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A Sublime Poem.

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

Mrs. Browning, formerly Miss Barrett, is distinguished for the powerful flights and bold originality which mark her poetry She is more masculine in her cast of thought than any other British poetess, Mrs. Hemans, perhaps, excepted. Here is a specimen of her peculiar manner and strange turn of fancy:

I would build a cloudy house,
For my thoughts to live in,
When for health too fancy-loose,
And too low for heaven,
I sleep, and talk my dream aloud,
I build it fair to see—
I build it on the moonlit cloud,
To which I look'd with thee.

Cloud walls of the morning's gray
Faced with amber column,
Crown'd with crimson cupola
From a sunset solemn—
For casements, from the valley fetch
May-mists glimmering—
With a sunbeam bid in each,
And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and the brightening,
Of a riven thunder cloud
Veined with the lightening.
Use one with an iris stain,
For the door within,
Turning to a sound like rain
As we enter in.

For the fair hall reach'd thereby,
Walled with cloudy whiteness,
Take the blue plain in the sky,
Wind-work'd into brightness—
Whence corridors and long degrees
Of cloud-stairs wind away—
Till children wished upon their knees,
They walked where they pray.

In my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close and silent, glorified
When the sunbeams come there—
Sudden harpers, hanging on
Every drop as such—
Drawing colors like a tune
Measured to the touch.

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut forest—
Bring a purple from the hill
When the heart is sorest;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet wove around;
And thereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

Bring a gray cloud from the east
Where the lark was singing—
Something of the song at least
Lose not in the bringing—
And that shall be a morning chair
For poet dreams—when with them
No verse constraint—the floating air
Their only, lovely rhytm.

Bring the red cloud from the sun—
While it sinketh, catch it—
Bring it for a couch, with one
Side-long star to watch it—
Fit for a poet's finest thought,
At curfew time to lean,
When things invisible are brought
More near him than the scene

Poet's thought! not poet's sigh!
Alas! they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly
As if in April weather
Hall, corridor, and column proud—
My chamber fair to see—
All past—except that moonlit cloud
To which I look'd with thee

Let them!—Wipe such visionings
From the fancy's easel;
Love secures some frailest things,
Dower'd with his immortal
Suns, moons may darken, heaven be bow'd,
But here unchanged shall be,
Here in my soul—that moonlit cloud,
To which I look'd with thee

A Thrilling Sketch.

CLAIMING A WIFE AFTER THIRTY YEARS ABSENCE.

Many years ago, said Mr. E——, I happened, as one of the referees in a case which excited unusual interest in our courts, from the singular nature of the claim, and the strange story which it disclosed.

The plaintiff, who was captain of a merchant ship which traded principally with England and the West Indies, had married quite early in life, with every prospect of happiness. His wife was said to have been extremely beautiful and no less lovely in character.

After living with her in the most uninterrupted harmony for five years, during which time two daughters were added to his family, he suddenly resolved to resume his occupation, which he had relinquished on his marriage; and when his youngest child was but three weeks old he sailed once more for the West Indies.

His wife, who was devotedly attached to him, sorrowed deeply at his absence, and found her only comfort in the society of her children and the hope of his return. But month after month passed away, and he came not, nor did any letters, those insufficient but welcome substitutes, arrive to cheer her solitude.

Months lengthened into years, yet no tidings were received of the absent husband; and after long hoping against hope, the unhappy wife was compelled to believe that he had found a grave beneath the weltering ocean.

Her sorrow was deep and heartfelt, but the evils of poverty were now added to her affliction, and the widow found herself obliged to resort to some employment in order to [illegible] her helpless children. Her needle was her only resource, and for ten years she labored early and late for the miserable pittance which is ever grudgingly bestowed on the humble seamstress.

A merchant in New York, in moderate but prospering circumstances, accidentally became acquainted with her, and pleased with her gentle manners no less than her extreme beauty, endeavored to improve their acquaintance with friendship.

After some months he offered her his hand, and was accepted. As the wife of a successful merchant, she soon found herself in the enjoyment of the comfort and luxuries such as she had never before possessed. He children became his children, and received from him every advantage that wealth and affection could procure.

Fifteen years passed away; the daughters married, and by their step-father were furnished with every comfort requisite in their new avocation as housekeepers. But they had scarcely quitted the roof when the mother was taken ill.

She died after a few days' illness, and from that time until the period of which I speak, the widower had resided with the youngest daughter.

Now comes the strangest part of the story. After an absence of thirty years, during which no tidings had been received of him, the first husband returned as suddenly as he had departed. He had changed his ship, adopted another name, and spent the whole of that long period of time on the ocean, with only transient visits on shore, while taking in or discharging cargo, having been careful also never to come nearer home than New Orleans.

Why he had acted in this unpardonable manner towards his family, no one could tell, and he obstinately refused all explanation. There were strange rumors of slave-trading and piracy afloat, but they were only whispers of conjecture rather than truth.

Whatever might have been his motive for such conduct, he was certainly anything but indifferent to his family concerns when he returned.

He raved like a maniac when informed of his wife's second marriage and subsequent death, vowing vengeance upon his successor, and terrifying his daughters by the most awful threat in case they refused to acknowledge his claims.

He had returned wealthy, and one of those mean reptiles of the law, who are to be found crawling about the halls of justice, advised him to bring suit against the second husband, assuring him that he could recover heavy damages. The absurdity of instituting a claim for a wife, whom death had already released from the jurisdiction of earthly laws, was so manifest, that it was at length agreed by all parties to leave the matter to be adjudged by five referees.

It was on a bright and beautiful afternoon in spring that we first met to hear the singular case. The sunlight streamed through the dusty windows of the court-room, and shed a halo around the long grey locks and broad forehead of the defendant; while the plaintiff's harsh features were thrown into still bolder relief by the same beam which softened the placid countenance of his adversary.

The plaintiff's lawyer made a most eloquent appeal for his client; and had we not been better informed about the matter, our hearts would have been melted by his touching description of the return of the desolate husband, and the agony with which he now beheld his household goods removed to content a stranger's hearth.

The celebrated Aaron Burr was counsel for the defendant, and we anticipated from him a splendid display of oratory. I had never seen him, and shall certainly never forget my surprise at his appearance.

Small in person, but remarkably well-formed, with an eye as quick and brilliant as an eagle's, and a brow furrowed by care far more than time, he seemed a very different being from the arch-traitor and murderer I had been accustomed to consider him. His voice was one of the finest I ever heard, and the skill with which he modulated it, the variety of its tone, and the melody of its cadenses were inimitable.

But there was one peculiarity about him that reminded me of the depth of darkness which lay beneath that fair surface. You will smile when I tell you, that the only thing I disliked was his step. He glided rather than walked; his foot had that quiet, stealthy movement, which voluntarily makes one think of treachery; and in the course of a long life I have never met with a frank and honorable man to whom such a step was habitual.

Contrary to our expectations, however, Burr made no attempt to confute his opponent's oratory.

He merely opened a book of statutes, and pointing with his thin finger to one of the pages, desired the referees to read it, while he retired for a moment to bring in the principal witness.

We had scarcely finished the section which fully decided the matter in our minds, when Burr re-entered with a tall and elegant female leaning on his arm. She was attired in a simple white dress, with a wreath of ivy leaves encircling her large straw bonnet, and a lace veil completely concealing her countenance. Burr whispered a few words, apparently encouraging her advance, and then, gracefully raising her veil, disclosed to us a face of proud, surpassing beauty. I recollect, as well as if it happened yesterday, how simultaneously the murmur of admiration burst from the lips of all present.—Turning to the plaintiff, Burr [illegible] quiet tone—

"Do you know this lady?"

"I do."

"Will you swear to that?"

"I will; to the best of my knowledge and belief, she is my daughter."

"Can you swear to her identity?"

"I can."

"What is her age?"

"She was thirty years of age on the 20th day of April."

"When did you last see her?"

"At her own house, a fortnight since."

"When did you see her last previous to that meeting?"

The plaintiff hesitated; a long pause ensued; the question was repeated, and the answer at length was—

"On the 14th of May, 17—"

"When she was just three weeks old," added Burr. "Gentlemen," continued he, turning to us, "I have brought this lady here as an important witness, and such, I think, she is. The plaintiff's counsel has pleaded eloquently in behalf of the bereaved husband, who escaped the perils of the sea, and returned only to find his home desolate. But who will picture to you the lonely wife, bending over her daily toil, devoting her best years to the drudgery of sordid poverty, supported only by the hope of her husband's return? Who will paint the slow progress of heart-sickness, the wasting anguish of hope deferred, and the overwhelming agony which came upon her when her last hope was extinguished, and she was compelled to believe herself a widow? Who can depict all this without awakening in your hearts the warmest sympathy for the deserted wife, and the bitterest scorn for the mean, pitiful wretch, who could thus trample on the heart of her whom he had sworn to love and cherish? We need not inquire into his motives for acting so base a part. Whether it was love of gain, or licentiousness, or self-indifference, it matters not; he is too vile a thing to be judged by such laws as govern men. Let us ask the witness—she now stands before us with the frank, fearless brow of the true-hearted woman—let us ask her which of these two has been her father."

Turning to the lady, in a tone whose sweetness was in strange contrast with the scornful accent that had just characterized his words, he besought her to relate briefly the recollections of her early life. A slight flush passed over her proud and beautiful face, as she replied:

"My first recollections are of a small, ill-furnished apartment, which my sister and myself shared with my mother. She used to carry out, every Saturday evening, the work which had occupied her during the week, and bring back employment for the following one. Saving that wearisome visit to her employer, and her regular attendance at church, she never left the house. She often spoke of our father, and of his anticipated return, but at length she ceased to mention him, though I observed she used to weep more frequently than ever. I then thought she wept because we were so poor, for it would sometimes happen that our only supper was a bit of dry bread, and she was accustomed to sow by the light of the chips, which she kindled to warm her famishing children, because she could not afford to purchase a candle, without depriving us of our morning meal. Such was our poverty when my mother contracted a second marriage, and the change to us was like a sudden entering into Paradise. We found a home and a father."

She paused.

"Would you excite my own child against me?" cried the plaintiff, as he impatiently waved his hand for her to be silent.

The eyes of the witness flashed fire as he spoke.

"You are not my father!" exclaimed she, vehemently. "The law may deem you such, but I disclaim you utterly. What! call you my father? you, who basely left your wife to toil, and your children to beggary?—Never, never! Behold there my father," pointing to the agitated defendant, "there is the man who watched over my infancy—who was guardian of my inexperienced youth. There is he who claims my affections and shares my home; there is *my father*. For yonder selfish wretch, I know him not. The best years of his life have been spent in lawless freedom from social ties; let him seek elsewhere for the companion of his decrepitude, nor dare insult the ashes of my mother by claiming the duties of kindred from her detested children."

She drew her veil hastily around her as she spoke, and giving her hand to Burr, moved as if to withdraw.

"Gentlemen," said Burr, "I have no more to say. The words of the law are expressed in the same book before you; the voice of truth you have just heard from woman's pure lips: it is for you to decide according to the requisitions of nature and the decrees of justice."

I need scarcely add that our decision was such as to overwhelm the plaintiff with well merited shame.

☞ A lady, on being asked to join the Daughters of Temperance, replied that she intended to join one of the Sons in the course of the week.

An Original Poem.

For the Democratic Watchman.

TO MY SISTER.

BY JOSEPH H. STONE.

As morn her golden union casts
Across the verdant plain,
And nature, in her winter garb,
Is vocal with a strain,
That bends the pine to earth,
Yet leaves the flowers to bloom
In safety by its side—
This hope clings round the tomb.
Sweet sister thoughts of you arise,
Here, mid our forest home—
Of what we were, *of what we are*,
Of what we will become.

For you my heart is full of love,
Such love as brother's feel—
Love only that is purely known
When no that love conceal.
I feel it now, and ever must
Devote it to thy heart—
For brother's no'er can feel true love
That from them can depart
For thee I ask a bright career—
I ask that joy be given—
I ask a life of virtue here—
I ask a place in Heaven.

A Historical Romance.

THE LAST OF THE QUESADAS.

It may be that the domestic life of Spain is, in the aggregate, as civilized and common place as that of Great Britain; but certain it is that incidents therein are not unfrequently brought to light which more resemble creations of the Radcliffe school of novelists, than the sober realities of the actual world. Of this kind is the recent story of Garcilas de Quesada, a young Catalan gentleman, which in its material parts has been judicially verified before the Spanish tribunals.

Garcilas de Quesada was, it seems, the sole surviving representative of a long line of ancestors, whose historic glories reached as far back as the days of Pelayo, and the first efforts to rescue Spain from the Moslem yoke, originating under that renowned leader, in the Montanas de Asturias, of which birthplace of Spanish independence the founders of the Quesada family were natives. Unfortunately, the heritage bequeathed the last of the race by eleven hundred years of glory, consisted of little more than the intense family pride engendered by those historic centuries, and an ancient castle, near Cardona, in Catalonia, which time and violence had reduced to pretty much the condition of its owner—that of a gloomy, repellent ruin.—The naturally arrogant disposition of the young man was fostered and inflamed by the teachings of his mother, who died a few months after he attained his majority, and it was said to have been early determined between them, that unless the young Garcilas could espouse wealth in his own rank, the superb line of the Quesadas should end with him, whilst yet unmingled with and uncontaminated by the common yarn of plebeian life. This preposterous arrogance gave birth, to an unmitigable hatred of one particular person; chiefly, in the first instance, because of the afflicting illustration which the position of that person afforded of the wiser course pursued by his family, the De Velasdos, who, in the matter of patrician pretence, might have held their heads as high as the De Quesadas.

Jose de Velasco, on succeeding to his inheritance, having found himself, like many other Spanish hidalgos, and even grandees of modern times, without the means of supporting his hereditary rank, at once resolutely brushed aside the cobweb prejudices that would have barred his path to forsake the avenue of trade, and engaged with remarkable energy, in the salt manufacture, carried on in that part of Spain. Success rewarded his exertions, and its visible signs deepened, by contrast, the gloomy aspect of decay and ruin presented by the formerly rival family of the Quesadas. The ancestral mansion, once in as dilapidated a condition as the hereditary De Quesada "castle," was thoroughly restored, furnished and decorated; the menial establishment, which had dwindled to two or three ill-paid, ill clad servitors, was recruited up to a handsome complement; Senor Velasco's children—he had dropped the *Don* and the *De*—were carefully educated; and when his son, Alonzo, returned home in 1847 from the university of Toledo, he was pronounced by general consent to be the handsomest, best-dressed, best-mounted, and altogether the most generous and accomplished caballero of the neighborhood for many miles around. For this young man, Garcilas de Quesada conceived from the first a violent dislike, which the passing years bringing increased sunshine and splendor to the Velascos, and only clouds and gloom for him, exasperated to the maddest hate. It was also said, that De Quesada had been for a time shaken in his resolve of perpetual celebacy, except under the before-named conditions, by the charms, personal and pecuniary, of Teresa Velasco, and that he attributed the repulse that had met his condescending advances towards a *mesalliance*, as he deemed it, with a family whose head had degraded its escutcheon by stooping to the status of a salt-contractor—to the opposition of the young lady's brother; his personal pride causing him, no doubt, to ignore the possibility of Teresa Velasco's declining the honor of his hand by her own choice. Some heedless expressions reported to have been made use of by Alonzo, relative to the moth-eaten dignity and poverty-stricken pride of his sister's rejected suitor, confirmed this impression, and led, moreover, to a duel with swords, in which Garcilas de Quesada was worsted, and owed his life to the forbearance of his triumphant adversary.

For about three years after, no further intercourse took place between the young men, Garcilas de Quesada during that period being rarely seen out of his crumbling castle, where he dwelt in idle seclusion, his sole attendant one Gil Polo, who was born, bred, wedded, widowed, and hoped to die and be buried within the now much circumscribed precincts of the domain. At length, in the early part of 1850, when in his thirtieth year, a circumstance occurred which drew him forth once more into the thinly scattered society of the neighborhood. This was a confident rumor of the approaching marriage of Alonzo Velasco with Isabella Riogos, a lady he had met with in Madrid, and to whom, as being neither distinguished for wealth nor birth, the older Velasco and his wife had strongly objected, till subdued into aquiescence by the passionate solicitations of their son, who loved the beautiful Andalusian with a fervor remarkable even in the love-disposing clime of Spain. It was, as the sequel proved, the knowledge of this fact which determined and hastened De Quesada's reappearance in the tiny world which circled his solitude. He was kindly received by the Velascos, who, indeed, never bore him serious ill-will; and had it been otherwise, his changed appearance, indicative not only of feeble health, but in the gray-sprinkled hair and stooping form of premature old age, must, in generous minds, have converted any adverse feeling into kindliness and compassion for one so early and untimely wrecked in the voyage of life. Isabella Riogos had arrived at Cardona, on a visit to a relative, before the parental obstacle opposed to her union with Alonzo Velasco had been removed, and there it was since settled she should remain till the magic power of the wedding-ceremonial entitled her to a permanent home in the comparatively splendid abode of the Velascos. Garcilas de Quesada met her there frequently in the interim; and although he could not avoid being struck with her singular loveliness, he paid her, it was afterwards remembered, but scant attention except when Alonzo was present, and then, as it seemed, merely by way of complimentary admiration of the enchanted lover's choice and taste.—He and Alonzo Velasco soon became exceedingly intimate—so much so, that De Quesada consented to officiate as the bride's father at the marriage, which, it was arranged, should take place on the 12th of May, 1850.

The bridal-day was distant only about a week, when thunder fell from the brilliant, unclouded sky. The Velasco family, the Lady Isabella Riogos, Garcilas de Quesada, who had joined them about half an hour previously, Dr. Zorrilla of Cardona, and other friends, were enjoying themselves *al fresco* in front of the family mansion, with song and dance, when Alonzo's horse galloped up to the gate, covered with foam, panting with exertion, and *riderless!* The alarm and commotion were instant and intense. Alonzo, who had set out early in the morning to transact some business for his father at a salt-establishment near the Albufera de Valencia, had been expected to return several hours before, and it was now, of course, apprehended that some terrible accident had befallen him. But a few minutes had elapsed ere Senor Velasco, Garcilas de Quesada, Dr. Zorilla, and several other gentlemen, rode off in anxious quest of the missing horseman; but the morning dawned upon their fruitless search, no tidings whatever having been obtained of the unfortunate cavalier, except that he had left the salt-works in time to have reached his home at least two hours before his horse arrived there. Quesada's house or castle was about a league distant from the residence of the Velascos, and not far out of the track the searching party had been vainly exploring; and he proposed that they should rest there awhile before resuming their inquiries. The invitation was accepted the more readily by the grief-bowed father and his friend Dr. Zorilla, that neither could divest himself of a haunting suspicion that Alonzo had met with foul play at the hands of De Quesada. Nothing, however, was observed in that gentleman's dreary abode, nor in the stolid, careless aspect and demeanor of its only inhabitant, Gil Polo, to strengthen that suspicion. De Quesada himself appeared to be too much and naturally affected by the distressing catastrophe; and before long, it was generally concluded that the young Velasco, though an excellent rider, must have been thrown from his horse, and hurled down one of the narrow and unfathomable fissures of the Sierra, over which he was passing. For, after all, argued the Velascos with their more intimate friends, and notably with Dr. Zorilla, what adequate motive could there be to prompt a man himself apparently on the verge of the grave, to the commission of so foul a crime? There was no question now of the hand of Teresa Velasco, who had been long since married, and settled in a distant part of Spain; De Quesada was not in love, it was quite clear, with Isabella Riogos; and it was surely hardly credible that the slight quarrel which had occurred three years previously, could still rankle with such deadly power in his breast as to urge him to avenge the fancied wrong or infliction he had sustained by murder!

This reasoning was scarcely satisfactory, especially to Dr. Zorilla, who thought he could read De Quesada's mind and disposition much more accurately than the others, but days, weeks, months passed away without throwing the faintest light upon the matter, till near the middle of October, when a strange freak of De Quesada's, viewed in connection with subsequent information, revived, and in some degree gave form and color to the strong though undefined suspicions of the Velasco family—with whom, by the way, Isabella Riogos had, since the mysterious disappearance of her affianced lover, constantly resided. Garcilas de Quesada, who had shrunk back to his former gloomy seclusion, all at once startled his neighbors by issuing numerous invitations to a grand *gala*, to be held at his residence on the 17th of October, in celebration of the inviter's thirtieth birth-day. The Velascos excused themselves; but the invitation was accepted by a considerable number of persons, who reported that the festival had been a joyless one—had gone off with much eclat, and must have cost the giver at least a half year's revenue. This unaccountable extravagance on the part of an impoverished and dying man would perhaps only have lived in the gossip of a few brief days, but for the receipt of a letter from an acquaintance at Madrid, enclosing a paragraph, dated about a fortnight before, and cut out of the *Heraldo* newspaper of that city, which set forth in stately terms, that the for some time contemplated marriage between Don Garcilas de Quesada and the beautiful Senora Isabella Riogos, would, it had been decided, be celebrated *on the 17th of October!* The lady's correspondent added, that several paragraphs, to which she had given no credence, had previously appeared in the same paper, hinting, not at all obscurely, to persons acquainted with the parties, of the probability of the event at last positively announced. The writer was desirous of ascertaining if the statement enclosed—a very surprising one to her—was correct; and if so, she of course congratulated her charming friend upon the alliance she had contracted, all the more cordially, if the paper was also right in stating that Don Garcilas had lately succeeded to a large property, and had quite recovered his health.

A tumult of wild conjecture, doubt, and apprehension arose in the minds of those to whom the letter was read; and one suggestion, half hinted by the Lady Isabella, and grounded upon the coincidence of the day of marriage named by the *Heraldo* with that of the gala given by De Quesada, struck them all as at once so likely and so terrible, that Senor Velasco's first fiery impulse was to set forth immediately and procure judicial assistance, to break into and ransack the suspected residence. A few moments of calmer reflection, however, sufficed to show him that he had no tangible grounds, or at least none that the law would hold valid, for preferring such an accusation against De Quesada, whose shield of nobility, rusted and worm-eaten as it might be, still presented in Spain a strong defence against any but the weightiest charges and the clearest proofs.

The family were still anxiously pondering the most advisable course of objection, when Dr. Zorilla was announced. Before the newcomer, who appeared much excited, could open his mouth, the letter which had created such a panic was thrust into his hand, and his opinion thereon eagerly requested. Dr. Zorrilla's agitation visibly increased as he read; and he had no sooner concluded his hasty perusal of the important missive and enclosure, than he exclaimed: "This but confirms my apprehensions; and I have to inform you, that whatever guilty knowledge Garcilas de Quesada may possess relative to your son's death or captivity, will in a few days be buried with him in the grave. He burst a blood-vessel in the lungs on the night, I am told, of his grand gala," continued the doctor, breaking in upon the clamor of surprise which arose from his auditors; "but I was not called in till this morning, when I at once informed him that nothing short of a miracle could prolong his life beyond twenty-four hours. His pallid features," added Senor Zorilla, "flushed hotly, with a sort of fierce dismay as I spoke; and after a few moments of dumb bewilderment, he said in a faint, struggling voice: 'If that be so, I must bear my doom as I best may. In the meantime, do you, doctor, send me the strengthening cordial you spoke of, as quickly as possible, and return yourself as early in the evening as you can.' I obeyed him in both particulars; and when I again saw him, found that he was sinking more rapidly than I had anticipated. It seemed to me," added Dr. Zorilla, speaking with slow and significant emphasis—"It seemed to me, judging by his strangely excited manner and a few incoherent words he muttered, that he had in the brief interval since I left him, finally accomplished some great purpose—perhaps if I said *great crime* I should be nearer the truth."

"Santa Maria!" exclaimed Senor Velasco, "what terrible meaning is shrouded in your words?"

"He is now entirely alone," continued Dr. Zorilla, with the same significance and solemnity of tone and manner, "having, which is not the least curious part of the affair, just sent off Gil Polo to execute a trifling commission at a distance of some twenty leagues; and he has requested me to bring him, without delay, a monk in priest's orders from the convent of Los Apostolos, to whom, under the sacred and impenetrable seal of confession, he will doubtless reveal, for his soul's health, what we are all so anxious to be informed of. I need hardly go so far as Los Apostoles," added the physician, with slow, emphatic emphasis, "for what with the moribund's fading sight, the gloom of the death chamber at this hour of the evening, and myself being the only attendant, the Senor Velasco himself might officiate as confessor without fear of detection."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Senor Velasco, crossing himself, and sternly regarding the tempter, who, having served in the French army during the war of independence, was suspected to be something of a heretic, or an *esprit fort*.—"Heaven forbid that I should commit such a sacrilege! But it occurs to me that Gil Polo, who, I suspect, will not else be seen in this neighborhood again, ought to be secured."

Dr. Zorilla readily approved of this suggestion, and remarked that it would be as well to bring him at once into the presence of his master; "for be sure, Senor Velasco," added the physician, "that if you ever obtain a clue to the fate of your son, you will do so this night."

The conference immediately broke up; Senor Velasco, followed by his wife and daughters, hurrying off to arrange for the instant pursuit of Gil Polo; Isabella Riogos accompanied the physician. "You, lady, I perceived by the flashing of your eye just now," said Dr. Zorilla in a low voice as they passed along the corridor, "do not, although a devout Christian, deem it sacrilege to further the justice of God?"

"I do not," replied Isabella Riogos, "especially as it is possible I may discover that—that——. I hardly dare breathe the hope that trembles at my heart."

"That you may discover," said the physician, "if you have firmness enough to stifle all emotion that may betray you till you have heard De Quesada's confession to the end—that Alonzo yet lives, and how he may be restored to the world and you? That is a quite possible result—mind, I say possible only, for I have strong misgivings. Still, if you are the brave girl you appeared to be a few minutes since, you will not shrink from the venture."

"I will not shrink," responded Isabella Riogos; "and adamant shall not be firmer than I, till all is revealed. But pray," she added quickly, "step into the courtyard, and request Senor Velasco to bring a true priest with him to the castle. We shall either have failed or succeeded by that time, and De Quesada's soul must not flit unshrived to judgment."

Dr. Zorilla smiled, but performed her bidding; and they were soon on their way to the presence of the dying man, the physician silently determining for his own part to try what effect a threat of the *garrotte*, coupled with a knowledge of who had been confessing his master, might have upon Gil Polo.

But for the pale, uncertain starlight which served to define the shadows of the cumbrous furniture of the apartment in which Garcilas de Quesada was breathing out his last of life, and the white face of the dying man himself, Dr. Zorilla and his companion would have had no other guidance than the faint voice of the sufferer to his bedside. "The glimmering lamp," said the doctor, in a sufficiently loud voice, "would pain the eyes of my patient, and your mission, reverend father, does not fortunately require one. When you require my attendance, be pleased to ring the bell on the table at your elbow." He then left the room, and descended the stone stairs with a sounding step, as if to assure the penitent that he was alone with his confessor.

The dying man did not speak, and the impatient listener repeated the first words of the *Confiteor*, as a suggestive invitation to commence. "True—true," muttered De Quesada, "the purpose for which you are here, reverend father, admits of no delay. '*Confiteor Deo omnipotenti*'—— Ah, it is long since I repeated those words. '*Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, beatæ*'—— Memory is failing as well as sight. Do you, father, say the words, and I will repeat them after you."

This was done, and the confession went brokenly on. After relating much that the reader is already aware of, relative to the insane hatred he bore Alonzo Velasco, he said that his burning thirst for vengeance during the three years he had feared it to be unattainable, had, he now felt, dried up the fountains of his life. "Mine was not," he continued hurriedly, "a hatred that the mere compassing his death would satisfy. I panted to inflict a far direr vengeance than that; and his unbounded love of the beautiful Isabella Riogos at last afforded me the means. You start with horror, reverend father, at this avowal, and it is nothing compared with what remains to tell. Yet a Christian can, we know, at the last moment, if the confession is unreserved—the penitence——. Ah, what noise?"

The lady's quicker ear had caught the sound distinctly: it was her father's voice in contention with some one—Gil Polo, probably. It ceased almost instantly; and De Quesada proceeded, but with a hurried incoherence which showed that partial delirium already affected his brain. "Yes—yes, as I told you, I invited Alonzo Velasco to leave the road, and rest here awhile. He little suspected the potency of the pleasant wine he drank, nor how, when he awoke long hours afterwards, it had come to pass that he had exchanged the bridal [illegible] he had dreamed of for a stone dungeon—that he was bound in stronger fetters than his lady's arms."

"Does he yet live?" burst from Isabella's lips in a tone which startled the dull ear of the dying man, and he strove to raise himself in bed, but failed to do so. "Live!—live!" he muttered, falling helplessly back upon the pillow; "yes to be sure—at least he did a few hours agone—where Gil Polo and I know, and we alone. I would tell you, but that it grows colder—darker—cold"—— The voice ceased, and Isabella eagerly applied a cordial Dr. Zorilla had furnished her with, to the lips of the expiring wretch. It revived

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