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THE
CASTLE OF ALVIDARO;

OR, THE
SPANISH QUARREL.

A ROMANCE.

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—
A ROMANCE.
—

FERDINAND and Alphonso were brother officers in the same regiment. At a dinner given by their colonel, the juice of the grape having heated their spirits, and inflamed their passions, their difference of opinion on a subject which they were discussing, rose to so great a height, that a challenge was the consequence; and on quitting the table, they proceeded to a spot of rendezvous, where their dispute was to be decided by the sword.

Each had mounted his mule, and was attended only by his servant. They rode about half a league into the country; and having chose their ground, and drawn their weapons, it so chanced, that the first round Alphonso pierced the side of his antagonist, who fell; which his servant observing, instantly rode back to the city for surgical assistance.

Alphonso, meanwhile, and his servant, trembling for their own safety, mounted their beasts, to which they clapped spurs, and travelled some leagues without stopping, directing their course towards the confines of Portugal, and hoping to reach that kingdom ere they were overtaken by the alguazils of Spain, by whom they could not doubt that they should be pursued, and whose power over them would cease the moment they had entered the adjoining country.

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26 a man his own
servant

Their road lay through a deep and intricate forest: the tumult of their feelings rendered them inaccurate in observing the path which it became them to take, and about the fall of night, their mules, which had for some time past been nearly knocked up, refused to set another step. Alphonso and his servant being compelled to dismount, resolved to endeavour to seek the path which divided the kingdoms on foot; and leaving their beasts, moved on; but the darkness in a short time became so intense, that they were scarcely able to discern each other; and rain beginning to fall to the earth, and the forked lightning to cleave the sky, their situation became as pitiable as it had before been uncomfortable.

"The very elements," exclaimed the wretched Alphonso, "appear to conspire against us!"

"Mules, and all, Sir, I think," returned his servant, Pedro. "Plague on them for knocking up, say I: for, in the way of pleasant travelling, methinks a journey performed by the help of one's feet only, is the most fatiguing pastime I know of."

"Is this a time to murmur, Pedro?" returned Alphonso, "when the preservation of my life may have depended on the exertions we have made?"

"Your pardon, Sir, your pardon," answered Pedro. "Saint Jago forbid I should ever murmur at sharing your fortune. You know I have always been faithful to you, and I intend always to continue so; but consider, Sir, here we are in a dark wood, at near midnight, in the midst of a storm, and nothing but my foolish prattle to keep both our spirits from sinking!"

"And Heaven is conscious," replied Alphonso, "that mine greatly require support. The reflection that I am a murderer, although the law of honor justifies my conduct, appals my heart; and in this gloom, no vision, but the form of my bleeding foe, presents itself to my imagination."

"Oh, Sir, Sir, Sir!" cried Pedro, "for pity's sake, don't talk so dolefully: start any other subject out of mercy to your poor servant, lest I should begin to fancy I see with your eyes. Let's talk of the mules, Sir, or

any thing: I wonder where they are now, poor dumb creatures!"

"Doubtless," replied Alphonso, "they are grazing where we dismounted, and left them."

"Aye, picking a bit of supper," rejoined Pedro: "would I could do the like; but I have little chance of that, without I could eat grass; and methinks if we are condemned to stay here much longer, I shall be tempted to try."

"I would we could find some shelter for the night," replied Alphonso: "if we could do so, and were to set forward again with the dawn, we might still reach the limits of the kingdom by sun-rise."

A few moments silence ensued, which Alphonso broke, by exclaiming, "See! behold! a light appears before us!"

"I see it, I see it!" cried Pedro exultingly, "and am prepared to make towards it with all speed."

"Yet stay," rejoined Alphonso: "may not the hazard be great to which I am exposing myself, by resolving to enter any unknown habitation, of which the owner may be tempted to deliver me up into the hands of justice, for the sake of the reward which may await his treacherous action?"

"The light is vanished now," returned Pedro; "but, from what I could distinguish, I think it proceeded from the tower of a castle."

"Thinkest thou so?" replied Alphonso; "then I am tempted to approach it: the mind of the possessor of such an edifice must be too noble to be swayed by mercenary or dishonorable motives: we can, at all events, Pedro, advance in the direction from whence the light shone, and examine the nature of the building: come on, and stick close to me."

"Don't fear me, Sir," answered Pedro; "I'll willingly obey you: depend on it, I never refuse sticking close to any friend's elbow who will be kind enough to lead the way in a dark night."

They proceeded onwards, and as they moved along, the rain began to abate; and the light of the moon be-

ginning to peer forth from the clouds, after a time, enabled them to distinguish a stupendous and extensive fabric, whose lofty towers bespoke it to be a castle of superior eminence. Alphonso's fears rendered him for a while irresolute, whether to demand admittance: he considered that his appearance at that hour of the night, and on foot, in any mansion where he was a stranger, must immediately create suspicions in the minds of those who should behold him; which, however honorable the disposition of the owner of the castle, might enable his domestics to betray him, if any inquiries were made after him by the officers of justice.

Whilst they continued wandering round the edifice, Pedro suddenly addressed his master, by exclaiming, "Why, Sir, why, my dear Signior Alphonso! by all the saints, the castle gate is wide open!"

"Open!" echoed Alphonso, advancing towards his servant as he spoke.

"Upon my life it is, Sir: we have nothing to do but to walk in, without the trouble of blowing the horn," answered Pedro.

Alphonso was now convinced, by his own observation, of the truth of Pedro's assertion; and said, "It is strange that the gate of a stately edifice like this, should be open at this hour of the night; it is very strange indeed!"

"But mightily convenient, Sir," returned Pedro; "for if you are determined on not going in, I may sleep in the entry, and not be out of call."

"But I am determined to enter," replied Alphonso: "the chances are in my favor, that if the alguazils are apprised of the death of my antagonist, they may not have pursued the same road which we have taken; or, if they have, their expedition may not have equalled ours; and should the owner of this castle prove a man of benevolent feeling, (and I will learn his nature ere I discover to him my situation,) he may be willing to assist me in effecting my escape from this kingdom. Should I find him of an uncharitable disposition, an excuse is easily formed for leaving his mansion, as I entered it."

"Wisely resolved, Sir, by my hopes of a supper!" cried Pedro; "let us enter directly."

"Hold!" said Alphonso; "first blow the bugle, and let us ask admittance."

"Dear Sir," cried Pedro, "why make so much ceremony without, when the state of the gate plainly shews they make none within? Besides, the blowing of the bugle may do more mischief than you think for; if any of your pursuers should be within sound, and hear it."

"True," cried Alphonso, interrupting him: "I perceive the danger which you apprehend: let us, therefore, enter; the open gate invites us; and I doubt not, from the circumstance of its being so, that we shall encounter some member of the household the moment we enter the walls."

Leading the way as before, Alphonso stepped over the threshold, and entered the castle hall, across which his way was indistinctly pointed out to him by the faint illumination of the moon beams, which played upon its spiral windows.

This uncertain light was by no means sufficient for the comfort of poor Pedro. "Oh dear, Sir," he cried, "how do I hate silence and darkness in a strange house! Oh, that I could but see the shine of a glow-worm, or hear the music of a cricket!" At this instant a clock in one of the towers of the building struck one; and Pedro, whose senses were confused by alarm, unconscious of the nature of the sound which he heard, exclaimed, "Oh, my dear master, what can that be?"

"What should it be?" returned Alphonso, "but a clock, proclaiming morning?" He paused a moment, then added, "if this mansion is inhabited, (and but for the light which we awhile ago perceived to shine from it, and the voice of the clock which we have just heard, I should pronounce it were not,) its inhabitants must surely be at rest; and yet, methinks, it appears unaccountable that they should sleep with open gates."

"Look there! look there!" ejaculated Pedro, catching hold of his master's arm; who turning his eyes in the direction in which his finger was pointed, beheld a

gleam of light issuing from an arched corridor at the head of a staircase, which led from the extremity of the hall. "Ah! behold another sign of habitation!" he cried; "let us proceed boldly, and no doubt but our labours will be rewarded."

"If you think so, Sir," answered the quivering Pedro, "pray step forward as quick as you please; for if I am but rewarded in proportion to one quarter of what I have suffered this last night, I am sure I shall be ten times richer than ever I was in my life before."

Alphonso ascended the stairs; Pedro still following close at his heels, like his shadow. Arrived at the top, he beheld at the entrance of the corridor, approaching towards him, an elegant female figure, habited in a loosely-flowing night dress of white drapery: in one of her hands she bore a lamp: the greatest surprise was depicted on her beautiful countenance; and she was attended by a man, whose snow-white locks expressed the greatness of his age.

Quitting Alphonso for a few moments, we must give a short account of the inhabitants of the castle, of whom this fair being was one. Don Sancho des Alfara, the noble possessor of the castle of Alvidaro, was a widower, the parent of two daughters; the elder of whom was named Hortensia; the younger, Leonora. A few weeks only had elapsed since Don Sancho had indulged his daughters, by taking them on a visit to the castle of a neighbouring grandee; amidst the other amusements of the place, one evening had been devoted to the pleasures of a masquerade; at this entertainment, it had so chanced, that the two young officers, Ferdinand and Alphonso, had been present, and fate had so directed it, that they each attached themselves to one of the sisters.

The disposition of Leonora was gay, and incautious; her light form gliding through the mazes of the dance, captivated the heart of Ferdinand, and he implored to behold her countenance. He had already cast aside his own mask: his features had pleased her; she confessed that they did so; and with little reluctance permitted

him to behold her own; the sequel of which action was a declaration of an unalterable passion on his part; and an avowal on hers, that her sentiments were congenial to his own.

Hortensia, on the contrary, more prudent in her conduct, although not less pleased with the vows of affection which Alphonso breathed into her ear, than was her sister with those whispered to her by Ferdinand, and also well satisfied with the handsome countenance which he displayed to her observation, could not still be prevailed on by him to take off her mask: she knew that her father entertained a prejudice against men of a military profession; and, persuaded that his consent would never ratify her choice if it fell on Alphonso, she endeavoured, on her return home, to drive him from her thoughts.

Not so Leonora; determined to please herself, if she pleased no one else, she immediately entered into a correspondence with her beloved Ferdinand; and promised to elope with him on the first opportunity which should present itself for so doing.

At the expiration of five weeks after their acquaintance had commenced, Don Sancho announced to his family, that he should pay a visit of a couple of days to an acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Of this period accordingly Leonora resolved to avail herself for flying to her lover; and immediately wrote to him the joyful intelligence, that she would, on a certain day, meet him at midnight, on a particular spot in the neighbouring forest; to which, for security, she would come disguised in male attire; and bring with her her waiting maid, habited like herself, for a companion.

Ten o'clock of the appointed evening being arrived, Leonora called her maid Jacintha into her apartment, who started with surprise on beholding her mistress in the dress of a young cavalier; and became more astonished still, when she was required to habit herself in a similar suit; and informed, that they were going instantly to quit the castle, probably for ever.

Leonora had cautiously concealed her love affair, even

from her faithful domestic; and Jacintha, utterly at loss to comprehend her conduct, exclaimed, "Why whither can we be going?"

"You must stifle your curiosity," replied Leonora, "till we arrive at the place of our destination; or at least till we have quitted these walls."

"I would not refuse to follow you," returned Jacintha, "if you were to swear I should never know more of your concerns than I do at this moment; but I confess I am curious; and I'll tell you why, my lady; because I always set more heartily about an enterprize when I am acquainted with all its particulars, than when I am working my way like a mole in the dark."

Leonora smiled, and Jacintha added, "I am sure it is love, though I can't for my life divine of whom."

"That I will confess to you," replied Leonora.

"Then answer me one question, Ma'am," returned Jacintha, "and after that I will be silent as long as you wish me."

"Propose it," said Leonora.

"Are you a lover in hope or despair, Ma'am?" answered Jacintha.

"Hope and expectation now bear me on the wings of love, to meet the only man on earth I value," answered Leonora.

"Then, Ma'am, I am at your service," answered Jacintha. "I began to be afraid despair might be sending to you to shut yourself up in a nunnery, and that is the only place where I must have begged of you to have excused my attendance."

Jacintha now became silent, according to her promise; and when the clock had struck the midnight hour, and Leonora believed all the inhabitants to be wrapt in sleep, they descended together into the castle hall. With little difficulty, and without noise, they succeeded in opening the gate; and resolved not to close it again, lest its sound should rouse any one within the building from repose. They congratulated themselves on their safe escape, and proceeded with all speed towards the spot of Leonora's appointment with her Ferdinand.

Having now accounted for the light which had been beheld by Alphonso and his servant, and which had shone from the chamber of Leonora, and also explained the cause of their having found the gate open at that dead hour of the night, at which their fate led them to the walls of Alvidaro, we proceed to inform our readers, that the beautiful female whom Alphonso encountered at the top of the stairs, leading from the great hall of the castle, was that very Hortensia whose form and conversation had captivated his heart at the masquerade; and whose delicate sense and propriety had restrained her from displaying to him her countenance, and from keeping up any communication with him after the amusement of that evening had ceased.

Hortensia had been reading till a late hour in her chamber: the cautious steps of Leonora and Jacintha, as they had quitted the castle, had not been heard by her; but the voices of Alphonso and his servant in conversation had reached her ear; and knowing the neighbouring forest to contain a banditti, and apprehending that they might be apprised of her father's absence, and have fixed on this night for the plunder of his castle, she immediately flew to the chamber of the old steward Jerome; and summoning him to rise, whilst she explained to him her fears, besought him to be speedy in calling up the other members of the house.

The faithful and aged Jerome had just issued from his chamber, and placed himself by the side of his alarmed mistress, when Alphonso and Pedro reached the top of the stairs. Hortensia immediately recollected the person of Alphonso; but his presence did not throw her off her guard: what could she suppose him, but one leagued with robbers, to behold him enter her father's house clandestinely at that hour of the night?

Alphonso had never seen her face, of course he did not recollect her person; but falling on his knee before her, he exclaimed, "Pardon, lady, this abrupt intrusion into your presence, and stifle your resentment till you learn the cause: by Heaven you wrong me, if you regard me other than as a man without the will, or the

ability, to injure you: driven by a recent misfortune quit the kingdom, my servant and myself, overtaken on our journey by a storm, our mules unable to proceed had wandered many hours bewildered in the forest when chance led us to this castle."

"On the faith of a weary traveller, Madam," said Pedro, "what my master tells you is true; and the open gate invited us to enter."

"Your master owes you much, fellow," rejoined Hortensia, "for your ready conclusion of his tale; I had forgot to tell me how he gained admission."

"On the honor of a Spanish soldier," replied Alphonso, "you have heard only the truth from either of us: if you doubt it, and require our absence, we instantly leave this castle; if compassion moves you to give us shelter for the night, we rest your grateful debtors!"

"I will confess, Signior," said Hortensia, "that there is a nobleness in your manner, which seems tally with your words; and, but for the mystery of your entrance here——"

Alphonso interrupted her; "hear my unfortunate story, and I doubt not fully to convince you of my honor," he said.

"Then speak it briefly," replied Hortensia.

"It must be private," said Alphonso, casting his eye upon Jerome.

"You trespass too much upon my favor, by such a request," answered Hortensia.

"Then send me hence," cried Alphonso; "my life depends upon the tale I would impart to you remaining secret."

"Since you petition thus earnestly," answered Hortensia, after a moment's pause, "I will awake my sister; she is my second self; you cannot be more reluctant to admit her to your confidence, than you are when she is by, I will hear your tale;" and with these words, she proceeded to Leonora's chamber.

Returning in a few seconds, with a look of composure, and satisfaction in her countenance, she said

"Forgive me, Signior, my suspicions; I have found in my sister's apartment a paper, written by her own hand, which explains the manner by which you have gained admission: taking advantage of my father's absence from his castle, she has this night fled to meet a cavalier, to her marriage with whom my father had denied his assent; and in her haste to escape, doubtless left the castle gate open, as you describe yourself to have found it."

Alphonso was not less relieved by this elucidation of his honor, than was Hortensia delighted with the cause she had received to believe the man whom she secretly loved an honorable character: she now consented to listen in private to his communication, and dismissed Jerome, whom she directed to take the weary Pedro into the kitchen, and give him some refreshment.

The moment they were left alone, Alphonso proceeded to state his unfortunate case to Hortensia: but he did not mention the name of his antagonist; he merely spoke of him as an officer in the same regiment in which he himself bore a commission. Having heard his explanation, Hortensia replied, "My father, Signior, is a man not less eminent for the honorable principles of his heart, than the benevolence of his mind: I am conscious, therefore, that I am acting agreeably to his will, when I assure you of such protection as this castle can afford, and I promise you faithfully that you shall enjoy it."

Scarcely had Alphonso pronounced those effusions of gratitude which this declaration drew from his lips, ere they were alarmed by a loud knocking at the gate of the castle: it revived Alphonso's fears; and Hortensia calling to Jerome, commanded him not to open the gate, but to receive the business of those without through the grate.

Jerome promised obedience, and returning in a few minutes, put into the hands of Hortensia a letter, which, he said, a courier, whose horse was panting with fatigue, had brought for her from her father.

She hastily broke the seal, and found the contents to

be these: "Dearest Hortensia, a young cavalier has this day mortally wounded his brother officer in a duel: the unfortunate youth who has fallen beneath the sword of his antagonist, is nearly related to the Duke of Padruva; his assassin is suspected to have fled towards Portugal, and will of course attempt to cross the narrow path eastward of our castle: my long established friendship for the Duke, commands me to be active in seeking the redress of his relative's untimely death. Arm instantly, therefore, all my vassals, and send them out with orders to bring every straggler whom they meet to my castle, where I shall myself shortly arrive.

Your affectionate father,
SANCHO DES ALPARA."

"Wretched injunction!" exclaimed Alphonso; "then I am lost!"

"Lost!" echoed Hortensia; "have I not pledged my word that I would protect you?"

"You knew not then," returned Alphonso, "the opposite command which you were to receive from your father!"

"True," replied Hortensia; "but my sacred word has been passed; and I think I shall perform a greater duty, than I should do in obedience to his order, by sparing you for repentance; by snatching you from dying with your account in Heaven yet wet in blood."

Alphonso could not reply; his senses were bound up in astonishment, admiration, and gratitude.

"But," returned Hortensia, "you must fly this castle, and instantly too, while the darkness of the night favours your escape; and as you value your own safety, be speedy in your movements; for the vassals must all be armed, and sent out, in compliance with my father's injunction. Come, Signior," she added, "I will shew you where your servant waits you, and myself will open for you the gate."

"To attempt to speak my thanks were vain," said Alphonso; "conceive me grateful, as I ought to be, and you will then behold me what I truly am."

Hortensia accompanied them to the gate. "Farewell; salvation attend you!" she exclaimed, as she closed it upon them; whilst her heart beat with the apprehension of never more beholding the man who possessed her warmest affections; and who had parted from her without being conscious that they had ever met before.

We now return to Leonora, who, ignorant of the misfortunes which had that day befallen her Ferdinand, proceeded dauntlessly through the dark mists of night, where his absence created her not only disappointment, but the most violent anxiety, and misery. "Ah! me," she exclaimed, "a thousand apprehensions, more torturing than disappointment, fill my breast! Ferdinand promised to meet me here an hour earlier than the present time; true love (and such I am sure is his) is always punctual; some untoward accident must have befallen him, and rendered it impossible for him to keep his promise."

"Impossible!" echoed Jacintha; "a real and true lover should conquer impossibilities; but, forsooth, now a-days, one never finds a man who travels to his mistress out of the common road of nature: for my part, I could almost find in my heart to forswear the sex; neither to come himself, nor to send his servant to conduct us! Has he a smart fellow for his servant, my lady?"

"And is it thus you forswear the sex, Jacintha?" answered Leonora, "by inquiring if one whom you have never yet seen, be worthy your attempting a conquest over?" A pause ensued, and Leonora broke it; "I faint, I die!" she cried; "apprehension will kill me. Oh, Ferdinand, is this thy love? is this the issue of thy plighted vows?" and with these words she sunk senseless on a bank, against which she had been leaning.

Jacintha endeavoured, but in vain, to revive her; and finding her cold and inanimate, and dreading that she might expire for want of proper assistance, resolved, in her alarm, to run to a cottage which she was ac-

quainted stood at some distance from the spot, and implore the humanity of its inhabitants.

Scarcely had Jacintha quitted the place, ere Alphonso, wandering on in search of the wished-for path which led into the neighbouring kingdom, bent his steps towards it; and infinitely more distressed in mind than when he had quitted the castle of Alvidaro; for his faithful attendant was not only become useless to him, but even converted into a dangerous companion. The old steward of the castle had regaled him generously with the strong liquor contained in its vaults; and having swallowed it on an empty stomach, he had no sooner entered the air, than its fumes flew to his brain, and his senses and recollection became utterly disordered. Amidst other inconveniences to which it had subjected him, it had materially slackened the pace at which he moved; a change ill agreeing with the eager haste experienced by Alphonso: again, and again, he had called to him to proceed more quickly; and he now exclaimed, "Come on, Sir, I command you!"

"Then pray, Sir, command the trees to be quiet," returned Pedro; "for they keep dancing round me so fast, I can hardly contrive to get a cut in amongst them."

"Pedro, you'll blush for this to-morrow!" ejaculated Alphonso.

"I wish you had not tried me till to-morrow," said Pedro: "I know I am a little elevated; but if I had gone to bed, I should have slept it off by the morning. Oh what a rare cellar they do keep at that old castle!"

Alphonso knew not in what manner to proceed: he believed that, to ensure his own safety, he must be under the necessity of leaving Pedro behind him. From the delays which Pedro's inebriety had occasioned him, he believed that the vassals sent out from the castle must be near upon his heels. Whilst he was debating how to proceed, cries for assistance at a short distance from the spot where he was standing assailed his ears. The heart of Alphonso was one which had never been deaf to the calls of humanity; and drawing his weapon from its scabbard, he exclaimed, "Now, my sword,

retrieve thy credit, by fighting on the side of the oppressed!" and rushed towards the sounds.

Pedro, who had sunk down at the foot of a tree, heard his words, and observed his departure; and, inconsiderate that those expressions which the lethargic oppression of drunkenness compelled him inarticulately to mumble, could neither be understood nor heard by him, "Why, master!" he said, "Signior Alphonso! don't go to fighting again; you have forfeited one neck already; and if you kill another man, consider, you have not a second neck to pay for your sin with.—Aye, he's gone at it!—It is very astonishing how some men forget themselves; so many lessons as I have given him on caution, and decency of conduct!—Sir! Signior!—Master! come, have not you done yet?—I would get up, and go after him, but the ground here is so unsteady, I believe it is rocked by an earthquake.—Halloo, Signior!—Aye, he won't hear me; at least he is not polite enough to come. How ready some people are to give advice, and how backward they are to take it! Never in his life did he say to me, 'Pedro, don't drink any more,' but I listened to him with the utmost patience, before I emptied my goblet; now he is fighting, and won't listen to me at all.—Plague on it, how these cursed trees do keep dancing! they make such a wind, I can hardly open my eyes for them. Be quiet, I say! Can't you be quiet, and let me look about me? Be quiet!" he repeated; and thus muttering, he fell insensibly asleep.

Thus he had continued only a few minutes, when Leonora revived from the fainting fit into which she had fallen. Unable to behold Jacintha, she called upon her by name. No reply was made; and, alarmed at her absence, and equally at a loss whither to suppose her gone, she arose from the bank, and, with feeble steps, moved a few paces forward. The faint light cast on objects by the moon, was just sufficient to disclose forms, but not countenances; and beholding Pedro, she immediately mistook him for Jacintha, and catching him by

the arm, she exclaimed, "What has befallen thee; dost thou not hear me?"

"You would not hear me!" returned Pedro, who, between sleeping and waking, supposed himself to be addressing his master. "I told you not to go, and kill any more people; but you would be headstrong."

"Heavens!" cried Leonora, "to whom has chance led me? and where can poor Jacintha be?"

"Be!" echoed Pedro, "why dead, to be sure, poor thing! if you have been cutting and slashing at him, as you did at the other gentleman!"

At this instant the gleam of torches burst upon the atmosphere; and Leonora observed several men, whom she recognized for her father's vassals, advancing towards the spot; and one of them, who had overheard Pedro's last sentence, addressed his companions with, "These must be the men; did not you hear what one of them said? He talked about cutting and slashing, and a gentleman being dead."

"Dead!" echoed Pedro, "why how should he be alive, unless he was a hedge-hog, instead of a man, after you had run your steel through him?"

"Well, well," cried another of the vassals, "you confess the matter plainly enough however; so come along with us to the castle, and take your trial; and if you have any relish for life, save your own neck by appearing evidence against your master."

"Which master," cried another of the vassals, and seizing Leonora as he spoke, "is, doubtless, this little gentleman. Why you are a mighty puny bit of a stripling, Signior," he added, "to have killed a full-grown man without help, as is laid to your charge! However, your little bantoms sometimes crow the loudest.—Come, comrades, there can be no doubt that these are the men; so come, let us away with them to the castle, and get the reward for which all our fellows are upon the lookout."

Leonora's heart died within her: without the support of the vassals, she would have fallen to the earth: from the extraordinary circumstances by which she was sur-

rounded, she knew not what conclusion to draw. Could Jacintha have fled, and betrayed her? No, that was impossible, for two reasons: first, because she was too well convinced of the honesty of her heart, to suspect her of such a meanness; and next, because it was evident that her father's vassals did not know her to be the person she was, but mistook her for some one else. Half determined to explain herself to them, she conjured them to hear her speak in her own defence; and assured them that she was no assassin, as they accused her with being. But the only reply that she could gain to her entreaties, was, "No, no, we do not want to hear you, nor are we authorized to hear you: Don Sancho will hear you; we found you, that is enough for us!"

"Don Sancho is not at his castle," rejoined Leonora.

"But he will be by the time we get there," replied the men.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Leonora; and the dreadful sensations with which the idea of being led into her father's presence, after the rash step of which she had been guilty, and of the conduct which he might adopt to prevent her ever again beholding her beloved Ferdinand, entirely overpowered her feelings, and she again sunk into a state of insensibility.

Some others of the vassals had meanwhile raised Pedro from the ground; and their rough handling having in some measure recalled him to his recollection, he rubbed his eyes, and said, "By the saints, I believe the trees have danced till they are all turned into gentlemen!"

"What are you talking about, sirrah?" cried one of the vassals: "you think to deceive us by this nonsense, but it won't do; we know you."

"Know me, do you?" echoed Pedro.

"Yes, all of us; we all know you," returned a vassal.

"Well, that is very extraordinary," replied Pedro;

"for I have not the pleasure of knowing one of you."

"Pooh!" ejaculated one of the vassals, "this fellow is more knave than fool, I can see; bring him along, bring him along."

His directions were immediately obeyed. Leonora was borne in the arms of some of the men, who amused themselves with jests at the chicken-heartedness of the little fighting gentleman, as they termed her; whilst poor Pedro was dragged along by others with as little ceremony as the thief in the proverb was dragged to the gallows.

Hortensia having sent out the vassals in compliance with her father's command, was once more left alone with the faithful old steward Jerome. "I intreat you, my dear lady," he said, "to take some rest; morning is breaking, and you have not yet been in bed."

"I cannot taste repose; my heart is overburthened with anguish," replied Hortensia.

"From what cause does it arise?" inquired Jerome: "if I cannot relieve your woes, I entreat you to let me become your consoler."

"I fear not to admit you to my confidence," replied Hortensia; "I am well acquainted with the affection which you bear to all my family, and feel a satisfaction in proving to you how well I think of you: Jerome, you have pledged your faith never to reveal the favor which I have shewn to this unhappy but rash stranger?"

"Shall I repeat the solemn promise?" demanded Jerome.

"Oh, no; I doubt thee not," rejoined Hortensia; "and to shew thee at once the fearless confidence I place in thee, and thus more firmly to bind thee to me, know then—Oh, Jerome, how shall I repeat it!—Thy age, wise from experience, may smile contemptuously at what I am about to utter, but the same source of knowledge will teach thee not to deal too harshly with a woman's weakness.—Know, then, I love the youth who stands indebted to me for the preservation of his life!"

"How say'st thou, Lady?" exclaimed the old man.

"The first impression," returned Hortensia, "of an object in itself admirable, is difficult to be erased from the memory; and oft the causes that ought most strongly to awaken our hatred, awaken but our sorrow that

we ought to hate: such is my case; I saw and loved this youth ere I knew him faulty; on the memory of that regard I have saved him, though I have since discovered him guilty of an atrocious crime; and I will ever act to screen him from the sword of justice. The day (should such a day arrive) that terminates his life by any means but those of nature, gives me a wound incurable: but here I swear, and Heaven be my witness! that, though his future life were spotless as the hearts of angels, his glory blazoned by Fame's trumpet beyond the limits of this finite globe, his riches greater than the bowels of the earth contain, and his love for me more pure and sacred than the vestal fire, I never would accept the hand of him who slew his fellow being!"

"Oh, Madam," returned Jerome, "sincerely do I pity you; and pray that Heaven may drive this phantasy from your mind!"

"I shall never repent that I have felt it," returned Hortensia, "since it has saved me from arraigning one whose death I was not born to expedite.—My secret lies buried in your breast."

"Trust me, lady," answered Jerome, "it is a grave from whence it shall never rise till summoned into life by you."

Scarcely had he spoken, ere the bugle at the castle gate was blown, and repeated a second and a third time. With all the precipitancy he could command, Jerome flew to open it; and found there one of his fellow domestics, who had attended Don Sancho abroad on the preceding day; and who informed him, that their lord, who was within a stone's throw of his castle, and whose return had been hastened by his desire of rendering himself of service to the Duke of Padriya, in attempting to prevent the murderer of his relative from gaining the pass into Portugal, had been attacked by banditti, who would have proved too powerful for him, and his attendants, had not a stranger come to their assistance, by whose valiant arm the fortune of the hour had been turned, and the robbers put to flight." He added, "that the stranger had been severely wound-

ed in the onset, and was so faint with loss of blood, that he was obliged to be supported by his fellow domestics, who were hastening with him towards the castle."

Jerome immediately communicated to his young lady the peril in which his loved master had stood; and time had scarcely been given him to acquaint her with his present safety, ere the voice of Don Sancho himself was heard in the castle hall. Hortensia ran to give him welcome, and threw herself into his arms.

Don Sancho returned her embrace, and then said, "That I am here alive, thanks to this gallant youth. Attacked by ruffians, his sword preserved me;" and as he spoke, he pointed to him of whom his conversation had been; and in the pale and emaciated visage of a young man, who was supported in the arms of the domestics, and to whom they were administering restoratives, she beheld Alphonso! for he it was who had been the preserver of her father's life; and from whom sense had fled in consequence of the loss of blood which had issued from his wounds.

A faint shriek burst from the lips of Hortensia, and she fell upon her father's neck.

"My child, Hortensia! what affects thee?" exclaimed Don Sancho.

"Pardon me, Sir," replied the trembling and agitated Hortensia; "but the idea of your recent danger appeared for the moment real, and, I know not how, utterly overpowered me."

"Well then," replied Don Sancho, "let the surety of my safety be your present comfort; and join your thanks with mine to my preserver: see, he revives!"

The opening eye of Alphonso fully expressed those sensations of wretchedness, which Hortensia could not doubt to be passing in his mind. Peculiar! unparalleled! was undoubtedly the situation in which he was placed. As her regards rested on him, his lip quivered, and his heart beat with the wildest of pulsations.

At length, stammering, Hortensia spoke; "Accept from me, gallant Signior," she said, "the warmest gratitude an anxious daughter can express on a loved father's rescue."

"Were any reward due to the performance of an act of duty and humanity," in a faltering voice pronounced Alphonso, "your thanks and favor, lady, were the highest recompence my heart could covet."

Turning to her father, Hortensia now said, "Permit me, Sir, to retire to my chamber; my weak mind is unable to dwell with composure on the occurrences so lately passed; I trust me I shall fare better by and bye." Don Sancho gave the permission which she required, and she departed.

Hortensia having retired, Don Sancho addressed himself to Alphonso: "Hereafter, Signior," he said, "I will devise some boon suited to your noble value; at the present hour your wounds claim all attendance." He then commanded his servants to lead Alphonso to a chamber; and, dreadful as was to Alphonso the reflection of being compelled to remain within the walls of Alvidaro, he could not do otherwise than accept Don Sancho's generous offer; as his bodily powers were insufficient to bear him away from the spot on which his apprehensions were raised for his personal safety.

Don Sancho now retired to an apartment, which he had no sooner entered, than one of his domestics informed him, that his vassals, who had been sent out by his orders into the forest, had brought in two men of suspicious appearance, whom they had chanced to encounter. "This," added the servant, pointing to a vassal who had followed him into the apartment, "is one of those who took them."

"Relate to me the circumstances," said Don Sancho, "which led you to suspect the men whom you have taken of being the offenders."

"Why, my Lord," replied the vassal, "just as we came up with them, we heard the servant upbraiding his master with having killed a gentleman; but to us, as it was natural enough for him to do, he denied having said so: at first, he pretended to be in liquor; but he now is become more rational; though still he denies the murder."

"Bring them into my presence instantly," said Don

Sancho; and the vassal retired to obey his command. In a very short time he returned, and spoke thus: "The gentleman, who is a very puny sort of fellow, fainted away on receiving your summons to appear before you; so I have directed my comrades to bring the servant alone into your Lordship's presence, as I judged that his confession might prove sufficient."

"I think it not improbable that such may be the case," replied Don Sancho: "let me see him:" and Pedro was now led into the apartment.

The state of intoxication in which Pedro had left the castle of Alvidaro, had prevented him from comprehending the reason for which his master and he, so quickly after their arrival there, had been expelled from its walls; the same puzzling state of brain had possessed him at the moment of his first falling into the hands of Don Sancho's vassals; but the fumes of the mountain were now tolerably worked off, and, although he had no certain knowledge from which to act, he had a tolerably clear idea of the reason which had caused him to be brought back to the castle; and having caught a sufficient view of Leonora's face, to convince him that she was not his master, he flattered himself that Alphonso might be in safety; but still resolved, like a wary general, to act with caution.

Don Sancho addressed him by saying, "I suppose you are well acquainted with the cause of your being brought to this castle?"

"Truly, Signior, I cannot say I am," returned Pedro; "for, to speak the truth, I was a little elevated when these gentlemen invited me back, and did not exactly understand the reason of their politeness."

"Back!" echoed Don Sancho; "why, were you then ever here before?"

Softly, softly, my dear fellow, thought Pedro; you are certainly not quite sober yet; for you are talking a little too fast here, and will certainly get yourself into a scrape. "Pray, Signior," he asked, "will you be so kind as to tell me where I am now, and then I will tell you directly if I was ever here before?"

"You know," was the reply, "that you are in the castle of Don Sancho des Alfara, knave!"

"I beg your pardon, Sir," returned Pedro; "that is a little mistake of yours, Signior: my name is not knave, nor any thing like knave, I assure you, Signior."

"Insolent rascal!" cried Don Sancho; "what your name is, is of little importance to me; tell me what is the name of your master."

"That is a question I never asked him in all my life, Sir," replied Pedro.

"Sirrah! sirrah!" exclaimed Don Sancho, "your equivocal answers plainly display your iniquitous character; you have been at the bar, I perceive."

"Aye, you have found me out, I confess now," answered Pedro; "many a dozen bottles of stout Madeira I have honestly paid for at the bar of the Eagle Tavern in Madrid; you are right enough there, Sir."

At this moment Jerome entering the apartment, and addressing Don Sancho, said, "The supposed gentleman, Signior, who has been brought here on suspicion of being this young man's master, and the murderer of Don Ferdinand, proves to be no other than your own daughter, the Lady Leonora."

"Leonora!" echoed Don Sancho; "how can it be possible that she can have been found in the forest at midnight, and mistaken for a cavalier?" And upon Jerome now fell the unpleasant office of explaining the intemperate conduct of which Leonora had been guilty.

Don Sancho listened in astonishment to his words; and was not less chagrined at this proof of his daughter's disobedience to his will, than he was delighted to learn that chance had conspired to return her, without the accomplishment of her purpose, to her paternal roof. He commanded Jerome to conduct her to her apartment, and to turn upon her the key; and having done so, he again addressed himself to Pedro: "This discovery clears not you, Sir," he said; "you may still be the servant of him I suspected you to be: answer me truly to the question which I shall ask of you, or dread my resentment: by what name is your master known?"

"By that of Don Pedro de Martino," was the answer.

Don Sancho paused a moment upon the name; he did not believe it to be the same which had been mentioned to him as the name of Don Ferdinand's assassin; but could not decide whether it were so or not. "Where does he reside?" he next asked.

"Wherever he finds he can live best, Signior," replied Pedro: "he has no settled place of habitation."

"If you deceive me, remember that it will go hard with you," replied Don Sancho. "Where is he now? I ask."

"In this castle, Signior," answered Pedro.

"Is he so?" ejaculated Don Sancho, in a voice of triumph. "Then tell me your own name, and appear witness against him; out with it!"

"Don Pedro de Martino, Signior," replied Pedro.

"How, Sir, the same as your master's!" exclaimed Don Sancho.

"It can't be otherwise, Signior," was the answer: "Don Pedro de Martino is my master's name; Don Pedro de Martino is his servant's name; and Don Pedro de Martino is my name; simply thus accounted for; that I am both master and servant in one. I receive nobody's commands but my own; and I execute nobody's orders but my own: I am my own master, and my own servant; two things I much pride myself upon; for as I serve myself, I am sure of my attendant's always being within call; a rare thing to be met with now-a-days; and as I am my own master, I can boast of being more at my own disposal than half the great men in the kingdom!"

Addressing those by whom he was surrounded, "I know not what to make of this fellow," said Don Sancho, "unless he be still in liquor; and such I believe him to be:" then turning to Pedro, he added, "I fancy you have been lately where you have not so honestly paid for your Madeira, as you have been bragging that you were wont to do at the bar of the Eagle Tavern in Madrid?"

Pedro conceived that this was an excellent idea to humour; and conceiving that Jerome must be his friend, he could not guess the reason of his silence; "What, has Jerome told you then, Signior?" he said.

"Told me what?" asked Don Sancho.

"That he and I had cracked a bottle of wine together to night, Signior?" was the reply.

"Is this so, Jerome?" inquired Des Alfara; "and do you know this young man?"

"Jerome replied, 'The young man certainly did drink part of a bottle with me this evening, Signior.'"

"There you see, Signior, you see," cried Pedro: "why, I had been on a visit to this honest scul, and was going home, rather tipsical, as one may say, when these gentlemen forced me back again."

"Aye, but how came you to be talking about your master murdering a gentleman?" asked one of the vassals, who was present.

"How!" repeated Pedro, "why Jerome had been telling me about the dreadful accident of the duel, and the poor gentleman's being killed, and so on; and when I fell asleep in that dark wood, being a little tipsical, as I said before, I dreamt that I was talking to his murderer, and upbraiding him with his cruelty; that was all!"

"We thought you were in liquor," returned the vassal; "but as we did not know you, we brought you hitner, in compliance with our Lord's commands, to suffer no straggler to escape."

"I commend your diligence, and will reward it," replied Don Sancho: "return to your posts!" Then addressing Jerome, he added, "let a hearty welcome to my castle, speak my apology to your friend for the unjust suspicions which I have entertained of him."

When Jerome was at length left alone with Pedro, the latter thanked him for the friendship which he had shewn him; and when Jerome had explained to him those existing circumstances with which he had hitherto

been unacquainted, "I care not a pin," he said, "for the straights to which I have been put; I am thankful enough to the saints that my master was not brought back with me."

Jerome, in return, recounted to Pedro, that his master was nevertheless within the castle walls; and having informed him of the accident which caused him to be so, he added, "but my master does not know him; nor will he be made acquainted, either by my lady, or myself, who he is; therefore, if you continue to act as discreetly as you have hitherto done, he will be safe."

"Show me to his chamber," exclaimed Pedro, with all the trepidation of eagerness marked on his countenance.

"You must not see him," said Jerome.

"Not see him!" echoed Pedro: "my dear master ill, wounded, perhaps dying, and I not see him! Why, when I had only broke my arm two winters ago, he gave me double wages; came to see me every day; and maintained my old father and mother, because I could not work for them; and do you think I would be under the same roof where he is fainting, bleeding, and groaning, and not nurse him myself?"

"But consider," said Jerome, "that, by your zeal, you may betray him, and endanger his life."

"Well, and may not he die now for want of my nursing?" cried Pedro. "Nobody here does know him, you say; nor they can't know him, nor they shan't know him. To be sure, you can't think I will betray him; and if I do, let the worst come to the worst, he has killed but one man; they can but demand life for life, and they shall have mine: let them hang me, if they will, only let me nurse my master well first!"

"Thou art a good fellow," said Jerome; "and if thou wilt be guided by me, I will watch an opportunity of admitting thee to his chamber."

"St. Jago bless you for saying so," cried Pedro.

"Can't you contrive to say I am a doctor, or a surgeon, or a confessor; or let me down the chimney like a

sweep, or any thing of that kind? I will leave it all to you; but I will do any thing; and the gratitude I shall ever bear you will be inexpressible; but how shall I ever give you proof of it?—I wish, from my soul, when my master gets well, you might suddenly be taken ill, that I might show you how kind and tender I would be to you, for having let me nurse my poor master!"

By the management of Jerome, Pedro was in the course of an hour admitted to his master's chamber, and hid in a closet adjoining to it, whenever it was approached by Don Sancho. Two days now passed, during which little amendment took place in the sufferer. No other stragglers were brought to the castle. Hortensia experienced the greatest wretchedness of mind. Don Sancho refused to see his daughter Leonora, and still kept her a constant prisoner in her chamber, where her solitary hours were relieved only by the occasional attendance of Jacintha; who had skulked home to the castle, rendered heartily ashamed of her male attire, by the comments which she had received on her wearing it from her fellow domestics.

On the third evening, about the hour of twilight, a handsome carriage, drawn by six mules, stopt at the Castle of Alvidaro: and a servant, who was attending it on horseback, having blown the bugle, requested Don Sancho des Alfara to be informed, "that a gentleman in the carriage desired to be honored by an immediate interview with him."

Don Sancho having received the message, commanded the Signior to be admitted without delay; and on his entering the apartment in which he was waiting to receive him, he beheld a stranger of a youthful and prepossessing appearance, who was handsomely dressed, and appeared in every respect a man of a superior rank in life.

At the invitation of Don Sancho, the stranger seated himself, and then spoke thus: "I have the honor, Signior, to be distantly related to your intimate friend, the Duke of Padriva; and it is with his knowledge and sanction that I now wait upon you."

Don Sancho declared himself delighted to entertain any relative of the Duke's; and the stranger bowing as an acknowledgment of his compliment, spoke thus: "You cannot require, Signior, to be reminded, that at the masquerade given by the Count de Parmac, to which you lately took your daughters, the Signiora Leonora was captivated by a young man on whom she afterwards requested your permission to bestow her hand; a sanction which you refused her, on account of a prejudice which you bear to the military profession, which was that of her favored lover."

"Such a circumstance has undoubtedly taken place in my family," answered Don Sancho.

"But you have probably yet to learn," rejoined the stranger, "that the man on whom her affections were placed, was that very Ferdinand who stands in the same point of relationship to the Duke of Padriya as myself, and who three days since received a mortal wound in a duel at the hand of a brother officer in his regiment, named Alphonso?"

"This I did not know," replied Don Sancho. "Do you come to tell me that the unfortunate youth has breathed his last?"

"Not so," answered the stranger; "he lives, but lingers on the margin of the grave; whilst all his thoughts are of his Leonora, that Leonora who had appointed to fly with him to love and happiness, on that very night on which the sword of his antagonist prevented him from keeping the blissful appointment which he had made with her! Trembling, as I have already said, on the margin of the grave, there is but one consolation which his fleeting life can enjoy, and this one it is alone in your power to grant him."

"In mine!" echoed Don Sancho.

"In yours," repeated the stranger. "It is impossible to account for the feelings which seize upon men who are labouring under a dreadful extremity of the nature of that under which he is suffering; and he declares, that as he knows it to be impossible for him ever to behold his Leonora again on earth, no event can cause

him to die in peace, but that of beholding in your handwriting, such a consent to his union with her, as might have insured him the happiness of legally naming her his, had it been the will of fate to have prolonged his life."

"But of what benefit can such a consent be to him?" asked Don Sancho, "as he must know himself to be on the point of death?"

"It is an imaginary happiness, which it would be cruel to deny him," answered the stranger; "but I doubt," he added with a sigh, "if you were to grant my request, whether he would ever behold it, let me make what haste I might in returning to him."

"Why, if you think him so near death as that," returned Don Sancho, "I can see no danger to be apprehended from my complying with his wish; indeed, I think it would be cruel in me not to accede to his request; here are pens and paper upon the table, pray dictate to me what will be sufficient to make his mind easy."

"It will be sufficient," returned the stranger, "for you merely to say—'Don Sancho des Altara, in his own hand-writing, gives his consent for Don Ferdinand to espouse his daughter Leonora.'"

Don Sancho took the pen, and having written the words which the stranger had spoken, put the paper into his hand. The stranger expressed his approbation of its contents; and then said, "But as it is impossible to account for all the imaginations with which an invalid may be seized, I must be provided with some proof that this is not a forgery, lest Ferdinand should suspect it to be so: will you permit, therefore, a couple of my servants to sign it, as witnesses of its identity?"

Don Sancho declared he could have no objection, and the domestics were accordingly summoned into the apartment; a pen was put into their hands, and they placed their names beneath the writing on the paper; which act being passed, the stranger having folded the paper, and placed it in a breast pocket of his vest, threw himself upon one of his knees before Don Sancho,

and exclaimed, "Your pardon, Signior, and your blessing! I am your future son-in-law; you behold in me, Ferdinand!"

The astonishment with which Don Sancho was seized at this declaration may be easily imagined: the most violent rage fired his breast; he endeavoured to gain possession of the paper which he had given to Ferdinand; and when he could not obtain it, he stamped, swore, and raved aloud. To complete the confusion of the scene, Pedro chanced at that very time to be passing by the door of the apartment, which being open, he was tempted by the uproar which he heard, to peep in; and no sooner beheld a form resembling that of Don Ferdinand, whom he supposed must long have been dead, than throwing himself upon the ground, and hiding his face in his cloak, he exclaimed, "A ghost! a ghost! Heaven bless me, and forgive me my sins! A ghost! a ghost!"

It was now necessary that some person of authority should appear to compose this scene of discord, for which office no one was better calculated than Don Sancho's intimate friend, the Duke of Padriya, who now entered the apartment, and who had till this moment been concealed in the carriage which had brought Ferdinand to the Castle of Alvidaro, and where he had sat awaiting the event of his artifice. Information of its having been crowned with success was immediately conveyed to him by one of Ferdinand's domestics; and, upon receiving the intelligence, he sought Des Alfara without delay.

Don Sancho was considerably surprised by his presence; but not at all displeased, when he heard him pronounce, "I am come, my old friend, to present you with an equivalent for the consent which has deceitfully been obtained of you: my relative, Ferdinand, is from this moment no longer a soldier, but my declared heir. Does this arrangement content you?"

The features of Don Sancho dilated into a smile: he shook the hand of the Duke heartily in his, and said, "If Leonora has no objection to become a Duchess,

there shall be no obstacle in the way of a general reconciliation." Leonora was immediately directed to be summoned to the apartment; and on her arriving in it, and seeing Ferdinand, she could scarcely believe that she was experiencing the felicity of being once more clasped in his arms.

Equally incredulous was Pedro of Ferdinand's mortal state; and creeping round to him on his knees, from the spot where he had a few moments before fallen to the ground, he laid his hand upon his leg, by which action having convinced himself that he was really and truly composed of flesh and blood, he uttered an exclamation of joy at the discovery, which drew upon him the regards of all present.

Ferdinand no sooner cast upon him his eyes, than he recognized his person, and said, "Yes, Pedro, I am, indeed, alive, and well, as you behold me. When your master supposed me to be mortally wounded, and fled from the spot of our appointment, I had only fainted with loss of blood: my wound was slight; and a couple of days have perfectly restored me. Would your master were here, that I might convince him of my safety; and place a seal of oblivion on our foolish disagreement, by a renewal of our former friendship!"

"Say you so, Signior?" cried Pedro. "This is news my master will be glad to hear, I know; but, as he is not able to come to you, will you have the goodness to step up stairs to him?"

Ferdinand expressed his surprise to learn that Alphonso was in the castle of Alvidaro; and Don Sancho was not less astonished at the discovery than himself; and Hortensia, begging to be heard, now made a full disclosure of the events of that evening, when Alphonso had first sought refuge within its walls. One only concealment did she practise in her tale; she spoke of the favor which she had shown him as the result solely of humanity; of the love with which her heart privately glowed for him she said nothing. To her account Don Sancho added the relation of the rescue from death which he owed to the sword of Alphonso; and having

sent forward Jerome, and Pedro, to announce to him their coming, they all repaired to the chamber of Alphonso, who had been taken from his bed, and placed on a couch to receive them.

The scene which ensued was one of the most exhilarating nature to the feelings of all; perfect joy animated their hearts; not a sigh of regret was heaved, unless it were imperceptibly breathed by Alphonso to the memory of the fascinating being who had captivated his heart at the masquerade; or stole from the lips of Hortensia, whilst she nourished the concealed wish of disclosing herself to him.

At length, tranquillity having been restored to the minds of all who were interested in the extraordinary events which had marked the few last days, and the solemnization of Leonora's nuptials having been appointed to take place at the expiration of a month, to which period they had been deferred, in order that Alphonso, who was now quickly recovering, might be able to join in the festivities of the season, Don Sancho, calling his daughter Hortensia into his closet, thus addressed her: "My dear child, I cannot decide upon any reward which I deem adequate to the noble saviour of my life; his situation is such, that an offer of gold must offend him; if I repay him only with my thanks, he may judge me actuated by avarice, and meanness; cannot you imagine any means for reconciling this difficulty?"

"I think I can," replied Hortensia: "I am acquainted with a lady whose form and conversation inspired him with the most violent affection at the very masquerade at which my sister captivated Don Ferdinand: on that very evening he made her an offer of his hand, which she then refused; but she is now desirous of renewing their acquaintance: if, therefore, you would permit me to invite her to this castle, and would lead her to the presence of Alphonso, and would explain for her, what she is too bashful to declare to him in her own words, which is, 'that she now desires to become his wife,'—I dare believe that he will consider it as the greatest obligation you can confer on him."

Don Sancho readily consented to the plan, and inquired the name of the lady: his daughter replied, "that she was not permitted to inform him it till the interview of which she had just spoken were past." Don Sancho next inquired, when she wished the meeting between Alphonso and the lady to take place? Hortensia answered, "that she would immediately write to the lady, to acquaint her with his willing adjunction in their plan, and would direct her to come to the castle on the following evening; and upon this arrangement Don Sancho and his daughter parted.

When the following evening arrived, about the hour of twilight, whilst Des Allara was seated in conversation in the dining hall of his castle with the Duke of Padriava, Jacintha appeared at the door, and begged permission to speak to him; and on going out, she informed him, "that the lady, of whom Signora Hortensia had spoken to him on the preceding day, was arrived at the castle, and impatiently awaiting him to conduct her to the presence of Signior Alphonso.

Don Sancho followed Jacintha's steps, who conducted him to an apartment, where he found an elegant female, in the dress of a shepherdess; which had been that which Hortensia had worn at the masquerade, and with her face concealed beneath a mask. The Signiora curtsied at his entrance. Don Sancho returned her reverence with a profound bow; and informing her, that it gave him the greatest pleasure to become the instrument of her happiness, he took her hand, to lead her to Alphonso's apartment.

The moment Alphonso's eyes fell upon the female at their entrance, a convulsive start of pleasure shook his frame; which Don Sancho acknowledging with a significant smile that he beheld, led forward the masked fair, whilst he thus addressed Alphonso: "I am informed, Signior, that the most worthy boon which I can offer to your acceptance, in requital of those services which I have received from you, is the hand of this lady; receive it from mine, and may you be happy together to the end of your days!"

Alphonso cast himself upon his knees before the female, and exclaimed, "Can this be possible? am I indeed so blest? Oh, exquisite being!" he added, "cast off that envious mask, and, by disclosing to me your features, complete the fascination over my soul which your form and conversation have begun!"

The female complied with his petition; and withdrawing her mask, disclosed the countenance of Hortensia.

The surprise of Don Sancho, and of Alphonso, cannot require explanation. The latter was delighted, transported. "By Heaven," he exclaimed, "I have loved thy countenance from the first moment of my beholding it; but, faithful to the vow of constancy which I had sworn to the unknown fair at the masquerade, I have endeavoured to disunite love in my heart from thy idea, and to recollect thee only with gratitude!"

"The services which we have rendered each other," returned Don Sancho, "have been mutual; as we have acted thus benevolently towards each other as strangers, there can be no doubt but that we shall become affectionate and interested relatives: take her hand, Signior, I repeat the consent which I gave to your union, before I knew whose the hand was that I placed in yours! Ferdinand is declared the heir of the Duke of Padriva; and, instead of your continuing in a military capacity, I declare you mine! Do not think," he added, "that, because I insist on both my sons-in-law becoming private gentlemen, I have any objection to soldiers, as men; far the contrary; as individual characters I honor them; and only dislike them as husbands; and for this simple reason, because they have usually been accustomed to so many sweethearts whilst single, that the chances are very much against their being satisfied with one wife when they are married."

Uninterrupted joy now blest the Castle of Alvidaro. On the same day were celebrated the marriage of Alphonso with his Hortensia, and that of Ferdinand with his Leonora; and, in reward for his faithful services to his master, Pedro was rewarded by being placed in possession of a farm under Don Sancho, accompanied with the hand of Jacintha.

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