from the Old World to share the hardships of the new; but the reckless soldiers, traders and adventurers took them so-called wives from the West Indias and Caribbean Islands, women often as wicked and dangerous as they were lithe and beautiful. Dona Hortense felt with all a woman's sensitiveness to such surroundings the unutterable suffering which might come to Pauline de la Chasie on account of her falling into the power of Captain Cortes. True, Cortes was apparently an exception to the general rule among the men of Pensacola, so far as she knew. He had never consorted with the most vicious even of the officers, and his lite had appeared to be clean and noble. Still the danger seemed great; and besides she had taken Pauline at once into her heart as her child, and felt for her all the suddenly kindled solicitude and tenderness that such a relation under such circumstances could not fail to engender in a breast so long deprived of every softer experience so dear to a true woman. It was therefore a matter to start hope in her over-apprehensive breast when the young man, instead of assuming the attitude of a libertine, began to treat Pauline with all the delicate politeness of a considerate and high-minded gentleman, who might become a very gallant and by no means unsuitable lover. She had never yet inquired into the antecedents of Pauline, nor had she so much as sought to know by what current of destiny the unfortunate girl had been cast so far away from her native land; but it was not in the nature of things for Pauline to keep her secret. Indeed, Dona Hortense was at once surprised and dismayed when the whole truth was poured into her ear.

"Going all alone to Mobile to marry a French soldier?" she exclaimed, when Pauline had ended her story. "Dear child, do you dream what you are trying to do? You can have no impression of the misery that you have escaped by falling into my hands instead of into the arms of a brutal——"

"Hush!" said Pauline, with such command in her voice that the old woman looked at her and started perceptibly. "Hush! Louis Doucet is not brutal. He is the very noblest and best man in the world. I would follow him all over the earth—I—"

She sank back upon her pillows pale as a lily and trembling with rud interbid emotion aroused by her thoughts.

"Pardon me—forgive me, dear," cried Dona Hortense, taking Pauline in her arms and kissing her. "I would not wound you for all the world. Doubtless your lover is all that you say; but oh! my child, my child, it is a dreadful, dreadful life. Think of dear France and the joyous existence of even her working peasants, and then look at the desolation and the despair which hover over us here!" As she spoke her shriveled face was pinched and its sallowness was touched with a hot, flame-like glow. "If I could go back—if I could go back once more," she moaned, "it would be delicious to die and be buried beside my mother! Oh! little Pauline—sweet child, how I wish I could save you, could bear you back to France——"

"But I do not wish to go back to France," Pauline interrupted. "I wish to go to Louis. I do not care to live if I cannot go to him."

As if the mere suggestion of being taken back to France had given her sudden strength, resolve and courage, Pauline threw off the arms of her companion and raised herself again to a sitting posture.

"How far is it from here to Mobile?" she inquired in a voice so changed that the poor old woman caught breath, as if almost suffocating, and could not answer.

"It cannot be far," Pauline continued, "and I must go there. Who can take me?"

The Dona clasped her hands and held them out with a gesture of supplication. When she could speak she said:

"It is impossible. We are at war. Even now the commandant here is planning an expedition to capture Mobile."

The girl sat for some moments gazing thoughtfully out of the window. Presently she turned quickly toward her companion.

"Please send word to Captain Cortez that I should like to see him."

She uttered these words with the steadiness and decision of one who has a well-defined purpose in view.

The Dona recoiled.

"Surely, no!" she exclaimed. "You do not mean it. It must not be."

"Yes, I wish it immediately."

"But, my child——"

"Lose no time, but go send for Captain Cortes."

The old woman felt the sudden and great change in Pauline's manner and knew that it had a deeper significance than she could comprehend at once; but although she more than suspected that it might be the beginning of bitter shame for the girl she could not refuse to grant her request.

"Don't, don't do this!" she urged with a piteous weakness in her voice. "You are too young to have any idea of the step you are about to take. Let me be your mother, my dear, dear child, and save you from the dreadful life you would plunge into!"

Pauline answered with tender firmness, insisting upon seeing Cortes at once.

"Well, well, it is always so," the Dona went on reflectively and sadly. "I was a girl not so very, very long ago, dear, and I gave up all for a man, all for love. Look at me and at the life I live."

She felt that her words were without effect on Pauline; she did not wait to hear the reply that might have followed, but arose and went to send a messenger to fetch Captain Cortes.

An hour later the young officer, evidently not a little embarrassed, was shown into Pauline's presence. He stood before her, tall, respectful, handsome, his fine head uncovered and his clear eyes fixed inquiringly upon her.

She moved her lips with a soundless effort at speech and made a motion for him to sit down. He took the designated chair with the prompt manner of one obeying an order.

Looking into his face gave Pauline courage to say what was upon her mind, but even when the courage came the task was an extremely difficult one. She felt that the request she was about to make must appear very strange, if not impossible of performance, still she did not hesitate. In the directest and simplest way she told her story to the young officer, leaving out nothing, and then in conclusion asked him to help her.

"I know you are noble, kind and good," she said, looking at him steadily but with eyes whose deep and tender purity sent a thrill of inexpressible pity through him, "and I feel that I can trust you. Oh, sir, will you not help me reach Mobile? I have no one to turn to but you. It was you who saved me from the terrible danger, the horrible death in the sea; save me now from this life which is worse than a thousand deaths and take me to my dear — to my friends at Mobile!"

It was hard for Captain Cortes to say what he had to say; but there was no honorable course for him to pursue save that of perfect frankness. He felt keenly his own situation, while his chivalrous nature burned with deep and strange sympathy for the sweet, brave invalid before him. It abashed him to think that he had been nursing tender dreams in connection with this beautiful being whom he had snatched from the tumbling waves of the Gulf. Now that he knew her history, and understood her desire he saw how fruitless, and unmanly as well, would be any further thought of claiming Pauline's love; moreover it seemed to him the very refinement of misfortune that he must acknowledge his inability to aid her as she desired.

"I should be glad and proud to do what you ask," he said with a sort of soldierly bluntness in his voice and manner, "but it is utterly impossible. The French do not respect us, nor we them. There can be no exchange of courtesies between us; so you see how my hands are tied in the matter."

Pauline clasped her hands and great tears dropped down her cheeks. Cortes saw her bitter disappointment with a sense of something like contempt for himself on account of his powerless condition.

"Believe me, Mademoiselle," he explained with sudden fervor, "I would gladly give my life to serve you even in the least degree."

"I believe you, sir, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are nobly [illegible] But is there indeed no way? Must I choose between death and the acceptance of this life now afforded to me?"

Something in her tone and manner sent a shock through the young man's breast. Within the past few minutes there had come upon him the sweet, rich and yet saddening experience of love and loss. Before him sat the fairest and loveliest apparition that had ever blessed his vision. In his heart she had set the fountains of spring to flowing—the song and the bloom to gushing. The old, old story of the sudden coming of passion and the sudden realization of its hopelessness had been told once more between the soft pulses of the sub-tropic breeze. He bowed his head until his dark forehead touched the plume of his hat which rested on his knee. For one moment he gave way to selfishness, and the thought swept through his mind that he might have his own way with fate.

"I am sorry to have pained you," said Pauline presently. "I owe my life to you, and I fear that I have appeared ungrateful. Pray forgive me."

Her words sounded to him like the rebuke of an angel. He looked up and said, as if in self-defense:

"You owe me nothing but execration. It was I who sunk the vessel which was bearing you to your lover. It was I who deprived you of more than life. Oh, Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle."

He checked himself with great effort and rising stood before her quite calm but pale, his eyes burning almost fiercely, his sunburnt cheeks showing the lines of suppressed but almost over-powering emotion.

"You did but your duty; I have thought all about it," she said, "and I do not blame you for it; but I am no prisoner of war, being nothing but a poor girl whom fate has cast into your hands, wherefore it seems to me that you ought let me go in all honor."

"I would not hold you one moment," he exclaimed quickly. "You are as free as I am; but there is no possible way for you to pass from her to Mobile. The thought is utterly untenable—the thing is impossible and not to be dreamed of."

No interview ever was more depressing and unsatisfactory to the parties holding it. Pauline felt that it ended all hope, at least for the present, and she lay upon her couch disheartened and purposeless. Cortes went away thoroughly wretched and at war with himself. He was in love with Pauline; his warm, arrogant Spanish nature had broken the bounds at once and now there was no limit to the passion that possessed him; but his chivalrous sense of honor, though overwhelmed, was immovable. The impression haunted him that, for the reason that Pauline was in his power, he ought to free her, and because of his love for her he ought to restore her to her lover. It was well to harbor these sentiments, but what lover could act upon them?

Days and weeks passed by, during which Cortes brooded over the situation. Now and again he resolved that he would attempt to send Pauline to Mobile by some clandestine method, but as often he remembered his duty as a soldier. The French at Mobile were the very incarnation of all that was hated by the Spaniards at Pensacola, and to do any kind act for one of them was repugnant to every pulse in a true Spanish soldier's veins. Doubtless the young Captain's passion for his fair captive made this repugnance all the more fierce and bitter, for the thought of resigning that captive to the arms of Louis Doucet, of the hated French race, was the refinement of torture. Still he acknowledged in the deepest caves of his breast that duty of the highest and most sacred sort demanded that he should never rest until Pauline de la Chasie and Louis Doucet, separated by him, should be united by him. It is easy to see how, ordinarily, a struggle of this sort would end. Love, extol it as we may, is the hot-bed of a certain kind of unconquerable selfishness. Rare indeed are the instances where love has been self-sacrificing enough to turn over to his rival the object of its desire. There were moments when Cortes would have made the sacrifice, and at all times he tortured himself between the flame of passion and the hot iron of conscience; but he was human, he found excuses for faltering and hesitating, nay even for what appeared to him harmless deception.

Almost every day he found time to see Pauline and to offer her some delicate attention. Meantime as the summer passed away Indian couriers began to bring word of preparations going forward among the French at Mobile for an expedition against Pensacola.

"I have not a doubt that Bienville will attack us soon," said Cortes one morning in September.

"And he will take the town, and then—!" exclaimed Pauline, clasping her hands and flushing suddenly.

She was sitting by the window. Returning health had made her form and her face doubly beautiful in the eyes of the young officer.

"But he will not take the town," he responded. "Our force is very strong and our fortifications and fleet are far superior in guns and effectiveness to anything he can bring against us. No, we will destroy him, almost entirely."

"No, no!" cried Pauline, "the French are always victorious. Are you sure they will come? Oh, but I pray that they will and then I shall be free! They will destroy you."

Cortes smiled, but there was a deadly pang behind that smile.

"You will be disappointed, Mademoiselle," he said. "It is not possible."

Pauline saw the smile, and instantly a flash of indignant resentment made her cheeks burn.

"When my people come," she said, "I shall see how you will destroy them."

"We are nearly 2,000," remarked he, still curling his lip a little, "and they are scarcely 500, Indians excepted. I tell you that they can do nothing, absolutely nothing."

Pauline sprang to her feet.

"You do not want me to be free!" she cried, her voice rich with passionate accusation.

He arose and looked down at her with a curious mixture of tenderness and harshness in his face. At that moment he realized how fully he had determined that this girl should never go away from him. What would life be worth without her? Who was Louis Doucet, that he should hold the exclusive right to such a prize? Would not the water of the gulf be now rolling over her if he, Cortez, had not saved her? How ungrateful she was!

Pauline, looking steadily into his eyes, read his thoughts. She saw the change in his features and manner, any felt that all hope was gone.

"And not long ago you said that you would give your life to help me!" she cried, a bitter contempt ringing through her trembling voice.

"I did say that; yes, and I spoke truly," he replied, almost fiercely. "Even now, Mademoiselle," and here his face swelled with the pressure of violent emotion, "even now I would sacrifice more than life. I would cast away honor for you."

He did not wait to hear what she would say in response to this, but turned and left her with almost rude abruptness.

CHAPTER III.

The 17th day of September, 1719, dawned on the bay of Pensacola with a slight fog, dim and gray, hovering over the water and fringing with fantastic trailing festoons the shores of the island. The fort on the hill behind the town loomed up quite grandly, and showed the projecting muzzles of its heavy guns, while the fleet in the bay and the earthworks on the island gave an appearance of great military strength to the little Spanish post. Doubtless a feeling of perfect security possessed the garrison, for there was no sign of unusual vigilance, albeit on the evening before some Indian runners had come in to assure them that the French were advancing by both land and sea.

The commandant at Pensacola was not aware that the Compte de Champmeslin had reinforced Bienville's little army at Mobile with a fleet of three ships of the line, nor that a strong force of Indians had been induced to join in an expedition against Pensacola by land. The routine of military discipline was kept up in a perfunctory way, while both the officers and men of the Spanish garrison gave themselves over to the dreamy and relaxing influence of the climate. When off duty they lounged in picturesque groups under the grateful shade of the trees, or sought the rude amusements offered by the low-roofed buildings wherein gaming and drinking were indulged in by the very officers whose orders prohibited such indulgence.

To Pauline life grew irksome and depressing day by day. After the interview recorded in the foregoing chapter she saw no more of Cortes for a long time. The Dona Hortense, after exhausting every means in her power to distract the girl's thoughts from the subject of going to Mobile, had given over the task in bitter grief and disappointment. This gave Don Alphonso most excellent excuse, as he seemed to think, for much sarcasm at his wife's expense.

"Your daughter," he was fond saying, "is certainly a model of dutifulness and gratitude. Just see how she honors all your wishes."

"She is a girl, Alphonso, as I was once a girl. She has seen a man to love, as I did. He has beckoned, as you did, and she would follow, as I did. Will you tell me how much I honored my mother's wishes when——"

"Not much when you married me. That is true," he interrupted with a laugh which was devoid of mirth. "But after all have you not done fairly well?"

"Perhaps then Pauline might do fairly well if she could go to her lover."

"Let her go to him, her lover is Captain Cortes."

"She does not love him."

"Well, but she ought to love him; her life is his, he snatched it from the very jaws of death. It is base ingratitude, it is soulless perfidy in her to reject him."

"You do not understand women."

"Yes, I understand them. This is no very rare instance of their utter lack of a high sense of obligation. Every dictate of conscience, every impulse of unselfishness would force a high-souled woman in Pauline's place to give herself to the one who so nobly earned the right to her love."

"But she loves another."

"Loves another! There is the gross selfishness I spoke of. She is thinking all the time of herself. That's the way with a woman. True gratitude, noble unselfishness would address itself to considering the happiness of her chivalrous and brave deliverer. All she cares for, however, is to gratify her own love."

"And what a terrible mistake she sometimes makes by so doing!"

"Granted," said Don Alphonso, rising and making a superb obeisance before his wife. He took his departure without further remark.

Pauline was compelled to overhear most of this conversation, as she sat in an adjoining room, and it came just at the moment when it could affect her most strangely. With the swiftness of light her thoughts flashed back over all the kindness and unselfish nobleness of Cortes, from the moment when he took her in his arms, there amid the boiling waves, down to the present, and something like a chill of self-abhorrence ran through her breast. She had not been kind to Cortes, nay, she had been bitterly unkind to him it now seemed to her. She had been absorbed in herself without room in her heart for any thought save that of "gratifying her own love," as Don Alphonso had said. How far from home she was, and all alone, with such a burden in her heart! The tension upon her nerves was greater now than at the time when she was clinging to the splintered spar in mid-sea. Again and again the words of young Cortes came to her: "I would sacrifice more than life. I would cast away honor for you." His proud, fine, passionate face, with its sudden flash of strange pallor after its heat of momentary anger, haunted her vision. She had not expected to see him again; but early on the morning of the 17th he came to the house and asked to see her.

She met him with distrust of both herself and him. He was pale, and his eyes showed that recently he had been suffering.

"I have come, Mademoiselle," he began at once, speaking in the manner of one who acts under the force of ill-suppressed emotion with the necessity of haste upon him. "I have come to do what I cannot help doing, what I have struggled not to do, but what cannot be resisted. Mademoiselle, I love you." In the old knightly style he went down upon his knees, his sword clanking against the floor. "I adore you and I must tell you so. What word have you for me, Mademoiselle? Speak and let me live or die."

Pauline could not command herself. She sat silent, the stupor of an overwhelming embarrassment upon her.

"I have tried to stay away from you," he went on, "but I have not been able to do it. You have filled my whole life; I can think of nothing but you. Oh, Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle, do not hate me, do not spurn me when I love you so."

"I do not hate you, I do not spurn you, Captain Cortes," she exclaimed, the effort sending a rich sympathetic timbre into her voice. "You have been so noble and so good—you have done so much for me."

His face took on a look of hope and he reached forth his hand to take hers.

In those days melodramatic things did happen. The jarring thunder of a heavy cannon rolled up from the bay and shook the house from roof to foundation. Another and another crash were followed by the heavy pounding sound of falling round-shot. Cortes was too good a soldier not to respond instantly to the summons of battle. In a moment he had sprung to his feet and was standing in a hearkening attitude. Like some perfect actress in a tragedy, more than like a startled girl in real life, Pauline sprang forward and flung out her arms with a cry more of joy than of terror.

"They have come! They are here!" she exclaimed. "They have attacked the town!"

Cortes did not hear her words; he saw only her wondrously lovely face and her arms outstretched toward him.

"Darling!" he cried, and clasped her close to his bosom.

Again, like the bursting of a thunder storm, the cannons roared out their startling detonations. Trumpets were sounding, in every direction arose the noise and bustle of soldiery making ready for battle.

Cortes pressed one long kiss upon Pauline's lips and rushed forth to do his duty, leaving the dazed and trembling girl standing in the middle of the room.

The fleet of the Compte de Champmeslin had sailed into the bay, and was pouring broadside after broadside against the slight works on the island, while, at the same time, Bienville, at the head of 600 men, was hastening by land to attack the fort on the hill behind the town.

The Dona Hortense, very little excited by an experience not in the least new to her, came into the room and put her motherly arms around Pauline. The girl returned the caress with a fervor born of the emotion that was making a wild tumult in her breast. To her every cannon shot, as it hollowed and boomed, told a sweet story of hope and love. She fancied that it was Louis Doucet's hand that was firing every gun; she even imagined that she could hear his voice, vague and far, but clear and sweet, above the general din, calling to her to have courage.

"He is coming! He is here!" she cried, with her head on the Dona's shoulder.

"Be quiet, my child," was the calm answer, "we cannot know what may be the end of this."

They went to the window and looked out to see the heavy ships drawing in toward the town and firing as they came. The Spanish fleet was at anchor close to the mainland shore in such a position that its guns were unavailable. Soon enough the battery on the island was quite silenced, while at the same time arose the sound of guns and musketry in the direction of the fort on the hill.

The Dona recognized the battle yell of the Indians who were fighting under Bienville. She had heard that savage cry before, and knew well its meaning.

"The Holy Virgin shield us if they succeed," she murmured, showing excitement for the first time.

"Oh, but they must succeed, they must not fail!" cried Pauline. "And see! the ships are taking down their colors—the French have won! Oh, Louis! Louis!"

In the hysteria of her joy she turned and ran out of the house and down the little street toward the strand.

Boats well manned were putting out from the French vessels to come ashore. Meantime the firing at the fort on the hill was thick and heavy, and the Indian allies of Bienville were making the air hideous with their howling.

Pauline had rarely been abroad in Pensacola, and the streets, such as they were, were quite unfamiliar to her. She had run forth without any definite object in view, though a vaguely outlined thought of finding Louis Doucet among the assailing soldiers was certainly uppermost in her mind. The Dona followed her, but so swiftly did she fly she was soon out of sight.

"Oh, my poor, poor child!" wailed the old woman, stopping all out of breath and wringing her hands.

While she stood there Captain Cortes, leading a small body of men, approached her. The intrepid young officer, seeing that his vessel must fall into the enemy's hands, had hurried his crew into the small boats and brought them ashore with a view to taking possession of a small block-house in the upper part of the town.

"You here!" he exclaimed, with the bluntness and sternness of authority. "And where is Mademoiselle Pauline?"

"She is gone—I do not know where—she ran away—Oh! Oh!" moaned the trembling and weeping woman.

"Gone!" he echoed. "Gone! which way? Where? Tell me—be quick!"

Dona Hortense simply lifted her hands and closed them over her ears, as if to shut out the dreadful sounds of the fighting. The earth seemed to rock and palpitate; the air was sulphurous with the drifting films of powder smoke.

"Yonder is the young lady," exclaimed one of the men, pointing with his cutlass.

Pauline was standing in the middle of the little street apparently bewildered. Her head was bare and her long, bright hair was floating on the wind. She was an apparition to make a man forget battle and danger and death. Cortes ran to her and laid his hand on her arm.

"Mademoiselle," he said, very firmly, but with infinite tenderness, "come with me."

Then he turned to his men, and bidding them follow, he started toward the block-house.

Suddenly he thought of the Dona. Delay was full of danger at the moment, but he halted again and sent a man to bring the old woman, who still stood weeping where he had left her.

As the little company resumed its march toward the blockhouse a great increase of the din was observable up at the fort, and at the same time a body of men came charging down the street that ran from the hill to the beach of the bay. This was a small detatchment of French soldiers headed by a tall young officer, who swung his sword around his head and encouraged his followers by the most vivacious example and spirit.

Cortes saw that it was too late to reach the blockhouse. He quickly put the women in the rear and formed his men.

Pauline's eyes had seen and recognized the young French leader.

"Oh, Louis! Louis!" Cortes heard her cry out, "Here I am! Come! Come!"

Did the French officer also really hear her? It appeared so, for with a loud shout he leaped forward and hurled himself with his men down upon the now closely marshaled Spaniards. In an instant had begun a close and deadly struggle, a hand-to-hand combat with sword and musket butt.

CHAPTER IV.

Pauline found herself in the arms of her watchful guardian, the Dona, who was praying and crying at the same time. They were rudely pressed backward by the recoil of the men when the French detachment struck them at full charge. There was a crash of blows and a volley of horrible oaths mingled with cries of rage and pain. A man came reeling out of the crowd and fell at Pauline's feet, where he writhed for a moment, with the blood leaping from a wound in his neck, and died face downward biting the sand of the street.

The nearest house was a low, mud-daubed structure, the rudest form of dwelling in use by the colonists. The door stood open with the threshold on the level of the ground. Into this dark room Dona Hortense pushed Pauline just in time to escape a volley of pistol shots fired by a half dozen of the Frenchmen. The Compte de Champmeslin had run his ships in close to the mainland, and now began raking the town with broadsides at short range. The balls went bounding along the ground and tearing through the frail huts with a peculiar suggestion of resistless energy so well remembered by every experienced soldier. The roof overhead was shattered. Down from a long, ragged, diagonal rent fell a shower of boards and splinters.

"Holy Mary save us!" prayed the Dona, sinking upon her knees and lifting her clenched hands.

Pauline, strange to say, felt no fear. From the beginning she had been in that numb and bewildered state which often comes upon one in the midst of overwhelming danger. She went to the doorway and looked out. The combatants, French and Spanish, were all mingled together fighting hand to hand without regard for discipline or order. Blows were falling thick and fast; swords clashed with swords; clubbed blunderbusses rose and fell with such sounds as would, under ordinary circumstances, sicken the strongest heart. She looked on possessed by a subtile fascination, feeling little of the true horror of the occasion. With the strange double power of the mind at such times she was noting every detail of the struggle before her, while, at the same instant she remembered all the long series of events by which she had been led to take upon herself this life of incomparable excitement and danger. The vines and gardens of Provence with the roses and the odors, the dear old days of love and joy, the sunshine, the shade, the moonlight on the dusky orchards, the church bells and all the sweet incidents and accidents of home life, came upon the field of her vision and shimmered before her, dream-like and yet so real, a fine idealization of her girlhood's dearest experiences. Through the roar of cannon and the clangor of swords, above the yelling of wild savages and the oaths of Christians, she heard the bubbling of the Rhone and the mellow songs of the nightingales in the leafy, odorous closes beyond the Avignon. Sweet words that Louis Doucet had murmured in her ear, the pressure of his hand, the betrothal kiss, a thousand touches of sentiment and of gentle romance thrilled her again. And yet there were the pools of blood in the street, red pools that slowly sank away into the sand, and there were the fiercely struggling men trampling their dying fellows as they fought. Strange that the fragrance of the early autumn roses growing and blowing in a neighboring plot should have impressed her senses at such a time, but the sweet breath came over the scene of terrible passion and brought into her consciousness its touch of pleasure despite the awful strain of what she was witnessing.

Louis Doucet and Captain Cortes met face to face, and crossed swords near the middle of the little street. The Spaniard knew his man. Pauline's cry of recognition awhile ago had told him who was the swift-footed and handsome young leader of the French detachment. As for Doucet, he knew nothing more than that an enemy worthy of his steel was before him. A voice that he had heard a few moments before had seemed to him to utter his name with a sweet tenderness that recalled, in some strange way, the homesickness of his first year of absence from France. It was no time for gentle reflections now; the voice could not really have called him, he thought, and the mere flash of nostalgia passed as quickly as it came. His sword rang sharp and clear on that of Cortes. The two men glared at each other, the concentrated hatred of years of war and hardship burning in their eyes. The meaning of such a look can never fall short of death.

They were well matched in every way. Cortes was a trifle the taller, but Doucet appeared rather more compactly built than his adversary. Both were sufficiently heated by previous exertion to make their blood swift and their muscles ready.

No time was lost; the fight was desperate from the beginning, neither combatant at first thinking of anything but rushing upon and bearing down the other. Both, however, discovered very soon that it was necessary to have a care for self-defense as well as for attack. They fenced furiously and adroitly, neither giving an inch, utterly forgetful of what was going on around them, their whole souls focused, so to speak, in the one desire to kill and, by killing, to live.

Cortes was aware that Pauline was near by and probably looking on. The thought in some way nerved him powerfully. She should not see Louis Doucet vanquish him; he would show her that a Spaniard for once was superior to a Frenchman.

Doucet had no such extra stimulus; but his was an iron frame and his coolness and courage needed no aid when a Spaniard dared cross weapons with him. With the dexterity drawn from long practice and with the fierce fury of young tigers thirsting for each other's blood, they struggled back and forth and round and round, while their companions, fighting quite as madly, swept on down the street leaving them to occupy the already corpse-cumbered and blood-stained ground. In those days soldiers of the better class knew the use of the sword and were over-proud of the knowledge. Under the excitement and exhilaration of a hand to hand combat the accomplished swordsman always feels that his strength is doubled; but the peculiar circumstances attending the struggle between Cortes and Doucet added immeasurably to this feeling. Each found the other an antagonist whose vigor and swiftness made every moment a crisis and whose steadfast gaze caught in advance every motion of wrist or body. Cortes, in what may be safely called a subconscious way, recalled in the midst of the fight what he had said to Pauline about sacrificing life and even his honor to serve her. Strange that at the same time he could see, by indirect vision, just beyond Doucet a dead man lying on the sand in the road. The face was upturned and distorted, the arms outstretched. Like a dark shadow, shot across his brain the thought: "Shall I soon be lying here in that condition?" It was not startling, it was more like an idle wait of suggestion, gone as soon as it came.

Both men became aware presently that the cannonading has ceased and that the rattle of musketry was no longer heard. A great calm had fallen after the storm—the battle was over and the Spaniards to the number of 1,800 had surrendered themselves prisoners of war.

One Spaniard, however, was not yet conquered; one Frenchman was still battling for victory.

CHAPTER V.

Louis Doucet was the better swordsman, it appeared, when it came to the test of endurance and steadfastness of attention. It must have been that the knowledge of Pauline's presence and the thoughts engendered by the probability that she was witnessing the struggle somewhat distracted the nerve of Cortes, or it may have been the persistence of the dead man in lying there in the sand in the line of his vision, for he at last lost his guard and the quick point of Doucet's sword pierced his breast. He scarcely felt the wound, however, and quickly springing back he recovered himself and made a furious rush upon his antagonist.

It was at this moment that Doucet's eyes in some way caught a glimpse of Pauline's face as she stood in the low, dark doorway of the cabin. The glance cost him dear. With the celerity of light the Spaniard's blade found a bloody sheath.

Out from the doorway sprang the young girl, letting go a short wail and holding up her white arms as she flung herself between the bleeding men. The Dona followed, calling upon the Virgin and laying hold of Cortes with a desperate energy.

It was too late now to renew the fight for loss of blood was making the limbs of Cortes sink under him. He turned blind and fell upon the sand pale and motionless.

Pauline had but time to throw her arms about her lover and call him by name when he, too, sank down with the blood spurting from his wound.

Bienville, accompanied by a number of officers and a squad of soldiers for body-guard, came along the street a little later and found the two women nursing the heads of the fallen men. He halted and made some inquiries; then ordering a surgeon and some attendants to remain and examine further, he passed on, going to have a conference with the Compte de Champmeslin.

Dona Hortense begged the surgeon to order the bleeding men taken to her house. She led the way, praying as she went.

Poor Pauline had fainted, and was borne along in the arms of a stalwart soldier. It was a strange procession moving through the silent, storm-shattered town.

* * * * * * * *

It is recorded that Louis Doucet and Captain Cortes both recovered; but Doucet was never afterward able to be a soldier, though he lived to be a very old man. He and Pauline were married at Mobile by a priest called Father Roman, and soon afterward they returned to France and made their home in Provence, amid the scenes of their childhood, and in the very house made holy to them by their betrothal. The legend further says that their children numbered 11, 7 of which were sons; the others, presumably, were girls.

The subsequent career of Captain Cortes is not certainly known, but in an old, though not well authenticated, chronicle preserved at Seville mention is made of an officer of that name who, "after valiant service in the Floridas and in many other countries wherein he followed the Holy Cross, was granted an estate in Mexico, near by Vera Cruz, where he lived and died unmarried, always true to his king and to the Holy Church; and it was the proceeds of his estate, bequeathed for the purpose, that built the Convent of the Sacred Heart."

Recently, while sojourning in Pensacola, I spent some golden April days, with the record in my hand, trying to locate as near as possible the exact spot whereon Doucet and Cortes fought and fell. If ever you chance to visit that picturesque and charming little city by the gulf it may please you to walk up the main street toward the site of the old fort on the hill. When you reach a rather narrow, flower-fringed cross street about half way on your journey, turn into it to the right and go forward until you come to a small garden on the left. On the flank of this garden, or flower plot, you will see a low, home-like, old-fashioned cottage, over whose wide veranda climbs a rose-vine of wonderful luxuriance, heavy with masses of strangely fragrant roses. Standing on the sidewalk nearly in front of this cottage, turn your face toward the bay and let your eyes seek and rest upon the tallest spire in sight. This done, let your gaze fall straight down until it reaches the ground some ten yards in front of you. That is the spot. Near by is a mulberry tree, a little beyond stands a clump of oleander, with a hedge of spirea and crape myrtle straggling away from it. You will feel the breeze from the Buccaneer Islands blowing over you, a mocking bird will sing in the moss-hung live oak yonder, the bay will glimmer and toss its foaming waves and over all will hang a sky as blue and pure as that of Provence itself.

One hundred and seventy years may not be a large part of the past, but certainly large enough to have compassed the growth of the greatest nation of the earth. It in telling this story I have preserved one incident of that history, surely the telling has not been in vain. Such bits of romance serve to show us how far our civilization is removed from that which molded the lives and directed the loves of those whose fortunes I have found it a pleasure to record.

[THE END.]

Copyright, 1889: all rights reserved.

Could Not Afford a Hat.

Clothier and Furnisher.]

Dashaway—I hope you'll excuse me for saying it, Prettyman, but that hat you have on is positively disreputable. Why in thunder don't you get a new one?

Prettyman—The fact is, old man, I can't afford it. By the way, come around to my tailor's with me, will you? I want to order me a suit.

Easily Profitable.

Puck.]

Miss Segreen—I don't see how the ocean steamers can afford to transport people such a long distance, and board them, too, at such a low price.

Mr. Pegreen (who has been across)—Board doesn't cost much.

THE DIFFICULT TASK

Is the One That is Always the Most Highly Regarded.

DAVID AND BETHLEHEM'S WELL.

Rev. George Hodges Explains a Very Important Distinction.

A COMMON ATTRIBUTE OF GOD AND MAN

[WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.]

It was in a time of war. David was fighting the Philistines. David and his men held the rocky hills, and the Philistines were in the green valley. And one day when the harvest sun was hot, and shade was scanty, and the battle long and wearisome, David grew very thirsty. And he thought, as thirsty people will, about the sweet taste of cool water. He remembered a well at Bethlehem, beside the village gate. He had played around it as a boy. The trees grew near it, the winds blew over it, and the clear water, deep in the rock, was the coolest and sweetest in the world, to David's taste.

He looked out over the tents of the enemy, afar into the green valley, and he fancied that he could almost see the little village, with the well beside the gate. And he spoke and said half to himself, "Oh, that I had a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem." And three men heard him—three stout soldiers of his army—and away they started for the well. The whole host of the Philistines lay between, and Bethlehem was the enemy's headquarters. Nevertheless, these heroes made their way through the entire army of the Philistines, and got a cup of water from that well and brought it back. It reads like a story of the days of chivalry. And what did David do? He took the cup as if it were the chalice in a sacrament, and poured the water reverently out upon the ground, like a libation in a sacrifice. He would not drink it. "He would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord."

But why? It was the same water of which David had drunk often and carelessly. The look of it, the taste of it, had not altered. If it had been analyzed no chemical change would have been discovered. It was just a common cup of common water. Again and again at Bethlehem, beside the well, one friend and another had given David the same kind of cup filled with the same kind of water, and had offered it with the same gesture and the same words. And he had never refused it before.

THE DIFFERENCE.

It was very good water, but it had never occurred to him before that there was anything sacred about it. But now he could not drink it. Now it was somehow changed, consecrated, sacred. He could only stand, thirsty as he was, and pour it all out upon the ground, with tears in his eyes. Why? Not because there was any difference in the gift, but because there was a difference unspeakable in the giver and in the giving.

The story turns upon one of the universal truths of human nature. A large part of the secret of value is difficulty. Among the hills of Switzerland the best gift which a lover can give his lady is a sprig of edelweiss. The edelweiss is not a particularly beautiful flower, but it grows in particularly difficult places. It takes long, hard and dangerous climbing to get it, and so it is a gift—just as the cup of water was—which means something. It means difficulty. The gift is consecrated by the difficulty of the giving. These illustrations touch, it is true, the exceptional side of life, but the truth for which they stand holds good everywhere and every day. For everyone of us, unless we are very selfish, the value of a gift depends upon the love of the giver, and the love of the giver is shown by the pains which he has been willing to take to get the gift.

Now, by studying the nature of man we make discoveries about the nature of God. God has, indeed, told us about Himself, but always and of necessity in terms drawn from our own experience. That is the only language which we can understand. We must by the constitution of our minds think of God as the superlative of man, the positive. We take the best in the nature of man, and, multiplying it by infinity, gain an idea of God.

AN INFINITE TRUTH.

And so this truth about ourselves, is a truth also, we may believe, about God. Whatever does easily and greatly please God. He thinks as little of it as we do of easy and unimportant things done for us. It would displease Him if we were to leave easy things undone. Because they are so easy there is so much the more reason for doing and not neglecting them. But we are not to think that we have really done anything for God, when we have done only easy things. It is the hard things which please God. Let me say that over again, the whole message of the sermon is in that sentence; It is the hard things which please God.

The hard things please God not for their own sake—not because they are hard, that was the mistake of the old ascetics. They did a great many hard things under an impression that pain somehow pleased God; that the more uncomfortable human life could be made, the closer it approached to the ideal of life which God had. It would be a very hard thing to hold your hand in one position, pressing the finger tips against the palm, until the nails should grow through the testered flesh. But that would not please God. There would be nothing about such an act except its difficulty. It would be a sign of nothing else but the perseverance and endurance and foolishness of the doer. David would not have applauded the heroes of that adventure, if they had simply done that daring feat for the sake of doing it. God does not want us to do hard things just for the sake of doing them.

It is true that there is a good deal said in the Bible about the difficulty of the Christian life. We are promised tribulation. We are told to beware when all things are going smoothly and all men are speaking well of us. We are assured that life is, as the old Persian called it, the Path of the Two Destinies; that the right side of the path may be known by its exceeding narrowness and difficulty, and by the small number of the travelers upon it, and that the easy and comfortable and popular side of the path leads to a destiny from which may God deliver us. We are reminded that they only are worthy of their Master who deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Him.

THE GREAT EXAMPLE.

The central fact in the Christian religion is the crucifixion of Christ, and the most sacred symbol is the cross. The true Christian life is full of difficulty. You remember the beautiful and significant story of St. Martin's dream. A great light filled his room, and a shining vision, as of the Christ, stood beside the saint. And he saw a glorious chariot of fire like that which carried the old prophet from the banks of the river Jordan to the fair borders of the River of Life, and he heard a voice bidding him enter, for his mother had come to take him also to the realms of joy. And St. Martin, lifting his foot to step into the chariot, looked at the heavenly vision of the Lord Christ, and look again, and drew back.

"Where is the print of the nails?" he said. For the hands were soft and fair. There were no scars there of any pain. "Where is the print of the nails?" And the vision vanished. It was not the Christ, but the fiend. Such a vision entices us—a vision of an easy Christian life, of a life unmarked by any print of the nails of the cross. But the vision is a lie. There is no place for ease and self-indulgence in the Christian life. The Christian life—for every man and woman who is honestly living it—is full of difficulty.

But this element of difficulty—and here is what I ask you to notice—this element of difficulty is not one which God has added in any arbitrary way. God has not deliberately made the idea! Christian life hard, as a retreating army cuts down trees and flings them across the path to impede the progress of the pursuers. God doesn't pile up hard things in our path, as the inquisitors laid the redhot ploughshears in the way for the Queen to walk over with bare feet, so that they could see whether she was good or not.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS.

No, the difficulty is there in the nature of things. The teacher doesn't insist upon all the hard text books, out of any delight in the toil of the scholar. The hard text books are simply the necessary conditions of knowledge. All those monotonous and wearisome exercises which small fingers get so tired of are not appointed, as the little players sometimes think, for the sake of their difficulty, in order to make the study of music hard. They are the necessary condition of learning music. The perplexing conjugations of the German verbs were not invented by the grammarian. They grow. They are in the grammar because they are in the language. They have to be mastered not as a piece of mental labor, but as a necessary condition of understanding German speech. Work, self-denial, perseverance,