the burghers screen.

As soon as the splendid cortège left the palace, in its way to the church, various companies of the inhabitants began to perform the curious masques which they had prepared for the occasion ; and the hilarity of the vast multitude was greatly excited by the burlesque gambols which soon began to

make themselves conspicuous. Immediately preceding the bridal train, the most singular and festive contrivances were observable.

They lead the bulls before them,
 All covered o'er with trappings ;
 The little boys pursue them
 With hootings and with clappings ;
 The fool, with cap and bladder,
 Upon his ass goes prancing,
 Amidst troops of captive maidens,
 With bells and cymbals dancing.
 With antics and with fooleries,
 With shouting and with laughter,
 They fill the streets of Burgos—
 And the Devil, he comes after ;
 For the King has hired the horned fiend
 For sixteen maravedis ;
 And there he goes, with hoofs for toes,
 To terrify the ladies.
 Then comes the bride Ximena—
 The King he holds her hand ;
 And the Queen, and all, in fur and pall,
 The nobles of the land.
 All down the street, the ears of wheat
 Are around Ximena flying ;
 But the King lifts off her bosom sweet
 Whatever there is lying.

The happy celebration of this wedding was the harbinger of many years of uninterrupted bliss to the fair Ximena and the heroic Knight of Bivar. Every time that the Cid Campeador mounted his favourite charger, Babieca, and left Burgos, it served as a signal that a new victory was about to be achieved, and the splendour of the Cid's triumphs was equal to their number. Speaking of this great warrior's deeds, a Spanish writer* says:

* Don José Manuel Quintana, in his *Life of the Cid*.

“ They are all warlike, and a simple announcement of them is sufficient to astonish the imagination, which can scarcely conceive this iron-armed warrior, who, quitting his native place with a slender retinue of such soldiers, relatives, and friends as wished to follow his fortunes, was never tired of fighting, and never fought without conquering.”

Indeed, the whole life of the Cid Campeador was a brilliant series of extraordinary exploits, amongst which the splendid conquest of Valencia stands preeminent. The Cid, notwithstanding the toilsome character of his life, lived to a very advanced age. Every thing which belonged to him was looked upon with veneration, especially his horse Babieca, and his famous sword Colada. Indeed, his favourite charger has been repeatedly celebrated in the old ballads.

The mortal remains of Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar were carried from Valencia, with great pomp, to the convent of San Pedro de Cardena, near Burgos, where the sepulchre of the famous knight is still visited by all who respect valour and worth.

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