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The Gipsy's Warning.

THE little village of San Pablo, which lies three leagues distant from Madrid, was once the residence of many proud and opulent families who have long since passed away from earth. Among muleteers, shepherds and water-carriers, one would hardly look for old Spanish grandees, and San Pablo is now only populated by an ignoble race.

At the period of which we write there lived in San Pablo one, Count Rodrigo de Bivas, who claimed to be descended from that Bivas who was called the thunderbolt of Spain, on account of his military exploits.

The count was in the thirty-second year of his age, had been educated abroad, and only returned to his country at the death of his father, who bequeathed to him vast estates in the southern part of Spain, which made him one of the wealthiest nobles in the kingdom. He was tall, well-formed, with a pleasing countenance, with which was blended great resolution. It was said of him that he was never known to evince the least trepidation under any circumstances that ever occurred. Just as he was quitting Germany for his home, he chanced to meet Senor Ruiz, who was abroad with his family, and he almost instantly became enamored with his beautiful daughter Julia. For months the count had impatiently awaited the return of Senor Ruiz to Spain, and at length he heard of the arrival of the lovely girl whose image was so indelibly impressed on his heart.

The sun was shining cheerily, and the birds were singing blithely along the roadside, as the count rode forward to Madrid on his trusty mule, richly adorned with silver trappings. As he came to a turn in the road there stalked out of a clump of bushes the figure of a woman in strange attire. Her dress was so fantastic that he reined up his mule suddenly, and gazed at her in surprise. Her face was swarthy, and upon her head she wore a yellow and red turban, while her skirt, which was green and short, was rent in many places. She displayed a pair of bright blue stockings, and her feet were encased in red morocco slippers.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated the count, "this is certainly a very strange being."

Before, however, he could reflect further, the woman approached him, and craved permission to tell his fortune.

"A gipsy?" he cried.

"Let me see your hand," said the woman, without appearing to notice his remark.

The count regarded her attentively and then laughed.

"Nay, nay, my woman, I am no believer in these matters; but you, like your race, are poor, I suppose; therefore, take this," and he tossed her a peso, which she quickly picked out of the dust. Turning to him she said:

"But I would see the palm of your hand, noble sir, even though you may ridicule my calling."

"There it is then," replied the count, as he unglved his hand and extended it toward the gipsy. The dark-eyed hag gazed intently at the count's hand for some minutes, then looked up in his face, and laughing, said: "This ever the same with handsome and gay men. Love, love, always love. I will tell you that you cannot believe, but I warn you, beware of the Raven," and before the count could question she darted among the trees, and he saw her tattered finery disappear in the forest.

"Beware of the raven," quoth the count. "What raven? What can the

creature mean? Ah! it is one of their tricks; it has no significance at all," and he pricked his mule with one spur and rode forward humming a ballad, all the while thinking of the beautiful Julia.

The sun was sinking behind the horizon as he gained the suburbs of the city, which was almost instantly on her feet again. Suddenly his mule made a plunge, and losing her footing came to the ground with her rider.

"A bad omen," muttered the count as he rose unhurt and gazed at the mule, which was almost instantly on her feet again. She had always been a remarkably sure-footed beast, and the count, who was not without a certain tinge of superstition, appeared uncertain whether to proceed or retrace his way. As he stood dangling his bridle in his hand, his eyes caught sight of an old public house by the wayside.

"We'll tarry here for the night," he said, and leading the animal, he walked towards the building.

The house in question was of large dimensions, the windows few and small, and were set deep within the thickness of the wall. Immediately over the portal hung a weather-beaten sign, announcing the house as the Raven Inn. For an instant the count hesitated, as the gipsy's warning came to his mind; but the feeling passed off instantly, and pulling the bell, he awaited the opening of the heavy court-yard doors. The count was tired and required rest, and as he was determined not to enter the city that night, one place was as good as another to tarry in. Had he known the reputation of the Raven he doubtless would have sought other lodgings. So long had he been absent from his country, that many local events had transpired of which he knew nothing, and one of the most noted occurrences had been the trial of Antonio Hernandez (the proprietor of the Raven) for murder, and his acquittal of the same. But, notwithstanding Hernandez saved his life through the exertions of his advocate, his character was entirely lost, and the business of his house almost destroyed, for few people believed in his innocence, and mothers pointed him out to their children as a murderer. Years before it appeared that a rich guest was murdered in his bed, and the landlord was suspected and arrested. The circumstances made a great stir, for the murdered man was well connected and widely known. Every one who valued his reputation shunned the society of Hernandez, and his house at last became the resort of contrabandists from the frontier and the low characters who infested the city.

Impatient at the long delay in answering the summons, the count jerked the bell-ropes vigorously, and at length the host, followed by a pale girl (the only domestic in the house), showed themselves.

With many profound bows and apologies for the delay, Hernandez took the mule to the stable, while the count followed the girl, whose name was Isabella, to the interior of the place. There was something so gentle and interesting about the girl that the count found himself gazing after her wherever she went. He fancied there was a sadness in her face, and her large eyes sought his as if she would have spoken to him. But the appearance of Antonio Hernandez put a stop to the effort that Isabella was meditating in the nobleman's behalf, for the landlord never for an instant left the girl alone in the count's presence. Once or twice, when the count yawned as if he were tired, Isabella turned her eyes mournfully upon him as if to beseech him not to retire to bed. The count noticed the look, but could not interpret its significance, and during the evening he saw her no more. A feeling of weariness at length overcame him, the count arose from his seat in the quaint old parlor and signified his intention of seeing his room.—Hernandez at once secured a lamp and escorted the count up stairs, ushered him into a large ghostly chamber, in which every article in the cumbersome furniture was despoiled by age to funeral blackness. Two large mirrors adorned the walls, and by their reflection seemed to stretch out the dimensions of the dreary apartment to a boundless extent.

This was the room in which the terrible murder had been committed, and it was never occupied, save when some dark deed was to be done. The land-

lord placed the lamp upon the table, and wishing his guest good-night, went out and shut the door. The count turned the key, and then by the dim light of the lamp surveyed the apartment. It was so gloomy that he turned and walked to the window, supposing that it looked on the street. He was disappointed to find that it opened on a small neglected yard, filled with coarse vegetation and some mouldering timber.

The moon was partially obscured by clouds, but ever and anon threw a flickering light upon the desolate scene. A vague presentiment of evil stole over the count, and his mind became gloomy. "Beware of the Raven." The words of the sibyl kept recurring to his memory. Could the warning of the witch have been prophetic? The count would have left the room but for a certain sense of shame the act would engender.

"Pshaw!" he cried, and leaned out the window to snuff the air.

As he did so his ears caught the sound of a suppressed hiss. He listened attentively, and it came again. Casting his eyes through the darkness, he endeavored to discover from whence the sound proceeded, but he could see nothing, and it was only when he raised his eyes upward toward a small window directly over his head that he discovered the figure of Isabella by the struggling light of the moon.

She was gesticulating towards him, but the moon was so frequently hidden behind dark clouds that he could not for some time guess her import. Suddenly the great orb came out into the clear sky, and the count could see the girl plainly. She was two stories above him, and he could not hear her words distinctly, for she spoke in such a low voice, and after she had warned him, she quickly disappeared.

"For the love of the Virgin, do not go to bed, senor," she said. "Antonio Hernandez is my uncle, but he is a bad man, and if you go to sleep, senor, you may never see the light of the world again. Don't betray me, for my uncle would kill me if he knew I had spoken these words. Adieu!"

The count felt beneath his girdle and instinctively laid his hand upon the hilt of his dagger. Then he walked to his chamber door, turned the key and unlocked it, intending to look out into the corridor, but to his surprise, he found it was fastened upon the outside—and he was a prisoner. He tried to force it open, but it resisted all his efforts. He sat down, and leaning his head upon his hand, began to meditate. As he did so the oil in the lamp became exhausted and the light went out. He felt a strong conviction that some unseen danger hovered near, and that which was suspicion became a certainty. Nothing remained now but to await the attack, and sell his life as dearly as possible. The thoughts of the beautiful Julia often occurred to his mind. It was to see her again that he became involved in his present condition. He thought, too, of the gipsy, and wondered what order of being she was to forecast the peril that should befall him.

The clouds began to break away from the face of the heavens and the count was enabled to see more clearly about the chamber. He heard the clocks in the city toll the hour of midnight, but all desire for sleep had left him, and he was very vigilant.

Approaching the bed, he pulled down one of the pillows and disarranged the covering, throwing it in a sort of a heap, as if a person was reposing there. Then he walked over the room and stood with his back to the wall, watching the chamber door, screened from the immediate sight of those who might seek an entrance there by a tall chair which he placed before him.

While thus upon the alert, a large mirror close upon his right gave a click like the lock of a pistol, and then flew open at the touch of some person behind it. The heavy frame work of this antique ornament rested against the chair and concealed the count from view. Notwithstanding cold drops of perspiration stood upon his brow, he was perfectly calm. In the mirror upon the opposite wall the count could see the muffled figure of the landlord, with a knife in one hand and a lamp in the other, step from the wall. Cautiously he approached the bed and raised the weapon in the act to strike, satisfied that he only had to contend with a

single adversary, when the count rushed from his concealment and sprang upon his enemy, dagger in hand.

A brief but desperate struggle ensued, in which the count twice struck the landlord with his dagger; but by a dexterous movement Hernandez eluded the grasp of the infuriated nobleman, and jumping into the wall pulled the mirror after him.

For a moment the count could scarcely believe he had lost his foe, and it was only by looking at the mirror as it fitted close to the wall that he could realize that the landlord had escaped. He went to the window and called for assistance, but there were few persons abroad at that hour of the night, and the window of the room was far from the street. He went to the door and used all his efforts to force it open without success. Exhausted in the unavailing attempt, he sat down to await the break of day. Hour after hour passed away, and at length the welcome gray dawn began to appear. Presently his ear caught the sound of a light step, and he heard a bolt fall from the outside, then the door opened and Isabella stood before him. She certainly looked beautiful as she walked into the room, clad in a simple white robe without any ornament.

"Thank you, thank you," cried the count, "I shall not forget the service you have done me, and if I crave a kiss, it is in token of the love which I bear for one who has been the means of preparing me to defend my life."

Isabella bowed her head, and the count kissed her on the forehead.

"You know all that has happened?" questioned the count.

"Yes senor," she replied. "My uncle is seriously wounded, but the contrabandists carried him off to the frontier before daybreak. Senor, now that you are safe and free to depart, will you not do me the favor to conceal this matter? You have dangerously wounded my uncle, and I heard Jose, the chief of the contrabandist gang, say, that if Antonio reached Segovia alive he would be much surprised."

The count was thoughtful for a few minutes and then asked, "Why, my dear girl, do you desire to shield this wretch? Certainly not because he is your relation. You do not love him, for last night he said he would surely kill you if he knew you had betrayed him."

"Listen, senor, and I will explain," said the girl. "Antonio Hernandez is the only brother of my mother. When she died he took me to his home, and brought me up after his rough fashion. He used to belong to Jose's gang. If he didn't treat me with affection, neither did he beat me. Once he saved my life—perilling his life to save mine. I was at the bottom of the sea when he dived and brought me to the surface again, and the water was full of sharks, too.—Great sea monsters, senor. Certainly he must have cared something for me, or he would have allowed me to be eaten up. She looked up in his eyes with a pleading expression as she spoke, and the count drew her near him and again kissed her brow.

"For your sake, I make the promise," he replied "but with this condition, that your uncle never returns to Madrid."

At that moment there was a jingle of spurs in the court, and a call for Isabella. The count descended the stairway with her, and at the landing met a swarthy fellow, with a face half concealed in a slouch hat, who called Isabella aside and spoke to her in a low and rapid tone. This done he jumped upon his mule and galloped quickly away.

The girl stood leaning against the doorway with her cheeks blanched and hands tightly clasped, while great tears rolled down her cheeks.

Divining at once the cause, the count approached and said, "You have bad news, I fear?"

"He died before they reached the mountains," she replied. "Jose sent me word. Alas, alas!" and she wept bitterly.

The count endeavored to soothe her grief, and made inquiries as to her future life.

"I am alone in the world now," she sobbed.

"I will see that you are cared for," he said, and will send a kind person to you before night. Come, cheer up; all will be well."

That day Isabella was removed to the convent of Saint Ursula, and placed at the school under the care of the kind sisters.

Count de Bivas sought the beautiful Julia and learned that, by a dreadful accident, she had been horribly burned and disfigured, and was then lying upon a bed of sickness from which she might never rise again. The shock was so great to him that he started upon his travels once more.

Six months later he was at Andorra, on the Spanish frontier, when he came across a band of contrabandists, who were coming down from the Pyrenees. One fellow, who had a peculiar limp in his gait, caught his eye, and he thought there was something familiar in his face. The man pulled his cap over his eyes and was hastening by, when the count sprang to his side and put his hand on his shoulder.

"You are Antonio Hernandez, formerly keeper of the Raven Inn," cried Count de Bivas.

"And you are Count de Bivas," was the reply.

"We won't mention the past," said the count; "but tell me why you sent word to that poor girl that you were dead?"

"Well, senor," replied the ruffian, "I was tired of playing landlord where I could gather no pesos. I longed again for my old life, and I didn't want to be bothered with women. I know all you have done for the girl, senor. Little passes in the cities that Jose's gang do not get correctly. Now let us say adieu, with the hope we may never meet again," and the ruffian doffed his cap in derision, and hurried on after his companions.

A sudden change came over the count. He hurried back to Madrid, and sought the convent of Saint Ursula, where he had a long interview with Isabella, and before the orange buds bloomed again in the garden of the de Bivas mansion at San Pablo, Isabella became a countess, and the happy wife of a man whose life she had been instrumental in preserving.

AIMLESS PEOPLE.

A MAN who would start off on a journey without any idea where he was going, or when he would return, would be regarded as very foolish.

Yet in the journey of human life many persons seem to have no definite purpose to accomplish. They have nothing in particular that they seek to accomplish. They do not know what they would like to do. Their lives are aimless; is it any wonder that their lives are unsuccessful?

People of this description miss a great deal of the zest of enjoyment of which human life is capable. Action to which there is no main spring is not only languid and insipid, but it affords little pleasure or satisfaction.

Every young man should lay out some plan to the execution of which he should diligently devote himself. It is pleasant to succeed; but he who attempts something and fails is more respected than he who has not blood enough in his veins to even try to do anything.

Girls are keen in their perception and penetration of character, and they soon set down as inconsiderate nobodies the young men of their acquaintance who are destitute of ambition.

An aimless young man never develops his own strength. Through continual inaction his faculties become listless and benumbed. The tendency with him is always to become a dwarf instead of a giant.

Of course in selecting an object of ambition discretion is to be used. It must be something in the keeping with the natural tastes of the individual, or it will rarely if ever be achieved. Being in harmony with his tastes, the loftier the object the greater will be the gratification which its accomplishment will afford.

When Andrew Johnson was President of the United States he was twitted with once having been a tailor; but he pointed to the sign on which his name had been painted in his humble youth, and triumphantly replied, "Well, didn't I make good clothes?"

He who makes the highest excellence in his calling the first object of his ambition, whether his occupation be that of a tailor or a President, gets a thousand times more enjoyment out of life than he who is content to aimlessly drift along with the tide of mediocrity.