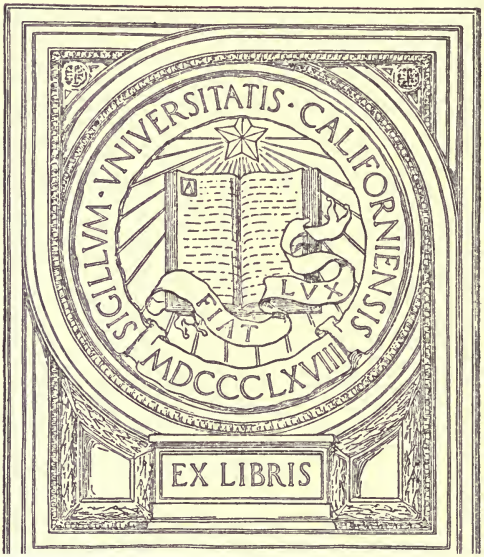
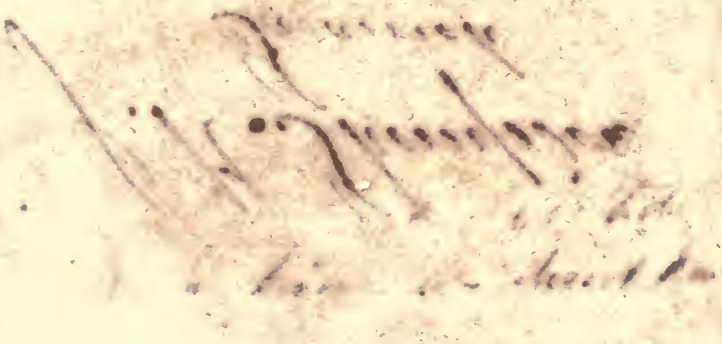


J. R. Thompson
Savannah Ga

v. 2 only?



PELAYO:

A STORY OF THE GOTH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MELLICHAMPE," "THE YEMASSEE," "GUY RIVERS,"
"THE PARTISAN," "MARTIN FABER," &c.

"Nor should the narrow spirit chide the toil
Through these old ruins. They have noble spoil
And goodly treasure."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1838.

PELAYO:

A STORY OF THE GOTH.

BOOK III.

PELAYO.

BOOK III.

I.

When the eyes of the stunned and suffering Amri were opened to the light, he found himself in the chamber of the beautiful Urraca. She had been, and was still, busy in attendance upon him. Her hand had dressed his wound, which was rather severe than dangerous; she had administered the cooling beverage, and her attentions had been unrelaxing, like those of the fondest and most devoted wife. The gladness which shone in her eyes as she beheld his unclosing, was a rebuke to his spirit, which he understood, if he did not feel.

"How is it with thee now, Amri?" she demanded of him, in a voice of the utmost tenderness, very different from that aroused and sternly passionate tone which we have heard her employing to the same person in a preceding interview. He answered her in a voice of studied fondness, and with words fitly calculated to gloss over his falsehood and conceal his indifference.

"Ah, dearest Urraca, how much do I owe to thy care and watchfulness! Thou hast saved my life, I know, and I owe it to thee now if I had not willed it to thee before. Thou hast been to me all—henceforward I will be all to thee."

The hypocrite played his part successfully; and, wil-

ing to confide, where confidence was happiness, the dependant Urraca paused not calmly to analyze or inquire into the truth of his declarations. She took them upon trust. She did not look to see if the eye of Amri met hers with unblenching earnestness as he addressed her; she did not remark that the voice was schooled into effort, and was unbroken and even while he was uttering words of passionate gratitude and warm affection. It was enough for her that the sense which they conveyed was sweet; she did not ask—perhaps she feared to ask—if they were the words of truth. Alas! how commonly do we forego the true for the sweet; how readily do we suffer ourselves to be beguiled by the one into a disregard and forgetfulness of the other; and how bitterly do we pay, in after days, for the sad error of such beguiling moments! She replied to him with all the fondness of a love which the show of a proper feeling in him had pleased and satisfied.

"Ah, Amri, thy words are sweet—sweeter to me than all the gifts and all the worship of the proudest Goth that ever humbled himself in my train. How glad would I be to believe thee, Amri. Dost thou not deceive me, dearest? Art thou not glozing, that I may not see or suspect thy falsehood? I fear me thou dost play me false, and thy words are those of the serpent, words of guile and of untruth. Yet, be it so, Amri—be it so. Speak to me falsely, but sweetly—and, if thou dost me wrong in thy heart, Amri, let the secret be withheld from my ears, and I forgive thee the wrong."

"Sweet Urraca, thou knowest that I wrong thee not. How could I wrong a love true, and sweet, and devoted as is thine? Were I moved to wrong thee, wanting in the natural passion which should respond to thine, thy truth would counsel me that I should do thee justice, and pay homage to the affection which I yet might never feel. I should feign the love for thee which thou deservest, even though my cold heart entertained it not."

"But thou dost not feign—thou dost feel, my Amri?" cried the woman, hastily, and with some symptoms of apprehension. He put his hand upon his bosom, and invoked the God of Israel to approve his sincerity.

"Thy God—my God! They have both heard thee, Amri!" she exclaimed, laying her hand upon his arm, and looking for a moment inquiringly into his face; then, with a fond smile, throwing herself upon his bosom, she cried, passionately and aloud, the satisfaction which she felt.

"I must—I will believe thee, Amri. I dare not doubt thee longer, Amri, though many are the doubts which have come to chide me with the confidence I have given thee; and often, even when thou didst seem most loving and most true, was there something that whispered in my heart, telling me to believe thee not—to heed none of thy professions. I will not hear to this evil tempter—I will believe that thou dost love me."

"I do—I do love thee, Urraca. Thou must believe, and confide to me always."

"I will—I must—even as thou sayest, Amri!" she responded; but with one of those sudden and passionate transitions which marked her ungovernable and ill-schooled spirit, her tone changed, even as she said these words; and with a fiery glance of the eye, and an uplifted finger, starting at the same time away from his embrace, she looked upon him threateningly, while she spoke the very doubts which she had determined to dismiss.

"Yet, if thou shouldst deceive me—if—oh, Amri, I could have slain thee with my own hands but the last night, when I looked upon thee and esteemed thee a traitor to my love. My hand was upon this dagger"—and, while she spoke, she drew it from her bosom and held it on high—"and, but that thy words were quick, and warmed with a devotion which was sweet to my heart, I had driven its biting blade into the very warmest parts of thine!"

"Urraca!" was the only word which the lips of Amri uttered in reply to this passionate exhortation. She turned a fond woman-glance once more upon him, while she flung the dagger from her to a distant corner of the chamber.

"I will not trust myself to hold it again in my hands, for fear that it should be too ready, in some sad hour, obedient to my wilful heart. Fear me not, Amri; I do now believe thee—I will wrong thee never again."

But he did fear her. He knew too well how tumultuously the storm of passion in her soul bore along with it every consideration, every stay of reason, every obstacle which prudence and a calm thought might will to oppose against feverish impatience and the phrensy of a jealous mood.

"I do fear thee," he said to himself, even while she embraced him and while he embraced her—"I do fear thee, and I were a fool not to provide against this fear. I will not fear thee long."

Such were the shadows of his thought, passing cloudily over his mind, and intimating the commission of other and greater crimes as necessary to his extrication from the past. But neither by word nor look did he convey to her mind a solitary suspicion of that which was passing through his own. He played the part of the adoring lover—the confiding, fond husband—one having happiness, and free from disquiet or discontent. Little did she dream while believing, and happy to believe, that in his thought he had already, with felon spirit, resolved to penetrate the sanctuary of her life—to throw down and trample into dust and darkness the sacred and sweet, though perhaps impure, fires which were burning upon its altars.

II.

That night the happiness of Urraca was perfect, if there can be any perfect happiness for the spirit which is impure. The sickness of Amri, making him for the time a dependant upon her, had imposed upon him the necessity of conciliation to a far greater degree than had been his wont to show for a long period previously. With the artfulness of that narrow sagacity which is cunning, and must always result in vice, he could imitate the virtue which he yet had not the courage to feel or to desire; and the eyes of love and confidence never looked more natural and true than did those of the dishonourable Amri. Willing to believe, where belief was itself so great a pleasure, the fond Urraca was readily imposed upon. She lay in his arms, and the fountains of her eyes were opened, and joyous tears, flowing freely from their deepest sources, relieved her labouring bosom, and soothed a spirit too easily roused to wrath and suspicion to remain soothed long. Vicious still, and pursuing still the indulgences of vice, the feelings of Urraca were, nevertheless, more truly innocent at this moment than they had ever been at any which she had known since the hapless hour when, in her maiden fondness and confiding youth, she had been beguiled from the innocent hope of girlhood, and the quiet dwelling of her father among the hills of Guadarrama. The child of a decayed noble, she dwelt amid seclusion, and her eyes were accustomed to behold no object in the shape of man more attractive than the surrounding goatherds, clad in skins as rough and more unsightly than those of the animals they tended. But, one day, wandering among those hills, there came a gallant cavalier—a Gothic noble—who had fled thither for shelter, seeking safety from the avenger of blood. Her eyes were daz-

zled by his glances and gay apparel, and her heart was soon enslaved by the sweet persuasion of his beguiling words. She became his victim; and when he left her, as not long afterward he did, she stole away from the innocent home in which she was no longer innocent, and sought her despoiler and her future abiding-place in the dangerous proximity of the court. The transitions of vice to greater vice are rapid, though perhaps insensible in their progress, and not often apt to offend, however they may be to startle; and the beautiful Urraca sank, after no very long period, and with little effort at resistance, into the thing we find her. She became accustomed to her degraded calling, and soon grew comparatively callous, in an atmosphere so generally vicious as that of the city, to the debasing shame of her indulgences. Yet were there moments when the memory of the past, of the quiet, humble, happy home of her sire among the mountains of Guadarrama, came over her heart with irresistible power, filling her bosom with sorrow and her eyes with tears—when the feeling of self-abasement shook her form as with the convulsions of a spasmodic agony, and when she felt how much holier was that humble home which she had given up for ever, than all the gaudy trappings and dearly-bought splendours which lust had accumulated around her.

Such now were her thoughts and feelings, even while she lay upon the bosom of Amri; and suddenly, amid her tears, she exclaimed aloud, as if to herself in musing—

"The old home—the quiet home among the hills—the peace—the peace!"

"What home, Urraca?" was the inquiry of Amri, as he heard the exclamation.

"The home of my childhood—of my innocence—of my peace! My father's home and mine, Amri. Would we were there, Amri—would we both were there!"

"Wherefore the wish, dearest Urraca? Art thou not

happy here—here, in my arms—secure, as thou now art, of the love of thy own Amri?"

"Happy—oh yes, very happy, Amri—but yet not at peace! Give me peace. I would rest now—I would sleep. I have been striving long, and I feel that a dreadful fever has been preying upon my heart. I feel—I fear, Amri—that I have not long to live! Something seems to whisper it to all my senses. I hear it—I see it—I feel it."

"And I wish it!" was the thought of Amri; but he gave utterance to a far different sentiment.

"Thou art dreaming, Urraca—and thy dream is no less idle to thee than it is painful to me. Forbear such thoughts, and let thy fancy no longer trifle with thee thus, torturing us both without profit. Now is the season for our mutual happiness—now, when thou doubtest me no longer; and now, when I am assured that the Jew is no longer despised of the woman he adores. Give over thy weeping, sweet one, and look the bright smile from thine eyes which is their natural and becoming expression."

She tried to smile while thus he strove artfully to sooth her; but her lips murmured fitfully for some moments after, as if beyond all her power of prevention—

"The old home—the brown hills—my father's home and mine. The peace, the sweet peace and quiet of that home!"

"Think not of it, Urraca. This is now thy home, as dear to thee as any which thou hast ever known before."

"As dear to me! Yes, dearer—much dearer, Amri—for here thou lovest me; and there—there are none left now who would, or should, love the outcast Urraca. This home is dearer than all, Amri; but oh, it wants the quiet of those brown hills and those suddenly-sinking valleys. Would we were there, my Amri!—there is peace among those hills which I would give this wealth,

these pomps, the world, every thing, dear Amri, but thee, once more to find—once more to recover!"

"Sleep, dear Urraca—give thyself up to sleep upon my bosom, and the peace will surely return to thee which thou hast lost before, and which thou desirest now."

"Never—never, while here!" was her energetic response to all his entreaties. "I feel that there is no peace for me in Cordova! No peace anywhere for Urraca but among those hills of her innocent girlhood. It was there that I ceased to be innocent. It is there only that I can be innocent again, and happy! Wilt thou not go with me there, Amri? Wilt thou not? Thou lovest me—so thou hast sworn to me! If thou dost, thou wilt not refuse. Go with me to the mountains of Guadarrama. Let us seek out the valley of my father. He is no longer there to meet me with his frown! He is no longer living to curse me with his dying breath! The old halls in which he dwelt are silent; and if they have no words of sympathy to sooth, they at least have no language of reproach with which to chide me. Thither let us fly—there let us live—there, at least, dear Amri—I implore thee as for my life—there, at least, let me die!"

The spirit of Urraca was again in tumult. Her mind was ill at ease. It was in vain that Amri strove to silence her complainings, and convince her that her griefs were idle and imaginary.

"Wherefore dost thou talk of death, my beloved? What hast thou to fear? Thou art young—thou art beautiful—thou art beloved! Thou hast wealth—thou livest in luxury—thou hast no want which thou mayst not gratify."

"Yes—there is one! There is one sad, sweet want which here I may not gratify. There only—there, in Guadarrama."

"What is that want, Urraca? I will—"

"Peace—I would have peace—I would sleep—and I feel, Amri, that I shall never sleep at peace till I reach those mountains. I feel that I am soon to die—"

"No more of that, dearest," said he, interrupting her with a well-affected fondness of entreaty.

"I feel it—I fear it. I cannot help the thought—the fear! It comes to me unbidden! It looks at me—it whispers in my ears—and I shut it out from one sense only to have it force its way into another. But whether it be true or false—whether it be idle or substantial—I feel that I would rather fly once more to that old home, if thou, dearest Amri, wilt go thither with me. I am sick of this life in Cordova. I am sick of the vile associates who seek me. Wherefore should I remain longer? I have wealth, as thou sayest, in abundance. I would leave the path, and, if possible, the practices, of the vice by which I live. Go with me to those quiet hills, dearest Amri, and let me live, if live I may, in peace, and for thee! Wilt thou go with me, Amri?"

She raised her head from his bosom, where all this while it had lain, as she put this question, and her dark eyes looked down penetratingly and imploringly into his face. He paused for a few seconds, until he saw, from the changing colour in her cheeks, that a prompt and affirmative reply would be the best policy. He gave the desired assent, and she then threw herself again upon his bosom, her arms clasping his neck; and there she wept freely, until exhausted nature sank down finally into the arms of a refreshing slumber.

III.

It was the lost peace of mind—it was the sleep of a reproving and feverish conscience, for which the unhappy woman prayed; but this she did not herself so well understand. It was a fond and natural desire which she

felt to return to her home of infancy, and the thought was no less natural to one in her situation, that there only could she recover the innocence which she had there lost. With the purely innocent the heart is never from its home. The sweet hopes, the pleasant joys, the cheering affections attend it ever, and cluster around its steps, and hallow all its emotions. Amri gave Urraca the promise which she sought, and she was, for the moment, satisfied. He gave it unwillingly, however, and without the most distant intention of its fulfilment. He could do no less than promise. He feared once more to provoke the paroxysm of her passion, the consequences and character of which he well knew, and which he had long since learned how to dread. And even had he not this fear, a common show of gratitude would have called for the concession. To have denied her at such a moment would have been ungracious in the extreme. Her fond nursing and gentle cares had recovered him from the stunning, but not serious, injury which he had received from the blow given by Pelayo; and, bending over her as she lay sleeping upon his arm, he half reproached himself, at intervals, with the base selfishness of his own spirit, that would not allow him to estimate as it deserved the willing devotedness of hers. But these moods were only momentary—of little strength, and of no duration. Other thoughts soon filled his mind, and a succession of dark and criminal purposes expelled from his bosom the better impulses. These purposes were many, yet not various in their character. They all bore the same family likeness, shadowed from his own vile and malignant soul. At one moment he meditated the destruction of Melchior, whom he had half sold already to the mercenary Edacer. A strange feeling of kindred —strange in him, though natural enough to others— alone made him hesitate; and when, at the next moment, he thought of Thyrza, his scruples and hesitation could not but increase. The thought of the Jewish

maiden soon usurped the place of all other images; and as, through the aid of his active imagination, her perfect and sweetly beautiful features rose before his mind's eye, he turned away, with instinctive aversion, from the contemplation of the face of her who lay sleeping beside him. She too was beautiful; but oh! how different her loveliness from the loveliness of Thyrza! Where was that angel purity, that heavenly grace, that sanctified look, in which no expression ever made its appearance inconsistent with a heart full of holiness, and a hope full of innocence and truth? The face of Urraca, beautiful though it might appear, was like some rich and decorated casket, in which lay concealed the elements of evil and of terror—wild, fierce passions, unholy desires, and any thing but innocence, and every thing but truth! It is in the sovereignty of virtue to command even the admiration of that vice which yet does not sufficiently admire to seek to emulate it; and the thought of Thyrza in the mind of Amri, and the comparison, or rather contrast, between herself and Urraca which that thought forced upon him, moved him to detach his arm from the neck about which it had been wound so fondly ere she slept, and to withdraw the close embrace, in the seemingly fond folds of which the unhappy woman had given herself up to a pleasing unconsciousness. His eyes now looked upon the closed orbs of Urraca as earnestly as they might ever have done before, but, certainly, with no such feeling shining within them as had once possessed his heart, and spoken for it through them. Hate, scorn, contempt, hostility, now formed the expression of that look, which, but a little while before, was all love and adoration! His mind revolted as he gazed; and, rising with the utmost caution from the couch where he had lain, he resumed the dress which, in part only, had been thrown aside before. A busy and a black thought in his mind prompted him to rapidity in his movements; and, when he had resumed his habit, he went to a recess

in the chamber which was hidden from all eyes by the falling folds of a curtain, and there, undoing the sash which usually bound his middle, he drew from a little pocket artfully concealed in its foldings a small envelope of parchment, which he transferred from its former place to one more convenient of reach in his bosom. This done, he girded himself with the sash hastily; then re-entering the chamber, he approached the couch where Urraca lay, still wrapped in the deepest, though most unquiet, slumbers. She murmured and sighed in her sleep, and the tears, even then, hung upon the long, black, and folded eyelashes of her large and lovely eyes. He gave her but a single glance as still she slept, and in that glance the murderous design in his bosom was fully apparent. Cautiously then he stole away from the apartment, and seeking an adjoining chamber, he summoned one of the female attendants who usually waited upon the person of Urraca. The intimacy of the Hebrew with this woman seemed to have been of a nature which rendered much formality unnecessary between them. He spoke to her as if she had been his creature, and one whom he could most certainly command.

"Zitta, she sleeps. Thou hast so far well performed, and here is thy reward."

He gave her money, which she readily received.

"Thou hast promised me, and the time is at length come when thou must do as thou hast promised. She will not free thee. She has resolved. Thou must free thyself—and me! I have striven for thee until I have angered her, and she has resolved, more firmly than ever, to keep thee in her bondage. She has sworn it. There is but one course for thee. Art thou ready to do every thing for thy self-mastery—for the tie which is between us—and remembering and desiring what I shall do for thee in Merida when thou shalt be free to go there?"

The woman promised him, and he then took from his

vest the parchment envelope which he had there hidden after withdrawing it from his sash. This he placed in her hands, with these words—

"For the wine she drinks! It is fatal—but it gives thee freedom. It gives us both freedom; and when thou hast that, I will do for thee, and be to thee, all that I have promised. Thou wilt do it—thou hast sworn?"

"I have sworn—I will swear again, Amri," responded the woman.

"'Tis well!"

"Thou sayest, Amri, that she has denied you—"

"Utterly, and with anger in her words and looks."

"Yet once she promised that I should be free to seek my mother in Merida? 'Twas thus thou saidst."

"She did—but revoked the promise in her evil mood. She is now resolved to hold thee with life."

"With life!" exclaimed the woman, bitterly. "And this," she continued, holding up the packet, "this is fatal to life, Amri, thou sayest?"

"It is," was the reply. "Drugged with it, the wine-cup which she drinks is death."

"Then she keeps me not long. Hold it done, Amri, as I have promised thee before. Again I promise thee."

She extended her hand as she spoke, which he pressed with a pleasurable grasp. Then, giving her some directions touching the manner of using the deadly potion with which he had provided her, he bade her take heed of the proper moment to administer it. This done, he left her to proceed to other and not less evil projects.

IV.

With the restlessness of a guilty spirit, Amri hurried away, when his conference with the woman was ended, to the prosecution of his various purposes. It was necessary that he should regain lost time; and, as it was

essential to his projects that he should not for a moment lose sight of the movements of Melchior, he was now solicitous to discover what had been the course of the outlawed Hebrew during the period in which he had been confined by his bruises to the dwelling of Urraca. A day and night had elapsed since his unsuccessful assault upon the person of the maiden Thyrza. Of her rescue he could remember little. Upon receiving the blow of Pelayo his senses had left him, and he saw and knew nothing after, until he opened his eyes upon the couch in Urraca's chamber. From her he obtained but little information; for, ignorant himself that she had been his companion in the affray, and feeling, as he did, the dangerous delicacy of the subject in connexion with her, he had ventured to ask her no questions, and was compelled to rest content with the limited information which she was willing to unfold. This was unimportant. She had her reasons for concealing from him her own agency in his rescue, and he was forced to resort to the attendant of Edacer, from whom he obtained little intelligence that was more satisfactory than that given by Urraca—by whom, indeed, the soldier had been schooled into silence. The Hebrew youth could only learn from their united testimony what he already, in great part, knew, or could conjecture, namely—that the page had been taken from his grasp at the moment when his possession of her might have been considered certain; but by whom remained to him utterly unknown. One error crept into the soldier's statement; but whether in consequence of the instructions of Urraca, or from his own head, in apologizing and accounting for his imbecility during the affray, it does not rest with us to determine. According to his account, the rescue of Thyrza had been effected, not by one man, but by a dozen, all "good men and true"—"men in buckram." A little bewildered to account for the appearance of so many persons so opportunely, and all so well armed, at the

proper moment, Amri was not, however, disposed to forego his purposes in reference to the maiden thus taken from his clutches. The privation only added a new stimulant to his always active passions, and he was now resolute to obtain her at every hazard. The slight hurt which he had received had the effect of determining him to sacrifice Melchior without further scruple; as, in resolving the doubts which came to his mind on the subject of Thyrza's rescue, he arrived at the conclusion that the persons by whom it had been effected were the myrmidons of the outlaw. Acquainted now with the existence of a conspiracy, and conscious that Melchior was at the bottom of it, he was at no loss to ascribe to the direct agency of the latter the injury which he had received; and he now set forth, resolute not only to effect his object with the daughter, but—dismissing all further scruples which he might have had, and did have, in sacrificing one of his tribe—also to deliver up to the mercenary Edacer, and to the penal terrors of the law, the person of her venerable father. Thus sharpened in his resolves, he hurried home with early dawn. The absence of Adoniakim from home gave him, in some respects, a freer opportunity for prosecuting his designs. Passing into a secret chamber of his father, which he was enabled to do by means of a master key which he had some time previously secured, he opened a massive safe of iron in which Adoniakim sometimes kept his treasure; but, to the annoyance and disappointment of Amri, there was little in its keeping—too little to permit of his abstracting any of its contents without detection. But, as if to compensate him for this disappointment, a small desk, which lay open upon a table before him, was covered with papers, over which the eye of Amri, glancing casually, became suddenly fixed in curiosity. He read with greedy pleasure their contents. They spoke of various matters connected with the conspiracy, and the mind of the youth became suddenly wonderfully en-

lightened on the subject of an affair, the importance of which he had never before conjectured. While he read he muttered to himself aloud, with a pleasure which he did not seek to suppress or conceal—

"By the beard of Samuel, but it is all here! This is treasure enough, and I sorrow not that the safe is empty. Thou hast been secret, Adoniakim—Abraham bless thee, for thou hast slept one moment—Abraham be blessed, for that moment I awakened. This is a prize which gives me every thing. I have thy secret, Melchior—I have thee, too, and Thyrza in my clutches. Thou shalt buy thyself, and I will buy her with thee. It is good—it is great, this plan. He cannot help but yield—he will—he must consent. I have his life in my hands—the life of Adoniakim—the lives of one half the tribe, and all of its treasure. Let him deny me if he dare. I have him—I have her. The lovely Thyrza is mine!"

The youth paced the apartment in his exultation, speaking to himself all the while as he did so in a vein similar to that which we have recorded.

"They cannot deny," he continued; "and if they do, it is written. *That*"—and he pointed to the writing in various places as he spoke—"*that* is the character of Adoniakim—*that* of Melchior; and it speaks of arms and warriors, gathering and to gather, under the lead of Abimelech. Abimelech, too—I am glad to find him here set down. I like him not, and he keeps not hidden the scorn which he holds for me. He, too, is in my power. Thyrza alone shall buy them free; and I am fain to think that Abimelech should be except from this safety. Why should I yield so freely? 'Tis enough I give not up their secret—'tis enough that I spare Melchior and the rest. I must punish the high-browed and insolent Abimelech for his scorn of me. He shall not be safe, though I keep terms and make composition with the rest. It must be as I say. Melchior shall hear a

word as haughty as his own. He shall prescribe no longer to Adoniakim—he shall no longer deny me. I am master of his fate—what hinders that I be master of my own?"

While thus he freely soliloquized upon the hopes with which his discovery of the papers of the conspirator had filled his heart, he heard the sound of approaching footsteps; and, hastily possessing himself of the important documents, he thrust them into the folds of his bosom. Then, passing into the adjoining apartment, in which once before we found him slumbering, he closed the secret panel in time to meet the intruder, who proved to be Mahlon, one in the service of Adoniakim, but one who was the entire creature of the son.

"How now, Mahlon—what brings thee?" demanded the youth.

"Thy father, Adoniakim, approaches," was the reply.

"Ha! that is well. Comes he alone?" was the further inquiry.

"Melchior comes with him," said Mahlon.

"That is better—that is well—I may soon prophesy for others since I have so well spoken for myself. Away, Mahlon, and give them entrance; and say not, if thou canst help it, that I am here."

The slave retired, as he was bidden, to give admission to the new-comers; while Amri, remaining where he was, prepared his thoughts for their reception according to the plan which his discovery of the conspiracy had already suggested to his mind. The reckless and vicious youth was delighted in the last degree at their approach. He drew a favourable omen from their coming so opportunely to hear the secret which he had happened upon, and while his own resolves respecting it were fresh in his reflection; and his exultation, which he could not, and perhaps did not desire to restrain, found its way to his lips in language of corresponding delight.

"By the beard of Samuel!" he exclaimed, "but this

is fortunate. We shall lose but little time. They come opportunely to my wish; and if Melchior be not utterly desperate, and madly prone to his own destruction and the defeat of all his schemes of insurrection, the lovely Thyrza shall be mine before the sunset. It is written. I have her securely—I have her here!" he exclaimed, striking his bosom joyously where the papers of the conspirators were concealed—"I have her here! Melchior can only remove and possess himself of these—which contain his life, his fortune, and his hope, all at my mercy —by placing his lovely daughter in their stead. Beard of Samuel! How the day brightens!"

The hum of their approaching voices, and soon the sound of their footsteps, reached his ears at the entrance of the chamber. He threw himself back carelessly upon a long cushion as he heard them, and his insolent eyes were fixed upon the door through which they were to enter. As the door opened, and the person of Melchior, in advance of that of his companion, met the glance of Amri, his face immediately put on an expression and look of lively indifference almost amounting to contempt, and he made no effort to rise and salute, as was customary, the venerable man. His father, seeing this, rebuked him with his neglect. The son then rose and made way upon the cushion, to which he motioned Melchior; but the latter did not seem to heed the motion. Adoniakim then pressed him to rest himself upon the cushion which Amri had so ungraciously tendered; but Melchior, with much gravity of manner, declined the courtesy, and begged him that they should proceed to the business upon which they came as soon and earnestly as possible. It was then that Adoniakim signified to Amri his desire that he should leave them together in the possession of the chamber. This he did in the gentlest language, saying to him, at the same time, that the business was private and particular, for the transaction of which Melchior and himself had come.

But Amri, who exulted in the possession of the secret which he had so dishonourably obtained, was not willing to delay to a remote period the utterance of his desires, and the exhibition and exercise of his newly-acquired sources of power. Without moving from the place which he had occupied before, he simply replied as follows:

"And why should I not remain, and share with thee this business, my father?"

"Because it concerns thee not, my son," responded the old man, quietly.

"But it concerns thee, Adoniakim, and thy interest is my interest, unless, under the friendly guidance of Melchior, thou art bent to make thy son a stranger, and to yield to strangers the place in thy regards and confidence which nature and justice alike require should be given to thy own flesh and blood."

Adoniakim was astounded at this speech, and spoke freely out his thought at the youth's insolence; but Melchior looked upon him gravely, without uttering a sylable in reply.

"Thy business should be my business, my father," persisted the wilful youth, "and I will remain to hear it."

"But thou canst not claim, Amri, that the business of Melchior and of others is also thine," said Adoniakim, who, though greatly surprised and grieved at his son's presumption, yet lacked the proper decision to control it.

"If it concerns thee also—yes," replied Amri, without hesitation; "and if it did not, it might yet be my business, as it may be that of the tribe and of the nation."

The two turned upon the speaker in redoubled surprise at this language; but, conscious of the secret in his possession, and believing that it gave him power which enabled him to set them both at defiance, the foolish youth allowed himself no pause in what he had to say, but proceeded thus—

"Thinkest thou I know not the business that brings ye here, and which makes ye desirous of the absence of one whom ye both wrong by your suspicions, and in whom your true interests, were ye wise, would have ye confide? Did I not save ye before from Edacer the Goth, and his soldiers, when he sought you, Melchior, at midnight, in the dwelling of Namur? Was not that proof of my fidelity enough? Wherefore did you still refuse me your confidence? Wherefore do ye withhold it now? I tell you, the business of Adoniakim is mine—I will remain and share in your conference. Perhaps I may help you more than you imagine in its progress. Perhaps I may counsel you with a knowledge that shall keep equal footing with your own. I can tell you—but no! I will spare your business to the last. I have some of my own, which it is more fitting that I see to first. Let me speak of that to you, and then, if ye deny me part in your performances, I will leave ye to them and to yourselves."

"What business, my son?" answered the pliant Adoniakim, who had been as much astounded by the audacity of Amri as he was wilfully blinded, by his attachment to the youth, to the sad deficiencies and prevailing faults of his character. Melchior only regarded the two with a grave and melancholy silence.

Throwing himself once more at length upon the cushion from which he had risen at the suggestion of his father, and which Melchior had refused to occupy, the youth, who seemed to have acquired double assurance from the pliability of Adoniakim, now addressed the former—

"And now, Melchior, it is with thee—"

The outlaw interrupted him sternly—

"Thy speech should be with thy father, Amri. I have no business, no concern with thee, that I wot of—I would have none with thee, at least!"

"But I will have with thee!" was the cool and confi-

dent reply. "I have much concern with thee, and for thee, Melchior, as thou wilt readily acknowledge when thou hast heard me through. It is true that much of my business with thee doth seriously affect myself—with that I would fain begin, if thou wilt deign to hear me. May I speak to thee of that?"

The tone which he employed was somewhat modified when the youth addressed Melchior, probably because he felt the obvious difference, which he could not but see existed, between the differing characters of the outlaw and his own father. To the latter, his mode of speech was not often respectful, and it was only when he needed supplies of money, or some special indulgence, that he condescended to employ the language and manner of conciliation. The superior character of Melchior awed somewhat the audacity of the youth. The stern, calm, unruffled brow of the outlaw had in it an expression which rebuked, if it did not entirely silence, the insolent; and, though flattering himself with the possession of a secret which he fondly imagined would extort his own terms and his entire wishes from the apprehensions of Melchior, he did not dare meet directly the glance of the old man, even when his speech was most daringly addressed to him. The reply of Melchior was calmly uttered, and without hesitation—

"Speak out, Amri—I will hear thee, as thou art the son of thy beloved father; though what thou canst have to say concerning thyself and me, which might not wait for a time of more leisure to us all, I am yet to learn."

"Thou shalt learn," was the ready reply. "The matter might wait, indeed, but that I am impatient; and thou wilt see good reason for my impatience when thou hearest it."

"Speak on," said the old man, contemplating him with a sorrowful countenance for a moment, and then turning his eyes, with a still greater sorrow in them, upon

the face of the venerable and unhappy father of so degenerate a son.

"Thou hast a daughter, Melchior," said the youth. Melchior regarded him sternly as he replied—

"And what is my daughter to thee, Amri?"

"Every thing," was the response. "I have seen her."

"I know it! I know that thou didst penetrate unbidden to the apartments of my child, where thy presence was ungrateful, and thy conduct was ungracious," said Melchior.

"She has told you, then," replied the youth, nothing abashed at the manner and words of Melchior.

"She is a child who forgets not her duties—who shrinks from disobedience as from a deadly sin—painful in the sight of man, and detestable in that of Heaven. Would that thou, Adoniakim, had obedience often from thy child such as I have ever had from mine."

"It were a God's blessing—the dearest to my old heart were it as thou desirest, my brother," was the response of Adoniakim; but the depraved youth laughed contemptuously at the prayer of both, as thus he continued—

"She has told you, then, and that spares me the difficulty of making thee comprehend a thing unknown. She has told you that I loved—that I love her!—that I sought her love, and offered her my affections in marriage."

"Thy affections!" was the involuntary exclamation of Melchior.

"Ay—my affections! What wonder is there in that? Thou dost not doubt that I have affections, Melchior—thou believest that I love Thyrza? I—"

"No!" was the almost fierce reply of the old man. "Thou dost not—thou canst not. Thou lovest nothing but thy own base passions—thy foul lusts—and thy continual self-indulgences. Thou canst not understand the nature—the purity—the religion of my child's heart—

and thou canst not, therefore, have a love for her in thine."

"Thou errest in thy judgment, Melchior, and therefore thou dost me a grievous wrong," was the reply of the youth, somewhat subdued in its tone, as the fierce manner of the old father seemed to have had its influence upon him. "I do love Thyrza," he continued, "as never before did I love woman. I feel that never again can I fancy woman as my spirit has fancied her. Wilt thou not let me to see her—to know her—to make myself an object of thought in her mind, that so she may come to love me with a regard like mine for her?"

"No!"

"And wherefore?"

"She is not for thee."

"What! thou meanest her, then, for another?"

"No! I have no such purpose. Thyrza shall choose for herself when the choice is to be made. My will shall in no respect control her. It should guide her erring judgment, should her heart mislead her; but this misfortune I do not fear."

"Yet thou sayest I shall not see her—that I shall not know her; how, then, may it be that one may move her will, or enliven her thought towards him?"

"Thou shalt not have this chance, Amri, nor any who may resemble thee. Let the good and the worthy approach to Thyrza, and the doors of my dwelling shall fly open of themselves at their approach; but they shall remain fastened at the coming of the base and selfish, even as if the seal of Solomon lay upon them, pressed with his own immortal hands."

"And thou art really thus resolved?" said the youth, inquiringly; and a suspicious smile rested upon his lips, which was displeasing to Melchior, who instantly replied, in a manner which was intended to subdue and silence the impertinent—

"Ay, Amri—as firmly as if the oath were written on

the eternal register of heaven. Never, with my will, shalt thou have sight of, or speech with, my beloved daughter. I will guard her from thy approach as fondly and sleeplessly as if thou wert the spirit of evil himself."

"Be not hasty in thy resolve, old man!" responded the youth, with a manner, the insolence of which was heightened duly in accordance with the provocation which his spirit had received from the ready and adverse decision of Melchior. "Be not hasty in thy resolve—be not rash! Thy oath broken will have a heavy penalty, and I have that argument with me which will make thee rejoice in its revocation."

"What argument, Amri?" demanded Adoniakim. But Melchior looked on calmly, and seemed to give no heed either to the threatening remark of Amri, or the trembling inquiry of his father.

"Think not, Melchior," continued Amri—"think not that I asked of thee the gift of thy daughter, yet brought nothing in lieu of what I took from thee. Give me thy daughter, and I will give a secret into thy keeping which will more than repay thee for the boon which thou wilt then bestow upon me."

"What secret?" asked Adoniakim, in manifest alarm.

"It is one which concerns thee, too, my father," said Amri, in reply.

"What meanest thou, my son?" inquired the old man; but Amri heeded not the question, and again addressed himself to Melchior.

"And now come I to thy business, Melchior—thou wilt give thine ear to that, though thou seemest resolved to withhold it from all consideration of mine."

Melchior waved his hand to him to speak, but gave him no further recognition.

"I would have taken thy daughter from thy hands as a free gift to my affections. Now I propose to buy her from thee, even as the Goth buys, in the slave-market, the creature of his lust."

A sudden and startling change came over the hitherto inflexible countenance of Melchior as he heard these words.

"Wretch!" exclaimed the fierce old warrior, drawing a poniard from his girdle as he spoke, and in the same instant rushing towards the infatuated youth. The aged Adoniakim, with a cry of entreaty, tottered forward to arrest the weapon; but, before he could interpose, Melchior of himself had stayed his hand and progress; yet the fury in his soul, though checked in its exercise, could no longer be concealed. His eyes flashed all the fire of indignation and of youth, and the long white beard that depended from his chin curled and quivered as if endued with a spirit and vitality of its own.

"Speak out what thou hast to say!" cried Melchior, as he contracted his hand and returned his dagger to the folds of his garment where it had lain concealed—"speak out the whole of thy foul thoughts and insolent spirit, and let there be an end of this. But hear me, Amri, if, in what thou hast to say, thou dost utter word or thought to which a father's ear might not listen, that instant will my hand grapple with thy throat. I spare thee now, not in consideration of thy deservings, but simply as thou art the son of Adoniakim."

"Let Adoniakim thank thee as he ought," was the insolent reply of the youth; "but, for my part, I fear thee not. I have thee in my power, Melchior; and, since thou hast proved thyself so rude and violent, I will be less heedful of the words which I shall choose out for thy hearing."

"Beware!" exclaimed Melchior, and his finger was uplifted in warning—"beware! Not a word, Amri, that shall graze upon the purity of my blessed child, or the presence of Adoniakim, and my own scorn of thee, will not suffice to save thee from the weapon which thou deservest, but which thy base blood would most certainly dishonour."

"Speak not—say not, Amri—I implore thee, my son —be silent. Say nothing to offend the father."

"Peace, Adoniakim—I will say. I have been too long silent—too long kept in bondage and base subjection by his teachings and thine. I will be so no longer, and ye shall both learn to heed what I command, as ye shall both learn, and quickly, how much ye are in my power."

The father would have longer solicited, for he was in terror lest his son should use more audacity, and well he knew that Melchior was one ever prompt to strike where an injury was offered to his honour and his child. Though affecting to defy his threats, yet, in his farther speech, Amri adopted the safest policy, and was more cautious, though still insolent enough, in the language which he made use of.

"I must have thy daughter, Melchior—I will have her; and I offer to thee to have her in honour as my wife," said Amri, renewing the dialogue.

"I have said," was the simple reply of Melchior.

"Yet I ask her not as a free gift—I will give thee an equivalent for the maiden."

"An equivalent for Thyrza!" exclaimed Melchior. "What equivalent?"

"Thy own life!" was the unhesitating response. Before either his father or Melchior could utter any reply to a speech so daring, and which so much astounded them, the youth proceeded—

"Thy own life, Melchior—nor thine alone. What sayest thou to the life of Pelayo, the son of Witiza—ha! Have I touched thee now—have I not thy secret —have I not thee, and thine, and Thyrza at my mercy?"

But the countenance of Melchior was unmoved, though Adoniakim trembled all over with his apprehensions. The former looked calmly upon the face of Amri, and his tones and language were milder as he replied to the audacious youth.

"Thou speakest to me a mystery, Amri," was his quiet answer; "I know not what thou meanest. If thou wouldst say that as Melchior is outlawed by the Goth, and at the mercy of the base informer who may happen to fall upon his hiding-place, this is no new thing, or new thought, or fear with me. I am that outlaw, I well know; and I am not blind to the dangers which I risk and encounter during my sojourn in Cordova. Of this secret thou hast long been in possession—with the knowledge of this truth I have long since intrusted thee."

"Perforce — perforce!" cried the other, bitterly. "Thou didst not trust me with this because thou wert glad or willing to trust, but because the trust was unavoidable."

"Perhaps—perhaps," said Melchior, calmly. His inflexibility chafed the insolent Amri into fury.

"Perhaps! perhaps! And dost thou receive what I say so indifferently? Is it thy own life which thou valuest so lightly? And hast thou not heard—did I not tell thee that I had, not thy secret only, but the secret of the tribe—of Pelayo, the Iberian rebel—he who now toils, with a foolish hope, against the Gothic monarch, King Roderick? What! thou knowest not that Abimelech leads the Hebrew discontents—that they gather even now along the Pass of Wallia—thy secret, forsooth—thy secret! It is the secret of the tribe, of the nation, which I have, Melchior—not thy secret—not thy one life, but the lives of many, and the hopes of all. Dost thou wonder now that I am boastful—dost thou marvel now that Amri claims thy daughter for his bride, and will not be bought to silence by any smaller or less worthy boon? Art thou not at my mercy? Wilt thou not hear—art thou not ready to bargain with me now?"

"But, my son—Amri—thou wilt not—"

The aged Adoniakim was full of trepidation, and would at once have implored the youth in such a fashion

as would have made him infinitely more insolent in his language and more extravagant in his demands—but Melchior interrupted him.

"Thou hast indeed spoken strange and grave matters, Amri; but I believe not that thou hast any such secret. Whence comes thy intelligence—who is thy authority?"

The words of Melchior were artfully mild. He was an aged politician, and at once understood the necessity of the utmost coolness. Nothing could have seemed more quiet and pacific than his spirit in the moment of his speech. It completely deceived the person he addressed, who now believed that he was in a fair way to achieve his purposes, and that he had properly alarmed the conspirators.

"Dost thou deny it?" he asked, in answer to the inquiry of Melchior.

"If I do, Amri, and defy thee to the proof, will thy mere declaration, thinkest thou, go to overthrow thy father, upon whose means and good-will so many powerful Gothic nobles depend? Will thy word prove his conviction? Thou art not so mad as to think it."

"I have the proof—clear, unquestionable, and utterly apart from my own words. It will not need that I should speak. It will only be necessary that I should point with my finger to guide the Gothic Lord Edacer, who is now governor of Cordova, to the proof which shall make all that I say a thing to be seen, not heard."

"Ha!" exclaimed Melchior, with a deep feeling, which he yet contrived to suppress. "May I believe what thou sayest, Amri?"

"By the beard of Samuel! It is true—I swear it," was the immediate reply of Amri; who saw in the inquiry of Melchior nothing less than his apprehension of detection, and a relenting of his determination on the subject of his daughter.

"And thou knowest—what?" was the further inquiry of the outlaw.

"Thy plan of meeting at the cave of Wamba three nights hence, with Abimelech and other Hebrews, where thou art pledged to join arms with certain Gothic and Iberian chiefs, the princes Pelayo and Egiza, the lords Eudon and Aylor, the Count of Garaynos, and certain others. This, and much more, touching gold, arms, and movement, is compassed in the secret I propose to barter with thee for thy daughter."

"And thou wilt treat for no less an object? Remember, Amri, thou too art a Hebrew. The aim which is thy father's and mine is not less thine. It is a blow for the emancipation of the Hebrew. It is thy freedom not less than ours."

"Ha! it is thus, now, that thou art willing to think; but when I urged to thee this argument in the hope to bespeak thy confidence, thou didst deny me—thou didst disdain me. I reject the argument now, as thou didst reject it then. If I was then unworthy of thy trust, I am not less so now. We will speak of it no more."

"And for my daughter only wilt thou be bound to us in secresy?" said Melchior, in a question, the manner of which was one rather of intense musing than of direct inquiry.

"For nothing less, Melchior," was the reply; "and, indeed," said the youth, continuing with but a moment's pause, "I think even to exclude from this guarantee of safety the insolent and proud Abimelech—"

"Ah!" was the exclamation of Melchior, and his thoughts seemed busy elsewhere while he spoke.

"Ay!" continued the youth, whom the manner of Melchior continued to deceive; "I hate him for his scorn of me. You shall be safe. To you, and all beside, I will stand bound; but for Abimelech—you shall give me counsel where to find him, so that I may prompt the Lord Edacer—"

"I believe not that you have this proof, Amri," said Melchior, quickly, without seeming to regard the last

words of Amri. "I deny—I doubt that you can show the evidence you speak of. No! You do but boast, Amri—the thing is not in your power!"

It was in these words that Melchior hastily interrupted the youth while he was proceeding in his requisitions. Without reflection, and completely misled by the earnest manner of the aged man—

"I swear it by the seal of Solomon, by the beard of Samuel, by the bosom of Abraham, by the shadow and the pillar, by the burning bush—I swear I have these proofs!" responded the youth, readily and with solemnity.

"Good oaths enough, if true. And thou wilt swear by these?" said Melchior, with a bitter smile.

"I do swear!"

Melchior paused for an instant—then, hastily advancing a few paces towards the youth, proceeded thus—

"And what if I consent? What if I say to thee that Thyrza shall be thine if thou wilt keep this secret? Wilt thou be free to tell me in what these proofs consist, and how thou gottest them? Speak—who is the traitor to our cause—who hath betrayed us?"

The youth simply pointed to his father. The two recoiled in horror and astonishment.

"Thou dost not mean?" said Melchior.

"Ay!" and the depraved youth laughed aloud as he beheld the consternation of Adoniakim.

"Liar and wretch!" exclaimed the indignant old man, now too much aroused longer to contain himself from speech, though pliant and indulgent to the youth previously, until his pliancy became a shameful and dangerous weakness. He would have exclaimed much further had not Melchior interrupted him; and Amri himself, at that moment, explained away his own charge by telling the truth.

"He was the traitor, though unwittingly. He left his papers where mine eye beheld them—"

"But only thine?" said Melchior, inquiringly.

"Only mine," was the reply of Amri.

The old man, his father, when he heard this development, hastened, as fast as his infirmities would permit, to the secret chamber in search of the documents; and, as he went, Melchior cried out to him to destroy them. The youth laughed aloud as he heard this direction, and, smiting his bosom unwittingly, exclaimed—

"He cannot—I have seen to that."

The speech had scarcely left his lips, when, with a bound that dashed the youth to the floor, Melchior of the Desert sprang upon his bosom. The suddenness and severity of his blow would have stunned a much stronger person than Amri, and it was all in vain that the latter struggled with his gigantic though aged assailant. He was but a child in the hands of the venerable Hebrew. Yet he drew his dagger from his girdle, and aimed a fierce blow at the bosom of Melchior, which, had he directed it more cautiously, and at his side or back, must have proved fatal; but the stroke was aimed full in the sight of his enemy. Grasping the upraised arm of the assassin, Melchior easily wrested the weapon from his hold, and he would, such was his anger, in another moment, have buried it in the youth's throat, but for the timely return of Adoniakim, who seized him from behind, and arrested the down-descending blow.

"Spare him, Melchior, spare him!" was all that the old man could say, when he sank down, overpowered by his deep and conflicting emotions, in a fainting fit upon the floor. Melchior slowly relaxed his hold, and, rising from the prostrate Amri, he bade him also rise; but not before he had torn open his sash and vest, and wrested the stolen documents from the bosom of the felon.

V.

Amri rose as he was commanded, and stood, sullen and stupified, in silence before the persons to whom he had purposed so great an injury. His face was full of shame and humiliation. Not that shame which springs from the consciousness of, and is followed by the regret for, error; but that mortified pride which feels disappointment and defeat, and regrets nothing of the meditated crime but its nonperformance. The miserable youth, who had but a little before exulted in the belief that Melchior of the Desert was in truth at his mercy, now dared not look the aged Hebrew in the face. He felt chagrined that his own weakness and vanity had so far seduced him from prudence as to allow of his exposure of his secret, and of its place of keeping, to one so vigilant, and, as it had been shown, one so infinitely superior in sagacity to himself. Had he but placed the papers in a keeping beyond the reach of Melchior, but still within his own control, he might—so he now thought—have succeeded in his desires. Reflections like these, however, only came to increase his mortification. They were too late to avail him now; and, like a base culprit as he was, he stood in the presence of the men he had offended so deeply, having no word by which he might excuse himself to them, and no thought in his mind from which his own heart could gather the smallest consolation. The eyes of Melchior rested upon the face of the youth with an expression of pity and scorn mingled evenly in their glance. He surveyed him a few moments in silence ere he spoke—

"Miserable boy!" he exclaimed, while his hands destroyed the papers which contained the secrets of the conspirators—"miserable boy, having the weakness of vice without any of that cunning which may sometimes supply the place of strength. Didst thou think thyself

one fitted to contend with men—to conceive their plans —to advise in their counsels—to keep their secrets? Learn, Amri, false son of a most virtuous and most abused father—learn that he only is wise who is noble—he only is fit to counsel who is faithful—he only can take heed of the hopes, the fortunes, and the fame of others who is most heedful, yet least selfish, of his own. When I look upon thee, boy, I know not whether to pity or to scorn thee most. Thou art stripped of all thy disguises—thou standest naked in thy shame before us—and even the pretence of virtue, with which thou wouldst have deceived me before, and by which thou hast so long deceived thy father, even that is taken from thee. Thou hast played for a high stake, but thou hast not played highly. Know that he whose aim is lofty should be lofty in soul; for, though the snake may sometimes reach the nest of the mightiest bird of the mountain, he still reaches it by crawling, and he still remains a snake. Wouldst thou win Thyrza, thou shouldst have striven to be like her—to have in thyself the virtues which thou didst admire in her. Thou hast erred grievously after the fashion of that elder born of sin, who would have wrested the sceptre from Jehovah, having another and an adverse nature to that which it sought to supersede."

The hardihood of the youth came back to him as he listened to this stern and bitter language of the aged man.

"It is well, Melchior—thou hast baffled me in this, but thou hast baffled me for a season only. I tell thee now once again, thou shalt yet comply with my demands. Thy daughter shall yet be mine."

The fire flashed from the eyes of Melchior as he replied—

"The hour of her wrong by thee, Amri, I swear by the blessed lamps of the temple, shall be the hour of thy death, if so be that Heaven denies me not the strength which should cleave thee to pieces with my weapon. Beware!"

"And I say to thee, 'Beware!'" replied the youth, with a look of insolent defiance; and, as he spoke, he would have passed to the entrance of the apartment, but the strong arm of Melchior grasped him firmly by the throat. The youth gasped and struggled.

"Release me," he cried; "wherefore dost thou hold me now? I have no more of thy papers."

"But thou hast thy tongue," was the fierce reply of Melchior—"thou hast thy tongue—a tongue not too base for falsehood—not too base to betray the just, and the just cause, even though thy own father perished by its words. Thou shalt not leave us, Amri."

"I do but go into the court—I will return," said the youth, and he trembled in the unrelaxing grasp of the Hebrew.

"We trust thee not," said the other. "Thou knowest too much to go forth. Thou wouldst madden until thou couldst find some enemy to thy people to whom thou wouldst give up thy stolen burden. No, no! Thou hast, of thy own head, made thyself a keeper of our secrets. Thou shalt be taught to keep them safely."

"I will keep them—I will not unfold them," promised the youth, to whom the grasp of Melchior now became somewhat painful and oppressive.

"Thou shalt. We shall see to that," said the other, still continuing his grasp, but now addressing Adoniakim, who appeared to surrender all charge of the youth to his brother. "Speak, Adoniakim—thou hast a close chamber in thy dwelling, from which the inmate may not fly? Thou hadst such a one of old—thou hast it now."

This inquiry aroused the farther apprehensions of Amri, who also addressed his father—

"Thou wilt not suffer this wrong to me, my father. Thou wilt command that Melchior free me from this constraint. I will keep thy secret—I will say nothing to betray thee."

"I trust thee not now, Amri, no more than Melchior

I have lost all hope in thee. My heart is shut against thee—my ear regards not thy prayer. There is a chamber, Melchior, such as thou demandest."

"Guide me thither," was the brief direction of the latter. Adoniakim led the way into the secret chamber, and from thence into a narrow apartment, which was entered through a massive door having a heavy iron bar across the outside, and holding within but a single window, grated well with close bars, and looking down upon a small courtyard, which was formed by the crowding houses around, many of which were among the very highest in the Hebrew Quarter. To this chamber Melchior, with strength which was wonderful to Amri, dragged the reluctant and still struggling youth; and, thrusting him in, they both withdrew, and carefully fastened the bar upon the outside of the door, which secured it from every effort made from within.

VI.

Left to himself, the musings of Amri were of no very pleasant description. The very novelty of the constraint was to him annoying in the last degree. The indulgence of his father had, from his boyhood up, left him, in a great measure, his own master. To denial and privation of any kind he had been but little accustomed. It may not challenge much wonder, therefore, if, in his new condition of confinement, he found himself wanting in most of those sources of native strength which could enable him to endure it with tolerable patience. As it is only the strong-minded man that makes the true use of freedom, so it is only the strong-minded that can best endure constraint and privation. The mind of Amri had neither strength nor elasticity. When free—if such a mind can ever be esteemed to possess, as it certainly never does perfectly appreciate

freedom—it never was satisfied until it plunged into some fettering weakness—some palsying indulgence; and when denied and deprived of liberty, it was prostrate and utterly deficient in energy and concentration. He raved in his prison like a fevered child, when his father and Melchior had fairly departed. He threw himself upon the floor, beat the walls, tore his hair, and yelled aloud in the very impotency of his boyish vexation. Exhaustion at length effected what thought never could have achieved with him. It brought him quiet; and, after some hours of puerile excitement and misdirected anger, he was at length surprised by sleep, and slept for some time, until awakened by his father, who brought him food.

But let us not anticipate. Let us go back to Melchior and Adoniakim. After leaving the youth to his prison, they returned to the chamber which they had left, and there renewed the conference, which the meeting with Amri, and the subsequent matter which had taken place between them, had completely interrupted for the time. Long and serious was their conference. They discussed the plans of the conspiracy now ripening to its open development. Every thing depended upon their secrecy and circumspection until that period. Their men were gathering along the passes of the neighbouring mountains. Several of their leaders were concealed within the walls of Cordova; and though it was not then the hope of the Bishop Oppas or of Pelayo to carry the city, yet they fully trusted that with the first open show of insurrection, many discontents, now inactive and unknown, would at once declare themselves under the banner of revolt. The Jews, fully confirming the promise and prediction of Melchior, had freely given of their wealth, and pledged their young men to the cause of the princes, in the hope of overthrowing that domination which had ground them to the dust in its unrelaxing and ruinous exactions. Two

thousand of them were already volunteered, and it was hoped, — when the news of the rebellion could reach Merida and other places where they were numerous, that the number of Hebrews engaged in the active progress of the war would not fall short of five thousand men. These were yet to be disposed of and directed; and it was one part of the business which Melchior then had with Adoniakim, to devise certain modes of bringing these troops in small bodies from distant places, to the general co-operation with the native insurgents, without exposing them to be cut off by the already armed and active troops which, under various commands, the usurper Roderick had distributed over the country. On this point they soon came to a satisfactory conclusion, and effected all necessary arrangements. Their final deliberations being now completed among themselves, preparatory to the great general meeting of the conspirators, which was to take place at the Cave of Wamba in a few nights,—the subject of his son's conduct, and of his own future course with him, was one natural to the thought of Adoniakim, and as naturally the subject of his spoken concern to Melchior. The latter was a stern, though strictly just, arbiter. He did not scruple to discourage the weaknesses of the father.

"He is now safe, and so far we have nothing to apprehend at his hands. But our apprehensions would return with his enlargement, and we must keep him where he is for a while. We are free only while he remains our prisoner."

"What! confined to that narrow cell, my brother?" demanded the too indulgent father, while his inmost heart yearned, in spite of all the mean misconduct of the youth, for his enlargement.

"Ay, there, Adoniakim: what better place to keep him securely and without question? There he is beyond all hearing of the stranger. He may not alarm by his cries the neighbouring dwellings, for the court

upon which that chamber only looks is, thou hast said, confronted by thine own."

"It is—it is safe, indeed, my brother; but, Melchior, he will die of that constraint. It is a miserable chamber—the cell in which the unanswering debtor was restrained."

"Fear nothing, Adoniakim; thy tenderness makes thee apprehensive overmuch. He will suffer only in his mind, which is moody because of its disappointment. The cell of the poor debtor cannot be too dreadful a place for the viperous and dishonest criminal; and the restraint will be of vast benefit to a temper so ill-governed as that of Amri, while it will be but a moderate chastisement of his most heinous offence."

"And how long, my brother, dost thou think that it will be needful for us to hold him in this confinement?" demanded the father.

"Till we are safe!" replied Melchior; "till the meeting is over in the Cave of Wamba—till the first blow is stricken for the freedom of the Hebrew! That is the secret which is in his keeping, and which he would not—he could not—keep were he free. He would instantly bear it to his dissolute accomplice, Edacer, whom the rebel Roderick has just made Governor of Cordova. It would be a glorious stroke for Edacer, our arrest and that of Pelayo, by which to commend himself to Roderick. It was this which so maddened the youth, and prompted his audacious insolence. It was the assurance that he should find ready aid from the power of Edacer that led him to defy thee, his father, and to denounce me, the friend of his father and of his people, though we both toiled, unselfishly, for his own and the freedom of that people. We cannot trust him to go forth until the blow is struck, when it will be of no avail to our injury that he should speak; for then, with the aid of Jehovah, we ourselves shall have spoken, in a language for the whole nation to

hear. Let him then be free, and thou wilt then see by his future bearing whether there be hope that he may return to the paths of his duty. If he be worthy of thy thought, he will take arms in our ranks; if he do not this, forget, Adoniakim, that thou ever hadst a son; and, in the battle, bid the warriors of the Hebrew not look to see if the enemy they strike in the bosom wears a semblance such as thine. Should thy own arm be uplifted then, thou shouldst strike still, though thy weapon be driven unerringly into the mouth of one who called thee father with the blow, and prayed for its forbearance with his dying breath. In that hour, as in this, having the cause of thy people to strike for, thou shouldst no more heed thy son than did Jephthah the daughter of his love, when the solemn duty was before him for performance, to which he had pledged himself in the sight of Heaven and his country. Let him but cross my path in the battle other than as a friend, and I slay him as a base hound which hath turned in its madness upon his owner."

The stern resolve of Melchior paralyzed the weak old man. His speech was interrupted by his tears—

"Thou wilt not, Melchior—thou wilt not. Thou wilt spare him, if it be only for my sake—for the sake of Adoniakim," he implored.

"Were it only for thy sake, Adoniakim, I should slay him; and, for his own sake—to save him from a worse doom and a more open disgrace—thou too shouldst slay him. But let us speak no more of this. It may be that he will grow wise when he beholds the whole of his nation in arms, and join heartily and with an honest feeling in our cause. Let us hope for this, and think farther upon no evil things. For the present, thou wilt keep him secure. Bear him his food thyself—trust no one in his presence—trust him not thyself. Speak to him kindly; promise him fairly; but I warn thee, Adoniakim, trust him neither with his own person

nor with thine, and beware that he practise not cunningly upon thee, to thy ruin and his own escape."

With these words Melchior prepared to depart, and Adoniakim followed him to the entrance. The eye of Melchior caught that of Mahlon, who attended them, scrutinizingly fixed upon him, and he then drew Adoniakim back into the apartment to repeat the warning which he had already given him, to allow no one to have communication with Amri, and to bear his food to him with his own hands.

"And trust not thyself in the chamber with him, my brother. Thou canst convey to him the food and water through the bars above the door. Beware, too, that thou sufferest not too much of thy person to be within the control or reach of his; and see, when thou seekest him, that thou goest armed."

"Why, thou dost not think, Melchior, that the boy would seek to do a violence to his own father?" said Adoniakim, with a sort of horror in his countenance.

"Would he not have betrayed thee to the violence of others? The traitor, if need be and occasion serve, will not scruple to become a murderer, and thy son is a traitor to his father and to his people. Beware of him—again I counsel thee—beware that thy affection for thy child mislead thee not, in his indulgence, to thy own and the grievous undoing of others."

They separated, Melchior to move other friends to the cause, and to complete other arrangements prior to the great meeting of the conspirators; and Adoniakim to prepare his business generally, against all of the numerous hazards accumulating about him with the prospect of that wild change which was so near at hand.

VII.

But the mind of Adoniakim went not with his present labour. What to him were the goods of life—the profits of industry—the successes of his toil? For whom did he labour? Of what avail were all his wealth, when the son of his heart, the only child of his affections and his hopes, had proved so worthless and unwise? Life itself seemed valueless in his eyes as he thought of his present sorrow. It brought him little else than pain; and he felt that it was only fitting that he should live for the good which he might do in the approaching struggle for his people, over whom his influence was so great that he could readily move them to their just purposes when all other pleading and influence must fail. He strove to fix his sight upon the collected folds of closely-written parchment that lay before him, but he could not. The writing danced confusedly before his eyes, which grew more and more dim at every moment; and when he put his hands up to them, he felt that they were full of tears.

"Unhappy son—unhappy father!" he exclaimed, in the bitterness of his sorrow. "Would that this toil were over—this sorrow at the eyes—this deeper suffering at the heart! Is there a curse, Father Abraham, other than this and like to this, of a dishonest child, who loves not where he is beloved, and forgets the duty to that parent who never forgets him even when least dutiful? God strengthen me, for I am weak to death!" and the head of the old man fell heavily, as he spoke, upon the table before which he sat.

He did not sit in this position long; but suddenly starting up, he muttered to himself aloud, while he proceeded to provide some food for the imprisoned youth—

"The boy must not starve, though sinful," he ex-

claimed, as he placed some refreshments in a basket. He added a little flask of wine to the viands, which he procured from a recess in one corner of the apartment; then, placing the basket upon the table, he proceeded to secure the outer door. This done, he opened a little bureau in the wall, by pressing a hidden spring, and his eye rested curiously upon certain beautifully-wrought Damascus poniards, mingled with sundry other weapons of a strange and Saracenic fashion. Among these, for a while, his fingers wandered, without possessing themselves of any one in particular; and his mind seemed busied elsewhere, and took no heed of their movements. At length, however, after a few moments thus spent, he fixed his attention sufficiently to enable him to make a choice, which he did of one of the smallest and simplest of the deadly instruments before him. This was a little dagger, sufficiently short for concealment in his bosom. Then, having secured it, he closed carefully the bureau, and prepared to depart for the prison of the youth; but a sudden paroxysm of grief, mingled with self-reproach, seized upon him as he reached the door, and he straight returned to the chamber and threw himself upon a cushion, burying his face, as he did so, in its pliant folds.

"Melchior, my brother," he exclaimed, after the first effusion of his sorrow was over, "thou art only too stern of soul—just in thy awards, but too distrustful of the once guilty. Thou hast counselled me to carry the deadly weapon against the life of my child, and I have placed it in my bosom, as if his blessed mother had not lain there for many long and blessed seasons. Was it her thought, when she reposed there so long and so happily, that such counsel as thine, Melchior, should be heeded by me? No!—no!—such a thought had been a sleepless misery to her, and I cast the cruel weapon from me now. I will not believe that the child of my love should so far err and be wilful as to make its use

needful; and if I confide too greatly to his love and duty—if the fears of Melchior be sooth, then, indeed, it will be time for Adoniakim to die: I will then bare my bosom to the knife."

With averted eye, and a shudder of his whole frame that spoke for his deep feeling, he threw the weapon from his bosom, as thus passionately he soliloquized aloud; then, rising hurriedly from the cushion, he hastily resumed the little basket of refreshments which he had previously prepared, and, as if he dreaded that, by lingering, his resolve should undergo alteration, he hastened at once, as fleetly as his weight of years would permit, to the apartment where the vicious youth was imprisoned.

Yet, though in his thought thus indulgent to his son, and unwilling as he still felt himself, in spite of all the evidence which he possessed of his guilt, to think that he was all worthless, he yet resolved that his words should be those of rebuke and reprehension.

"I will accord him no indulgence—he shall see that I am firm to withstand his prayers and pleadings. I will but bid him to his food and leave him."

It was thus that he muttered his determination to himself as he reached the chamber in which Amri was imprisoned. Alas! for the unhappy old man, he overrated his own strength as much as he did that of his son's virtue. The result proved his weakness as completely as it did the viciousness of Amri. He reached the door, and, tapping gently upon it, he called the name of the inmate, and bade his attendance. He received no answer. The youth, at that moment, slept. He repeated the summons with more emphasis and earnestness; and though Amri, by this time, had become conscious of his father's call, he yet obstinately forbore to answer. With the evil mood of a sullen and spoiled child, he determined to continue a dogged silence, having no other object, with the first thought,

than the annoyance of his venerable father. This thought, however, was superseded by another of a more criminal nature still, as he discovered from the subsequent words of the old man, and his tremulous utterance, that Adoniakim was seriously alarmed by his silence. Cautiously, therefore, he undid the sash from about his waist, and so quickly and silently did he effect his movements, that not the most distant sound reached the senses of the aged listener. This done, he wrapped the sash about his neck, and turning himself upon his face, continued to hear, without regard, the reiterated calls of his father. His subterfuge was not practised in vain. Paternal affection got the better of all human and politic caution; and, procuring himself a stool, which enabled him to rise sufficiently high to look into the chamber through the iron grating above the door, Adoniakim saw with horror the position of his son. His utter immobility—his silence—the sash tightly fixed about his neck, the ends of which, though now relaxed, seemed drawn by a desperate and determined hand—all conspired to impose upon him completely; and, with a cry of terror, rapidly descending from his elevation, the old man tore away the bar from the door, threw wide the entrance, and, rushing forward to his son, would have cast himself upon him, but that the more adroit and active youth, watchful of his opportunity, in that moment hastily eluded his embrace, and leaping to his feet, stood erect, while the aged sire fell heavily upon the floor in the place where the son had lain. Before Adoniakim could recover from his astonishment at this base deception, and rise from the floor, the elated youth had already fled the apartment. His exulting laugh reached his father's ears, and went like a viper's tooth into his heart. In the next instant the old man heard the bar fall into the sockets on each side of the door, and he then knew, even if the audacious youth had said nothing, that he now filled his place and was

the prisoner of his son. But the soul of Amri was too utterly base to forbear the taunts which now came thickly and insolently from his lips.

"Ha! Adoniakim, is it with thee thus? Where is Melchior now to counsel with and to aid thee? Thou canst hope for nothing from me. Thou didst look on tamely, and see me trampled under foot by his brutal violence; thou didst obey his commands to put thy own flesh and blood into bondage—where is he now to help thee forth?"

"Amri, I will curse thee with a heavy curse," said the old man, threateningly, as he looked up and beheld the exulting eyes of his son glaring down upon him with scorn and laughter.

"Curse on!" was the defiance which the son sent back in response—"curse on!—I care not. Thou wilt heed, too, the saying of the Arab—'Curses, like good chickens, ever come home to roost!' Beware, then, for so will it be with thee. Thou hast cursed me already in thy denials—in the ready obedience thou hast given to the malice of Melchior. Thou hast no curse in thy mind which I can fear more than those which thou and he have already made me to suffer. Now, I defy him and thee! Thee will I keep safe, for I will keep thee from the Cave of Wamba. But hear me, Adoniakim—Melchior will I destroy. I go to Edacer now—I go to the governor of Roderick in Cordova. I go with thy secret and the secret of Melchior. Thee will I save—I will keep thee where thou art; but Melchior of the Desert, and Abimelech the Mighty, and others whom I hate, will I give up to the executioner of the Goth. I leave thee with this purpose, my father; yet thou wilt need food, and the basket which thou hast brought for my service I leave to thee for thine. I pray that it be well and choicely filled, for thou well meritest what thou hast provided."

He dropped the basket through the grating above the

door, and was about to descend from his stool, after saying these words, when the voice of Adoniakim reached his ears. He paused and listened to his words.

"Stay but a moment, Amri—I would have thee see and hear me but for an instant."

"Speak quickly, then, Adoniakim, for I thirst to see the armed bands of the Lord Edacer, in preparation for the quest upon which I shall soon send them."

"I shall not keep thee long," was the reply; and, as he spoke these words, Adoniakim knelt down, folded his hands and bowed his head, as in prayer, while thus he appealed to Heaven—

"Hear me, Jehovah—hear me, Father Abraham—let the doom of the ungrateful and false son be sharp and sudden: let him feel it; and let it be fatal. I implore thee for this, God of my fathers, as thou art just and merciful."

He rose from his knees, waved his hands, and exclaimed—

"Now, Amri, thou art free to depart. Go!—go where thou wilt, thou wilt not escape my curse. It will for ever pursue thee." He said no more, but turned away his eyes, and deigned no other word or look. A cold and strange chill rushed through all the veins of Amri as he heard this fearful invocation. For a moment his limbs refused to perform their office; but, gathering strength at last, he descended and fled hurriedly, but even as he fled a voice seemed to follow him into the public ways, saying perpetually in his ears, with a low and solemn tone—

"Be his doom sharp and sudden—let him feel it, and let it be fatal!"

He hurried with the speed of fear—he rushed to the dwelling of the Lord Edacer, and strove with earnest endeavour, but strove in vain, to lose the sound from his ready senses of that pursuing voice. For many

hours it continued to pursue him, repeating its fearful penalty, until his own lips at length caught up the words, and joined also in the repetition of the doom.

VIII.

There was but a single mode of escape for Amri from the terrors of that voice of conscience, and that was by plunging madly into newer depths of vice and indulgence. The terror which it inspired only drove him the more impetuously forward in the prosecution of his dishonourable purposes; and he hoped, in seeking his not less vicious but more powerful associate, Edacer, to quiet, or at least drown in a greater confusion, the strife which was busy in his mind. Filled with the toils, not to speak of the "pomp and circumstance," of his new condition, the Governor of Cordova was not so readily accessible to the Jew as the dissolute Edacer, a coarse and worthless noble of the Goth, had usually been found; and Amri was compelled to wait among the crowd of officers, applicants, and offenders, who desired or needed the presence of authority. Nor, when he did appear, did Edacer condescend to regard the Hebrew, until the demands had been satisfied of the greater number of those persons who were in attendance. Yet was it evident to the latter that his eye had been one of the first to catch that of the governor upon his entrance into the Hall of State. At another time, and under other circumstances, the impatient spirit of the Hebrew youth would have been loath to brook such slight from one who had been his companion in all manner of vice; but now, thirsting as he did for vengeance, which he felt could not well be attained but through the power of Edacer, he was content to suppress, or at least to conceal, his annoyance. The novelty of the scene before him had also

its effect, as it excited his imagination, in quieting his discontent. Edacer presided as a judge; and, to the surprise of Amri, he now observed that the person in authority was most severe in his judgments upon all those vices which he, in connexion with Amri, had been most given to indulge in. It may be that a selfishness not less singular than narrow prompted the noble to deny that to others below him which was a source of gratification to himself. It is not unfrequently the case that the vicious mind, not through any lurking and lingering sense of virtue, but through the sheer intemperance of excess, would punish those very practices in another which it most earnestly pursues itself. The problem was one most difficult of solution to the Jew, but his was not the sleepless spirit which would deny itself all rest in a search after truth; and even while he meditated the matter, in an errant mood, the audience was dismissed, and a private signal from Edacer motioned him, when the crowd had withdrawn, to an inner apartment. The Jew followed in silence: the soldiers remained without, in waiting, and Amri stood alone with the governor in a private chamber. Here Edacer threw aside his robes of state, and casting himself at full length upon a couch, bade the Jew, before he could speak a syllable of that which he had to say, bring him a bowl of wine from a vessel which stood in a distant niche of the chamber, and was hidden from sight by a falling curtain.

"Drink, Amri," he cried, as he gave back the half-emptied bowl to the Hebrew—"drink, and speak freely. The wine is good—it is a god."

"Thou hast said not more in its behalf, my Lord Governor, than it well deserves," said Amri, as he finished the draught; "the wine is more than a god—it is a god-maker. We have both felt its power. This is old, and of a rich flavour and fragrance. It is worthy of the lips of the Lord of Cordova. May I congratu-

late your highness on the justice and extreme felicity of your decrees to-day. Truly, my lord, I should think you had heard some homilies, and imbibed some lessons from the lips of my worthy kinsman, Melchior of the Desert. There was a holy unction in your rebuke, as you counselled that citizen in the soiled mantle, charged with rape upon the daughter of his neighbour, and doomed him to a loss of half his substance in compensation to the woman he had defiled, which I looked not to have heard from your lips."

"Thou knowest me not, Amri," responded the noble, with a laugh of peculiar self-complaisance—"thou knowest me not, my worthy Amri: my principles have ever been held most unexceptionable, and the most sanctified priest in all Iberia could never discourse better than can I on the vices and ill practices of youth—with a more holy phraseology, and a more saintlike horror and aversion. What matters it if my practice do not accord with the rule of my lips? The mason will prescribe to the noble a dwelling, whose vastness and beauty he himself will never compass, nor seek to compass, in building up his own. The low hovel satisfies his pride, and he heeds not the lofty symmetry of the fabric which he designs for his neighbour. It is thus with all. We teach others—we thus show that our hearts are free and liberal, since we give, confessedly, good principles and wholesome laws to our neighbours which we appropriate not to our own use. The priest is thus liberal—the learned doctor, and his reverence the pope—his decrees are wise and holy; though 'tis most certain that he waxes fat, and wealthy, and powerful, the more he goes aside from the exercise of his own teachings. When I counselled and punished the young citizen, I but followed the practice of our holy father. I counselled him for *his* good, and not for my own: my rebuke was addressed to *his* necessities, not to those of the Governor of Cordova. Dost thou conceive me, Amri?"

"Do I see the sun to-day, my lord? I shall answer one question much more readily than the other. The argument is clear. It was not thy sin that thou hadst in cognizance, else the case, perchance, had been somewhat different," replied the Jew.

"Of a truth it had. We, at least, who have the power, and can make principles, have no reason to believe in our own fallibility. Holy church is full of analogies which give wholesome sanction to the indulgences of this transitory life. The rules of virtue and conduct which we lay down and declare to be fixed laws, are rules only for those who are to obey them. The maker of the law does his sole duty when he has made it—the citizen does his when he obeys it. The path is clear for both; and as he who has made can unmake, so the ruler may not for himself heed the rule which is the work of his own head and hands, when it shall be the desire of his head to undo it."

"It is light, my lord. Of a truth the great Solomon never spoke more truly or wisely; though I misdoubt if Melchior, of whom I came to speak to thee but now, my Lord Governor—I much misdoubt if he would not pick me some open place in thy argument."

"He could not well, Jew, believe me; the truth is beyond the cunning of any of thy tribe. But what hast thou to say to me of Melchior? Hast thou tidings of his movements? Get me knowledge of his place of secret hiding, Amri, so that I may entrap him, Hebrew, and I make thy fortune, since my own will then be secure. Such success will give me a stronger hold in the favour of Roderick, and silence the enemies, some of whom have striven, though, as thou seest, but vainly, to keep back my advancement."

"I will do it—I have the knowledge which thou desirest, my lord," replied the Jew.

"Now, wouldst thou wert a Christian," responded the Gothic nobleman, half rising from the couch upon

which he lay, "for then would I hug thee to my heart as the best friend and truest servant in Cordova. Speak out thy knowledge, Amri, that I may rejoice in what thou promisest."

"I have a greater knowledge and a more profitable secret even than that of Melchior's place of hiding. Know that he designs once more a rising of our people."

"Ha! but I shall foil him there. I am glad of it, nevertheless. This will only make greater the good service which I shall render to Roderick;" and the governor rubbed his hands together joyfully and confidently as he uttered these words. He then bade the Jew relate more fully the intelligence which he brought.

"There is even more matter in this than thou hast heard, my Lord Edacer, since there are yet others linked in this rebellion of Melchior, making it one of more character and import. What sayst thou if I tell you that the banished prince Pelayo is one of these conspirators?—what if I tell thee that he is here, even now, in Cordova?—and if, farther, I say to thee that thou mayst, at one grasp, take both the rebels, with others yet unnamed to thee, and place their heads at the feet of King Roderick. This were good service to thee, my Lord Edacer, and no less good service to thy lord the king."

"Thou stunnest me, Amri, with thy good tidings. I can scarce believe what thou sayst, Jew—thou mockest me—thou hadst better not!"

"I do not—I swear it by the beard of Samuel, and the speaking rod of Moses! It is true as the graven tables. I mock thee not, unless the sober truth be thy mock."

The governor leaped from his couch, himself proceeded to the beverage which was hidden in the niche, and drank freely of its contents; then, turning to the Jew, he bade him relate at full the extent of his knowledge, and the manner in which he became possessed

of it. But Amri had some scruples, and perhaps it is not strange to say that these had reference to the safety of his father. He was careful that in what he said there should be nothing to commit Adoniakim. Nature still occupied a spot—a small, a solitary spot—in his bosom, though driven, in great measure, from that dark and desecrated abiding-place of guilt.

"I will tell thee, my lord, all that is needful to place thee in possession of Melchior of the Desert, of Pelayo, the son of Witiza, of Abimelech the Hebrew leader, who comes from Merida, and others worthy to go with these to punishment—such as the Lords Aylor and Eudon. Will these suffice thee?"

"Hast thou not other secrets, Amri?" demanded Edacer, fixing upon him a glance which seemed meant to pierce through the very bosom of the Hebrew.

"I have!" was the unhesitating and firm reply.

"Thou shalt give me all," said the Gothic noble, sternly.

"I will not!" replied the Hebrew, with almost equal sternness; "thou shalt have the truth in the matter which I speak of, as it concerns the men I have named to thee. Thou shalt know where to place thy hands upon them, and I will name to thee the very hour of their assembling. Thou canst fail in nothing if thou wilt heed the counsel which I give thee and the conditions which I make: deny me, and delay for more, and even this shalt thou forfeit"

"Beware, Amri—let not thy confidence in our old friendship persuade thee into a most unwise audacity. Remember, I am now no longer the poor Edacer, having base wants which thy father's wealth could feed, and which made even thee, at moments, the master of my will. I have now the power to punish thee—ay, to tear the secret from thy bosom, and extort the speech from thy lips, even if thou hadst there locked up the very life of thy father."

The Hebrew shivered as he heard this threat; the ill-directed kindness of Adoniakim came to his mind, and once more he heard the dreadful sounds of that pursuing voice which threatened him with a sudden and fatal doom. But he tasked his utmost energies to the performance, and replied fearlessly and with but little hesitation, while he repeated his resolve still to reserve to himself something of the narrative he was required to unfold—

"I fear not, my Lord Edacer, and thy threat is most unwise, since, without my limbs to lead thee, and my hand to guide thee, in some matters yet unascertained, even the words of my mouth would fail to serve thee in the matter of which we speak. There is something yet to me unknown which is needful to thy success. Hearken, then, to what I am willing to unfold to thee, and content thee with my conditions. Is it not enough that thou shalt have Melchior and Pelayo, and the very heads of this rebellion—the hated enemies of King Roderick—to proffer to his acceptance? What is it to thee if I would save an old man who has wealth which I need, or a boy who has suckled at the same breast which gave milk and nourishment to me? Perhaps a Jewish maiden is also at risk, whom I would preserve with a fonder feeling than belongs to either of these—art thou so greedy that thou wouldst take all? Will not the part which I assign to thee—the all that is needful to King Roderick's favour—will that not repay thee for thy toil and the valour of thy men?"

"It will—it will!" replied the impatient Edacer, who probably only insisted upon having that portion of his secret which Amri seemed anxious to reserve, as he was unwilling to forego the exercise of any portion of his supposed power over the fears and service of the Hebrew. "It will!" he continued—"save the old man whose money thou desirest, and thy foster-brother, who has drawn milk from the same nipples with thee, and

the Jewish girl, too, if she be worth the care which would save, when so many of the Gothic blood are ready for any hire and for any service. Thy demands, if these be all, are small enough. They are granted thee. Speak only as it pleases thee, Amri, and I am satisfied."

After this, the Hebrew framed his story to his own satisfaction. He simply omitted all those portions of his intelligence which could effect the safety of his father, and guide to the present place of Thyrza's concealment—a discovery which he had also been fortunate enough to make. The papers which he had read had apprized him of the place of meeting, of the probable number of the leaders who would be there assembled—of what would be the direction of their troops—how gathered together—how divided—and of the particular command which should be assigned to Melchior and Abimelech, as leaders of the Jewish insurgents. The fond parental care of Melchior had already, meanwhile, placed his daughter (still disguised in her male attire) in the secluded and unsuspected dwelling of a Hebrew, within the walls of the city of Cordova, where she was required to remain while the success of the rebels continued doubtful. These portions of his secret excepted, the traitorous youth revealed all that he knew of the conspiracy to his dissolute listener, whose ears drank in greedily every syllable which he uttered. His joy at the intelligence could scarcely be restrained from the most wild excesses, and he now—forgetting all differences of station and religion, both hitherto so much insisted upon in his intimacy with the Hebrew—actually embraced the informer, and lavished upon him the most unqualified praises and caresses. When he became sufficiently composed, he proceeded to examine Amri more closely, and required him to recapitulate, that he might better determine in what manner to proceed in arresting the insurgents. In this decision the cunning

mind of Amri proved a useful auxiliary to the more purposeless but more daring one of Edacer.

"The leaders only will assemble in the Cave, my lord: their numbers will be few—some fifty at the most. To take these the force required will be moderate, yet it must greatly exceed theirs, since, doubtlessly, they will fight like desperate men. What guard have you in Cordova?"

"Two hundred men," replied the governor.

"Enough, if rightly managed, my lord. You need no more. To go out of Cordova to gather a greater number would be to make the rebels suspicious of danger, and they might avoid the meeting. No doubt they have many emissaries in Cordova, who would convey to them the knowledge of any addition to your guards, or any sudden or strange movement which you might make. There should be no change in your regular doings; but after nightfall you should steal forth, with your men, at different routes, sending them under chosen guides, and they should rendezvous near the Fountain of the Damsels; from thence, under your own lead, they could reach the Cave of Wamba in time, moving silently and with caution, to find all the conspirators assembled. One sudden blow, and the game is yours. They cannot save themselves by flight—they cannot even give you battle, for they will be crowded together beyond all chance of a free movement, with necks stiffened only for the better exercise of your swords."

"'Twere a brave fortune, truly, could I but secure it—could I but succeed!" was the exclamation of Edacer as he listened to the plan of Amri. The Jew urged the certainty of his success.

"You must succeed, my lord. It needs only that you be resolute, and keep your men so. The rebels cannot hope to fly; and they are quite too few for any hope from flight with the force which you can array."

"But then their troops, Amri: they have been gathering along the passes—how far, how near, we know not. They may press down upon Cordova itself, hearing of the fate of their leaders, and endanger the city. What then?"

"This staggers not, my lord. Have you a trusty captain in your troop?"

"Yes, there is one—Balermin—my lieutenant."

"Give him command: bid him make alarm in the city when you shall have been gone five hours from it. Let him arm the trustiest citizens, as if they stood in danger from the Saracen; then let him send forth trusty messengers to the lieutenant of King Roderick, who has a force of men but five leagues off—off by the west—I have not the name of the place—"

"Darane—I know the village," said the governor.

"I know—what then?"

"Bid him quick bring his soldiers to thy aid. Thou wilt need them to disperse the rebels and clear the passes, when thou shalt have entrapped their leaders. What more? The game is before thee!"

"Clear enough! Thy plans are excellent, Amri—thou shouldst have been a warrior, Amri."

"No, my lord—the shouting terrifies me. I could plan out the field, and say well enough when and where the blow should be stricken, but the shouting of many men has a dreadful sound which appals me. My heart trembles when I hear it even in the peaceful walls of a city, and when they shout with joyfulness and glee; but when they shout in anger, and with the fierce rapture of an angry beast, who scents the carnage with a keen nostril coming down the wind—then I shiver with convulsion, and I sicken even to faintness. I cannot fight—I cannot even fly—my knees give way from beneath me, and a child might slay me then."

"'Tis very wonderful!" exclaimed the Goth, looking upon the Jew with a pitying surprise as he listened—

"I have no such terrors. The cry which appals thee, to me is like the blood-scent to the angry beast of which thou speakest. It is then that I shout also, and I hear my own voice with a rapturous sense, as it thrills and rises louder than any of those who shout around me. My blood leaps then in my bosom, and my eyes glow red and burningly, and my hand grasps my sword, and twitches with a pleasure of its own, as if it tugged at the throat of my enemy."

"I know it—I have seen thee angry. I saw thee once take Astigia by the throat, even as thou sayst, until he grew black in the face under thy grasp," and, as he spoke, the Hebrew gazed upon Edacer with a simple expression of admiration in his countenance, while the other, as if to secure the respect he had already excited, now bared his muscular arm, upon which the veins were swelling in heaped-up ridges, and the brawn stood out in hills and knots that seemed fearfully to deform it, and demanded no less admiration for the exhibition which he made of his strength than he had before elicited from his admirer by his display of courage. Not satisfied by the acknowledgments thus extorted from his companion, the dissolute nobleman, who had his vanity also, himself sneered at the incident to which the Hebrew had referred when he sought to convince him that his valour had not been unobserved by him.

"That affair with Astigia," said Edacer, "of which thou speakest, was only a child's affair. He was but an infant in my grasp. I could tell thee, Amri, of other strifes and struggles which laugh at this. What sayst thou to the fight which I had with two strong and subtle-minded Saracens, both of whom I slew without succour, and both striving against me at the same moment; and yet that was boyish valour only. I could do better now. It would not be so easy now for any Saracen to make his mark upon my bosom, as did one of those in that

same combat. Look, Amri, at the scar—the cimeter went keenly there, as thou seest, though not deeply. In the same moment my mace dug deeply into the scull of the infidel, and the other, as he beheld the fate of his companion, sought, but in vain, to escape his doom by flight. They lay not far apart from each other when the fight was done, and a like blow had slain the two."

"Both slain by thy hands?" demanded Amri, while beholding the scarred bosom which Edacer bared to his sight.

"Have I not said? They both perished by my hand; and thou shalt see what blows that same hand will bestow upon the limbs of the rebels to whose hiding-place thou shalt guide me. The strife with Astigia will no longer have a place in thy memory, in the thought of the blows which thou shalt then behold. Thou shalt see—"

The idle boaster, who, nevertheless, was brave enough in battle, would have farther gone in his self-eulogistic strain, had not the apprehensions of the Jew here interrupted him—

"I will believe what thou tellest me, my lord—but I would not see it. There will be no need that I should be present when the strife comes on—"

"Fool!—timid fool that thou art!" responded the other, scornfully—"what hast thou to fear? Thou shalt look on the strife as one upon the eminence, who beholds the spectacle below. The danger shall be beneath thee, if there be danger; but I warrant thee there shall be none, though the force of the rebels were thrice what thou hast said it to be."

"Freely do I believe thee, my lord," said the other; "but what need that I be there? I should not be able to help thee with a single blow, or, when the fight was done, to rejoice in thy victory, since the clamour would appal me, and I should not even see the heavy strokes

or the brave men who give them. Besides, I have cares at the hour when thou shalt strike which shall call me elsewhere; and I would have thee assign to me a badge of thy service, and one of thy attendants also wearing the habit of thy soldiers. These, with a written order under thy hand as Governor of Cordova, commanding for me free entrance into any house in Cordova in the keeping of the Hebrew, under pain of death to those who may deny me, I would have thee intrust to my use and good discretion."

"What wouldst thou with them?" was the demand of Edacer.

"There is a page kept bound in Melchior's service—a tender, timid boy, that has my blood—him would I challenge as my right. I would take him from those who keep him back from me—"

"What sort of boy is he—he is thy blood?"

"From the same heart with mine," replied the Jew; "but kept from me unjustly. 'Tis a boy—a simple, sad, and very timid boy, having the spirit of a shrinking girl, and needing kindest tendance. Melchior keeps him under pretence of right, but mere pretence; for I will show thee, when I have him safe, that I am his best guardian. The power I ask from thee will draw the bolts and make the doors open which now are shut."

"This all?" demanded the governor.

"All, my lord."

"It shall be thine. When the time comes thou'lt have it, not before, and for that night alone. Now bring the bowl. Let us drink, Amri—then speed to the Lady Urraca. When didst thou see her last?"

The Jew shrank from this subject, but he replied quickly, and with as little show of hesitation or annoyance in his manner as possible, for he feared to awaken suspicion. The consciousness of his purposed crime was in his mind, and there is no foe like guilt. It pursues us wherever we fly, and, unlike other enemies, it is

found in all forms and all places, and we have no moment secure from its obtrusion. The Jew felt its presence as he replied to Edacer, stating the time at which he had left the ill-starred lady of whom he had been questioned. But Edacer drank, and did not heed the confusion which Amri could not altogether suppress or conceal.

"Thou shalt meet me there to-night," said the noble. "She has bidden me to supper, and I make bold to take thee with me. She hath a kindness for thee, Amri, which shall well excuse me, and call for no words of mine. We shall have other toils upon the morrow which shall keep us both from such indulgence."

"Thou wilt have thy enemies in the toils, my lord. King Roderick will do well already to look around him for thy reward. Thy success in this will make thee a favourite with the Goth. It may be—"

"What, Amri?"

"Ah! my Lord Edacer, when thou becomest a royal prince, thou wouldst have no eye for the poor Hebrew."

"By Heaven, thou wrongest me, Amri. Let the power but be mine, and thou shalt be—what matters it to promise? I tell thee, Amri, thou shalt rejoice that I have had thee in my service. Thou shalt glory to have been faithful to me. No more. Leave me now; we meet at Urraca's."

The Jew left him, as he was commanded; and the smiling scorn he did not seek to hide which rose involuntarily upon his countenance as he listened to the speech of the vain, thoughtless, and dreaming Edacer

IX.

Let us now seek the Prince Pelayo, whom we left about to proceed in search of his truant brother. Assured that Egiza haunted the dwelling of the maiden

Cava, it was thither that he bent his steps. Yet he did not dare now, as before, to present himself openly before Count Julian. That nobleman, since his last interview with the princes and the Archbishop Oppas, had received instructions, as the king's lieutenant, to arrest the young princes as traitors to the realm; for they had forborne to appear before the usurper, as had been especially commanded them, and profess their obedience. They were now outlawed men. The practices of Oppas had been conducted with too much secrecy to provoke the suspicions of Roderick, and—such had been his address—he was then actually in the royal palace at Toledo, in council with the usurper on the condition of the kingdom. The visits of Egiza were addressed, therefore, to Cava, in despite, and without the knowledge of Count Julian, who was rigidly faithful in the assertion of his loyalty. The heart of the maiden had been too deeply impressed with the regards and the person of Egiza to heed altogether the commands and counsels of her sire; and the two met in secret when opportunity allowed, in the neighbouring grounds and garden of Count Julian's castle. It was beneath the twinkling olive-leaves at evening, or in sweet and haunted dells among the neighbouring mountains, that they enjoyed their stolen moments of delight; and the eyes of Pelayo, as he wandered in search of his brother, beheld the mutually devoted pair seated in a little hollow of the hills, which gave them a fitting shelter from the keen eye of observation, though scarce a stone's throw distant from the castle, and in the immediate grounds of its noble owner. The thought of Pelayo grew softened, though still indignant, as his eye took in the loveliness of the scene. The sun was just then setting, and his yellow robes rested upon the summits of the brown and distant hills. The leaves were died in his light, and the dark, topmost towers of the castle still kept some few but fleeting glances of his smile. The silence that rested upon

the scene was like the whispering spell that seems to follow the thrilling music of some wizzard instrument, and a haunting glory seemed to gather and to grow with the increasing march of the twilight up the swelling and increasing mountains. The love of the two sitting at their feet, though a love injurious, if not fatal, to the cause in which the whole soul of Pelayo was interested, seemed fitly to mingle in and harmonize with the scene; and the prince, as he approached the unconscious pair, half paused, and the thought came to his mind to leave his brother to his idle but winning dream, and pursue the strife for empire alone. He would have done so, but that no one stood nearer to the seat of royalty, after Egiza, than himself; and his was a spirit that would not only be pure in performance, but would seem pure also in intention. As he moved towards them, his eye discerned the shadow of a third person, also approaching from the western rock—a shadow not perceptible to the lovers, but readily so to himself. Apprehending some treachery—for the strifes in which he had been for so long a time engaged had taught him to look for treachery as one of the attributes of warfare, if not of life—he sank behind a projecting ledge of rock, which gave him a perfect shelter, determined to await the approach or action of the new comer. In the mean while Egiza, in the arms of the maiden of his desire, indulged in those visions of the heart and youthful fancy which conceal the gloom and the tempest, and array earth in those features of perfect and true beauty which only belong to heaven. And, as he surveyed the pair, Pelayo muttered thus to himself while throwing his form at ease behind the rock:—

"It was a true saying of our dam, that, at his birth, Egiza had all the ballad minstrelsy, and would better, in future years, desire the music of the shepherd's reed than the clamorous ringings of the trumpet. I would she had spoken less truth in this. He hath grown ut-

terly sinewless, hath no purpose, and would seem better pleased to pipe away, than to command, existence. It were less than folly to look to him for manly endeavour in our sharp controversy with Roderick. He can strike well, but what avails the muscle of the arm when the heart lacks, when the soul is sluggard? There he sits as he were dreaming, with a head that drops upon his palms—with half shut eye, and words which, when they flow, break into murmurs that speak for his sad unconsciousness only, and have little meaning else. What a thing were this to rescue a people from their tyrant, to revenge the wrong of a sire, to set the times right which are now so turbulent! And she, too, the witless damsel who sits beside him, with a beauty that must blaze only to be extinguished—bloom only for the blast—its own worst victim. They deem themselves happy now, as if they were secure. Could they see the clouds—the storm that hangs upon the hill—would they dream thus idly? 'Tis well for them, perchance, that their eyes are with their thoughts, and either turn within or hang upon each other. They live, and are conscious only in the mutual sighs and smiles, which is love's idle barter."

While he spoke thus to himself his eye caught a glimpse of two persons approaching cautiously towards the unconscious lovers from an opposite hill, clinging carefully to its shadow as they came, and having an air of premeditation in their movements, which was visible to the prince even at the distant eminence from which he gazed.

"Ha! some treachery awaits the turtles. Their commerce is like to have interruption. Two men steal along the ledges — both armed. I see the shine of steel. Now, by Hercules, but Egiza deserves not that I should help him in this strife; and the enemy, who now steals on him thus, may save me the stroke of justice. I am sworn to slay him should he deny our people, should he refuse to seek them with me; and

will he not refuse? Hath not this woman defrauded him of his better purpose? is he not already a traitor? And what hope is there that he will be true in time to come? But no! I will not think it. He will—he shall go with me, and I will save him yet. A bound will bring me to his help; there are but two, I will manage the one, and he—he hath not surely forgotten the use of the weapon he would seem to have forsworn—if he cannot keep the other harmless, he will well deserve the harm. He will surely battle for his mate, if not for his people. Soh! they speak together—their loving words come up to me at moments with the wind. They dream not of the danger while they prate of their delights; and—"

He paused, and the words of Egiza, sitting with the Lady Cava upon a little table of the rock below, came distinctly to his ears.

"Thou dost, indeed, distrust me wrongfully, sweetest Cava. I have no such purpose as thou fearest. Freely will I forego the crown which, heretofore, I've sought—refuse the hope which would have me toil for it."

"Ha!" exclaimed Pelayo, "then may the assassin, if such he be, do his work."

Egiza continued—

"To be a quiet cottager with thee, sweetest Cava, would be my best ambition. Thou shalt teach me to forget that I was born to high estate—thou hast taught me so already—and in some deep wood, some quiet glen like this, sweetest Cava, I will content me to be only happy, and share my happiness only with thee."

"Well said—well promised! Shall he perform it well?" were the muttered words of Pelayo. The reply of Cava, though doubtful also, was uttered in far other language.

"Ah, my lord, this is thy promise now; but when thou hearest the tidings of the fight; when it is told thee how this brave warrior battled, and how this; and, per-

chance, when it is said to thee that the fight went against thy friends—thy brother—ah, then! then will thy heart burn and chafe to mingle with them."

"Would it were so!" exclaimed Pelayo, with a sigh. The next words of Egiza almost vexed him into open rage, and it was with difficulty he restrained himself from shouting his scorn to him aloud.

"Believe it not, Cava; let the warriors strike as they may, I shall not envy them. Let the fight turn as it will, it shall be no fight of mine. As for my friends and brother, they will be but the happier at my absence."

"Perchance the better for thy loss, thou craven!" was the bitter speech of Pelayo, which broke through his clinched teeth.

"Ah, my lord, but when thine eyes look upon thy sword," said the maiden.

"They shall not, sweet lady. I will straight turn it to a reaping-hook."

"Ah, but thy pride, my lord—"

"I am proud no more, dearest Cava, unless it be of the blessed love thou hast given me. Believe me, I do not thirst now for glory as I have thirsted, and the hope is gone from me for ever that promised to make me famous. I care no longer for the dazzling shows, the thick array, and the clamour that belongs to princely eminence. Ambition works no longer in my heart. The trumpet moves me not; but, in place of it, a softer, a sweeter note of music comes from thy lips, and I know not that I have had a loss. Thou hast blessed me with sweeter joys than all that I yield. I think only of thee, my Cava, and my dream is only and ever of some far solitude, where the quiet love broods for ever over its own visions, and lacks none other. Thither could we fly, my beloved—ah, wilt thou not? I feel that I should be no less happy, than it would be my happiest labour to make thee. My glories then should be in those bright sweet eyes; in those dear lips

that mock the redness of the rose; and in those words of music which thou breathest into a speech of the heart that goes with every utterance into mine. Oh, we shall be most happy, dearest Cava, thus to fly to each other and from the living world beside."

"Could I believe thee, my lord; but the heart of man, it is said, soon tires of the love of woman, and needs better employment than tending its devotions."

"The girl's no fool," said Pelayo, above.

She continued—

"In a little while, when thou hast seen the eyes of the poor Cava until thou tirest with the gaze, and hearest the words of her lips until they sink into a forgotten sound, then will thy hope strain for empire—for the brave toils which thou now profferest to lay down for the poor Cava."

"No, sweet lady, no! My hope has been subdued to suit the desires of my heart, and that lives only in thy smile. Believe me, I seek no higher throne than thy bosom; no sweeter toils than those taken in thy service. Once more will I resume with thee, in our woodland home, those labours of our nation's father, when he roved along the hills a fearless peasant, having no greater victory than to tame the wild steed of the desert, or contend with some neighbouring hunter touching the common spoil."

"Could I think it," said Cava, with a happy smile overspreading her yet girlish features, which freely declared, by their expression, the pliant yielding of her heart to the desires of her lover—"could I think it, my lord—but no! Thou smilest—it is in a pleasant scorn that thou speakst to me as to a child too willing to believe what she wishes. I am foolish to think that thou shouldst love so weak a maiden as I."

"By Heaven, I swear to thee—"

"Nay, do not, I pray thee—do not swear. It is not well; and yet thou mayst tell me thy thought without

thy oath. It is so sweet to hear that we are loved from the lips we love, we may not even chide, if there be a gentle falsehood—a trick of speech too beguiling to the fond ear, and the ready believer in the words they utter."

"Not from mine, Cava, shalt thou hear the trick thou speakst of. Believe me true, dearest lady, though I swear it not. Dost thou not believe me, sweet?"

"Oh, indeed, I wish it, my lord," was the unsophisticated answer of the damsel.

"I bless thee for the word, dear lady. Thou mayst believe me. 'Tis my soul that speaks to thee, and not my lips only. My love is no idle wanton to go abroad in fair disguises seeking but to blind fond belief, and deceive gentle faith to its undoing. Mine is not the false mood so current with the world."

"It joys me to believe thee, my lord," replied the untutored damsel; "and yet I doubt—"

She paused. The hand of her lover clasped hers as he demanded—

"What is thy doubt, dear lady?—doubt me not."

"I doubt—I fear, my lord, that thou art fashioned like the rest of men. Hath not the world taught thee its erring practices. Art thou not one of the youth of the court, of whom it is told me, that they give but refreshment to a weary mood, and come not with any love when they come abroad into these mountains. Thou wilt return soon—wilt forget thy promise to the too believing Cava, and in the crowd—"

"The crowd!" exclaimed Egiza, interrupting the fond reproaches of the maiden—"oh, keep me from the crowd, I pray. Thou little knowst how thou wrongst me, dear lady, by that thought. Even though I loved not thee, I should still pray for protection from the crowd—the coarse, the base, the wild, the clamorous—the beings most inhuman that prey upon their fellows, and lose humanity in the possession of themselves. I have no wish, no desire for life in their communion,

and, loving thee, the very thought of the crowd is loathsome to my soul. The pomps of state, the pride of place, the noisy strifes and pleasures of the court—if, indeed, they be pleasures—are hateful to my thoughts since I have known thee, and their presence would but trouble me and torture. No, dearest lady, sweet were the doom of exile, perpetual exile from the court and the crowd, wert thou doomed to share it with me. With thee, in some distant wilderness, having no hope but in ourselves, no joy but that which springs from our fond communion, how sweet would glide away the hours—how happy, could we hope that the world would leave us thus to ourselves and one another, as two poor idlers, who, having nothing but their own loves, which the world seeks not, are unworthy its observance!"

The quick eyes of Pelayo from above beheld the shadows in motion of those persons whose cautious advance before had controlled his attention.

"Patience, good dreamer," he exclaimed, "patience! The world, or a portion of it, is not over heedful of your prayer; and, if I greatly err not, you are soon to have more of its heed than is altogether grateful. They move again. One seeks the western path, the other stoops; he crawls aside. I see him not—ah! there he moves; he seeks a fissure to the right, through which he glides. Well, let them come. Meanwhile, I must beg my uncle's boon of patience, and keep quiet as I may."

Thus spoke Pelayo to himself, while the amorous Egiza, unconscious of all matters but his newborn admiration for Cava, was discoursing to her of that sweet and selfish seclusion which forms no small part of the dreams of young lovers in general. The reply of the maiden to his declamation showed a spirit no less willing than his own for such seclusion.

"'Tis a sweet thought, my lord, and it were a blessed destiny to have no hope hanging upon the capricious

will of the crowd. And yet I would not, when I have thee to myself—I would not that we should utterly lose sight of the world. I would that the world should sometimes see the gifts of my fortune. Methinks 'twould give me pleasure to behold great lords and ladies watch thee at coming, and follow with a long glance thy departure. It were but half a blessing could we not challenge the eyes of others to behold it."

"Dear lady, if thou speakst to me soothly, then are thine eyes but traitors to thy heart. Thou holdst me too high for justice, and wilt cease to love me when thou comest to better judgment. So long hast thou been a dweller among these lonely hills; so few have been the gallant gentlemen thou hast seen among them, that thou errest when thou deemst me unrivalled in all estimation as in thine own. When thou seest more of that world from which I would have thee fly with me, thou wilt wonder at thy credulous eyes which, with such favour, have beheld me."

"Nay, my dear lord, thou wrongst my judgment. I have seen many gentlemen, and lords of high pretension, and of claim allowed, who were cried by herald when the court was at its fullest, and did not shame, by free comparison, among the proudest for valour and all noble exercise. I do not fear to have you show with them; nay, I would have it so. It were my wish to have you conspicuous with the rest, that I might love yet more, as I behold the admiration of all yielded up to him I love. I feel, my lord, I should be the envied of my sex, calling you mine own."

The sarcastic Pelayo could not forbear comment upon the fond eulogium of the maiden.

"Now, had he better die!" he exclaimed; "he shall not have more lavish eulogy if he live a thousand years."

With becoming humility, but increased fondness, Egiza replied—

"Thou art rash, dear lady, in thy unlicensed flattery.

By my faith, if thou speakst in such measures often, thou wilt tempt me to become a very puppet of the court—a noble fit only to bear the shining ring from the gallery, join in a sportful fight with home-valiant boys, and take any pretty labour in the eyes of noteful dames which shall vex a rival on holydays. If thy pride be of this fashion, sweetest Cava, I fear me thou wouldst soon deem me wanton or unworthy."

"Not so, my lord; my pride would have it as thou sayst—not always—not often—nor would I have thee lose in these skirmishings thy truer thought of me. What though thou shouldst turn thy curious eyes upon all the gallery, and smile with this fair dame and toy with another; it were all well if thou wouldst then, when the game were over, come to me, and press my hand, and whisper in my ears, and say how tired thou art, and how much better thou wouldst love to be alone with me, as thou art now."

"He were much wiser, and both much safer," said Pelayo, "if ye were as far apart as the crowd could make ye. The enemies are upon ye, and, with eyes not less keen than mine, watch all your practises. Ye were better at prayers than kisses, and your coming lessons will, I doubt not, make ye think so too. But stay—the minstrel prates anew."

"Ah, sweetest," cried Egiza, fondly, "thou persuadest me to be vain with thy free flatteries and with thy lip so wooing—nay, do not chide me, dearest, such coy denial dwells not with the true affection, and is less than the love deserves which is now hooded and bound down before you."

His lips were pressed upon hers as he spoke, and though she resisted with a maiden's might, he succeeded in kissing her. Her head hung down in a sweet bashfulness, and her words trembled as she spoke.

"Love me not less, my lord, that thus I favour you. It is little that I can deny you when you plead, and the

wrong, if it be wrong, is surely yours when you press so earnestly."

"It is no wrong, dearest love."

"And if it be, I forgive you, my lord, so that you take not from me the esteem in which you hold me now."

The comment of Pelayo upon this proceeding was of a different order.

"A goodly smack!" he exclaimed, as Egiza kissed the struggling maiden—"a goodly smack! and had this valley the echo of Agarillo, it might have shaken down yon castle. As it is, the echo hath alarmed other ears than mine, and yon shadow comes from the gorge."

Then, after a brief pause given to keen observation, and while the approaching figure came out more distinctly into the light, he continued—

"By Heaven, it is Julian himself, the stern old father, and in his hand his bared weapon. Now would I gather from his words how far he doth approve of this tenderness. It may be that it shall strengthen our claim upon Julian if Egiza were allied unto his daughter. He might gladly desire to give to his son a throne which he would not toil to bestow upon a stranger. We should then prosper without the sacrifice of this poor maiden's fondness. She is a sweet and an innocent, frail, fond, gentle creature. 'Twere pitiful if she were wanting. Ha! the doves see the fowler. They are on the wing, but fly not."

X.

Even as Pelayo had said, at this moment one of the persons whose shadows he had seen descending the gorge and cautiously stealing round the hill, at the foot of which sat Egiza and the maiden, came forward and stood suddenly before the two. Well might they start as they beheld him. The person was Count Julian.

His sword was bared in his hand—his countenance stern and threatening. He did not pause for speech; but, ere Egiza had risen to his feet, the count thus addressed him—Cava, meanwhile, standing apart, trembling with maiden bashfulness and the consciousness of having offended—

"How now, sir—wherefore this? Knowst thou me?"

"Count Julian," was the reply of Egiza, who answered fearlessly, though surprised by the sudden appearance of the count.

"Ay, sir—and this my daughter. What mean you with her on such terms of secrecy? Who art thou?"

The fierce demand of the count produced no hesitation in the reply of Egiza; on the contrary, his air became more resolute and manly with the appearance of a seeming enemy. His answer was calm, and, but for the interference of Cava, would have been explicit.

"I am one, Count Julian, who should not be altogether unknown to you, if justice had its due and I my rights. I am he, sir, that was—"

The hurried accents of the Lady Cava interposed at this moment, and silenced those of Egiza.

"Speak it not, my lord—speak it not, I pray thee, if thou wouldst live—if thou wouldst have me live."

She paused—she would have said, what she well knew, that the commission which her father had received from Roderick directed him to arrest the fugitive princes. To have said this was to have declared him one. Believing that, in the dimness of the hour, her lover's features were undistinguished by, and that he was still unknown to her father, she fondly thought to prevent his fatal declaration of the truth. She little dreamed that all was already well known; that Julian, though affecting ignorance of the person he addressed, had yet prepared all things for his capture as a rebel.

Indignantly did her father reproach her for her interference.

"Now down, thou wilful maiden," he exclaimed; "thou shouldst be in thy chamber, and at thy prayers, rather than here in thy shamelessness. Why dost thou break upon his speech? If it be honest, should he fear to speak it? and yet it does not beseem honesty to lurk thus in waiting to steal the boon which a brave soldier had challenged boldly at my castle entrance."

"Forgive me—hear me, father," Cava would have remonstrated.

"Nay, do not speak to me. Thou hast deceived me, Cava—cruelly deceived me. I thought thee one too ignorant for shame like this. To thy chamber, go—to thy prayers—and let thy sorrow for thy deceit make thee more worthy of that love which I gave thee without stint. Away—speak not. Let thy paramour answer; he will not surely be base enough to desire thee to take the danger as well as the duty of defence upon thee, unless he be dastard as dishonest."

The language of Count Julian, so bitter as it was in reference to Egiza, gave great satisfaction to his brother. It was the hope of Pelayo that it would provoke that spirit into utterance and action which, though sleeping and sluggish of late, he yet well knew that Egiza possessed.

"I thank you, sir count," he exclaimed; "these are words to strike fire from any bosom not utterly base and worthless. I trust that they shall work upon my brother. If thou canst move him to lift the idle weapon which he seems to have forgotten by his side, my labours were half done, and there were hope. But I fear me! Ha! he speaks—speaks when he should strike!"

Though mortified that Egiza did not reply with his sword rather than his lips, the language of the latter was encouraging to the hope of Pelayo.

"'Twill but need a few words, Count Julian," was his reply, "to declare my feelings towards your daughter and my purpose here. For your scorn," he pro-

ceeded, and his words grew stern like those of Julian himself, and his eyes flashed fires of defiance no less warm than those of the indignation which brightened in the glance of the latter—"for your scorn, but that you hold so close a tie with this maiden, I should requite you with a like scorn, nor limit my anger with such requital. I should back my speech with steel, and end in punishment the conference which, with so much insolence, you have begun."

"Why, this looks well enough," said Pelayo, above. "Now let the other but chafe more loudly and the maiden but plead more pitifully, and the thing's done. We shall have blows, and there will be peril, but I'll cry 'cheer' to it."

The anticipations of Pelayo were not then realized. The tones and language of Julian were more qualified than before. He would seem either to temporize with his adversary in order to gain time, or the boldness of the latter gave him pleasure. Of the former opinion was Pelayo.

"Thou wouldst seem brave," said Julian; "why, then, hast thou feared to seek my daughter in her proper dwelling? Why hast thou stolen to her thus, if thy purpose were honourable? Am I a niggard in my entertainment to the noble gentlemen who seek me? Who, that is brave and honest, have I chidden from my board? You have done me wrong, sir—you have done wrong to the lady of your love, if such is this damsel. You have taught her a lesson of error in this deceit which she practises upon the father who has always but too much loved her."

"Oh, not too much, dear father—say not so, I pray you. Indeed, indeed, I love you. Forgive me if, in my thoughtlessness, I have been led aside to error."

"Away, girl, thou hast not loved me as thou shouldst. Away."

The commentary of Pelayo upon this part of the in

terview proved him more acute here than Egiza, who was so much more interested. The latter fondly believed himself to be yet unknown to Julian. Such was the belief also of Cava. Not so Pelayo.

"'Twould seem he knew not Egiza from this language," he exclaimed; "and yet, is it not art rather to conceal his knowledge until his followers should come to his aid, making the captivity of my brother certain? It must be so. It is strategy; for the shadow approaches unseen behind the silly youth, and will be upon him in a little while. But I shall foil his succour, and will be ready."

"Speak, Cava, since thy knight will not!" exclaimed Julian, to his drooping daughter. "What is he?—wherefore does he fear to come with a bold summons to the gate of thy father? or is he of base peasant blood which shall shame thee in my sight?"

"Oh, no, no!" were the murmured words of the maiden, as she denied this imputation upon the birth of her lover.

"What, then, hast thou to fear?" he demanded. "Have I denied thee to hold affections—to speak the feeling at thy heart? Have I been a stern father to thee, locking thee from freedom, and taking from thee the hope of that love which is in the heart, the vital principle of all life? Have I not been a gentle father to thee ever—always yielding to thy wish—making thy desire a measure for mine own—taking all heed of what thou lovest, and loving it because thou didst so? Wherefore, then, this slight which thou has put upon me?"

"Oh, no slight, my father," faintly replied the maiden.

"Ay, but it is slight," replied the other. "Have I not ever sought to give you fondest nurture; to maintain every ministry about you which should make you happy; guiding your mind, guarding your state, and with each gift of culture and accomplishment seeking to make your thought fitting to the natural graces of your person?

and do I merit return like this? Thou hast done me wrong, Cava."

"Forgive me—hear me, father—"

"No word—thou art ungrateful—"

"And thou no less unjust than stern, sir count," was the fearless interruption which, at that moment, fell from the lips of Egiza. It chafed him more to hear the severe language which Julian held to the maiden than the violent and degrading terms in which the father had spoken of him.

"Hear me, Count Julian," he continued.

"'Tis you that I would hear," said the latter, coolly. "'Tis you, sir, that I have come to hear. Your boldness should be at no loss to find excuse for this clandestine meeting with a girl—a mere child—one, of the world ignorant, and thoughtless, and, as it seems, but too ready to hearken to its least honoured representative. What are you, sir?"

"A man!" was the almost fierce answer of the youth, aroused by the scornful language of the father. The hands of Cava were lifted imploringly to her lover; but the same answer which aroused all her apprehensions only awakened the hopes of Pelayo.

"Now, that was well spoken; the weapon now—the weapon of the man, Egiza," he had almost cried aloud.

"A man!" said Julian, "it may be so; but thou hast not sought my castle like a man. Why camest thou here? What wouldst thou?"

"Thou knowst," was the quick and brief reply. "Why should I tell thee what thou see'st? I came to thy daughter."

"Thou lovest her, thou wouldst say?"

"I have said it. I love her as she should be loved, with all my soul, with all my strength; with a love devoted to her best regards, and yielding not with life."

"Thou'st told her this?"

"Ay, sworn it!"

"And she believed thee?"

"I thank her—I bless her that she did believe me."

The smile of Cava, shining through her tears, rewarded the enthusiastic lover. A dark scowl gathered upon the brow of Julian, but, with a tone evidently subdued to mildness by strong effort, he demanded—

"Dost hold to this?"

"With my whole soul I do!" exclaimed the lover.

"And thou, girl?"

The tears, the smiles, the bowed head, and the tremulous, unmeaning syllables of the maiden sufficiently answered for her. Hope rose into her heart anew, joy into that of Egiza, and both listened impatient for those words of indulgent blessing from the father's lips which was to sanction their loves, and which, they nothing doubted, were soon to be uttered. But if they were lulled into confidence by the artificial manner of Count Julian, so was not Pelayo. Made suspicious by the cautious approach of Julian from the first, and doubly so from the circuitous course which had been taken by his follower—who now appeared near at hand—he readily conceived that the design of Julian was to disarm the apprehensions of Egiza by gentle and yielding words until his assistant was within call, when he would throw off the mask and declare his true purpose.

"This parley," said he, as he listened from his secluded perch—"this parley but mocks the ear, and is most false upon the part of Julian. He waits but for his comrade, when he will fasten upon the poor youth's throat, and have him at advantage. Well—well enough, let him do so. I would have him give the amorous youth a goodly gripe that shall put dalliance and desire from his mind. Then will I put in and save him. What though he may tear the flesh, and take from his face some of the woman comeliness which it wears, it will but make him the fitter for the camp, and, perchance, persuade him of a diminished fitness for a lady's

bower. But a truce, the strife must be sure at hand. The colleague descends, and now glides behind them. A word will bring him, and—ha! the tone of Julian changes. I could swear to it now."

Even as Pelayo said, the language of Julian, or, at least, his manner, underwent a change in the very next words which he uttered.

"And how may I trust thee, sir? I am too old a soldier to reckon words, or even oaths, by young men, spoken in the ears of willing damsels, to be such solemn and creditable things. I do not think to trust thee, young lord; thou shalt give me better proof of thyself ere thou depart."

"What mean you, Count Julian?" demanded Egiza.

"To thy chamber, Cava," said the father to his daughter, without heeding the speech of the youth. The tones of his voice struck a chill into her heart, which had so recently been elated with hope. She lingered, looked tearfully into his face; but its expression increased her apprehensions. A sullen frown overspread it, and her eye shrank in terror from the glance of his. "Away!" he exclaimed; and with no other word, but with uplifted hand, he beckoned her off. One glance to her lover revealed her apprehensions, but she spoke nothing, as, with trembling and reluctant footsteps, she left the scene. Egiza would have remonstrated—he would have followed her, but Julian intercepted his advance, and bade him "Stay!" in a voice of thunder.

"The coast is clear now," said Pelayo, as he beheld the departure of Cava, "and the fray may begin. The poor maiden totters to the castle, looking often behind her, and dreading the very silence which has followed all this coil. She is gone now, and it will soon be my turn to speak in this business. Ha! the count!"

Satisfied that his daughter was out of hearing, and that his follower was sufficiently nigh for all his pur-

poses, it was now that Julian gave them that utterance which a sense of policy and a consideration of the maiden's feelings had induced him to suppress.

"Traitor and rebel," he exclaimed to Egiza, "didst thou think I knew thee not? Yield thee, young man, as I bid thee—thou art my prisoner."

His sword was uplifted on the instant; but, as the moment of trial came, that of Egiza was not less prompt. The opposing blades were crossed ere he replied,

"Thou'rt base to say so, Count Julian; base, like the master whom thou servest. But I fear thee not; thou takest no living prisoner in thy prince. Strike—double traitor as thou art. I defy thee to the trial."

Pelayo, sitting above and looking composedly, if not coolly, upon the strife, seemed to lose all consciousness of its danger to his brother in the increasing pleasure which this show of spirit produced within him.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Well said—well countenanced. 'Tis man to man as yet. Let them go on a while, and bruise each other. I am not wanted to this match."

"Vainly would you strive, young man," replied Julian to the defiance of Egiza. "You are my prisoner, though your life be safe from any blow of mine. The headsman's axe demands it, and I am forbidden to rob him of his victim. Yield you then—I would not strike you."

"You shall not," replied Egiza; "not while I can wield weapon in my defence; and thou shalt strike, if it be only for thine own safety. Lo! my sword is upon thy bosom—I will provoke thee to the use of thine."

The quick weapon of Julian parried the thrust of Egiza, and contenting himself with doing this, he forbore assault, as he replied, contemptuously—

"Your boy's weapon can do little here, young man, even against my own; what can it do against a second? Look—Odo!"

Count Julian, in that last word, had summoned his follower.

"Now goes the other forth," said Pelayo; "'twill be for me to round that party soon, or my brother is but a lame chicken. But—patience, good uncle Oppas; thy text were scarcely a pleasant one to Egiza, if he knew that I used it for my own counsel at this moment."

With the appearance of Odo, Egiza, still presenting a ready weapon and a fearless front, gave back, and the two pressed upon him with bared swords.

"Thou see'st," exclaimed Julian, "there is no hope for thee. Two weapons are at thy breast."

A single bound at that instant brought Pelayo to the scene. In another instant, with a stunning blow of his sword, he brought the astonished Odo to the ground; and, ere Julian or Egiza were either of them recovered from the surprise which his presence had occasioned, he confronted the former.

"Thou hast erred, Count of Consuegra," he exclaimed to Julian, as his sword glittered in the eyes of the count, "the two weapons are at thy own breast. It is thou that hast no hope, save in our mercy."

"Ha! Thou'rt in season, brother," said Egiza.

"Ay—for the tares," cried Pelayo; "thou hast had the fruit to thyself, as usual. But let us not linger here, we have other tasks; and—thou wilt now let the youth depart?" was the concluding and derisive inquiry which Pelayo made to Julian. The wrath of the latter may not be spoken; but it was tempered by the necessities of his situation. Though brave, he yet felt how idle it would be to attempt anything against two well-appointed warriors; and he contented himself with maintaining a posture of readiness for assault. But this was not designed by Pelayo, and, in spite of the indignity to which Egiza had been subjected, Julian, as the father of Cava, was still secure from his animosity.

"You have the fortune, young men," replied the count, with a bitter coolness, "and I counsel you to make use of it. You cannot always escape me; and you shall not

have fled beyond these hills ere my followers shall be upon you."

"Let them come," replied Pelayo, coldly. "Think you we fear them? Let them pass in pursuit beyond these hills, and they return not again. Think you, most valiant count, that I followed this amorous youth alone? Pursue us but beyond that eminence, and I will rejoice your eyes with a sight of war which shall even warm the heart of an old warrior like yourself."

The cool and prompt assertion of Pelayo fully convinced Julian of the truth of what he said, and, under existing circumstances, he was willing to let the two escape without farther interruption. At this moment Odo, the follower whom Pelayo had stricken down and stunned, began to show signs of returning consciousness, and it became necessary that the fugitives should take heed of the counsel of Julian, and urge their flight while yet the time was allowed them. Even then it was difficult to move Egiza from the spot. He still had hope to influence the father of the maiden by entreaty; but the haughty reply which his exhortations met provoked the indignation of Pelayo, if it did not move his own.

"Why wilt thou care, my brother, to implore him who denies you with such scornful speech? For shame! Let us leave the churl's dwelling, and, if thou hast the feeling of a prince, as thou shouldst have, thou shouldst rather rejoice that thou art quit of a damsel who would bring thee to a knowledge of such connexions. Let us away."

With a depressed, disconsolate heart, and a slow footstep which would have lingered still, Egiza was forced to submit, and sadly turned to follow his brother. The latter, ere he led the way, thus addressed the mortified and defeated Julian.

"We have spared you, sir—you are in our power, but we turn the weapon from your bosom, as our aim is not your blood. But I warn you not to pursue us.

Provoke us in our flight, and we will turn upon and rend you even as the wild boar rends the flanks of the forward hunter."

"And I warn you, Pelayo, that you speed far and fast; for, as there is a God in heaven and a power on earth, so surely will I pursue you with a force far beyond any in your command. Speed while you may—you are now safe—you will not be so long."

"You have caught your hands full, and they burn already, Count Julian—beware you catch not more than you can carry by a farther trial," was the reply of Pelayo, in the language of an ancient proverb of the Goth. "We are safe—thanks to the good sword that smote down your myrmidon. We owe no thanks to you that we are so. Do what you may, sir, we shall keep safe still, and so let your pursuit begin. Enough—now, brother, let us on—our men await us—we have much to do."

"Lead on, Pelayo," said Egiza, as he turned mournfully upon his path; "lead on, lead on! But my soul sickens as I depart from these blessed hills."

"Blessed hills!" exclaimed Pelayo, as he ascended them; "the good count had like to have given you a blessed mouthful of them. But come on—we must fly far to-night."

A few bounds carried the elastic youth to the top of the crag over which he came, and in a few moments more they were both lost to sight in the shadows of a deep and narrow gorge upon the opposite descent. Vexed with his disappointment, and not satisfied with the course which he had taken to effect the commands of his monarch, Julian turned his attention to the wounded Odo the moment after they had disappeared. A feeling of delicacy towards his child had persuaded him to bring to the capture of Egiza but a single and confidential follower, and the inefficiency of his force was the defeat of his object.

XI.

HURRYING his brother away from the spot, Pelayo led him through the narrow gorge by which he came, and, with speed that was justly warranted by the danger, they fled together from the neighbourhood of Count Julian's castle. The night gave them present shelter, since it would have been impossible for that nobleman, with all his retainers, to discover them among the crowding hills, unless through some fortunate accident. Julian, foiled and furious, was yet sufficiently aware of this truth to forego any hopeless pursuit; and he contented himself with giving aid to the retainer who had been stricken down and stunned, but not seriously hurt, by the prompt blow of Pelayo. Him he recovered after a little while; and, enjoining secrecy upon him as to the result of the adventure, the count returned to his castle, where the maiden, his daughter, awaited him in speechless apprehension. She feared, but unnecessarily, the rebukes and reproaches of her father. He gave her counsel against her misplaced regard for Egiza, but it was given with parental fondness, and not in severity; and it may be said, in this place, that the hostility of Julian to the pretensions of the young prince arose not from any personal dislike to the unfortunate youth, but from the duty which, as a good subject, he owed to the reigning monarch, of whose confidence he was in possession, and whose armies he even then had in command. Willingly would he have pardoned the error of his daughter and permitted the advances of the outlawed prince, could he have done so and escaped without reproof and punishment, as a kindred traitor, from the vindictive Roderick. And now, though compelled to seek, by all possible means, the arrest of the denounced rebel, Count Julian forbore the most active measures which might have been deemed essential to that end, and con-

tented himself with just enough of effort to escape all censure for omission or neglect of duty. This understood, the escape of Pelayo and Egiza will be readily conceived. The pursuers despatched by Count Julian failed to find out their places of retreat; and it was midnight when the two princes halted for rest, which they found in a deserted hovel, where they deemed themselves secure for the time from their enemies. To this time since their meeting, Pelayo had said but little to his brother, and that little was in brief sentences, sternly uttered, and of such matter only as seemed to belong to the merest circumstances of their flight. But with the belief that they were now safe from pursuit and beyond the hearing of others, a change took place in the language and manner of Pelayo. Stopping short in a little area formed by the gradual hollowing of the hills around, the hazy moon giving them a partial light, the latter turned, and, confronting his brother, thus addressed him:

"We are now safe, my brother. Our enemy, even if he have pursued us, which I believe not, has failed to follow upon our steps. We are alone, and can now speak to each other, as we might not do if we had other ears than our own to listen. And now I demand that you should hear me, Egiza, for I have sought thee out as brother seldom seeks brother—in a temper that is not brotherly, and with a feeling of justice in my soul that cannot be blinded by any ties whether of blood or of affection."

"What mean you?" demanded Egiza, somewhat surprised by this opening and the stern air and solemn manner of the speaker. "What mean you by this salutation, my brother? You have just rescued me from captivity or death, Pelayo—do not lessen the value of your service by looks and words of such unkindness."

Had the tones and language of Egiza been more full of spirit and defiance, they had most probably been more

agreeable to Pelayo. The gentleness and humility of his reply seemed altogether too feminine for the manly character required by the times. The address of the latter was not modified, therefore, when he spoke again.

"I know not that I have done you service by saving you from Julian. Thou canst better answer that doubt by thy actions hereafter. I sought you, not to save you from Julian—I sought you for punishment, Egiza."

"How! For punishment?"

"Ay, for blows—for death—for shame. Art thou not—"

"What?" demanded Egiza.

"A traitor to thy pledges—a slave to thy wanton lusts—a coward—deserting from thy people, having no heart for thy honour, spiritless in thy shame, and heedless of the scorn of those whom thou hast prompted to the danger which thou thyself hast been the first to shrink from? If thou art not this thing, Egiza, then have I wronged thee in my fears—then have thy people wronged thee in their thoughts. If thou art, then have I done thee unkindness to save thee from the stroke of Julian."

The unhappy Egiza was no less indignant than thunderstruck by the speech of his brother. He could only exclaim, while his lips quivered red with anger and his hands convulsively twitched at the handle of his sword,

"Go on, go on, Pelayo—thy tongue is free of speech—thou art rich in dainty language. Spare it not—go on—to the end, I pray thee."

"Be sure I will," replied the other, coolly; "thou shalt hear the truth, Egiza, spoken without favor and without fear. Thou art my brother, and for my own honour I will not spare thee—thou art my prince, and for mine own and thy people's safety thou shalt hear their complaint."

"Pause not—thy beginning promises too well for what is to come. Speak on, and spare not."

"What didst thou at the dwelling of Julian, piping and puling with his daughter, when thou hadst pledged

thyself elsewhere? Why hast thou wasted the precious hours in this fashion—hours too precious for such keeping as thine—when thou hadst other work and nobler duties to perform?"

"And what is thy right, and whence comes it, Pelayo," was the reply, "to challenge me with thy free censure thus?"

"Thy people's rights are mine. They have a right to their prince—his life is theirs, and his dishonour is not only their shame, but their loss. Why camest thou not to our men when, through me, thou didst solemnly pledge them? Thou didst ask their service, and they gave it; thou didst bid them gather to receive thee, and they came. Where wast thou meanwhile? Had they seen thee, as I did but late, crouching with curlike fidelity at the feet of thy mistress, thinkst thou they had put in to save thee from the blow of Julian? No! they had shouted to him in applause, and given him all needful help to thy punishment."

"Have they set you on this task, Pelayo? Have they given you commission to play the orator?" said Egiza, suppressing, though with great effort, his emotions as he spoke.

"No! Of my own thought I came to save thee. 'Twas my own spirit that moved me, perchance unwisely, in thy service. I had staked my honour upon thine. I have sworn to redeem my pledges; and for this I came; for this have I saved thee. Their messenger had better been the headsman—they will hold thee a traitor if thou heedst not. Thou hast proved one."

"Traitor, indeed!" exclaimed Egiza, scornfully; "I see not how that can be, since I owe no service to any but myself."

"Thou dost—thy thought is idle. Thou owest me service—them service—service to thy name, to thy father's memory, to thy country. Thou owest thy sword, strength, life, to the people who would strike in thy cause, and for

whose rescue from the tyrant thou art doubly pledged, not less by thy birth than thy own spoken resolve. To this cause thy whole soul—thy courage—thy virtue—everything—is due. Thou art born the sovereign of thy people, but thy rights belong to theirs. If thou claimest from them obedience, they claim from thee protection. As the superior, thou art bound to the inferior in a thousand ways—thou must instruct and guide, advance the worthy, counsel the ignorant, punish the unworthy, promote mind to its true condition, and do all these things with impartial judgment, having nor fear nor favour. In thy hands lie the scales of decision, the sceptre of resolve, the sword of justice, the boon for patient service, and the reward for noble and unexacted achievement. For thy award thy subjects wait thee, and these are the duties which thou owest them in return and requital of those which their obedience yields to thee. And let me tell thee, my brother, that the treason of the sovereign to his people is of all treason the worst, since theirs must ever be the worst loss. Such were thy treason to them now. Thy neglect and most complete desertion would deliver them to a tyrant; nay, it has already done so in part. They are even now his slaves, his victims, and with a bondage terrible he fills our father's land. They groan aloud—they call upon thee for succour—and thou—thou comest to sing amorous ditties to the moon, while thou lurkest around a nobleman's castle, striving at a theft, when, as a brave and valiant prince, at the head of thy people, thou shouldst come boldly, and receive a gift with honour. Shame on thee, my brother, that such should be thy performance."

The reply of Egiza, though feeble, conveyed his firm resolve.

"Alas, my brother, thou wouldst move me to impossible things. I have taken counsel upon our purpose, dwelt upon it in earnest thought, and feel that there is no hope. It is in vain that we would assert our right.

The nation too fully owns the sway of Roderick for us to move him. We have no soldiers, no strength, no resources. To lead our few followers into arms were but to bring them to destruction, and yield ourselves up to no less. No—I have resolved, my brother—I will strive no more."

'Do I hear?" was the passionate exclamation of Pelayo, as he heard this plain avowal from the lips of his brother; "do I hear? Let not my father's ghost be nigh us at this moment; such damned salutation would make him doubt thou art his son. It is not as thou sayst, Egiza. Nothing is lost to us if we be not lost to ourselves. Nothing impossible, if we give no heed to base fears and womanly weakness. All is ours if we bring but courage and resolve to our cause, and keep the pledges which we have made to our people. We have goodly hope if thou wilt but look upon it. A hundred gallant leaders are sworn in sacramental blood to our banner; and they will strike for us to the last, till thou hast thine own, till Roderick is hurled from his bad station, and our mother-land purged from the pollution which he has brought upon it."

Egiza smiled derisively as he heard the enthusiastic speech of his brother.

"A hundred men!" he exclaimed; "why, what a jest is this, Pelayo!—how canst thou talk of hope against Roderick with thy force of a hundred men?"

The indignant reply of Pelayo was no less prompt than the sarcastic speech of his brother.

"Talk not of hundreds," he cried; "what are thousands, millions—of what avail their number, their skill in fight, their choice of 'vantage ground, and the consciousness of right, which is best armour to the true heart, when the leader to whom they look lacks soul for battle and grows craven at its approach? I tell thee, my brother, thy poor spirit affrights me, and makes me to doubt more of our cause than all the strength of Rod-

erick, than all our own weakness else. Do thou but fight, and I count not the foe."

"And wherefore should I fight, Pelayo?" replied the other, mournfully. "For fame—for empire? Alas! my brother, these are nothing to me now!"

"I do not hear thee!" said Pelayo, chokingly. Egiza proceeded.

"I tell thee, brother, if but to draw my sword upon these hills, and trace my worthless name upon their sides, would win for me this empire thou wouldst have me seek, I would not stoop to do it. No! Pelayo, I have grown happier in other hopes. In nameless station, rather than in strife, would I pass the future hours. I have lost all the spirit for reckless strife, for the shedding of human blood, for the grasping at power with hands red and reeking with the miseries of man. Besides, I am forbidden—I may not contend with Roderick—I am sworn not to do so."

"Brother, say not so!" exclaimed Pelayo, hoarsely, while the tears gathered in his eyes, and his hand convulsively grasped the wrist of Egiza.

"Say not so. I call you still my brother. I forbear all rashness of word or action. Hear me, I am calm—I am gentle. See—my dagger keeps its sheath. I will not curse thee. I will not strike thee. I will do nothing which shall stir thee against our holy cause—thy cause, our father's cause, and mine. But I pray thee, brother—I pray thee, unsay thy speech. 'Tis not becoming in thee. 'Tis against thy mother's fame, thy father's memory, thy own right; I say naught of my right, Egiza, though it is my right also which thou 'dost set aside in thy relaxed purpose."

Egiza would have spoken here, availing himself of a pause in the speech of Pelayo, which the latter seemed to make rather through hoarseness than lack of topic, but he continued with his wonted impetuousness.

"Nay, hear me out, my brother—hear me out. I

came to chide, to curse thee—to drag thee, if thou wouldst not, to our people and to thy neglected duties. I will not chafe thee thus. My words shall have a gentler meaning. I will implore, entreat, spare nothing of a softer mood, so thou wilt unsay those foolish—those base words. Take thy manhood on thee again—let not the gathering rust upon thy sword reproach thee with long dishonour. Remember thy father's name, thy own —once more let us do those deeds which shall keep them bright with the passage of the years, defying the effacing breath of time—defying the slanders of our enemies."

It was for one moment an imposing sight to behold the big drops gathering in the eye of that otherwise rough warrior; to see his half-stifled emotion, and the convulsive clasp of both his hands around the arm of his brother. But this show of emotion lasted for a moment only. The reply of Egiza produced another change no less sudden than those which had already marked his deportment in this interview.

"I've thought upon this strife, my brother," said the elder, "and I see no hope for our cause from the struggle which we propose. The chances are all against success. Our men are few, and though they be gallant all, and well approved in fight, their endeavour were but fruitless when thousands press upon and bear them down by the sheer power of numbers."

"Hear a tale!" exclaimed Pelayo, impatiently, withdrawing the grasp of his hands upon the arm of his brother, his eyes flashing the fires of indignation, and his voice struggling hoarsely in his throat for utterance like some pent-up mountain torrent—"hear a tale thou seemst to have forgotten."

"What tale, my brother?"

"It was a time of terror for the Goth," resumed Pelayo, in reply, "when; led by Wallia, he battled first in the Iberian country. His force diminished to a little

band the consul of Rome but laughed at—girt in by the entire race of the Silingi, full ninety thousand—on his front their allies, the Alani, a beaten but brave people, themselves superior to the utmost might brought by Wallia—to these we add the Vandals and Suevi, all leagued for his destruction. Did he fly? Did he despair? Did he talk of the force of numbers, and, in a coward mood, resolve to give up the struggle, to forfeit the empire he sought, to retire in shepherd's guise from the strife, seeking a dastard safety, which neither he nor thou could have ever found? No, no! he did not —he dared not. Though on his back rolled the impassable sea, and on his front a host, to which his front were but a narrow point, which he looked to see swallowed up by the side closing ranks of his enemy!—did Wallia tremble? Did he desert the people who had trusted him, and fly in hope of safety from a fortune which he yet decreed to them? You may have your answer from the old crone who, at the evening, when the bee first sings in summer, tells it to the hinds assembled beneath the cottage tree. In one night, with a courage warmed by danger to be deadly, and with a sword sharpened for a thousand lives, he smote the barbarians in their tents, slew with his own hand the gigantic monarch of the Alani, and hewed his way to freedom and safety—as thou shouldst do—through the hearts of his crowding enemies!"

"I know the tale, Pelayo," was the faint response of Egiza. "'Twas, indeed, a brave action—'twas gallantly well done."

"Thou knowst the tale; 'twas gallantly well done!" exclaimed Pelayo, repeating contemptuously the words of his brother. "I cannot think you know it, Egiza; I cannot think you esteem it gallantly well done, else wherefore need that I should tell it to you now? and wherefore not strive, with a kindred spirit such as Wallia cherished, to win as bright and lasting a renown?

Why wake only to whisper 'it was was well done,' when your people, and your own honour, demand that you do likewise? Satisfied with the word of praise which you give to Wallia, and which his glory needs not from any, and, least of all, from you, back you sink into your soulless and senseless slumbers, making it double shame for you to have ever awakened."

"Nay, Pelayo, thou dost me wrong, great wrong," replied Egiza. "I do not forget, I would not forget, the glorious deeds of Wallia—would that they were mine—"

"Without the danger, eh?" said Pelayo, harshly, breaking the unfinished speech.

"No—to have them would I brave all the danger, even now, such as girded in the desperate monarch. But such hope were idle. Our game were far more desperate than his. Our people are not one, as was the people of Wallia. Scattered and far—few, unarmed, and without money, we should but call them into sight for their destruction. To cope with Roderick were to rush on certain fate. Wherefore, and what the wisdom of such rashness, without any hope such as counselled the enterprise of Wallia?"

"Oh, wherefore live, and wherefore strive at any fortune," replied Pelayo, bitterly, "unless thy captain comes to thee with a certain count of thy own and thy enemies' numbers; shows thee by a certain rule, with a nice computation, the very movement thou shouldst make for success, ere thou resolvest upon it; and declarest the cost in men and horses of every onslaught? Computes for thee after this fashion: 'Here lie three hundred foes, two hundred friends—clear gain one hundred here. Here, at this point, we lose—a favourite horse has here been wounded with an ugly gash that cleft his neck; his rider lies at hand—he lifts no sword again. Now on this side—behold! Here's an ugly pile—we have lost here—two Goths and five Iberians

more than our foe; but, on the whole, we are better by the combat; we have not gained—but our loss is less than Roderick's.'"

"What is this talk, Pelayo?" demanded Egiza.

"The talk of the captain; his close compt, which thou needst, of what the fight shall be ere thou goest into it. It is thus you would have him compute for you the field, so that you may estimate the game ere you err by rash battle. By Hercules, brother, but you have grown marvellous nice upon the sudden. Time was when you were less prudent, and, men said, more manly; now, with a keen honour—not keen enough, however, to cut the hand of its owner—thou art more heedful of thy uncle's mule than of thy father's kingdom. Thou wouldst ride his favourite text 'Patience' while Roderick rides thee, and deal in grave homily about life's chances, while the foe tramples thee with his foot in anger, and spits upon thy brow in his scorn."

"Be it so, then. You are too free of speech, Pelayo."

"Would I could make you free of action."

"Chafe not, or thou wilt ere thou wishest it," was the reply. "Thy words strike ungently—thy speech is ungracious."

"My thoughts are no less so at thy weakness—thy lack of purpose."

"My purpose is my own, only—you waste your words by speaking upon it. Since I am your rightful sovereign, 'tis for me that you would war with Roderick. I yield my right—I will not war with him—'tis I that lose by this relaxed purpose; not you!"

"Ay, but it is, Egiza. Selfish man, I tell thee thou dost lose but little. The loss is mine, thy people's, thy country's. 'Tis the loss of those who have feeling yet of their country's honour and of their own—of those who are sore beneath the tyrant, and who demand that their king shall come to their help and rescue them from their bondage. What, if thou hast grown heedless

of thy own wrong—blunted to the scorn of others—indifferent to the disgrace in which thou livest? Shall thy insensibility be thy excuse from serving them in their suffering? Are there not many, the subjects of my father and his friends, who break the bread of poverty and travel the rude hill-paths of exile? Shall they lose by your desertion? They have lost all in their service to us and to our cause; can it be that you will deny them with a careless word to hope for the restoration to their homes, to the high and honoured places from which our enemy has driven them? You are doubly sworn to these, nor to these alone. You owe vengeance to the slain—to the many who have perished for King Witiza in prison, on the battle-field, and scaffold; less prudent and sparing of their blood than the firstborn son of him for whom they perished. They have sons too—brave, fearless, noble sons—shall they strive vainly for their rights—for their goodly names, once honourable, but now degraded with the worst reproach to honour, the shame of treason? These suffer loss by your denial—these lose all by your fickleness and weakness—the basest features in a sovereign."

"And are these all? Methinks there are yet others to be named who suffer loss, as thou sayst, by my weakness."

"Doubtless! The whole nation suffers by thy defect, since the uncurbed tyranny of the usurper is a malady that in time possesses all."

"Ay, but such was not my thought, Pelayo. Thou hast spoken nothing of thy own loss, my noble brother. Dost thou not share in my conquest if I conquer? if I perish, dost thou not succeed me?"

The fingers of Pelayo grasped the throat of Egiza the moment he had spoken. The glance of his eye was fiercely withering.

"Thou art base of blood!" he exclaimed—"a wretch most ill-begotten!"

"Take off thy hand, Pelayo," gasped the half-suffocated Egiza; "undo thy hold, or thou wilt strangle me."

The hold of Pelayo was rather tightened than relaxed as he muttered in reply—

"A base slave, whose trade were worthy of the Hebrew—"

The struggles of Egiza were fruitless in the iron grasp of his brother. He was compelled to expostulate.

"Pelayo, brother, undo—let go thy hold—I choke!"

"Brother—no!" exclaimed the indignant youth, releasing his hold, and hurling the other from him. "Brother—no! I sorrow that we are of kindred, though but for this my dagger had searched thy slavish bosom. But—come on with me. Brother or no, sovereign or slave, come on with me to the cavern. Let us delay for no more speech. I parley with thee no longer—I hearken no longer to thy base suspicions—I contend no more with thy base purpose. To the cave; when there, I break all bond with thee—I know thee no longer, whether for brother or comrade. To our friends declare thyself; they wait us there. Say to them what thou hast said to me, and let them judge of thee as they may. For my single self, I give thee up for ever. Hereafter we hold no interest together, whether of blood or business. Thou wilt meet with the Iberian nobles in council; they form the only legitimate council of the nation. They, doubtless, will receive thy declaration with heedful judgment, and learn to yield the contest with the tyrant, as thou wouldst do, or discard the hope that now looks to thee for good guidance and manful deed. This—if they regard thee with Pelayo's eyes—they will surely do, and thou mayst then go free—go free to dream away the hours in thy silly bondage, puling to woods and flowers, piping to streams, losing the consciousness, if thou canst, the while, which tells thee of thy duties left undone, thy father's memory forgotten, and his cruel murder unavenged."

"I will not go with thee, Pelayo," said Egiza, quickly.

"Thou shalt!" was the no less prompt and more resolute response.

"Ha! thou darest not think of violence, Pelayo? and if thou dost, I fear it not. Who's he shall make me?"

"I—thy brother. By Hercules, I swear it. Hear me, Egiza; my hand was but a moment since upon thy throat; my weapon is before it now—bare, ready—and I am resolute. Thou hast trifled long with our men; thou shalt not so trifle with me. Thou hast made me promise them falsely; I will die, and thou shalt die, ere thou dost so dishonour me again. Thou shalt go, though I bear thy bleeding carcass upon my shoulders. Thou shalt go and confirm what I have done for thee, and with thy own lips shall declare that it is thy defection only which is to give the deathblow to our cause. They shall hear from thy own lips thy craven resolve—they shall look thee in the face while thou relatest thy own shame. May my father's spirit help thee in that moment, Egiza, and strengthen thee to a better resolve than now; for, I tell thee, if thou dost not become their king, as they will claim thee—ready with thy sword to lead them against the tyrant—so surely will they doom thee to a fitting punishment. Thy life is at their bidding."

"I give them no such power. Thy rude assault makes thee my foe, Pelayo. Lower thy weapon, or I swear to thee I will forget our kindred, and strike thee as freely as I would the fiercest warrior in the ranks of Roderick."

The threat was lost upon Pelayo.

"Strike as thou wilt—I am too much thy friend to hearken to thy self-condemning words. I'll hale thee to the cavern—living or dead, I'm sworn to bring thee to our friends. They shall hear thy voice, or, in place of it, they shall behold my reeking dagger, and upon it I will swear it is thy lifeblood which it has drank"

Thus speaking, with weapon extended as if for the

fulfiiment of his threat, Pelayo rushed without scruple on his brother. In an instant the latter was prepared, and their swords crossed and clashed in conflict.

"I've borne with thee too long," cried Egiza, as they began the fight. "Thou hast grown insolent beyond endurance even of a brother. Strike now, Pelayo, as if thou wert none; for, I swear to thee, I shall couple no such idle memory with the blows I give thee."

A fierce laugh preceded the reply of Pelayo.

"Let the blows speak for us," he cried, contemptuously; "mine will remind thee of no kindred, be sure. Strike thou with thy best skill, thy most reckless courage—it will glad me that I can yet provoke in thee some spirit not unworthy of our father."

Stung by every uttered word of Pelayo, Egiza pressed closely upon him. His blows fell fast and thick, and for a brief space they required all the superior adroitness of Pelayo in defence to ward and turn them aside. Yet they gave him no disquietude, and the scornful manner in which he spoke all the while only added to the vexation of Egiza.

"What! thou hast life yet!" he cried; "thou canst still feel anger and strike quickly! Well! it is something gained, that, in thy woful degeneracy of soul, thou dost not need that I should spit upon thee or turn thee with my foot. Look, now, with both eyes to thy guard, for I trifle no longer."

"Nor I! nor I!" muttered the roused Egiza through his closed teeth.

The stars looked down with a calm smile upon their fearful combat, while the affrighted echoes gave back the clashing strokes of their weapons from the surrounding hills—which were so recently silent—until there was no longer any solitude among them.

XII.

A FEELING of absolute pleasure rose in the bosom of Pelayo as this conflict proceeded. Yet it was not that he found a pleasure in the strife itself, or desired the shedding of a brother's blood; but, regarding the mental apathy of Egiza as, in great part, the consequence of his bodily inaction, he supposed it not improbable that any circumstances which could bring his blood into exercise, and prompt a return to the wonted thoughts of his mind, would necessarily have the effect of bringing him back to the performance of those duties, his neglect of which he could not but consider as the foulest treachery and the most bitter dishonour. This sluggishness, it is true, had been most conspicuous since his first interview with Cava; but Pelayo, as yet insensible to the tender emotion himself, was disposed to regard the passion into which Egiza had fallen for the damsel as an effect of his apathy rather than its occasion. Believing this, it was his confident hope that any strong provocation, which would stimulate him into unmeasured anger, would break the chains of that apathy which had so completely fettered his spirit and enfeebled his resolves; and it was his no less confident hope that the wily bondage of Cava would also be severed, as a necessary consequence of the overthrow of that other domination, which had placed him within her seductive influence, and made him so susceptible of spells which, to the mind of Pelayo, were so very unimposing. Once fairly aroused, he did not dread that his brother would readily sink back into the lulling and unmanly sluggishness from which he had been so rudely awakened,

and his satisfaction arose much more from this belief than from any desire to inflict a punishment, however deserved, upon his brother for his defection and default hitherto. The night was one of a clear starlight, and they could behold each other distinctly, and well discern the movements, not less of their hands and weapons, than of the muscles of their several faces. That of Egiza was full of anger: his cheek was flushed with the glowing and irritated blood; his eye darted forth the most angry fires, and his lips were fast riveted together and bound by his compressing teeth, until the blood started from their pressure. The countenance of Pelayo, on the other hand, wore quite another expression. An air of pleasantness and satisfaction overspread it; and, though full of that decisive character which distinguished all his actions, it could yet be seen that its resolve was softened by good-humour, and that nothing of malice, and but little of anger, was at that moment in his bosom. Egiza could not help perceiving this, and the discovery, if possible, increased his own indignation. His blows were seriously given, and with momently increasing rapidity. But Pelayo did not seem to heed the earnestness of his brother's hostility. No movements could have been more cool and temperate than those which he made; and Egiza chafed like a caged animal when he found all his efforts ineffectual to set aside the guard of his opponent, and win the opportunity of the stroke. To increase his rage, Pelayo encouraged him with humorous language to increase his efforts, even as a strong man trifles with the anger of a froward boy, and stimulates, by petty taunts, his feeble and impotent hostility.

"Wilt go with me, Egiza?" said he, in the midst of the sharp controversy; "'twere better—the same good blows which thou expendest most idly upon me would not fall so harmlessly upon the crest of a soldier of Roderick."

"They shall not always prove idle or harmless upon thee, Pelayo," responded the other, as he redoubled his efforts, and renewed the assault with greater energy.

"Thou art rash, my brother, and the time is come for thy better teaching," said Pelayo, in reply; and the smile passed from his face as he spoke, and his lips were now closed, and such was the stern, strong glare that then shot forth from his eyes, that Egiza faltered in his assault.

"I will teach thee thy feebleness, Egiza," said Pelayo, "and will trifle with thee no longer. Look now to thy guard, for, unless thou makest better play than thou hast done, I will take thy weapon from thy hands in spite of thee."

The swords clashed as he spoke, and that of Pelayo seemed to cling to the opposing blade as if it were welded upon it. Egiza beheld in an instant the difference now between his brother's blows and those which had before been given; but he had very little time for reflection, for, in another instant, his weapon was twisted from his hand, and whirled from him as if by the stroke of an enchanter. He stood with undefended bosom beneath the sword-point of Pelayo.

"Strike," he sullenly exclaimed—"thou hast striven hard to shame me in the eyes of others, and thou hast, at length, disgraced me in my own. What more wouldst thou wish, Pelayo, than my life? What more canst thou take? Strike, and let me suffer no longer from thy hate and my own humiliation."

He folded his arms as thus he spoke, and looked with comparative calm upon his brother, expecting his instant death. But the mood of Pelayo was subdued, and the uplifted sword-point fell to the ground. With a voice full of mournfulness and anguish, quite unlike that which he commonly employed, he thus replied to the speech of Egiza:

"Egiza—oh Egiza! wherefore hast thou so far hum-

bled both of us, as to compel me to bestow this so severe lesson upon thee? Why hast thou fallen from thy noble thoughts and from thy sacred duties? Why wouldst thou make our father's memory a thing of scorn and thy own name a word of infamy? Why degrade thy own brother to an executioner? for"—and he concluded solemnly—"even upon this errand have I come."

"Strike!" was the response of the other, still more sullenly than before—"do thy errand."

"Require me not, Egiza, but go with me. Upon my knees, my brother and my sovereign, I do implore thee. Go with me—seek our men. Declare thyself their king—their true and loyal king—ready to lead them to the enemy; forgetting all the errors of the past, thy weakness, and thy unresolve—forgiving all the rashness of Pelayo."

"What if I tell thee no—and do not go?"

"Then here thou stay'st for ever—here I slay thee. I've sworn it, brother. Thou shalt go with me and see our men, or I will smear my weapon with thy blood, and show thy fate and my own firm resolve writ on the face of the same sudden messenger in the same letters."

"If I do go, Pelayo, it will be but to show thy followers how idle would be the struggle with Roderick, and to withdraw myself from a strife so hopeless," said Egiza.

"I care not what thou tell'st them, so that thou goest, and will approve all the performances to which, when thy mood was more valorous and less reluctant, thou didst set me to. Thy presence before them will acquit me to them of all that I have said for thee; and they may then order it as it may seem best to them or to thee afterward."

"I will go with thee, Pelayo; yet think not that I go because of thy threat to slay me: what I resolve, I resolve in proper reason, and not in fear."

"As thou wilt, for whatever reason may seem best to thee—I care not, so that thou goest. Thou shalt do thy duty, and fulfil thy promises to the men who are doomed as traitors and ready to die for thee. When thou hast seen them, thou wilt, I think, be willing to draw sword and lead them; and if not—"

"What then, Pelayo?" demanded the other, finding that he came to a pause before finishing the sentence.

"Why, then, may God always make thee as ready to die as I found thee but now, Egiza. Take thy sword, my brother, it lies before thee."

XIII.

With subdued spirits, quieted, and now without any show of anger, yet more than ever estranged from each other, the two brothers proceeded upon their way together until they came within distant view of a miserable and unsheltered cabin of a peasant among the hills. The scene was wild beyond description. The hovel stood on the side of a ravine, through which, even then, a mountain torrent, the consequence of late heavy rains, was rushing with unexampled rapidity. The exceeding narrowness of the gorge, its broken bed and circuitous route, caused the torrent to roar in its passage down like the voice of a labouring tempest. On one hand rose a dense but small forest, frowning blackly in unison with the scene, but the rocks beside were bleak and bald of vegetation. A stunted tree stood at the entrance of the cabin, which was wrapped in darkness, and at the first glance of the two young princes it seemed to them to be entirely uninhabited. Pelayo stopped short ere he approached the dwelling, and pointed out the situation of the gorge and the general features of the country to his unheeding and regardless brother.

"Look, Egiza, ere thou movest! See the rude cerros, that threaten behind, before us, and on every side—and among them see how many are the ravines and winding hollows which make passages for flight—for freedom! To the left, behold yon gorge, the bed of some great torrent now dried up. The path is black in its exceeding depth, and a brave army might wind through its bosom, almost in broad daylight, without startling the browzing goat or the watchful shepherd upon the cliffs which overhang it. The true soul and the fearless spirit might brave Roderick in such a place as this, even as the Lusitanian Viriatus defied of yore, and defeated the best consuls of imperial Rome. Would that the brave savage were living now! Would that we were worthy of his valour! Dost thou regard the scene, my brother?—thine eye seems only to survey the backward path over which we came."

The melancholy Egiza responded to his brother, but his words were few and their sense spiritless. His soul was with his eyes, and they strayed backward ever in the direction of Count Julian's castle.

"I see the gorge," said he—"'tis very dark and deep. 'Twould be a fearful fall from the overhanging cliff, if the regardless shepherd—"

"'Twould be a glorious passage for brave men seeking in silence the superior foe. Canst thou not think with me, Egiza? If Roderick lay upon the opposite hills with his assembled army, could we not, though with our hundred knights and their small bands, win on his camp by night, and, through that gorge to the left, or even through this that spreads itself before us, smite them with ruin? By my soul we could, had we but souls! Come on—thou sleepest, brother."

The quick eye of Pelayo beheld the stupor of his brother. His own enthusiasm seemed to awaken no corresponding impulse within Egiza's bosom; and his language accordingly became stern as he turned away

from the survey of those prospects, the susceptibilities of which for the purposes of war he had been labouring so vainly to describe to him.

"Thus," he muttered, as he led the way, "thus are we slaves and victims. It is thus that we make the tyrant who overcomes and chains us. Tyranny is but the creature of our need—the scourge that whips us for decaying virtue—that chastens to reform us. The tyrant never yet sprang to life in any land where virtue presided among the people. It is the foul, fearful progeny of our vices—the rank disease of our degeneracy—born of our baseness, and powerful only in our shame. Our weakness gives it strength; and he who submits to injustice but arms tyranny. The slave makes the tyrant, the coward creates the oppressor. 'Tis a cruel thought, that one, born, like Egiza, to sway—to noble purpose—high destiny—the heir of such a mighty heritage—should so fall off from honour—so forget his name, his very nature; and move thus, with a soul mingling with the dust upon which he treads, and a step like that of a beaten cur that dreads a second punishment."

The soliloquy came only in part to the ears of Egiza. He had been musing of things remote—he had been dreaming of Cava. Thinking that Pelayo had spoken to him, he started as from slumber.

"What sayst thou, Pelayo? Didst speak to me?"

"I spoke of thee, my brother," replied Pelayo, continuing still his forward progress; "I strove to think how best to bring thee to life—to put blood into thy heart—to give wings to thy spirit, action to thy sinews, and exercise to thy strength. I strove to think how best to make thee once more a man—to give thee freedom, and—"

On a sudden the words of the speaker were arrested, and Egiza, who came behind, heard strange accents mingling with those of his brother.

XIV.

"STAND back, before I strike thee to my feet and beat thee into powder!"

It was thus that a fierce voice arrested the progress and the speech of Pelayo. A gigantic and wild figure sprang up in his path even at the entrance of the cottage, to the threshold of which they had now come, and brandished a heavy club before their eyes. The foot of Pelayo had struck upon the cumbrous body of the man, who lay sleeping at the door of the hovel, and aroused him into angry consciousness. Egiza started back, almost in terror, as he beheld the uncouth and strange figure arising from the earth. But not so Pelayo, whom nothing could easily daunt or take by surprise. Yet well might the appearance of the stranger inspire apprehension, without shame, in any human bosom. His figure was Herculean—his features dark—his hair, which was long and deeply black, streamed wildly from his shoulders, and the thick beard was matted above his lips and chin in rugged folds, which did not seem to be lifted often, even to permit of the free access of food to his wide and swagging lips. His gesture well accorded with his outward seeming. It was blustering and fierce, and the voice was that of one who would seem to have been struggling to outbrave the tempest in the piercing strength of its shrieks.

"Stand back!" he cried, as he rose and stood before the princes—"I will not speak again to thee, but strike."

In an instant the thick short sword of Pelayo waved in his hand, and, despite of all the entreaty of Egiza, who would have restrained his progress, he advanced upon the savage.

"Beware!" cried the stranger, in a threatening voice, yet receding somewhat from his position.

"Urge him not, Pelayo; he will crush thee with his mace," cried Egiza.

"Then get thy weapon ready to slay him when he does so," responded Pelayo, chiding, with a stern tone, his laggard brother. "But fear nothing, Egiza—I have no fear. This burly monster can do nothing with me in so clear a light; and be sure I shall not deal so tenderly with him as I did but a little while ago with thee."

"Back!" cried the savage, seeing the determined approach of Pelayo—"back! I warn thee."

But Pelayo laughed scornfully, still advancing, and Egiza also drew his weapon and came on closely after his brother. The savage swung the heavy mace about his head, and in another instant it would have come fatally down upon that of Pelayo, but that the quick-sighted and fearless warrior suddenly closed in with him, and with the hilt of his sword struck the savage a blow between his eyes which half stunned him, while it dazzled his vision with the most stupifying glare. Without falling, he tottered back against the door of his hovel, under the overhanging eaves of which, in the open air, he seemed to have been sleeping. His mace, still in his hand, fell by his side; and though he lifted it a second time, he seemed confused and objectless, and did not again aim to strike either of the princes. Pelayo grasped the huge weapon with a sudden hand, while Egiza presented his bared weapon at the throat of its owner.

"Give me room," cried the man, recovering, and seeking to push away the princes; but he was checked as the sharp point of Egiza's weapon pricked his extended hand.

"Be not foolish, man," said Pelayo, kindly; "we seek not to do you harm. We are friends, and would only crave from thee a place of shelter and quiet for the night, which is already half gone."

"Who art thou?" demanded the savage, in reply.

"Thy master—have I not written my name between thine eyes?—thy friend, if thou believest in me," was the calm but authoritative reply of Pelayo.

"I can fight thee still," replied the man, fiercely; "I have no master but Ipsistos—the mightiest God."

"As thou wilt," said Pelayo, "though I care not to fight thee, for I would sleep—my companion and myself are weary. Give us lodging in thy cabin, and I will fight thee in the morning, and plague thee with thine own cudgel; deny us, and I will put my sword through thee even where thou standest."

"I like thy speech, and will try thee, as thou sayst, in the morning," replied the savage, with a laugh that was harshly pleasant in the deep, melancholy silence of those midnight and bleak hills. He continued:

"Thou shalt have the lodging thou requirest, stranger; and if thou canst strike me 'tween the eyes by daylight, as thou hast done to-night, I will go with thee for a season."

"Wilt thou follow me?" demanded Pelayo, eagerly.

"If thy pursuit shall please me—what is that?" replied the savage.

"War!"

"Good!—with whom?"

"Mine enemy."

"Give me the stroke at morning thou hast given me to-night, and thy enemy shall be mine," was the promise of the savage.

"By Hercules the Striker, I will make thy bones ache!" said Pelayo.

"If thou canst," said the other.

"What art thou?" asked Pelayo.

"A man—dost doubt me?"

"No! The name of thy nation I would know?"

"Bascone!"

"Ha!—what dost thou here, then?"

"Live!"

"What brought thee to these parts, I mean?"

"I was a warrior, but the King Witiza was a better. I fought against him, and he made me a prisoner, with many of my people. I was released by the new king, and then I fled from Toledo."

"Wherefore, when he released thee?"

"I feared his tyranny."

"Why, what hadst thou to fear? What should tempt him to thy injury? What hadst thou to lose?"

"My freedom!" replied the savage; and as the reply reached the ears of Pelayo, he grasped convulsively the arm of Egiza while he replied—

"Comrade, I'll blacken thee with bruises on the morrow, I so resolve to make thee follow me. But let us into thy dwelling."

"It is open to thee," replied the man—"there's fire, and thou wilt find acorns upon the hearth. For thy couch—the dry earth is beneath thee; the turf makes a good pillow, but I prefer mine here, where the air keeps it ever fresh. I will watch at the door while ye are sleeping."

"Watch well!" said Pelayo—"beware the stranger does not again strike thee between the eyes."

"We'll wait till day for that," replied the other, merrily, while the two young princes, accepting his courtesy—such as it was—at once entered the miserable hovel, where they slept without interruption until the day had fairly dawned and the red sunlight came gliding in through the thousand decayed openings of the hovel.

XV.

Pelayo started to his feet and awakened his brother.

"I must go forth and do battle for my follower," said he, gayly.

"Thou wilt not fight with him, Pelayo?" said Egiza.

"And wherefore not, if it needs it?" was the reply;

"such good limbs in a soldier are worth fighting for, and we are too slack of men in our service to stint the price we pay for them. I will but stand a blow with the burly Bascone, and I will not shrink from a bruise or two: he will not do me much evil, for I have a trick of the hand which shall blind him, and of which he cannot know. But I think not to bide the buffet. Speak lower, for still he sleeps, as thou mayst hear by the heavy breathing from without. Let him but sleep on till I stand above him, and I make him my follower without strife."

"Thou wilt not strike him as he sleeps, Pelayo?" said Egiza.

"What dost thou take me for, Egiza?" responded the other, as he turned upon and sternly surveyed his brother—"hast thou known me so long, from youth, to think me grown base in my manhood? By Hercules the Pilot, thy own course must have undergone dreadful alteration when thou doubtest so of mine!"

Thus speaking, Pelayo grasped his sword in the middle, and cautiously moved to the door of the hovel, which, with like caution, he unfastened. The savage Bascone still slept, with the whole bulk of his frame stretched at length before the entrance. Pelayo placed one of his feet over his body, and, thus bestriding him, with a light hand he struck the hilt of his sword once more between the eyes of the sleeper, just where he had stricken him the night before. The Bascone awakened and gazed round him with astonishment.

"Get up and follow me," cried Pelayo—"I claim thy promise."

"Thou must fight me first," said the Bascone.

"No!" responded Pelayo, with a laugh, "I have already won thee. I pledged myself to strike thee again between thine eyes where before I struck thee: was not my sword upon the spot when thou awakened?"

"Yes, but I slept then," said the Bascone.

"And the warrior is bound who sleeps. I have won thee, for I awakened before thee, and this gives me the game. Arise, then, my follower, and give to me thy name."

"Thou art wise not less than strong," said the Bascone, "and hast fairly outwitted me. Thou art worthy to be a great leader, for thy head and hand agree. Still would I like to try thee a buffet, if it were only to repay thee for that which I suffered at thy hands last night."

"Thou canst not if thou wouldst, good Bascone," said Pelayo—"thine eyes are swollen too greatly with the blow, and well I know thou couldst not see the double ends of thy enemy's staff at the same moment. They would twinkle on both sides of thy crown at once, and when thou struck'st most heavily at thy foeman's neck, his legs would be around thine own. Thou art fairly my follower, good Bascone, and let it content thee to strike my enemies as thou wouldst have stricken me. Be satisfied, such desire will more greatly pleasure me. Tell me thy name."

"They call me Britarmin among my brethren the Basques; and name me besides, when I am hungry, the 'Seven Teeth;' and when I am satisfied, the 'Nine Sleepers;' for when I have not eaten long, and find wherewithal to requite myself at last, they affirm that I am equal to any seven of my brethren in the business of the feast—when it is over, I call for the repose of nine."

"I shall know how to provide for thy seven teeth, Britarmin—but this shall be only when the fight with my foe is over."

"If I am to follow thee—as I confess it somehow pleases me to think so, for I like thy valour, and thy wit, and thy frank spirit—give me thy name also."

"Surely—like thyself, I too have my by-names; and while I have an enemy men call me 'The Sleepless;' and while I have a friend they call me 'The Watchful.'"

"Good names, my lord," said Britarmin; "but what did they name thee at thy birth?"

Pelayo put his hand upon the shoulder of the Bascone, and looked him sternly in his face as he replied—

"I tell thee the name of one who is an enemy to all tyrants, and a doubly sworn foe to that tyrant who is now upon the throne of Iberia—I tell thee this, Britarmin, as I am willing henceforward to intrust thee with my life—I am Pelayo."

"Brother, thou shouldst not," whispered Egiza, hurriedly, as he came forward.

The Bascone seemed to understand the motive of interference and the sense of the expostulation; for, turning a severe look upon Egiza, he cried enthusiastically to Pelayo, while he put the hand of the prince upon his head—

"Britarmin is no traitor. Thou hast done well to trust me with thy secret, Prince Pelayo—henceforward I am thine. Lead on—I follow thee."

XVI.

Pelayo and Egiza led the way, and were closely followed by their new companion, wielding his massive club. Ere they left the hovel, they broke their fast upon a few dried acorns and chestnuts, which hitherto had supplied the desires of the "seven-teethed" Britarmin. Upon this simple fare had he lived for weeks before the arrival of Pelayo; and such was his savage and severe love of liberty, that he infinitely preferred it to all the refinements and delicacies of the city. There, as he said, he felt himself still in bondage, though perfectly unshackled. The walls of the city, of themselves, annoyed him, for he could not conceive of their object, unless to hold men in prison. When Pelayo told him that their use was to prevent the incursions of the foe,

he replied that men never yet needed such defences so long as they possessed the desires and the strength of freemen.

"Thou shalt be at the pulling down of these walls, Britarmin," said Pelayo. The savage shouted till the hills echoed again, waved his mace in air, but, uttering no other answer, followed his new guide with all the thoughtless simplicity and gladness of a child.

XVII.

"Egiza," said Pelayo, "to-night we are to meet our friends at the Cave of Wamba."

"To-night?" said Egiza.

"Ay, to-night—our friends—the brave, devoted few, who now risk the doom and the dungeons of the tyrant in thy behalf—we meet with them to-night! Dost thou hear me—dost thou understand me, Egiza? Think, my brother, think well!—to-night (the time is close at hand)—our friends (can there be a sweeter meeting?) —we meet them, my brother, in thy cause—in our common cause—to strike against thy enemy, the tyrant Roderick—the murderer of our father—the usurper of our throne—the enslaver of our country."

"I understand thee well enough, Pelayo," was the reply of Egiza, who seemed impatient of the earnest manner of his brother.

"We meet, too—think, my brother—we meet with them in the Cave of Wamba!—that cave which was hallowed as the home of the holy man, when he left the cares of the empire which he had saved to other hands! What a prince was he—a prince to emulate—to follow in all practice! In that cave I think to meet his spirit with the rest. Let not thine falter there, I pray thee, brother. The place is holy—haunted. His knees have pressed its rocks—his prayers have risen from its

encircling gloom, in the deepest and darkest hour of midnight, in tribute for his country, to his God. It will need that thou shouldst speak to our people a language such as his—'twill need, I say, my brother!"

"Have I not said to thee already, my brother, that I hold this struggle to be vain, and more like the madness of the dreamer than the calm reasoning resolve of one who thinks and knows?" was the reply of Egiza.

"Let me not answer thee, my brother," said Pelayo, gently—"I would not be angry with thee now. What I say to thee this day I would say pleadingly—I would say humbly—I would bring thee to think and to feel the truth, even as I feel it; and though my blood bounds wildly and my heart throbs vexatiously, sometimes, when thou speakest coldly of these things, the very thoughts of which do fever me, yet will I so school blood and heart into subjection this day, as that neither will have cause to reproach me hereafter when I think of thee."

"What meanest thou, Pelayo?" said Egiza.

"Look down!" said Pelayo, without heeding the inquiring looks and language of his brother—"look down, my brother!"

They stood a few paces from the edge of the precipice, to which, following the road, they had been directly advancing. It was then that the path suddenly turned aside, and on one hand it took its way down a deep gorge, partly the work of art and time, and partly made by the heavy torrents that worked their way down from the upper hills to the deep valley that lay below. Where they then stood, however, the deep and sudden abyss spread itself before them, and the bosom involuntarily shuddered as the eye surveyed the edge of the precipice. Egiza looked down, agreeably to the suggestion of Pelayo.

"What seest thou?" demanded the latter.

"I see the cattle grazing, and now a shepherd looks

up, and now moves on, with sluggard step, beside them."

"Seest thou naught else?" asked Pelayo.

"Nothing—what seest thou, brother?"

"I do not see the cattle nor the shepherd," said Pelayo.

"Why, there they are—there by the rivulet, that toils and tumbles through yon rocks. Dost thou not hear the brawl?—its clamour seeks us here."

"I hear it not," said Pelayo, while he continued to gaze, "nor do I seek to hear or to behold it."

Egiza turned to him with a look of inquiry. The eye of Pelayo met his gaze, and it was full of a proud meaning, which the former could not understand, but which he could not help but feel.

"I do not see the cattle nor the shepherd," said Pelayo—"it is not these I look for! but I look once more to see the bands of Viriatus foiling the Roman consul. Dost thou remember—thou hast not sure forgotten, oh Egiza, the last time went we with our father forth, he pointed out the gorge, made glorious then by Viriatus. There the Roman came with his dense legions. The Lusitanian chief stole from behind the hills with a small band, inviting the assault. The prætor saw, and fell into the cunning snare he laid: Vitellius fell, and the Iberians came, clustering like angry bees on every side, and hemmed the invaders in. Vainly they fought that day: they fled at last; but with as swift a wing did hate pursue as ever helped on fear. Not one had then escaped, had not Nigidius, colleague of Vitellius, come to the Roman's aid. I think of it, and see once more the strife begin—there—just below—"

"Why, sure, Pelayo, 'tis a dream thou hast," exclaimed Egiza, interrupting his brother, whose eye intently watched the pass below them, while his finger rigidly pointed to a distant section of the gorge. Pelayo

turned suddenly upon his brother in silence. Egiza continued—

"Thou errest in thy speech—it was not here that Viriatus fought and slew Vitellius; 'twas in the bloody defiles near Tribola—"

"'Tis well thy memory lives," replied Pelayo; "and sweet to me, Egiza, to discover that all is not forgotten from thy mind of what our fathers wrought. Full well I know 'twas at Tribola that Vitellius fell—thou didst not think that, when my eye was stretched as piercing yon abyss, I looked to see the legions issuing forth? No, my fair brother—the sight was in the mind. I called for thine, and would have given it glorious exercise. I would have had thee from the distant vision catch a faint hope of glory for thyself—would show thee Roderick's legions in some pass, bleak, rugged, deep like this; and in the fearless chief of Lusitania, with little band, small chance, but fearless heart, I would have had thee look upon Egiza, and dare be, what that vision would have made thee, a patriot and a man! But let us on: we'll speak no more of this; I leave it to thy thought. Come on, Britarmin—what matter, Bascone —thou look'st as thou wert angered?"

"Why, so I am, my prince," replied Britarmin, "but the anger is a pleasant one. Only speak when we are going into battle as thou didst just now, and I will leap into the enemy's throat. Almost I thought that thou didst behold them coming quickly around the mountains below us, and I strained my eyes to behold them also —thy words were so proud, and thine eye so glorious."

In silence they descended the pass, each too much filled with his own thoughts to speak farther for some time; but, before the day was half over, Pelayo renewed the subject most active in his mind to his brother Egiza. Long and earnestly he strove to awaken him, by every sort of exhortation and argument, to a proper sense of the duties which he had hitherto neglected. He repeat-

ed many stories of the olden time—of old Iberian valour—of their ancestors, and of their immediate family; and in the prosecution of these efforts he strove studiously to forbear harsh comment and ungentle word. One time he soothed, then solicited, then argued; and at moments, when, in his narratives, he elicited some spirited response from Egiza, his heart would rejoice with hope that his brother was beginning to awaken from the apathy which had possessed him. But such hopes lingered not long; and he saw with the deepest sorrow, as, towards nightfall, they reached the neighbourhood of the Cave of Wamba, that his brother maintained his former unresolve, and still thought discouragingly of the enterprise which was before them. Pelayo said but little after this; yet one sentence, which he uttered in a cold and solemn manner when they came in sight of the cave, fell on the ears of Egiza with a deathlike emphasis.

"Here is the place, Egiza—here we meet all our friends. I have now done with thee. Whatever they resolve shall be my law. I'll say no word against it—lift no hand save in support of what they decree. Beware of what thou dost—thou knowest their power—they are the National Council of Iberia, sole sovereign in the land. Let's in to them."

"A moment, brother," said Egiza, in a whisper, while he grasped the arm of Pelayo, who was about to go forward.

"What wouldst thou now?" he asked.

"Such is not their power?"

"Unless you hold the usurper Roderick to be the truer sovereign, yes!" was the reply of Pelayo.

"And what if I declare myself against their plans—if I withhold myself?" demanded Egiza.

"A shaven crown or death!—the monk's stone cell and rosary, or else the sharp stroke of the axeman," was the stern reply of Pelayo.

"I will not enter with thee," was the sudden resolve of Egiza as he heard these words, and he drew back from the mouth of the cavern.

"Too late, Egiza, now," replied Pelayo, grasping his arm and dragging him into the throat of the cavern—"too late!—show not the coward now, but say out thy firm resolve, whatever it be, to our people, and meet thy fate like a man, whatever they decree it,—follow me close, Britarmin."

The Bascone did as he was commanded, and Egiza was forced to advance, for Pelayo and his follower were now between him and the entrance. With a deep sigh he went onward, bitterly regretting that he had not preferred to brave the sword-point of his brother, which threatened him in the night, rather than the trial and possible doom which were before him now. When he had fairly entered within the recess, Pelayo lingered behind and spoke thus to Britarmin—

"Keep thou here concealed, Britarmin—hide thee behind this ledge of the rock—thou wilt be unseen, and thy presence unsuspected. Watch well that none leave the cavern till thou hearest my signal—admit all to enter that seek to do so; and show thyself only to those who would depart before the business of our meeting is over. Remember—strike down, with a sudden and sweeping blow, him who would leave us until permission is given to him to do so. I do not except from this command my own self, nor the person of my brother who but now preceded us. Remember, Bascone, I trust thee as my soldier. Be faithful as thou wouldst have success—do as I bid thee in this, if thou wouldst have employment for thy seven teeth."

The Bascone placed the hand of Pelayo upon his head while he swore—

"By the god Ipsistos, whose wrath I fear, I swear, Prince Pelayo, to do even as thou hast commanded!"

"It is well—I trust thee, Britarmin. Remember, I

except not myself from thy blow, should I seek, ere the proper time, to depart from the cavern. Egiza, my brother, who came with us—remember, also, thou wilt slay him as if he were a stranger and a Saracen, with as little pause or sorrow, should he seek to fly."

"I will slay him—I will do even as thou commandest!" was the reply; and Pelayo then followed his brother into the recesses of the cavern, leaving the Basconе safely hidden behind the projecting ledge of the rock which he had shown to him as a place for shelter and concealment.

END OF BOOK THE THIRD.

BOOK IV.

I.

In its various workings, how independent mind ever is of matter. Not so when the proposition is reversed. The scheme which is perfected with consummate art in the silence and seclusion of the closet is made fruitless when it depends for development upon mere thews and sinews; and the genius of the philosopher is hourly called upon to lament, more and more, the weakness of humanity, when it beholds its inadequacy to the execution of those divine conceptions which arise from intense thought and daring imagination. Yet the mind of man, though mortified with its nonperformance, is never so well assured of its own immortal destiny as when it discovers the incapacity of its earthly agents in the prosecution of its thousand purposes.

How various, too, are the forms of mental independence! With what a noble profligacy has the Deity provided men to be free of each other! Thought is so various, that the mind of one man need never encroach upon the boundaries and the province of another; and millions shall so work in their several stores of speculation and invention, yet never penetrate into the empire, nor disturb the creations, of their neighbours. The conspirator shall toil in the overthrow of the sovereign, who, with a thought equally, if not more active, shall labour, at the same moment, for the eternal bondage of the conspirator. The rebel and his ruler shall in the

same hour meditate their several schemes of subjection and revolt, yet no divine instinct shall enable the one to conceive the subject-matter of his enemy's deliberation.

It was thus that, while Pelayo with a proper boldness, and Lord Oppas with his natural and beloved cunning, toiled together, and framed their plans of revolt against King Roderick, that monarch, though troubled in a thousand ways with his cares of empire and his plans of tyranny, never once suspected the existence of such a conspiracy. Nor did the conspirators, in turn, ever once conjecture that a greater power than their own was at work, arraying itself, and arising, by which Roderick should fall without effort of theirs—a power infinitely beyond their own, and which should, to a great though still limited extent, control their best efforts for the restoration of their country's freedom. Still less did the ever-planning Oppas think that Pelayo, whom he only sought to use, should soar in triumph when he himself should be grovelling in the dust—should live in glorious memories when his name would be allied only with shame and degradation. And, to descend still lower, little did the base spirit of the Hebrew Amri imagine that the hour was so near at hand when the prayer of his scorned and imprisoned sire would undergo such direct and fearful realization—when the dreadful words which his ears had heard from the lips of Adoniakim, in the moment of his flight—"Jehovah, God of Heaven, the just God and the perfect, may the doom of the ungrateful son be sharp and sudden—may it be felt, and may it be fatal!"—would so quickly meet with the accord from above which they desired, and descend in punishment upon his guilty head in their utmost force. His heart had become insensible to its fears: it teemed only with the vicious hopes of his lustful imagination. His fancies only prefigured to his mind his vengeance upon Melchior, and his possession of the beautiful daughter, whose beauty was no longer

powerful to buy the devoted life of her sire. And the miserable woman Urraca—little did she think, while she was planning the fondest schemes of retirement, and, possibly, of innocence, with the man upon whom she had so madly concentrated her affections, that the hour was approaching when all her hopes, like the affections from which they had sprung into existence, would be crushed and trampled into dust. Little did she dream of that fearful mental revolution—that change in head and heart—in thought and hope—which a few hours were to bring about. She had lain down in a moment of repose from sorrow—a short respite from the storms which vice must ever bring along with it: she awakened to their dreadful renewal—to the defeat of her hope—to the annihilation of her dream of peace—to despair of life—to a desire of death! Let us now return to her.

II.

It was late when Urraca awakened from her slumbers, which had been sweeter and purer than, for a long season before, she had ever known them. She started with some surprise, and wondered to find Amri no longer beside her. Her thoughts and her dreams—her heart and its hopes, had been, and were still, so full of his image, that it was now with a feeling of intense disappointment, amounting to pain, that she discovered his absence. But she was too well assured of the truth of those pledges which he had just given her, and she relied too confidently on his vows, to allow any disappointment of this nature to affect her seriously or long. She had realized, in the few preceding hours which have been dwelt upon already, that sense of recovered peace, and of new and reasonable hope, which must ever arise to the abused and vicious spirit with every backward

step which it takes to those paths of virtue from which it has so long wandered. With the resolve to lead a purer life—to discard the ostentatious trappings, and to reject the base allurements of that lustful self-abandonment in which she still lived—came a feeling of quiet peace, which had long been a stranger to her bosom. She had learned to be weary of those false joys which must ever end in weariness; and she was possessed of a strength of determination and of spirit, not often given to the debased, which supported her in the resolve to retrace her steps, and recover whatever might remain within her reach of the lost possessions of virtue. The pure waters of health and untroubled joy seemed to flow and well in the prospect which her fancy painted to her eyes, and her heart glowed and her eye kindled with the desire to obtain them, even as the weary and thirsting pilgrim of the desert pants for the fountain which gleams before his fancy in the distance, and toils with new vigour for its attainment.

While Urraca looked around her, after her first feeling of disappointment at the absence of Amri was over, the person of Zitta appeared before her eyes, as she emerged from a niche in the apartment which had hitherto been concealed by a falling curtain.

"Zitta," said Urraca to the woman, with a voice of gentleness. She answered the call, and approached her mistress; but the latter saw, at a glance, that she was reluctant, and her looks bespoke more than ordinary discomposure.

"Come to me, Zitta," said Urraca—"tell me how long is it since Amri went forth?"

"Since the first hour of day, my lady," was the answer of the slave, uttered readily enough, but without any of that softening deference of tone and manner which shows a good spirit moving the reply. At another time such a response might have awakened the anger of the mistress; but the returning virtue of her

mind was hourly gaining strength, and was beginning to subdue the quick and jealous pride of the irascible and imperious temper.

"Said he aught to thee on going forth? Did he not say when he would return? Left he no word with thee for my ear?"

"None, my lady," said the slave.

Urraca was silent for a few moments, and turned away her eyes from the woman, who now proceeded to her duties in the chamber. But it was not long before Urraca again addressed her, which she did in the same gentle and subdued tone which she employed before.

"Come closer to me, Zitta—I have something which I would say to thee, and I feel too feeble to speak to thee so far."

The woman did as she was commanded, something surprised at the singular change which seemed to have come over her mistress, and which was shown as well in the indulgent language which she employed as in the soft, conciliating, and greatly altered tones of her voice. Conscious as she was of her own evil design upon the life of the person who addressed her, she approached the couch to which she was bidden with a feeling of apprehension, which showed itself in the sudden paleness of her cheek and in the awkwardness of her movement. But this, though observed by Urraca, failed to arouse her anger or indignation, as had been but too frequently the case before. The soothing dreams which had been present to her mind, and the hopes and thoughts with which she had dressed up the promised life before her, seemed to have made her indulgent in the extreme, and to have softened to meekness a spirit only too easily aroused, and too stubborn to be easily quelled or quieted. This very alteration in her usual manner was of itself too surprising to Zitta not to startle her, and in her guilty consciousness of

soul it positively alarmed her with an unaccountable sort of terror.

"Sit on the couch, Zitta—thou dost not fear me? Why dost thou tremble—what is it alarms thee? Can it be that I have been so cruel a mistress to thee? Wherefore thy apprehension—what is it that troubles thee?"

"I—'tis nothing—a little sickness—I am not well, my lady—I—" and the woman resorted to falsehood to account for the singular emotion which she found herself unable to conceal.

"Sick—I am sorry, Zitta—thy cheek affirms it—it is very pale. Thou shouldst retire—thou shouldst have rest a while; and I would despatch thee at once to thy chamber, Zitta, but that I have something to unfold to thee which I think will relieve thee of thy sickness."

The surprise of the woman was duly increased by these words, and her fears now amounted almost to consternation. She stared, without ability to reply, upon the face of Urraca, who, with a quiet smile upon her lips as she witnessed the wonder of her servant, thus continued her speech—

"You have a mother, Zitta—she is old?"

"Yes, my lady, she is very old."

"You love her, Zitta?"

"Love her, my lady!"

"You do—you do," said Urraca, hurriedly—"I know you do—the question was most idle. Your mother—you must love her. Where does she live now, Zitta?"

"At Merida, my lady."

"Do you not wish to see her?"

"Much, my lady. I prayed thee more than once for this privilege, my lady, which you denied me."

"Did I deny you?—are you sure of that?"

"Most sure, my lady."

"I do not think it. Yet it must have been," she said, musingly, and with a deep sigh: "my heart has

been a hard one—stubborn in its weakness; and no wonder I should deny thee to seek thy mother, Zitta, when I fled so wickedly from my own."

"You did deny me, my lady," said the woman, studiously repeating the words, as if to strengthen her own resolve, for the unwonted gentleness of Urraca had also had its effect in somewhat softening her. The strange sense of her words, too, had greatly surprised and subdued the slave.

"'Twas wrong in me to do so," said Urraca: "and you would like to see her again, Zitta—would you not like to go to her, and live with her for ever? Say—would you not?"

The person thus addressed did not answer this question; but her eyes sank upon the floor, and her head drooped, while her tremulousness returned with increasing force, owing to the complexity of her emotions. Her disquiet did not escape the searching eyes of her mistress, who did not think proper farther to remark upon it, as she ascribed it to any but the proper cause. She again spoke to her, continuing the topic in part, and her language was even gentler, and her manner kinder, than before.

"Thou wouldst joy to leave me, Zitta, and to fly to thy mother—thou wouldst joy to leave me, even hadst thou no mother to fly to. I see it in thy face, my girl, and I may not complain: I have been but a hard mistress unto thee."

"Oh, no, my lady—no!" was the response of the slave, with something more of genuine earnestness than she had hitherto shown, for the manner and self-accusing language of Urraca had begun to touch her heart.

"Yes, Zitta, it is but too true. I have made thee toil overmuch, nor have I often been heedful of thy proper wants and thy passing wishes. I have sometimes been careless of thy woman feelings, and thou hast had claims which came with thy feelings, which, in

my evil mood, I have but too much disregarded. Sometimes I have beaten thee with unjust blows when my passions have been awakened, and not when thou hast deserved them. Is not this true, Zitta, as I declare it? Hast thou not accused me in thy heart of these things?"

"Oh, my lady—do not, I pray thee—thou dost thyself great wrong," said the slave, who began to be very much moved, and could say nothing more than this in reply. Her mistress continued—

"Though a slave, Zitta, the purchased creature of my wealth, yet hadst thou thoughts and capacities which fitted thee for a higher condition; and the toils and the lot of the slave should fall only upon heads and understandings which may not repine at tasks to which they are fitted, but which are so greatly below thee. Thou hast been improved by thy toils, however, and canst now much better undertake thine own charge than when I first took thee into my keeping—canst thou not?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Thou wert poor then, and wretched. Dost thou remember—it was thy own mother who sold thee in her need?"

The woman looked down, but spoke not, yet her tremulousness had utterly passed away.

"I taught thee what thou knowest—I made thee what thou art. I fear me I have taught thee error, for I showed it thee, and I practised it myself; but it was in my ignorance of understanding—in my wilfulness of heart—in my weakness of resolve, that I have done this—that I have taught thee these lessons."

The tears filled the eyes of Urraca as she spoke these words, and Zitta became uneasy as she heard them. She felt her own eyes tremble, and with this consciousness, as if vexed that it should be so, she placed her hand in her bosom, and felt the little parchment which Amri had given her, containing the deadly potion through which she was to obtain freedom from

that bondage of which her mistress had just spoken; and when she had done this, her eyes became dry, and her heart grew hard and unyielding, and she heard the mournful words, and looked upon the tearful cheeks of her mistress with indifferent scornfulness: she thought then only of herself.

Urraca, after the pause of a few moments, thus continued to address her—

"I have been foolish for a long season, Zitta, and many are the wrongs and errors which I have done and committed in that time, which it is not in my power to repair, and which I can only, with God's indulgence, repent. Dost thou hear me, girl?"

The woman did not seem to hear or to heed, for her eyes wandered away from the couch where her mistress lay, and hence the concluding inquiry of the latter.

"Yes, my lady, I hear thee."

Urraca proceeded—

"A change has come over me, Zitta—a happy change; the blessed Mother of God has softened my heart, and awakened my understanding to the knowledge of what is good. Heretofore I have known but little that was not evil. I have been walking blindly, but without a consciousness of my blindness, plunging forward, unseeing my path, with all the desperate audacity of ignorance and sin. The scales are falling from my vision; and though I have opened my eyes to behold the depth of my bondage, I have opened them also to see a little path yet left to me through which it is my hope that I may make my way out. Dost thou not rejoice with me, Zitta, at this prospect of my release—of my freedom?"

The word "freedom" chilled the sympathies of the slave, which the sweet appeal of her mistress had begun somewhat to awaken and enkindle. She made no answer to the inquiry. Urraca remarked her silence, and simply placed one of her hands upon her wrist, as

it rested upon the bed beside her—the guilty woman shuddered and shrunk away from the touch, as if it had been that of a glowing bar of fire.

"Why, Zitta, thou hatest me!" was the exclamation of Urraca, greatly shocked at what she conceived to be only an exhibition of disgust and hate. The woman sought to remove the impression, which was, indeed, an unjust one, by a denial couched in tones of proper warmth and directness. It was, indeed, only because her mistress had never before seemed in her eyes half so deserving of her love as at this moment that she had shrunk from contact with her hand, and sought to withdraw her own. It was with a guilty consciousness, a feeling of some self-rebuke, that she would have withdrawn her criminal fingers from the touch of one upon whose life, at that very moment, she meditated assault, and against whom her thoughts and feelings were alike hostile and malicious.

"Do not hate me, Zitta—I pray thee do not," was the imploring speech of her mistress—"do not think ill of me because I have been and am ill, and because thou hast seen so much that was evil in my doings and my thoughts. For the scorn and the injustice which I may have done thee, I pray thy forgiveness. Pardon me my wrong to thee as thou wouldst have the Blessed Mother intercede in thy behalf to the Father. For me, Zitta, it is left only to repent where I may not repair, and to repair where, perhaps, such is my sin, I may not be suffered even to repent. I am making up my accounts in my thought, and the table is black against me. I have tried to review the claimants upon my justice, and thy demands, Zitta, have not been forgotten. I have set thee down even before many others; and thou shalt not have reason to say, my girl, that I have forgotten thee."

"Oh, my lady," exclaimed the slave, "wherefore

dost thou speak thus to thy slave?—wherefore this language—what does it mean, my lady?"

"A change possesses me, Zitta, which is almost as strange to me as it now seems to you. My heart is altered within me, and I tell thee that the light has been let in, for the first time, upon my eyes. Either, my girl, I am soon about to be made happy, and win the peace and quiet I have sighed for, or I am about to die."

"To die!" almost shrieked the affrighted slave.

"Yes—to die! Is death so terrible, Zitta? I do not think it: I have sometimes thought of it as a blessing, though now I do not, for I would live in Guadarrama once more, and think I should be happy there. Hast thou never thought of death—of thy death—of mine?"

"Me, my lady—thy death, my lady?" and the tones of her voice were thick with horror and affright.

"Yes, Zitta, my death or thine. Little do we know how soon we shall be called upon to leave the friends and the blessings which are about us, and to go—we know not where. It should be thy thought, my girl; of late it has become mine; and with this thought, Zitta, I would have thy forgiveness now, while I am able to ask and thou to bestow it. Dost thou forgive me for all the wrong I have done to thee?"

The woman trembled like an aspen—her frame seemed convulsed by her emotions, and her head sank down upon the couch, in the drapery of which her face was buried. She could not answer.

"Well, well, thou wilt strive, Zitta—I know thou wilt, and I will pray God to incline thee to grant the prayer which I have made thee. Look up, my girl; I will oppress thee no more with my sad talk; but I would speak to thee of other matters."

Zitta looked up as she was bidden, but her eyes dared not encounter with those of her mistress, and her features were wild with the singular doubts and apprehensions in her soul.

"Hear me now," said Urraca—"I have news for thee which will surprise thee. I am at last resolved to retire from Cordova."

The woman started to her feet as she heard this communication, but again quickly resumed her seat upon the bedside, and said nothing. Urraca continued—

"In three days, Zitta, with the permission of Heaven, I leave Cordova for the mountains of Guadarrama—for peace and my native mountains I go, Zitta, there to live the remainder of my days in a blessed quiet with my own Amri."

"With Amri!" said the woman, with unfeigned astonishment.

"Ay, with Amri! What is there strange in this? Why dost thou start—why dost thou tremble, Zitta?"

"Tremble, my lady!"

"Yes, tremble. Thy lips are pale—"

"Leave Cordova, my lady!" said the woman, who now recovered herself from the momentary and almost overpowering astonishment which had seized upon her—"leave Cordova!"

"Yes, for ever—and hope to leave behind me, Zitta, the sorrows and the strife that I brought to Cordova and found in it. Amri has sworn me his: he promises to go with me to my old dwelling-place among the mountains of Guadarrama; and there I hope to live in peace and in truth for him only. I will be virtuous there—I will break away from the shackles of sin—I will strive for the peace I have lost, and, with Heaven's blessed smile, I hope to be happy. Tell me, what dost thou think of it, my girl?"

"Think, my lady—I know not what to think," was the response of the woman, with looks of most unfeigned and dull astonishment.

"What dost thou feel—how does it please thee, Zitta?" was the farther demand of Urraca.

"I do not know, my lady," the woman rejoined.

"What! does it not rejoice thee?" asked Urraca, who began to show some little impatience at the cold and unmeaning countenance with which the slave had received her intelligence.

"Rejoice me, my lady!" was the grave and gloomy response of the person addressed—"why should it rejoice me?—what does the slave Zitta know of Guadarrama—why should she wish to leave Cordova?"

"True, Zitta—thou knowest but little of Guadarrama, and the slave will not have need to rejoice with the joys of the mistress whom she does not love: but something thou knowest of Merida, and thy mother there—"

"Oh, my lady—thou wilt not!" were the broken exclamations of the woman, as she began to catch some glimpses of the determination of her mistress.

"Will it not rejoice thee to go to thy mother? to make her old age happy? to—"

"Thou wilt not say it, Urraca—mistress—no!" almost screamed the bewildered woman.

"But I will! Thou art a slave no longer, Zitta—I give thee freedom of the earth and of the air—of the sun and of the sea—of the voice and of the hand—as God gave it thee in his mercy, so I give it thee, Zitta, having the will from God and the power from man to do so. To-morrow shall the scribe be with me to put my resolve on parchment; and in three days shalt thou have the proof of thy freedom in thy bosom, with no let to keep thee from thy mother. Leave me now."

The woman sank down at the bedside in stupor and silence, but she remained there a few moments only; with a wild scream, mingled with broken words, in which her mistress could only distinguish her own and the name of Amri, the overpowered and guilty woman rushed headlong from the chamber.

III.

But the freed slave remained not absent long. Her guilty bosom, full of self-reproaches, demanded utterance. She was crushed to the earth by the sudden, the surprising generosity of her mistress, and the crime which she had meditated filled her heart with unutterable horror. She rushed back to the chamber of Urraca. The convulsive paroxysm of joy had passed away, and left her features more composed than at first; but the tears, sweet and bitter, of mingled gladness and reproach, flowed freely down her cheeks, while her breast heaved and her lips quivered with her new and strange emotions. The blessing had been too great, the boon too sudden and unlooked for, not to overwhelm her; and even when she came back to the chamber and presence of her mistress, she could only kneel by the side of her couch, bathe the extended hand with her tears which she grasped in both her own, and sigh and sob as if her very heart-strings were breaking with every meditated utterance of her striving emotions. Humbled, yet happy—shrinking with her shame, still hidden, which she yet felt she could not long conceal—yet pleased that she was able thus to abase herself before her whom she had been about to destroy, Zitta strove vainly to articulate some of the strangely mingled and contending thoughts and feelings which possessed her. Surprised at these emotions, yet not dreaming of the criminal complexion of their source in part, the mistress strove in vain to quiet her. Ascribing her conduct to excess of joy, she sought to disparage the boon which she had conferred, and made light of that freedom which the other esteemed so great a blessing.

"Thou wilt implore to come back to me, Zitta—let thy joy not madden thee, for the charge of thyself will

prove to thee a heavy burden when, at times, thou shalt find thyself alone, and when sickness is pressing sorely upon thee, and thou lookest around thee in vain for 'tendance and sympathy."

"It is not that, my lady. 'Tis not joy," was the broken response.

"Not joy—what! art thou not glad, Zitta? Whence is thy sorrow? Wouldst thou not be free?"

"Oh, yes, my lady, yes! But I am base, ungrateful. I deserve not so great a blessing at thy hands. Thou shouldst put double service upon me rather—thou shouldst scourge rather than free me!"

"Why, this is madness, girl; rise—look on me—speak calmly to me—what is thy meaning, Zitta?"

"No—'tis truth, my lady—'tis a God's truth, I tell thee, I am base—forgive—forgive me."

It was thus that, brokenly and wild, her self-accusing spirit obtained occasional utterance, in reply to the exhortations and inquiries of Urraca, while she sobbed evermore for forgiveness.

"Forgive thee, my Zitta—what is thy offence? It calls for no such violence. I do forgive thee."

"It does, it does! you know it not, my lady; but look not upon me while I tell it thee. Turn thine eyes from me. I will tell thee all."

Her sobs increased with these words; a sudden convulsion seemed to come over and to rack her frame; and she sank at full length upon the floor by the side of the couch, and lay moaning and grovelling in that posture, but without saying any thing farther. Urraca, without a thought but of the woman's illness, arose quickly from the couch and strove to uplift her; but she resisted her efforts and refused her aid. In a few moments, as she found that her mistress continued to bestow it, she arose herself, and now stood with much more of composure in her manner, though with the look and attitude still of a culprit, in the presence of Urraca, who

surveyed her in the deepest astonishment and concern.

"What does this mean, Zitta—why dost thou look thus from me—what offends thee—what is thy sorrow?"

"I am a guilty—a base, guilty wretch, unworthy, my dear lady, of thy favour," was the reply of the woman, who now spoke with a resolute air, coherently and strong, and her eyes, as she replied, now addressed those of Urraca with a degree of strength which presented a singular contrast to her show of weakness and self-abandonment hitherto.

"Of what dost thou accuse thyself?" demanded Urraca. "What dreadful secret works in thy bosom. Speak, Zitta; I will not betray thee."

"God forgive me. Oh, my lady, every word which you speak makes my heart more criminal in my eyes. You know not—you cannot guess—I would have murdered—"

"Murdered—horrible! who, Zitta?"

"Look not on me, Urraca! This day I had sworn to murder thee. This day—this day!"

"Me, Zitta! murdered me! This is thy folly, girl; thou art but mad to say so."

"I am not mad. I am no longer mad, my lady. Thank God, I am not! But what I tell thee is the truth. In this paper was thy death; touch it not—it is poison. With this I had sworn to murder thee."

She drew the paper given her by Amri from her bosom as she spoke these words, and held it on high. Urraca advanced, and took it, after some slight objection of Zitta, from her trembling hands.

"This is a horrible story," said Urraca, calmly turning over the little packet, and surveying it on both sides.

"Horrible!" exclaimed the woman, with the unconsciousness of an echo.

"Tell me all, Zitta. Speak out—I am not angry with thee, and will not harm thee, now that thou repent-

est of thy meditated crime, which I believe not, really. Unfold to me the truth—what was't possessed thee !"

"The fiend—the arch fiend—who else ?"

"Thou saidst, Zitta, that thou hadst promised and sworn to murder me : could it be that thou wast prompted by another ?" was the farther inquiry of Urraca.

"Ay, my lady—yes ! You'd fly with Amri to Guadarrama, my lady ; he has vowed you his—Amri has vowed you his ! You are to be happy with Amri, and live with him in the mountains of Guadarrama, my lady —ha—ha—ha !"

"What mean'st thou, woman ?" said Urraca, sternly, as she heard these words, and the irreverent and uncontrollable laugh of scorn which followed them.

"Forgive me, my lady, I would not offend thee," replied Zitta, quickly, as she observed the sudden and stern change which came over the features of Urraca ; "but thou art deceived—dreadfully deceived, my lady. I have deceived you frequently and long, but I deceive you not now. It is Amri that deceives you ; it is Amri that would have me murder you ; his hands gave me the potion now in yours, which he swore me to drug your cup with. I am perjured, since I have betrayed my oath ; but I am not guilty of the crime I promised !"

"Liar and slave !" cried Urraca, in a voice of concentrated and ominous thunder ; "liar and slave that thou art, unsay thy falsehood. Confess thou dost defame him—say that he is true to me, and that it was an idle mischief of thy tongue which made thee say otherwise. The truth—the truth !"

Once more the figure of Urraca was erect. The subdued spirit was once more awakened into life. The meekness had gone from her eyes—the smile from her lips—she stood, lofty, fierce, commanding, before the trembling slave, her sable hair flying from her neck, and her arm extended in an attitude of accustomed power,

while through her parted lips the close white teeth gleamed terribly upon her companion.

"It is the truth—I've said but the truth, my lady."

"Poison!" exclaimed Urraca, musingly, while again turning over the packet in her hand and surveying it curiously, "Poison—it is no poison if it came from Amri. Speak, woman, did he call it poison?"

"He did, my lady!"

"And bade thee give it me?"

"Even so, my lady."

"To drug my cup—and swore thee to it, woman?"

"He did, my lady—'tis all true, my lady, as I have told it thee," replied the slave, falling upon her knees as she reaffirmed her statement, absolutely quelled and bowed by the imperial anger of that fierce beauty, whose passions she well knew, and whom she had been so long accustomed to fear.

"And swore thee to it?"

"He did, my lady."

"Swear that! 'Tis false unless thou swear it!" Urraca almost shouted in the ears of the slave, while she advanced her foot, and her arm, now freed from the robes which had been loosely gathered around her, was extended, white, beautiful, and commandingly, over the head of the kneeling woman.

"I will swear!"

"Thou shalt not! Base, black-hearted, damned slave, thou shalt not! I will save thee from the hell thou wouldst plunge headlong into. I will not let thee put this foul perjury upon thy soul. Thou shalt not swear—it is a deadly sin, beyond all hope of mercy. I will save thee—I will not let thee, Zitta. Pray—look up to Heaven and pray. Pray—pray!"

The intensity with which Urraca had spoken these words, and the excess of feeling working in her at the time, produced exhaustion, which alone silenced, for the moment, the infuriated speaker. When she paused,

Zitta, humbly but firmly, repeated her assertion, and again professed her willingness to swear to the truth of what she had affirmed. With a transition as strange as it was natural to her, Urraca sank on her knees beside the woman, and, clasping her uplifted hand in both her own, now, in the most gentle and pleading voice, implored her not to take the oath she proffered.

"I know thou thinkest, Zitta, as thou sayst, but thou errest. Thou art deceived, my girl; thine eye has blinded thee to confound the person; thine ear betrayed thee with some similar sounds; 'twas not the voice of Amri—not his hand. They counselled not the crime—the deadly crime. Say 'twas Edacer—the base Lord Edacer—the Governor of Cordova—I'll believe thee. He would not stop at that—"

"'Twas Amri, dearest lady—none but Amri. Hear me unfold the tale, even from the first."

"I would not hear thee, Zitta—yet I must. If what thou sayst be true, thou killest me—killest me, though thou hast left my cup undrugged."

Never was look more mournful—more imploring than that which Urraca fixed upon the slave. It plainly solicited that she might be deceived. But the woman would not understand the meaning, though she truly felt the wo which that glance conveyed.

"Alas! my lady, what I have to tell—"

"Is truth, thou sayst."

"It is—it is, my lady."

"Go on—I hear thee," said Urraca, coldly, with a composure as extreme as her former passion was intense. She arose as she spoke this command, and walked to and fro along the floor, while Zitta proceeded to unfold the narrative of her long connexion with Amri, and the various meditated plans of criminality and practices of improper indulgence which had been carried on between them.

IV.

The freed slave had now no secrets from her mistress. She unveiled her bosom freely to the examination of Urraca. She told of a long and criminal intimacy with Amri, and with a closeness and coherence in the several parts of her narrative—with statements of circumstances so well mixed up with other circumstances which Urraca knew to be true, that the unhappy woman could no longer withhold her credence, or doubt the truth of what she heard. She listened in gloomy recklessness, walking about during the narration, sometimes interrupting it with a word of inquiry or exclamation, but generally receiving the several particulars in silence, and with an ear that lost not the smallest portion of what was uttered. When the slave had finished, having brought up her relation to the events which had taken place in her last interview with Amri, Urraca paused before her.

"And thou hast told me nothing but the truth, Zitta?" she demanded of the slave.

"Only the truth, my lady."

"Thou hast guessed at nothing in thy story?"

"Nothing, my lady."

"And thou believest, Zitta, that the packet which is in my hand contains a deadly poison?"

"Amri said so, my lady."

"And bade thee, *in words*, to drug my cup with it, that I might perish?"

"He did, my lady, in words—I do not err!"

"Be sure of what thou sayst, Zitta," said Urraca, gently, but solemnly. "As thou hopest for life, for peace, for happiness—as thou dreadest eternal torture—the hate of men—the scorn of angels—the wrath of

God—say nothing by apprehension and conjecture—say nothing but what thou knowest to be the truth."

"I have told thee nothing but the truth, my lady, as I hope for the mercy of Heaven!" repeated the woman.

"And I believe thee!" exclaimed Urraca, with a long and difficult breath; "I believe thee; but rather than this—" putting her hand upon her throbbing temples—"rather than this pang which I now suffer, Zitta, I would that thou hadst drugged my cup in silence. Better to have perished in the dream—the sweet dream of a requited love—than live in its utter hopelessness, and live only for hate;" and Urraca buried her face in her hands as she spoke these words, and threw herself again upon the couch.

"Alas! my lady, I am sorry for thee," replied the woman, as she beheld the anguish of her mistress; but the sympathy was unwisely proffered to a spirit which, though severely tried, was still far from subdued to resignation.

"Sorry! sorry for me, Zitta," said Urraca, scornfully, rising again from the couch, and looking upon the slave, her face now freed from the hands which covered it, and her eyes flashing with new fire upon the woman, while a smile of contempt passed over her lips; "thou errest, Zitta—thou shouldst not be sorry. Go—leave me now. I will but think a while, and then call thee to my help."

V.

"But one lone hope was left to me through all!" was the exclamation of sorrow that burst from the lips of the unhappy woman as the slave left the apartment. "But one! but one—and that is gone for ever!"

The tears gushed forth freely from her eyes, and poured unrestrainedly down her cheeks. They brought

her relief, and softened the mood which might else have maddened her.

"To be deceived by him, and so deceived! My life, too, would he have! 'Twas not enough that I would give him all, and live for him, and serve his will alone! Monstrous—oh monstrous falsehood!—and I so loved him, so lived for him, and so believed him, too—to meet with such return! But I will conquer yet; he shall not escape me. I will have vengeance on him. He shall die—ay, die, by his own device!"

She paused with these words, then sank down upon a chair in deep meditation. Her thoughts seemed to take a new direction, and, though evidently still intense, and concentrated entirely upon some one leading purpose of her mind, they had the effect of dissipating and quieting her frequent paroxysms, and of leaving her infinitely more sedate than usual. At length she arose, and proceeded to the arrangement of her toilet. The fatal potion she placed upon a table, having first, with some curiosity, unfolded the paper which contained it, and surveyed, with unshrinking countenance, the deadly drug. It was a fine powder, of a dark white or bluish complexion, and the quantity was exceeding small. She soliloquized as she surveyed the destructive minister:

"And this is death! This! How innocent his shape! Can this usurp the power that fills my heart, and take the fire and feeling from mine eye—the glow that warms my cheek—the hues that shade, and all the thousand tints and touches of the face that make up human beauty? Can it be? 'Tis wonderful!—'tis strange!"

She turned away shudderingly from the powder and the mirror, upon both of which, while thus soliloquizing, her eye had alternately and involuntarily been directed. Moving to the corner of the chamber, she struck the gong with a single blow, and the now obedient Zitta made her appearance in the succeeding instant.

"Help me once more to put these robes on, Zitta. Your term of service will soon be over—but three days —and you will then be free of this duty, and subject to no summons of mine, my girl."

"You are too good, my lady," said the now docile slave.

"Would I were, Zitta."

"Oh, you are, my lady. I care not now to leave you."

"But you must! Your mother—the poor woman—she will want you. I will not need you long."

"What mean you, my dear lady?"

"How?"

"Why do you say that you will not need me long?"

"What should I do with thee in Guadarrama?" said Urraca, gayly, but evasively. "Thinkest thou I will give so much heed to my attire among the mountains, and the wild, skin-clothed peasantry that dwell there, as I was fain to do here in Cordova, with the gallant young nobles of the Goth coming around me? No, no, my girl; I'll be a peasant there, and clothe me like the rest. This mirror shall be thine, Zitta—thou shalt have these jewels—there—set them in thine ears, and round thy neck—set them, I say."

"But, my dear lady—" expostulated the girl.

"Do as I bid thee, girl—thou art not free yet. Put on the jewels—let me see them on thee."

With fear, trembling, and surprise at the strange mixture of earnestness and frivolity which seemed to operate upon her mistress, the slave did as she was bidden, and, pushing her away to a little distance, Urraca contemplated her for some moments with a pleased expression of countenance.

"I knew they would become thee—thou shalt wear them; but not now, Zitta. Thou shalt have them for thyself three days hence, when thou art leaving me. I must once more adorn me with them, and take one

more view of all the charms and glories which heretofore have gladdened my vain heart, that I may make the greater sacrifice to Heaven when I throw aside such vanities for ever. To-night, Zitta, thou knowest I feast Edacer; Amri will be here also—he!—dost hear me, Zitta?"

"Hear thee, my lady?"

"Ay; I tell thee of my company—Amri comes here to-night."

"He does, my lady?"

"He does! and hark thee, Zitta—I have a doubt—a thought—it is a blessed thought!—a sweetest doubt! May it not be, my girl, that thou hast erred in thy story to me?—that thou hast dreamed something unseemly of Amri, and, with thy dream to prompt thee, thou hast vainly imagined all the rest?"

"Alas! my lady, would it were so; but I have not dreamed—if so, whence comes the poison?"

The slave pointed to the packet, which lay unfolded upon the toilet, and the eyes of Urraca mournfully followed the direction given by her finger.

"True—true—true!" she responded, with the hollow accents of one from whom the last hope has been ungently taken away.

"True, most true!" She folded up the drug as she spoke, and a painful silence filled the chamber for some moments afterward. By this time Zitta had fully arrayed her mistress, and stood in waiting for her farther commands. Urraca beckoned her to come nigh.

"Zitta—" she said, in a whisper.

"My lady."

"Hear me—I doubt thee not, but I would prove the truth of what thou hast told me! Amri comes here to-night. Thou shalt see him! Dost hear me?"

"I do, my lady."

"He will seek thee, I doubt not, if what thou hast said to me be true—he will seek thee to ask of thee—"

she paused before she concluded the sentence, and a dreadful shudder passed over her frame—" to ask of thee why it is that I live !"

" He will, I think, my lady."

" What wilt thou say to him ?"

" That the opportunity has failed me."

" Good ; I was not well—hark thee—and drank of no wine to-day. I will refuse all drink while the day lasts, that thou mayst not speak a falsehood in thus saying. What then ? Thou wilt promise him on the morrow to be more urgent with me. Thou wilt promise a better answer on the morrow—or the morrow after that ?"

" Yes, my lady."

" Where will he seek thee ? where was it his wont to seek thee ?"

" In my chamber, my lady."

" Ha—ha ! and from my chamber, Zitta, 'twas his wont to go to thine," said Urraca, laughing wildly, and putting her finger on the girl's shoulder as she spoke.

The slave hung down her head in shame, and made no answer to the remark. The gloom came back to Urraca's features, and the smile passed away as she continued thus :

" Well, well, it matters not now, my Zitta ; the wretch has wronged us both to our shame—if thou hast spoken truly. But, of this, nothing ! I will also seek thee in thy chamber. Thou shalt conceal me there before the feast be ended, for I will retire in sickness from Edacer, and leave Amri with him. There let him seek thee, and I will hear his speech ; and if thou hast said truly, Zitta—if he speak in support of thy story—if—"

" What, my dear lady ?"

" Nothing ! nothing now ! Go to thy offices ! Let the wines be set—let the supper-room be got in readiness. Spare no pains—no splendour. Outbrave, outblaze all our former lustres—it is, you know, the Gov-

ernor of Cordova that feasts with us to-night!—'tis not Edacer—the poor, dissolute Lord Edacer, but the favourite of King Roderick that comes; and Amri—our Amri, you know—comes with him. Have the wines set; get ices from Tarracon, and spare no cost for meats. Amri loves fish—spare nothing to procure them. Get oysters, the fresh-brought from Africa. Provide against all stint—against all strait. 'Twill vex me 'gainst your wishes, Zitta, if these lords call for aught we may not give them. Away!"

VI.

That night Urraca was in the highest spirits. She never looked so beautiful—she never was more witty or more eloquent before. She had attired her person with the nicest and most elaborate care; she had exercised her mind, and drilled her thoughts, now made obedient and docile as the humblest slave's, by the intense will which she had brought to bear upon them; and her utterance was clear, unimpeded, and musical, and her fancy flashed out like a star, which some hidden minister is continually replenishing with light from an exhaustless fountain. She was gay and elastic almost to extremity, but there was a sarcastic scornfulness sometimes in the glance of her eye, and a tone of bitterness in the utterance of her tongue, which, while they added to the intensity of her grace and eloquence, were not always innocuous in the estimation of her guests. Much did they wonder at her improved loveliness; and even the voluptuous and gross Edacer, to whom, hitherto, the charms and enticements of animal passions alone had proved wooing and attractive, began to awaken, under the exciting influence of her mind, into a partial consciousness of his own; while Amri, who did not, however, abate a single purpose, hitherto entertained, of crime against her,

could not help admiring the mental resources and the graceful spirit of that person whom he had learned to fear, if not to hate, and had determined to destroy.

Nor was it the feast of intellect and female spirit and vivacity alone which Urraca employed to give pleasure to her guests. The table was sumptuously spread with every luxury which could be found in Cordova. The tastes and appetites which had been transmitted to the coarser Goths by the voluptuous people of Byzantium, and which had enervated them in due course of time, as they had done the nations from which they came, had been studiously exercised in procuring the various viands which loaded the table of Urraca. Every refinement of Greek effeminacy and Roman licentiousness was there; and the dulled appetite, surveying the crowded board, would not long want the necessary provocation to sharp improvement and free exercise.

Edacer surveyed the table with a complacency which prompted him to speech, but with a delighted surprise which, for some moments, kept him silent.

"Truly, Urraca," he exclaimed, at length, "thou hast gone beyond thy former self—thou hast surpassed all thy own frequent extravagances heretofore, and hast given a fitting climax to thy feasts of delightful memory in seasons overpassed. What new triumph hast thou made to prompt thee to all this? What conquest over a thoughtless noble, fresh come from Toledo, with full purse and empty mind—good treasury, but heedless treasurer? Say, Urraca, and speak quickly, for great is my amaze."

It was in such language as this that the coarsely-minded Edacer uttered himself in inquiry respecting the sumptuous supper which he saw spread before him. Yet the smile was playful and unresentful which accompanied the reply of Urraca.

"Be no longer amazed, my Lord Edacer, nor longer affect ignorance as to the occasion of my present excess. Well hast thou called this the climax to my excesses of

the past. It is the climax; and what fitter occasion could I choose for such climax than the entertainment of the new Lord of Cordova. Is it not enough that I would do thee honour, my Lord Edacer? The supper is provided for thee."

"Thanks, Urraca—many thanks. Thou hast proved to me that I am valued by thee beyond my own previous estimation. Thou hast flattered me beyond my thought. I shall grow vain after this."

"Grow, indeed, my lord! wherefore? you are already of sufficient height. To change would be to risk a loss, and thy shadow, now, more than covers one half the walls of my chamber."

The dull Goth looked round upon the walls as she uttered these words, and seemed to find pleasure in the discovery that, in a physical point of view, Urraca had only spoken the truth. The latent meaning of his mistress was visible to the acuter mind of the Hebrew, who smiled significantly to Urraca, catching her eye, as he did so, fixed curiously upon him. As one who had been detected in a secret watch, she turned away quickly as the glance of Amri met her own, and spoke in a low voice to a servant who stood in waiting. By this time Edacer had turned from the survey of his own cumbrous person, and addressed Urraca again in compliment to a splendid cluster of polished steel-reflecting mirrors, that gave a burning light upon the opposite wall.

"These are new to me, Urraca—have they, too, been procured to do honour on this occasion to your guests?"

"They came but to-day from Toledo, my Lord Edacer, and were procured for the occasion."

"Truly, thou hast spared nothing, Urraca; I must chide thee for thy improvidence, though it pleases me to behold it."

"Nay, do not chide, my lord—I will bribe thee to indulgence, for I will send the lustres to thy palace on the morrow, as a gift from Urraca to Cordova's governor."

"Wilt thou?" exclaimed the selfish and delighted Goth. "Wilt thou indeed bestow them on me?"

"Thou shalt have them," replied Urraca, calmly and indifferently.

"But they are fitted—they seem almost necessary to thy walls, Urraca—the spot will seem bare and cold if thou remove them. I fear me thou dost unwisely to rob thyself in this disposition of the lustres. I shall not soon be able to requite thee for so rich a boon."

"I ask for no requital beyond thy graces, my Lord Edacer; and, for the walls, I care not how bald they seem to others—to me they will be nothing ere long; they will not often challenge my sight after the lustres are gone!"

The Goth turned upon her with an inquiring look, and, after a brief pause, she continued—

"You have yet to know, my Lord Edacer, that I have another reason for making this feast the climax of my excesses—that which is to exceed them all, and throw all of the preceding into shadow. It is the last feast which I make in Cordova—it is the farewell which I make at parting from it, my lord, and leaving it for ever."

The governor was astounded. He replied, breathlessly—"At parting from Cordova—at leaving Cordova for ever. Speak! how! what mean you, Urraca?"

"What! hast thou not heard? has not Amri told thee?"

The eyes of the Hebrew sought those of Urraca, and their expression was clearly that of expostulation and entreaty. She paused—her resolve to declare the truth, so far as the removal of Amri and herself from Cordova had been determined upon, was abridged in compliance with the evident wish for forbearance which was shown in the face of the former; and she proceeded only to a partial development of her intention and the truth.

"In three days, my lord, I leave Cordova for my old

home—my father's home—among the mountains of Guadarrama. I retire from the city for ever."

"Ha!—but with whom? Thou goest not alone, I know. With whom dost thou fly? Thou hast not told me that."

"Nor will I, my lord, until I send thee the lustres. It is a little secret now, but—"

"Is he rich? is he noble? Tell me that, Urraca, or I will not let thee go. As Governor of Cordova, I will arrest thee as one suspected of treason to the king, and will imprison thee in my own palace till I have thy secret."

"Thou shalt not have need to give thyself such unworthy trouble, my lord, for I will tell thee freely what thou desirest to know. He with whom I fly from Cordova is rich as any Jew in Cordova, and, after the fashion of the time, as noble as any Goth. That is my thought of him, at least, my lord."

"Beware, Urraca—beware that he does not deceive thee. Be sure of him ere thou confidest, or bitterly wilt thou weep thy confidence. There are few of our Gothic nobles in Cordova that have much wealth, and not one of them who would not lie freely to thee for thine. Take the truth and my good counsel in payment for thy lustres."

"What! dost thou think them all so evil, my lord? Is not one reserved from thy suspicion?" demanded Urraca.

"Not one! they are all alike! Evil is their good, Urraca. A virtuous Goth is always sure either to be too poor for indulgence, or too great a fool to be knavish, and help himself to the wealth of others. I know thee too well to think that thou couldst regard the fool with a favourable thought; and if thou takest up with the other, I look to see thee back in Cordova after a little month of absence, in which he will have stripped thee of all thy wealth, and beaten thee half to death in charity."

"Verily, my lord, the Goth has need to thank thee."

"Ha—ha—ha!" exclaimed Edacer—"think not I do them wrong, Urraca! By my faith, not so. Nor would they chafe to hear me speak of them in this fashion. 'Tis their own boast, Urraca. 'Tis no shame to do dishonour here in Cordova, save with the vulgar and poor citizens. We laugh at shame, and with a fearless front we brave the exposure which the coward shrinks from. Having the power, we make the principles; and that which fools call virtue, we call shame, by virtue of this power!"

"A goodly power," said Urraca.

"Of a truth it is—there were no freedom else."

"But wherefore keep the church—maintain the priest—dress the high altar—make the sacrifice—and clothe in state the solemn ceremonial? Wherefore all these? They do abridge the license which you love, and stop your way to freedom."

"Not with us, Urraca. The church is of our side—one of our arms, by which we keep the animal man, who might grow troublesome, in wholesome order. It teaches him judicious fears of something which he knows not, and so fears. 'Tis a dull blind we set up by the wayside, and, in proportion as our virtue stales, we evermore put out some shows of it; for as we all know that the shadow points some form from which it springs, so do we toil, building the shadows of a thousand forms, which all seem good. We thus avoid their substance."

"That is wisdom—is it?" said Urraca, musingly, in reply to the Goth, who had not only described the condition of his own time and people, but of other times and other nations, before and after. There was little more of this spoken between them, and the conversation was soon diverted to other subjects of a different and less general character. Much merriment succeeded—the guests drank freely, and Urraca strove, and strove successfully, to show a pleasant countenance and

a cheerful spirit throughout the feast, even to its conclusion. But her heart toiled dreadfully in this endeavour, and her thoughts were ill at ease. Her mind at length began to weary of the unusual restraints which she had set upon it, and she felt the necessity of retiring soon, in order to put her plan in execution. Pleading exhaustion, therefore, and a sudden indisposition, she retired from the apartment, having first signified to Amri, in a whisper, that she expected him on the ensuing evening. This was said in a manner too peremptory to be evaded, and he readily gave her the required promise to attend.

VII.

Urraca immediately retired, first to her own, and then, by a secret passage, to the chamber of Zitta, who was there in readiness, awaiting her. Carefully concealing herself in a closet, she impatiently waited for the coming of Amri. Nor had she long to wait. Before his departure he came, as had long been his custom previously, to the chamber of the slave, with whom he was now more than ever anxious for an opportunity of speech. Urraca soon had damning confirmation of all that Zitta had informed her, and a sufficient overthrow of her own hopeful doubts in the cruel words which her ears were now compelled most painfully to hear, from the lips of one to whom all her hopes had been too readily confided.

"Thou art slow, Zitta," he said, impatiently. "Hast thou no desire for thy freedom?"

"Canst thou ask, Amri? I long for my liberty even as the caged bird for the sweet air and the wide forests."

"Wherefore does she live, then? I know that thou couldst not have given her the drug, for it is fatal. Never yet, when it once found its way into the human frame, has it been known to fail. Thou hast not given it to Urraca—she lives—she has not been affected?"

"I have not yet prepared it, Amri, for she has refused her cup since I had the poison from thee."

"Ha! Why has she refused? Does she doubt? does she suspect thee?"

"No! but all the day she has been sick, and she desired not wine, nor took it from any hands. I proffered it to her at morning, as was my custom, and she then declined it."

"Yet was she free to take wine to-night: and never, for a while, did her spirits seem more gay, or her looks more lovely."

"Yes—she grew well as the evening came on," replied Zitta.

"Thou must be better advised against the morrow; and, hear me, it is not needful that wine be employed—thou shalt mix the drug with the bread, with the soup, with whatsoever her appetite may crave whose colour may disguise it from her sight. Thou must give it her to-morrow, Zitta, if thou canst—let there be no delay. Fear nothing. When it is done, thou art free, and I will myself take thee to Merida."

"It shall be done, Amri," was the assurance of the slave, "if she be not again unmindful of the cup or of food. She retired for the night, and her pulse was fevered, and she complained much of vexing indisposition. But 'twill pass away, I doubt not, with her sleep."

"Do what thou canst, Zitta—if thou canst not to-morrow, let not the third day pass upon thy unperformance. Much depends on thy speedy work in this."

"It does—I know it does, Amri. Hold it done ere the third day. I promise thee it shall."

"It is well! I trust to thy assurances, Zitta. I will come to-morrow night as she commanded me, but I hope not to find her all-powerful to command either thee or me again. Remember, Zitta—thy freedom and mine thou hast in keeping! It is in thy strength, thy courage, thy skill, thy firm resolve for the good which

thou hast promised, and for the performance which thou hast sworn to do, that thy hope, not less than mine, is warm and apprehensive—it is upon these that I rely! Let not thy heart fail thee, as thou hopest for its future joy—and be thy hand strengthened to the task, as thou wouldst lift it from the shackles of the slave. Thou hast no hope but in this, for she is stubborn against thy prayer and mine."

Again she promised him; and, satisfied that she would not fail during the day following to execute successfully the dreadful commission which he had assigned her, he hurried away for the night. Zitta immediately ran to the closet where Urraca lay concealed, and in which she had distinctly heard the whole conversation.

"Give me thy arm, Zitta," said Urraca, "and help me to seek my chamber."

The woman did as she was commanded, and assisted her mistress, who seemed no longer to possess the necessary powers of life, to her apartment, whence Urraca soon dismissed her, preferring at that time to be alone with her own sad thoughts and solemn meditations.

VIII.

When, on the ensuing morning, the attendant Zitta sought the chamber of her mistress, she was already risen and dressed. At the first glance the slave was sure that she had not slept during the night; but this conjecture was immediately dismissed from her mind as she beheld the unruffled composure of her countenance. It was indeed grave and sad, but there was no visible emotion—no proof of unschooled, unsubdued, or irrepressible feeling such as she had looked to see, and no single trace of that feverish grief which cannot have exercise without leaving its visible impress upon the haggard cheek and the drooping and desponding eye. She

little knew how to judge of that sorrow which passeth show—which disdains and dreads all ostentation. Yet was the slave right in the first conjecture which she had so suddenly dismissed. Urraca had not slept—the whole night had been passed in thought—in that intense, self-searching, but not self-satisfying thought, which produces humiliation if it does not prompt to prayer. That humiliation had brought her strength—strength enough for resignation, if not for right. The crisis of her fate was passed, and she was now calm! Her resolve was taken, and she had prepared to die! She had nothing now to live for. She was not sufficiently the Christian to live for repentance, and she had been too narrowly selfish in her devotion to a single object to live for hope. She lacked the necessary resources of life—and having too fondly trusted her fortune to one pilot, in his falsehood she had lost every thing—she was herself lost.

The nature of Zitta was too humble, and her own sensibilities too coarse to enable her to conjecture the mental self-abandonment of her mistress. She saw nothing but composure in the seeming calm of her countenance. Alas! it was the composure which comes from despair, like that which follows the storm, and which, though it speaks only of its own exhaustion, is not less significant of its former violence. But under that treacherous surface, with all its treasures and its precious freight, lie the wrecks and ruins of the goodly ship. It was thus in the mind, as upon the face of Urraca. There was all the delusive calm, the treacherous quiet of composure, which, when the hurricane has gone by, overspreads the face and extends even to the bosom of the insidious sea. The storm was overblown, but the hope with which she had been crowned and chartered, like some rich jewel, had been swept from sight while it lasted, leaving her destitute—too destitute and too despairing even for complaint.

She had no complaint—she uttered no sigh—no word

of sorrow in the ear of her attendant. All was calmness and self-reliance. All her accents were gentleness, and all her looks were peace. Yet she gave herself no time for repose—indeed, she dared not—she seemed resolute to hurry through her crowding toils at once, in order that she might secure the long slumber which she desired undisturbed. After a slight refreshment, even more slight than usual, she commanded the attendants hastily to perform their several duties, while she despatched Zitta for the proper officer through whom the emancipation of the slave was to be effected. This duty was soon performed, but as yet she held the parchment.

"Until to-morrow, Zitta, it must content thee to remain with me. Thou wilt serve me until then? I shall not need thee much longer."

Zitta professed her willingness to abide the commands of her mistress with all the warmth and alacrity of one who has just received so considerable a boon.

"I have much meanwhile for you to do," said Urraca. "These lustres, you will instantly send them to the Lord Edacer. I promised him last night that they should be his."

"And greatly did it delight his mean soul, my lady, that you did so," exclaimed Zitta.

"Perhaps!" said Urraca, "perhaps! I am glad that I may so easily delight him. He is fortunate indeed if his soul can very highly esteem a thing of such slight worth and poor attraction."

"Oh, my lady, I wonder that you can think so meanly of that which is so beautiful. Sure I am there's nothing like it in all Cordova, and the cost—"

Urraca gently interrupted her: "Alas! my poor girl, thy error is a sad, but a much too common one for note. Thou wilt find, when thou hast more experience of thy freedom, that few things possess a real value in the estimation of the heart which wealth may purchase or flat-

tery procure. Nothing is worth but the true, unyielding affections—nothing is lastingly secure but truth—nothing always beautiful but that which is always good. Send the lustres to the Lord Edacer; and let it be said to him that they come to him from Urraca, with the single wish that he may soon learn to esteem them as I do who give them."

"And that is nothing," said Zitta.

"True," replied Urraca, "but that need not be said to him. Despatch them straight, for I have other offices for thee to execute."

The lustres were soon despatched to the greedy Goth, who received them with a loud delight; and the slave, bringing back his thankful acknowledgments, again stood in the presence of the mistress, awaiting her commands. These were few and soon executed.

"Here is money, and there are some jewels in this casket, Zitta, for thyself. The money will serve thy own and the wants of thy mother for a season. The jewels—thou wilt wear them for thy mistress, and think of her when thou dost so. In thy want—shouldst thou suffer want at any time to come, which I pray thou mayst not—they will provide thee, for their value is great among men. Take them—they are now thine. I will not need them again."

"Oh, my lady—I deserve them not at thy hands. Thou hast already given me but too much—thou hast been lavish upon me against reason."

"Not so!" said Urraca; "I give thee a great trust and a heavy burden when I bestow thy freedom upon thee, and I should not fix upon thee this burden unless I provide thee with the ability to bear it. Thou wilt find that with thy freedom will come new wants and wishes, which did not belong to the condition of the slave—new responsibilities will press upon thee, and in thy sickness or destitution thou wilt know that some difference lies between the slave whom a watchful interest beyond his

own must provide for, and him who can only compel attention to his need in proportion to his wealth and substance. Thou wilt need all the money which I give thee, and more that I may not give thee—the wisdom from Heaven to guide and direct thee aright in a new state and progress to which thou hast not been accustomed, and for which thy education has not prepared thee. Pray that thou mayst soon learn to shape thy feelings and thy thoughts to thy new condition, else wo will fall upon thee and upon those around thee. To have thoughts and desires which are unbecoming thy place is wrong—he whose mind is below his condition must be a tyrant, and he whose mind is above it—he only is the slave."

With such good counsel as this, bestowed without authority, and with a simple and persuasive grace, which was as strange in the sight of the slave as it was newborn in the bosom of the mistress, Urraca continued to direct, and counsel, and employ her. In this manner she despatched her to bestow sundry presents of money and of goods upon the various attendants of the household, all of whom she instructed her to dismiss on the ensuing morning. This done, she gave special directions to Zitta for the preparation of a chamber in an upper story which had long been disused. The order awakened some surprise and suspicion in the mind of the hearer.

"Why, my lady—it is so cold and damp, that chamber—and so gloomy too—with but a single window that lies free to the street, and all the rest choked from light by the high houses around. Why wouldst thou employ that chamber?"

"Is it thy new freedom, Zitta, that thus provokes thee to question my desire?" responded Urraca, firmly, but still mildly and with softness.

"Oh, no, my lady."

"Let the chamber be got in readiness, Zitta, as I bid

thee. It is because it is cold and lonesome that I would employ it. But let it be so prepared that it shall not seem cold or lonesome. Transfer to the walls and to the couch the rich hangings of this chamber; close all its windows, and see that many lights are there to supply what else it might seem to lack of cheering and gay character. When thou hast done this, let a table be spread with fruits within it—and the wine—fill me a rich vase of silver with wine, and place it in readiness amid the fruits—but one vase, Zitta—one will suffice," she murmured, as the slave disappeared—"one will suffice for Amri and me!"

IX.

Let us return for a brief moment to Amri. That day he condescended to visit his father, whom he still maintained within the dungeon to which he had been himself consigned. He carried him a sufficient supply of food, but spoke nothing of his release. The old man simply looked up to the opening above the door, through which the youth let down the provisions in a small basket by the use of a string, but he said nothing to him either in the way of solicitation or complaint. This taciturnity irritated the youth, who addressed him somewhat tauntingly with certain inquiries touching his captivity—demanding to know upon what terms he would be willing to procure his release. To all of which the old man deigned him nothing in answer; but, with clasped hands, he murmured his repeated prayer to Heaven, imploring protection from the Most High, and preferring once more the terrible imprecation which the ears of Amri had already heard, but which now, unhappily, went by them unheeded. Secure, as he esteemed himself, in his triumphant position, he permitted himself to speak harsh words to his father in return.

His heart was hardened within him, and he had no fears of overthrow. Confident of Edacer's success with Melchior, and of his own with the lovely daughter of the outlaw, he was too buoyant in hope at this moment either to fear the wrath of Heaven, or to heed the curse which his father had invoked upon his head. He bade the old man a scornful defiance, and departed ungraciously from his presence. To Mahlon, however, he gave directions for his release on the ensuing morning, when he imagined that his projects would be fully executed, and the events fairly over from which he hoped to derive so much.

"On the morrow, Mahlon," said he, "thou shalt release Adoniakin—not before. And, hear me—thou shalt not give entrance through the day to any who may seek him. Say that he is gone forth to those who ask for him—he is gone forth on pressing occasion, and will not return till the night. To-morrow we shall neither of us care whether his mood be pleasant or angry. For thyself, Mahlon, here is the money thou hast demanded—there is more for thee to-morrow when I return, if thou hast truly done as I bid thee."

That day the plans of Amri were perfected with Edacer—the latter had portioned out his men for the investment of the Cave of Wamba, while the former had received from his hands the desired authority in writing, by which, in the name of the king, he should obtain access into the dwelling of the Hebrew Samuel, or any other dwelling in the Hebrew Quarter where the maiden Thyrza might be concealed. Nor was he altogether content to await the hour of midnight, which he had himself set aside for the proposed search, when the probabilities were so much the greater of finding her in the dwelling; but, attended by one of the officers who had been allotted to him by Edacer, he prowled in a partial disguise around the neighbourhood in which the Hebrew Samuel had his abode, and cautiously pointed

out to the soldier the place where they should enter. His disguise, however, was not equal to his perfect security from detection, and quick eyes were as watchful to save the maiden and her sire as his who strove for their undoing. Elate and satisfied that the hour of his triumph was at hand, he retired to the palace of Edacer, with whom he had a farther conference on the subject of their common pursuits; and towards nightfall, with beating heart and impatient spirit, Amri proceeded to the dwelling of Urraca, anxious to gain the intelligence which he so much wished for, that she could no longer be to him an object of fear, as she was no longer an object of desire. In this hope, however, he was destined to be disappointed. The deadly work had not yet been done; and, cunningly advised, Zitta framed a story which satisfied him to await patiently for the events of the following day. A brief time only was allowed him for interview with the slave, ere he found it necessary to ascend to the upper apartment in search of her devoted mistress.

X.

A SEVERER trial was at hand for the Hebrew than any through which he had ever passed before. He was conscious that Urraca expected from him a speedy resolve to fly with her to Guadarrama, as he had already promised; and he was only solicitous how best to frame his promises so as to satisfy and meet her present exactions. Relying on the execution by Zitta of the crime to which she had pledged herself, he had no hesitation in this matter; and he had resolved to promise freely to his mistress for the future, assured that, ere he could be called upon for the fulfilment of his pledges, the lips which had exacted them would have lost all power of reproach. His misfortune was, as it is the

misfortune too commonly of the young and partially endowed, to be too readily satisfied with his own powers of persuasion. His vanity misled him into a self-confidence which the circumstances did not justify. But we shall see in the sequel. That same day, and towards evening, when the coming of Amri was hourly looked for, the resolve of Urraca began to assume a more distinct and unequivocal aspect. The chamber had been prepared by Zitta agreeably to the directions of her mistress. To this chamber, which was high and remote from the other apartments, the drapery and decorations belonging to that which she had formerly occupied had been carefully transferred. The table had been spread sumptuously with fruits, cates, and many delicacies brought freshly from the East; and in the centre, as she had specially directed, a beautiful fountain-urn of the purest silver was elevated, containing a full measure of the choicest wine. Brilliantly lighted, and in every respect ready and complete, the slave called upon her mistress to survey and to approve her work. She did approve of it, and a smile of bitter satisfaction overspread her countenance as she spoke.

"It is well done, Zitta—thou hast omitted nothing—it is fitly designed for those who shall enjoy it. Leave me now, Zitta—leave me, and give fit reception when Amri cometh. Deny me to all other persons, and seek me no more thyself to-night."

"Should the Lord Edacer come, my lady, he may seek you to thank you for the lustres?"

"I can spare his thanks—I can understand them unspoken. He cannot see me—I am sick to all but Amri; and, Zitta—" The slave returned. There was a pause before her mistress again spoke. Zitta advanced a pace inquiringly, and Urraca whispered her thus:

"It may be thou wilt hear noises to-night from my chamber—heed them not—hear them not!"

"Oh, my lady—what mean you?" cried the slave, beseechingly.

"What matters it to thee, Zitta? thou art free now."

"But not happy, my lady, to see you thus," replied the slave.

"Hear me, and be assured. What I do, I do for my happiness, under the guidance of the only thought which can promise me the peace I seek. I am not wild, Zitta, but what I do and contemplate is done and considered with a deliberate mind, ungoverned by any passionate mood, such as has but too frequently misled me into error. Obey me—leave me now; and—hear me—whatever cry thou hearest coming from my chamber, whether of my voice or Amri, give it no heed—stir not to inquire—suffer no one, not even thyself, to approach. Think only, and rejoice as thou thinkest, at such moments, that thou art now free! It may be that, even with thy thought, I too shall be free, though after a different fashion. Leave me!"

"But may I not come, my lady—must I not, if thou shouldst call or cry out?" demanded the slave.

"No—not even if I cry out shalt thou come," was the stern reply.

The slave, immersed in tears, would have lingered; but, gently leading her to the door of the chamber, Urraca pushed her from the entrance and carefully fastened it behind her. When she had gone, and her steps were no longer heard, Urraca carefully inspected all the windows, and saw that, in compliance with commands previously given, they were fastened beyond the strength of any one man, without fitting instruments, to unclose. This done, she approached the table, and drawing the packet of poison from her vest, emptied its contents into the vase teeming with wine, and then carefully destroyed the parchment which contained it. She had now little more to do than to await the arrival of Amri—or, we may rather say, her fate. Her resolve was taken, and her

nature was of that impetuous and decisive character that we may regard her determination as unalterable. This was evident in the coolness which had marked all her proceedings, her careful consideration of every subject in her household, however minute or unimportant, which might seem to challenge her attention, and the temperate and subdued demeanour with which she had dismissed and favoured her domestics. Lifting the curtain of her privacy a moment before the appearance of Amri, we behold her in an attitude, to her one of the most unwonted, but, at the same time, of the most essential humiliation. Upon her knees she strives earnestly, but oh! how hopelessly, to pray for that mercy which she must forfeit for the crime which even then she meditated. The unspoken supplication dies away in murmurs, and the murmurs—a vain and broken breathing—are lost in the unheeding air.

XI.

Amri at length made his appearance. Urraca herself received him at the entrance of the chamber, the door of which she carefully closed and locked, and, unseen by him, the key of which she drew forth from the ward, and secreted beyond his discovery or reach. Yet her reception, in all other respects, was not calculated to awaken in his bosom a solitary apprehension. It had all the show of that fondness which she was accustomed to exhibit, and which she had really and passionately felt for him until that luckless moment when she discovered, not his falsehood merely, but his hostile intention upon her life. It was then that, scorning him with a scorn fully commensurate to the degree of love which she had formerly entertained for him, she determined upon a measure of policy like his own. She resolved to oppose artifice to artifice—to meet the false smile and de-

ceptive speech with smile and speech, if possible, more deceptive still; and, under the garb and disguise of that criminal cunning which, as she borrowed it from him to employ against him, she deemed herself justified in using, she meditated a revenge which should be such as to satisfy her wounded pride, and sooth her bruised and disappointed spirit. With this object in her mind, deception was easy. Her lip was flexible with smiles—her tongue moulded into forms of the softest and most beguiling language, and her eyes, in which not even despair could altogether quench the glorious and unreserved fire, were made to reflect and exhibit only the benign and the beseeching looks of love.

"What means this change of chambers, Urraca?" was one of the first questions of Amri after the usual salutations were over, his eyes looking with some curiosity, but without anxiety, upon the array of the apartment. She accounted for it easily and naturally enough by referring to the confusion below resulting from her preparations for removal.

"You sent the lustres to Edacer," said he; "he was delighted. I saw him but an hour since. He has reason to rejoice in your friendship, and I wondered, and wonder still, Urraca, at your extravagant generosity. I am almost fain to suspect, dearest, that even now you hold him too favoured in your heart altogether to bestow its affections upon mine."

The eye of Urraca searched closely, yet without lingering long in the survey, that of the speaker. With how much earnestness, with what well-acted sincerity had he spoken these words! Yet she knew all the while that they were false—that he himself was false as hell. At first her reply, and the momentary glance with which she acknowledged his address, might seem to have been less than confiding.

"And you doubt me, Amri—you would claim for your love a warmer return than mine can bestow. Is it not so, Amri?"

"It is, dearest Urraca—it is. I *know* how much I love you, and I only *hear* your professions. I *know* that I do not deceive myself, but I am not sure that you do not deceive me."

"Be sure I do not, Amri," she said, earnestly, putting her hand upon his arm; "believe me, Amri, for you I have lived, for you I am ready to die, such is my love; and whatever may be the extent or nature of the feeling in your heart, be satisfied it is more than requited by that which is alive and active in mine."

Amri secretly thought with her—he was right—he knew not the latent signification of her language.

"Yes, Amri," she proceeded, "living or dying, I am still yours. You will believe me—I will make you believe me, dearest—ere very long. Do you remember I told you that I had a sad presentiment that I had not long to live?"

"You said so, dearest—'twas an idle fear."

"It was not idle, Amri—I feel, more and more, that it was not an idle fear. It comes to me at all seasons, and in vain would I fly from its presence. Think you that it comes to me for no purpose? Think you that the Christian God, who is your God also, has not sent this thought to chide me, and to drive me away from my pursuits, which I now begin to see have been too sinful for the eye of earth not less than for that of heaven? It is a warning that I should repent and fly from the wrath which is preparing for me. It is this thought which prompts and prompted me to fly to Guadarrama—to leave the places of temptation and sin—to fly to the places where I knew of none—the places of my childhood. Thou hast promised, Amri, that thou wilt dwell there with me."

"True, dearest Urraca—true! I will fly with thee to Guadarrama; but thou art over quick in thy proceeding. Thou saidst to Edacer that in three days thou wouldst take thy departure. It will not be possible for

me to go so soon. I have much, dearest, to execute, and my time is scarcely my own. See this order—I have it here to seek for a public enemy—this is the writing of Edacer, and at midnight I am to search the Hebrew Quarter for one who has a secret business from the Saracen, and is an outlawed enemy of King Roderick. This is a toil of state, and Edacer hath put others upon me—"

"Edacer!" said Urraca; "let me look upon the paper."

He gave it her, and she read—"In the king's name—Hebrew Quarter—any dwelling—may suspect—a page—Ha! a page! Has this page thy secret, Amri?"

"Yes—the secret of a great conspiracy against King Roderick."

"What!—trusted to a page? Nay, thou dost mock me."

"I do not, Urraca, believe me."

"And when wouldst thou go?" she asked.

"At midnight."

"What!—this midnight!" she exclaimed.

"Thou sayest."

"Well, truly, Amri, between thy own, and Edacer's, and the king's business, Urraca has but little interest in thy thoughts, and but a shallow portion of thy time. But it will not be so, Amri, I trust, when we go to dwell in Guadarrama. There I will bind thee all to myself."

"Thou shalt," he replied; "I shall be all thine when we are in Guadarrama, as I shall look then, dear Urraca, to have thee all mine."

"Even as I am now!" she exclaimed. "Look! dearest Amri—behold the preparation I have made here in secret for our departure."

She carried him to a portion of the chamber which he had not seen, and pointed out to his eyes three large earthen jars filled with precious gems—with gold and

jewels of immense value. The Jew's eye glistened while he gazed.

"These are thine, Amri," she said, as she unveiled them before him; "here is wealth beyond our wants—beyond your wishes, I believe, as it is beyond mine. It is for thee I have preserved it—thou art its master now, as thou art henceforward to be mine. I have marked these jars with thy name, in proof of the love I bear thee, and the readiness with which I give thee command over myself and my possessions."

"Thanks—many thanks, dearest Urraca—my gratitude is speechless, and thou mayst not wonder that I find not words to make fitting acknowledgments."

"Make none, Amri," she said, gravely.

"This wealth is immense, Urraca, and far beyond what I had thought in thy possession. But what is this of such curious fabric—is it of gold?"

He pointed to a thin piece of flattened gold, shaped like a crescent, inscribed with unknown characters, and having two holes in the two horns through which a string had been passed.

"That is a talisman brought from Arabia—it has a wonderful power to protect the wearer, and until this day I have ever worn it. 'Twas given me when a child, and it was said by him who gave it me, that so long as I wore it would it keep me from wrong and injury."

"Is such its power?" demanded Amri, curiously.

"I know not that," she replied, "but such was the faith of him who gave it me. 'Twas the old sage Abulfeda."

"What said he of its properties, Urraca?"

"Oh, much," was the reply of Urraca to Amri, made with a show of indifference that proved a perfect foil to the increasing anxiety which he manifested on the subject; "much! It was, he said," and as she spoke she took up the talisman and passed it around her neck, "it was a protection against all evil design of mortal.

Nothing, he pledged himself, which mortal man could devise for my injury, could harm me while I wore it."

"Didst thou believe him, Urraca? Didst thou have faith in its powers?" asked Amri.

"Surely not! I held his speech as idle; but, as he prayed me to wear it, I refused not."

"And you have worn it until now, Urraca?"

"Until this day. I threw it off this morning as a poor foolery, and as something unbecoming in a Christian to employ, it being of Pagan workmanship, you see."

"'Tis beautiful—wilt give it me, Urraca?"

She smiled as, taking the trinket from about her neck, where she had placed it but a moment before, she threw it around his. He seemed pleased, and she led him to the table where the repast had been set, and motioned him gayly to a place beside her.

"Thou canst not mean to leave me to-night, Amri?" she spoke, as he seated himself at the table; "thou art unkind to think it. Some other night will answer."

"Not so, dearest. I must depart this night. This commission is imperative upon me—the outlaw may escape—"

"The page!" said Urraca.

"Yes—'tis he I mean. He would escape did I not seek him out to-night."

"I think thou wilt not go—thou dost but trifle with me, Amri?"

"Upon my soul, Urraca."

"Nay, but thou shalt not, Amri. Thou shalt stay with me this night—leave me at morning on thy secret quest, but not to-night."

"Not so, my love. To-morrow, early morning, I will come—to-morrow night I'll stay with thee, and next day. All other times but this, and I am thine."

"Thou art resolved, then?"

"Be not vexed, Urraca—I may not choose but leave thee."

"Well, as thou wilt; but yet, Amri, I do not fear but I will keep thee still. When thou hast supped thou'lt linger a while and thou'lt stay." She spoke and looked in a manner which Amri, in his secret thought, could not but feel to be most persuasive.

"Till midnight only, dearest; but let us to the fruit. What is here, Urraca? Where got you these fine Damascenes? What a rich purple; and these figs look fresh as if just fallen from the tree. The finger-date, too, is full grown and ripe, and larger than is common. 'Tis a tempting repast, and so well ordered—but sit thyself, Urraca."

"As thou sayest." She sat down beside him as she replied, and pointing to the plums, said—

"Thou speakest them so highly, Amri, it puts me in the mood to take some of the Damascenes. It is a fruit I love."

"I join you in the preference," he said, as he supplied her. "Wilt have the dates?"

"No, I affect them not. Give me some wine."

She handed him a little golden tankard as she spoke, which he filled from the spacious urn before him—a second goblet, which she gave him for himself, he filled in like manner.

"Let us drink, Amri—" She lifted the tankard. "Let us drink to our future life together! Ah! Amri, there will be no strife then—no doubt—no lingering desire for the crowd and the clamour of Cordova. Our abode henceforward will be peaceful—peaceful—peaceful! Will it not, Amri?"

"Ay, and full of pleasure too, Urraca, I trust me," he exclaimed, as he emptied the goblet.

"Perhaps!" she replied, as she drank, "perhaps!—perhaps!"

XII.

After a brief pause, during which Urraca, leaning upon the table with her head resting upon her palm, seemed utterly unconscious of the objects around her, while her mind roved away in pursuit of some foreign thought, she abruptly recovered herself, and thus addressed her companion :

" Amri, hast thou drank ?"

" I have, dearest—my lips have searched the bottom."

" Fill again, Amri—fill—fill : we are wedded now."

" How wedded, Urraca ?" inquired Amri, who did not know how to account for the sudden look of exultation which her features wore.

" Fill thy cup and mine," was her only reply. He did as she desired him, repeating his question as he did so.

" How wedded, Urraca ? Thou saidst wedded, dearest ?"

" Are we not ? Hast thou not sworn thyself mine, Amri, and do I not pledge myself to thee in return ? Does not this wed us most closely ?"

" Ay, truly does it, dearest Urraca ; but in this fashion have I been long wedded to thee, and thou to me. Yet, until now, thou hadst not deemed us wedded."

" Is't not enough, Amri ? Wouldst have a church to wed us, and a priest ?" she demanded, somewhat wildly.

" What church, Urraca ?" he asked, gently.

" It should not be thy church, Amri, for that I believe not ; nor yet mine, for that thou deniest ; but the church in which we are wedded, Amri, should yet have sway over both of us. It should be a universal church, Amri."

" Where wilt thou find such church, Urraca ? What church is it that thou speakest of ?"

Her reply was instantaneous, and her voice rose and seemed to kindle as she spoke with a sort of enthusiasm

little short of eloquence, and which, as she proceeded, awakened somewhat the apprehensions of Amri, who regarded it as a gathering and growing insanity.

"What church is it?" said she. "A goodly, a great church—thou wilt soon know it, Amri. It is a more mighty edifice than the mind of man may imagine or his eye encompass. Its elevation is beyond his art to rival, as it is beyond the ambitious power of any king to limit. Its altars may be found in every land, the largest raised of earth. Its sacrifices do mock and swallow up all others, or put them all to shame—they are so humble when noted with its own. And of its incense I need say nothing. It reeks from every land—up, up to the pure heaven, assaulting the sweet skies with different scents from theirs. And for its pillars, they do stand aloft more firmly heaved than those of Hercules. They better keep our liberties than these do fence our borders from the Saracen. Its power is mightier yet—for, in its pale, the thousand sects of earth—the warring tribes—the jarring moods of superstition and devotion—grow reconciled and one. What thinkest thou, Amri, of a church like this? Bethink thee, hast thou never heard its name? Hast thou no guess? Is it not clear to thee?"

"Indeed, I know not, Urraca. Thou speakest that which is to me a mystery. I know of no such church as that thou speakest of, nor do I hold faith in it."

"Thou dost—thou knowest it well—thou shalt know it better before many days."

"I cannot think—'tis not the Christian church, for that has no such powers, though belike it may urge such pretence. Our King Roderick here, they say, like the Gothic kings of old, makes but little heed of it; and our rabbins, though they swell greatly when they tell of Solomon the Wise, and of the temple of his building, they rise not to such height as to make me regard that and this church of thine as one."

"Thou question'st not its powers, Amri, as I describe them?"

"No, not I; but 'tis a wondrous church—wondrous if only as it brings together the warring sects thou speak'st of. But truly, dear Urraca, I'm lost to know—I cannot guess thy meaning. Explain—tell me what church is this—what name it bears."

"Drink with me to the triumphs of that church—drink, Amri—thou shalt then know its name."

"I've drank, Urraca."

"And I," she added, immediately; then laying down the emptied vessel as she spoke, and looking with a triumphant smile in the face of the Hebrew, she thus proceeded—

"It is the grave!—that church!—the grave!—the grave!"

"Ha!" he cried, half starting from his seat, and his cheeks growing pale with a sudden but indescribable apprehension, while the tankard fell from his hand. "Ha! What is thy dreadful meaning, my Urraca?"

"It is the grave, my Amri. What! dost thou tremble? Wherefore shouldst thou tremble? Hast thou not promised me to share my fate—my fortune?"

"I have, Urraca. Have I not sworn it thee?"

"Wert thou not glad — thou saidst so, dearest Amri—to give up all thy freedom—to be bound in life and death, and to make thy lot with mine? Didst thou not love me to this measure, Amri?"

"Even so, Urraca. I have promised thee, and with such passionate fervour do I love thee, that I will give up all in Cordova, my father, friends, brethren—"

"I know thou wilt," she exclaimed, laughing exultingly. An acute look of fear overspread the features of Amri as he beheld the expression, but he continued,

"And within three days I will fly with thee."

"Before, before, my Amri—thou art laggard—I will not wait for thee so long."

"Thou dost forget, Urraca. I have told thee it may not be before. I am bound to this performance for Edacer, and much depends upon my execution. But ere the three days, dearest, I'll be thine—all thine—and fly with thee to thy own hilly home in Guadarrama."

"Alas! my Amri, I believe thee not! I do not think it. Thou wilt not fly with me to Guadarrama. I know thou wilt not."

"I swear to thee, Urraca."

"Thou swearest a lie then, Amri—a base lie—thou wilt not, canst not—the priest who wed us proclaimed it should not be."

"What dost thou mean, Urraca? From thine eyes glares a terrible wildness—thy brow—"

She interrupted him quickly as she rose from the table, and replied to him in a manner full of strange solemnity—

"We're wed by a fix'd fate—by one whose word we may not set aside, nor disavow, nor, in our terror, fly from. He hath said, and I believe him, Amri, that thou never wilt leave Cordova—that thou art bound to it by the strongest links, which thou canst neither bear with thee nor break. He tells me that, as thou evermore hast been a traitor to me—to all—thou'lt prove a traitor still."

"'Tis false," he cried; "whoso hath spoken this hath much belied me. Believe me, dear Urraca, it is falsehood."

"'Tis truth!" she responded, lifting her hand to heaven.

"Who is it tells thee that I will not fly with thee? What meddling priest is this?" he demanded, anxiously and angrily.

"Death!" was the hollow answer which she gave him; and the dreadful minister whose name she had called at that moment seemed to glare forth from her eyes in terrible threatening upon his.

XIII.

The affrighted Hebrew looked upon her now as one who had lost her senses. He, too, rose from the table, but took a position which left it interposed between them. She did not suffer him, however, to maintain this position; but, labouring strongly to preserve or compel a calmness of manner which had entirely left her during the scene preceding, she pushed aside the table, and firmly approached him.

"Hear me, Amri—you deem me distraught—I am not. But my mind is wrought up to new necessities, a strange condition, and to the contemplation of a solemn and singular change, which is in progress not less upon thee than upon me. When thou knowest all which I have to tell thee—when thou knowest what my hope has been, and know that I feel that utterly gone from me which late I leaned upon in hope—thou wilt not think it surprising that my eye is wild, and that my thoughts and language are like the thoughts and language of one utterly distraught. Hear me, and fear nothing—thou hast now, indeed, nothing more to fear. Thou hast a better protection within thee from fear than the talisman about thy neck. Thou mayst now put Death himself at defiance."

"Thy words are still strange to me, Urraca, and they sooth me but little. Tell me thy grief quickly, and say what I may do for thee, Urraca, for I am soon to leave thee."

"Thou errest, Amri, and hast more time, yet far less time than even thou, in thy impatience, thinkest of. Thou canst not leave me to-night—no—nor to-morrow, Amri."

"How—what mean you?"

"The door through which thou camest is shut upon thee, and the key which secures it my own hand has flung through a fissure in the wall which thou wilt

see behind yon curtain. It now lies at the foot of the wall in the court below, and no words of thine—no spell or power in thy command—will bring it to thy relief."

"But wherefore this?" demanded Amri, in evident alarm. She proceeded without heeding him.

"Look with me upon these windows, Amri. I was resolved to secure thee, and I lodged their fastenings each with its own rivet, and a strong bolt lies upon all, keeping them secure from any strength of mine or thine to undo them. Never was prison more close for criminal in fetters than this chamber is for thee."

The alarm of Amri increased duly with this intelligence, but he strove to conceal it as he replied—

"I fear not thy custody, dear Urraca, for well I know that thou will not have denied to thyself all chance for freedom. Thou hast a mode left for escape—that is enough for me."

"For escape from this chamber I care not, Amri. It is true, nevertheless, as thou sayest, that I have a mode of escape."

"I will share it with thee," said Amri, laughing.

"Thou shalt, I well know," replied Urraca, "but that thou wilt desire to employ such mode I somewhat question. Yet, ere thou dost, Amri, I have a something to disclose to thee. I have a dreadful charge to make against thee."

"What is that, Urraca? Speak, dearest, and let me forth soon, for the time hastens, and by midnight I must proceed upon the business of Edacer."

"Let the business of Edacer wait, and think rather upon thine own. Thine is now more necessary to thee than his. Hear me; I have it charged upon thee, Amri, that thou desirest my death."

"Thy death!" he exclaimed, appalled.

"Ay, my death—the death of the feeble and fond woman who has loved thee. Nor wast thou willing to await for it in the common course of fate, when the de-

cree of Heaven should demand it also. Thou wert bent, it is said, to hurry fate, and didst suborn my own slave to administer a fatal potion unto me. Thou didst tamper with Zitta to this end."

"'Tis false—she doth defame me—'tis a lie."

"Be not too bold—'tis true—I did behold the potion."

"I gave it not!"

"Thou didst—there's proof to show the packet came from thee."

"'Twas a love potion only that I gave her—it was no poison."

"What, didst thou doubt my love for thee, Amri? Did it need a love potion to make me all thine own?"

"It did—I thought so—dearest Urraca. I did not hold thee true to me alone; I would have had thee fonder. The powder which I gave Zitta was innocent, and would have wrought only upon thy affections."

"I glad me that thou sayest so—I glad me much. Would it, indeed, provoke the cold heart to love more fervently?"

"Such was its purpose—such its quality. 'Twas framed by an Arabian for my mother, who had misgivings of my father's love, and sought him for a charm. He gave her that—the potion which to Zitta I delivered. It could not hurt—its power was only framed to move the coy affections—to bend the unyielding heart—to make it warm with a more pliant method."

"I glad me that thou sayest so. Art thou sure?"

"Most certain, dear Urraca!"

"How I rejoice me! I do breathe again! I feel like one set free from a dark prison, and glorying in the sunlight."

"Oh, wherefore, dearest?" She proceeded without seeming to regard his speech.

"When Zitta brought this tale to me, I maddened."

"Didst doubt me, then—didst think it true, Urraca?"

"I did; and then the world grew black upon me. I

cared no more for life! I made her free, yet I bade her give me the fatal potion."

"But she did not," he demanded, anxiously.

"Thou shalt hear all. I then resolved to die!"

"I glad me, dearest, that I spoke so soon. Had I not told thee of the potion's innocence, it might have been—"

"Oh, yes—yes! But hear me out. Be patient now, I pray thee. I bade thee hither, as thou knowest, last night, and had this feast of fruits and cates provided. Believing thou didst mean to murder me, and did project my death with that same potion, ere yet thou camest—for I was bent on vengeance—I mixed it with that fountain—"

"The wine—the wine!" he exclaimed, his whole figure convulsed and trembling, as he bent forward, making the inquiry.

"Ay, with the wine we drank. Why dost thou tremble? Was it not innocent?"

"Hell's curses seize thee, woman—fiends and snakes —'twas poison—deadly poison!"

"Then we are wedded, Amri!" she replied, sternly, but contemptuously—"in death, if not in life, we are now wedded. Thou'st drank—we have both drank—and now—go pray."

"Let me go forth, Urraca—Jezebel, deny me not. Give me the key, I bid thee," he cried, furiously, while his features spoke at once the intensity of his hate and the extremity of his apprehension. She replied decisively, and with a withering scornfulness of expression—

"Why, this shows ill in thee, Amri. Thou shouldst now love me; having drank the potion made by the Arabian sage to bless thy mother, and to bend thy father to a due regard with hers, thou shouldst now love me."

"God curse thee, woman!—do thou not provoke me! Undo the door!—let me go forth, I pray thee. 'Tis not too late—there is a medicine—"

"Thou shalt not go—to-night thou shalt not leave me. To-morrow—"

"'Twill be too late to-morrow. Let me go now, Urraca—'twill save us both—I'll share the medicine with thee—"

"I seek it not—I would not now live, Amri, since thou hast denied that I shall live for any thing."

"I will be thine, Urraca, only thine? I'll fly with thee to-morrow—ay, to-night. Let me go forth in season."

"Never, never! I have resolved upon thy death—for mine own I care not! Thou hast deceived me as never yet has woman been deceived, forgiving her deceiver. We die together; I hope not now for any antidote—I do deny it thee."

"I pray thee, dear Urraca—on my knees."

"Liar! I know thee. Rise—thou but chaf'st me with thy base language."

"Pardon—spare—let me fly!"

He grovelled at her feet, which at length spurned him.

"Hope not to move me by thy prayers and sighs. Too well I know thy villany to listen. I know all thy schemes, Amri. To-night thou wert to seek a page, an enemy of Roderick! Do I not know the page thou aimest at is a woman—a lovely woman—one thou wouldst make thy victim; but one—I joy to think so—who doth most rightly scorn thee. Hear a tale I kept from thee before, in a vain hope to mend thee by my fond forbearance. I had not then the courage which had saved me, to pluck thee, as a viper, from the heart which thou hast stung to madness."

She then told him all the particulars of his attempt upon Thyrza, and of her rescue by Pelayo, of which we have already been apprized, but of which Amri knew nothing. She concluded by the following stern and inflexible summary.

"Knowing all this of thee, and more of thy falsehood

and base connexion with the woman whom thou couldst have prompted to the foul crime of murder on her mistress, even at the time when thou wert most professing love and service, I gave thee up for ever. I then resolved, with this last knowledge of thy cruel purpose to strike at my poor life; at the time, too, when first I had began truly to live, and when I did bestow upon thee such a perfect confidence as should have made thee, even if before thou hadst occasion to be mine enemy, my best and truest friend—I then resolved to tear thee from my heart. It was no pain to doom thee to the fate which thou didst design for me—the pain was in the terrible conviction that thou didst hate me. After that conviction I did not wish to live."

Amri could no longer doubt her sincerity, though he might her sanity. He, too, began to madden, for an agonizing pain which passed through his vitals at this moment more fully impressed him with the terrible consciousness of his situation. The dreadful imprecation of his father came to his memory with that pain, and seemed to be thrilling again through his ears—the petition had indeed been quickly heard, and as Amri well knew the horrible effects of the poison, he well knew that it was likely to be as severely felt as it was most certain, unless he could procure the antidote of which he spoke, to prove certainly fatal. Whether he possessed, in truth, a remedial medicine, may not be said. It is possible he simply desired escape from the dwelling, with the vague hope which comes to the otherwise despairing, and is a hope against hope, that succour might be had by a quick resort to the men of skill and science of the time. With this hope he prayed Urraca earnestly for his release, with every art of persuasion which, of old, he had seldom exercised in vain. But the conviction of his utter heartlessness had made her inflexible. The power of the poison had already begun to manifest its presence upon herself—she writhed under its fearful

pangs, but she also smiled scornfully upon her companion in suffering. Every word which she uttered in reply to his agonizing entreaties was a word of bitter taunt and contemptuous derision.

"You would be every thing, Amri, and you are nothing. You would win power with Edacer because he is Lord of Cordova, and find a way, too, even to the favour of King Roderick. Hadst thou been bold enough to be true, thou hadst been safe this hour, and in some of thy schemes successful. But thou wert false where thy faith was most due, and now, count thy gains!"

"Yet, if thou wouldst forgive me, Urraca—there is but little time to waste," said the wretch, imploringly. "I pray thee—on my knees."

"I mean not to forgive—I mean not to forego my power upon thee. Thou art my prisoner, and when I release thee it shall be to that greater power which already hath its hands on me."

He clamoured at the door, and shouted for aid from without; but she laughed scornfully at the feebleness of his efforts to shake the bolt or drive the massive timbers with his feet, which he now began furiously to apply to them.

"Zitta—Zitta!" he cried to his former accomplice, and his cries were echoed by the increased laughter of Urraca.

"Take the gold," said she, as she beheld his efforts; "this is thy gold, Amri—dost thou not know it? It is thine when I die. I bequeath it to none but thee. Buy her with it to come to thee, and pledge thyself to share it with her. She will help thee, perhaps."

"Fiend—wretch—cease thy infernal mockeries!" he cried to Urraca, who had sunk down in pain upon a couch, while, turning furiously from his ineffectual clamours at the door, he shook his clinched fists in her face. Her laughter mingled in strange contrast with her insuppressible groans, while she continued to taunt him with

his weakness, and to deride him with his ineffectual desperation.

"Thy cries are all in vain, Amri, and thou shoutest the name of one who is commanded and rewarded not to hear thee. Before thou camest I had anticipated thy clamours now. To Zitta I gave orders that she should heed no cries, of whatever kind; no appeals, whether of thy voice or of mine, coming from this chamber."

"Father Abraham—dreadful Jehovah! shield me—save me!" cried the despairing and bewildered prisoner. "What fiend from hell has prompted thee to this—this horrible malice? Curse thee, Urraca—Heaven curse thee with the plagues of Egypt. It cannot be that I am doomed to perish thus—it is not true; thou dost try me only. Thou hast not drugged the wine—it is thy trick. Ah—ah!"

The last exclamations were extorted from him by a keen pang, which sufficiently answered him, and contradicted the hope which he had just expressed. There needed no answer from her to confirm his fears. The poison had commenced its work, and, in the momentary and acute agony of its burning pain, the miserable man threw himself howling and writhing on the floor. Urraca, too, had ceased to taunt her victim—she now murmured only; and she strove to bring her thoughts to the crisis which was fast approaching—she strove to pray. A picture of the Virgin hung upon the wall, opposite to, yet at some distance from, the cushion upon which she had thrown herself. She arose from the cushion as she gazed upon the picture; and, though suffering increasing agony at every movement, she crossed the room, and sunk down before it upon her knees in prayer. Amri saw the movement, and at first imagined that she was about to seize an opportunity for flight, leaving him still a prisoner. With the thought he hastily leaped from the floor and hurried after her; but when he beheld her kneeling, and from the words which came to his ears

discovered that she was seeking to deprecate Heaven's wrath for her misdoings, he rushed furiously upon her. She heard his footsteps, but turned not once to behold him; and, utterly unseen, and his purpose unexpected by her, he drew a dagger suddenly from his vest, and plunged it deep down over her shoulder into the vital recesses of her bosom, exclaiming as he did so—

"Thou shalt not pray—thou shalt not find mercy, but shalt go with all thy sins upon thy head to the kindred fiends that thou fearest, and that now await thee."

She fell upon her face with a convulsion; the blow had been fatal, and her words were few and imperfectly uttered.

"I thank thee—I thank thee, Amri; thou hast done me a sweet service. I have no more pain—thy dagger has disarmed the poison—I am free—free."

Her face was turned upon the floor, and the blood gushed all around it. A few more brief and muttered words fell from her lips, but they were indistinguishable. In a few moments she was silent. He stooped down, and sought to lift the body, but he soon discovered from its weight that life had departed. It was then that his own pangs became more frequent and acute. In his agony he turned the point of the fatal dagger upon his own bosom, but just then he heard a noise—he thought so, at least, and, hurling the bloody instrument from him, rushed to the door. He imagined that he could detect the sounds of retreating footsteps, and with this conviction he shouted aloud.

"Ha, there—Zitta—Zitta! Come to me, Zitta. Here—come to me quickly. Bring help—bring axes, and break down the door—let in the air—bring water to my help—I thirst—I am on fire—I burn—I die!"

He paused for a few moments, as if to learn the effect of his cries and pleadings; but he listened in vain, and his clamours and solicitations were renewed.

"Come to me, Zitta—whoever thou art, I implore—I command thee. Oh, Zitta, dear Zitta, if thou lovest

me, come quickly to my help! Thou shalt have gold —gold—whatever thou requirest, Zitta; thou shalt have all that is here—all that I possess! Oh, fire—fire—fire! I burn—I burn—my heart is on fire! Ah—oh! it is at my heart—a dreadful tooth—it bites—it burns —it is fire—fire—fire! They come not—they are gone! I hear them no more. They hear not me. They leave me to burn—to perish!"

He paused, and stooped to the floor to listen—to catch again the sounds which he fancied he had already heard. The poison even then was tearing and tugging at his vitals. His own hands, in his dreadful agony, had grasped his bowels with a fierce gripe and furious energy, which would seem rather like that of a wolf upon the flanks of his victim. He listened for several minutes, until the increasing pain compelled him to forego the effort, and drove him from the extreme of attentive silence into the opposite extreme of wild, demoniac fury. He writhed deliriously upon the floor, and cursed fruitlessly the unconscious woman that lay dead at a little distance. His shoutings were renewed more furiously than ever. He beat upon the door with his unconscious hands—he shrieked, in his various moods of desperation, hope, agony, and entreaty, to the supposed listener—proffering his life and countless wealth to the person who would save it for him. And, when the echoes of his own voice came back to him unmingled with any favouring responses, he thrust his furious head against the wall with repeated effort, which, however, brought him no pain in addition to that which he endured already. The conviction that he must perish without prospect of relief or rescue was at length forced upon his mind by the disappointment of all his hopes and the failure of all his supplications. With this conviction he rushed to the body of Urraca, determined to repossess himself of the dagger by which he had terminated her sufferings, and with which he now proposed to end his own. Hav-

ing stricken the fatal blow into her bosom, he had hurled the dagger from him. But the doom against him was unyielding—the fate was inflexible, and he had not the choice of death. In vain did he grope around the chamber for the deadly weapon. His eyes were blinded, and he failed to see it; the sensibilities of his fingers seemed gone, for he failed to touch it; and the dreadful imprecation of his father seemed at once to be realized upon him, in all the forms of Providential judgment. His doom was written without mitigation. It was required not less to be fatal than to be felt; and he was destined to endure the most protracted form of human suffering.

"But I will not endure it," he cried, furiously; "I will fly from—I will escape it yet!"

From one side of the room he prepared to rush, with extended head, upon the dead stone wall of the other. To dash out his desperate brains, and thus terminate his agony, was his last hope; and, closing his eyes, he bounded forward; but, ere he reached the wall, his heart sunk within him. A tremour seized upon his knees—a general weakness overspread his limbs, and he dared not carry out his more resolute design—indeed, he could not—the judgment was inexorable, and could only be endured, not defeated.

"Oh, Adoniakim—father—father! that I had heeded thy commands—thy prayers—thy counsels!"

Groaning and shrieking, he sank down, and crawled once more to the place of entrance—once more he listened—once more he fancied that he heard retreating footsteps, and he again howled with a strong but foolish hope, praying for the relief which came not. With the momentarily increasing agony of the poison, his cries became more and more dreadful, and nature could not much longer endure the strife. In a dreadful paroxysm, the miserable wretch thrust his fingers into his now wolfish eyes, and tore the quivering globes from their burning sockets. But this brought not the desired ben-

efit, and, howling and suffering still, the now utterly hopeless victim rolled and writhed along the floor, calling vainly for that death which he had once so much dreaded to encounter. The doom, though fatal, was yet according to his father's prayer, to be felt in torments even greater than those which he had endured already. He was not yet suffered to die, and the tenacious life hung on in agony until sensibility was entirely subdued. Through the night the cries of the sufferer came to the ears of Zitta, in the distant apartment where she lay. What was their occasion she knew not, for her mistress had withheld from her the secret of her intentions; and she remembered the injunction which was given her, and did not seek to inquire. Yet she could not sleep, and so piercing at length did the shrieks of Amri become, that she left her apartment, and cautiously, and with as little noise as possible, approached that where the victims lay. The demoniac cries alarmed her, and she fled. It was probable, indeed, that Amri, with the acuteness of hope, had really heard her footsteps, but his appeal availed not. She distinguished no particular sounds—she heard no call upon her name and for relief; and even if she had, the fastenings of the apartment were entirely beyond her unassisted strength to remove. She hurried back to her chamber, and, with an imagination active with momently accumulating terrors, she buried her head in the bedclothes, but she did not sleep. The dreadful shrieks penetrated the thick folds of her couch's drapery, and when they did not, she could not forbear the anxiety which prompted her to remove the covering, and once more listen. Fainter and fainter at every moment came the cries until towards morning, when they ceased entirely. The dreadful catastrophe was over, and the ungrateful son had too soon and too suddenly perished beneath the dreadful curse invoked upon his head by his deeply-wronged and justly-irritated sire.

END OF BOOK IV.

BOOK V.

I.

THERE is nothing more touching in the history of human affections than the hopelessness of youth. Hope and youth would seem to have been twins—they belong naturally to one another. Their separation is one of the most painful subjects of mental contemplation. We cannot help but weep when we survey it. It does not seem so hard or so improper, the parting of age with hope. It is for age to despair. When the sap runs slowly, when the branches are dead, when the trunk is withering, and the green honours no longer come forth in the pleasant springtime to adorn the tree, the axe of the destroyer is then fitly laid to its root! We are then reconciled to its overthrow, and, indeed, recognise a sort of propriety in the event, even though it brings a sorrow to our hearts. But it is far otherwise when the young plant is doomed to perish—when the warm sap suddenly withers on its passage up—when life's currents are destined to be prematurely frozen—when the spring, which is its life and lovely emblem alike, deigns it no glance and brings it no nourishment. Hope is the spring season to the youthful breast, and love is the fruitage which it brings to bless it. Alas if the one comes unattended by the other! Alas for love! alas for youth!—they must both perish!

The last time that we looked upon the Jewish maiden Thyrza, she had been sleeping in the chamber of the Prince Pelayo. His noble courtesy and honourable for-

bearance were duly written upon her heart. Poor maiden! Her heart had been equally tenacious of his virtues in all other respects, and the page was full of records. His manly beauty, his bold demeanour, his patriot love of country, his delicacy, and his wisdom—his beauty free from effeminacy, his boldness from brutality, his love of country without ostentation, his delicacy unaffected, and his wisdom beyond the time, yet adapted to its necessities—all constituted him a being singular in the sight and supreme in the heart of Thyrza. She was too full of thoughts of him to speak of him; and when Melchior pronounced his praises, she was silent—she was speechless—she could only smile and weep.

It did not now escape the penetration of her father that the affections of his daughter were irretrievably given where they could look for no return. His heart shuddered with the conviction. He attended her home from the dwelling of Pelayo the morning after her rescue from the attempts of Amri, with a bosom lightened, it is true, of the heavier fear which had possessed it during the preceding night, but full of sorrow at the new conviction which filled his mind.

"Thyrza," he said to her, when they had reached the seclusion of his own apartments in the house of Samuel, "Thyrza, my child, it had been far better for thee and for me if we still had lingered upon the desert, and dwelt until the coming of the death-angel in the tents of the Saracen."

"Oh, wherefore, my father—wherefore dost thou say so?" she replied, affectionately and earnestly.

"For thee—for thy sake and safety, far better, Thyrza, I am sad to feel. Thou wert a blessed and a happy, though a solemn-thoughted child when we dwelt in the solitude and enjoyed the freedom of the desert. Thou hadst no hope beyond thy aim, or out of the attainment of thyself or me. Thy dream was humble, thy thought was fetterless, like a bird's wing. To be with me, to

pour forth thy heart in music, and to sweeten our solitude with our mutual sighs, when thy wild song was ended, was thy greatest care, as it was my happiest enjoyment. Thyrza, it is otherwise now. Thy heart has other hopes—it is not so happy now. Thy voice is no longer airy like the bird's—thy footsteps are light no longer."

The maiden hung down her head, and her breathing was suspended. Melchior bade her approach him; and not daring to look him in the face, and with eyes still drooping and downcast, she did as he commanded her. He took her within his arms, and seated her upon his knee. She was still silent. He continued—

"Thou art changed, my child. A sad change has come over thee, and a new sorrow is in thy heart, gathering strength with thy thoughts, and taking the strength from thee while it does so."

"Alas! my father," she exclaimed, and her face was hidden in his bosom.

"It is written, my child. Thou art chosen—thou art doomed! I know thee too well to believe that thou canst feel the searching thirst of love for a moment only—it is a life with hearts like thine, and it will exhaust thy life ere it will leave it. Thou art not the one to devote thyself, and, after a brief season, depart from thy devotion. Alas! no! Would it were so, though it might make thee less worthy in my sight. Would that thy soul were of that lighter temper, which, like the insect-bird of Cashmere, may spring away from the flower it has all day sought with a wing lighter and more capricious as the evening cometh. Were it so, I should have better hope of thee. Then might I rejoice still in the thought that thou wouldst be spared to my old heart, though I might then regard thine own as far less worthy of its love. But such is not thy nature, Thyrza. Thy affections have hands that cling, not wings that fly.

They cling but to one altar, and they perish there—they cannot be torn away."

"Alas! my father, of what is it you speak?" demanded the maiden, her sobs striving with her speech for utterance.

"Thy tears answer me, Thyrza—and if they did not, my child, dost thou think me so blind now, or so indifferent through the long sweet years when it has been my joy to watch thy infancy and growth, that I know not the signs of feeling within thee? It is vain, Thyrza, that thou wouldst hide thy heart from my sight: I have learned to read it. I read it now. It is open before me like a book. I read it in thy pale cheek—thy upturned eye—thy bosom troubled and shaken with convulsive heavings. Seek not to deceive me, my child—thou canst not, and I so love thee that I would not have thee strive. Thy woman nature, I know, must shrink and labour for concealment of its weakness—it has but little strength else! But the veil must be removed from thy bosom as it is removed from thy face. Thou shalt speak to thy father for thy peace, my child, and that he may the better console with thee, and teach thee, though it be beyond his art to save thee."

"Do I not, my dearest father? Have I not told thee all? What have I kept from thee which has happened unto me? When Amri came and approached me—"

"No more, my child—thou dost still deceive me, though, I trust, only because thou dost still deceive thyself. Why shouldst thou speak to me of Amri and of thy heart in the same moment? It needs no word from thee to assure me that they have no thought, no feeling, no sentiment in common which should bring them together. I speak of thy affections, Thyrza. Alas for thee, my child, I speak of thy fruitless affections!"

A heavy sigh escaped from the lips of the maiden, but she made no other answer.

"Thou lovest, Thyrza, and thou lovest one who is

worthy, but whom I would not have thee to love as thou dost."

"Alas! my father—speak no more of this—spare me—in pity spare me—I have not strength to bear with thy reproaches." She sank down in his embrace as she spoke—her knees upon the floor, and her face buried in his lap.

"Thou errest, my child. I have no reproaches for thee. Thou art good, and pure, and innocent in this of any wrong. Thou art guilty of weakness only—of a proper and a sweet, though, for thee, an unhappy weakness—a weakness belonging to thy nature, and given thee by Heaven as a blessing, but which man, with trick, and false standard, and foolish contrivance, has turned into a bitterness and a blight. If there be error, it is my error. I should have known thee too well to have put thee where thou mightst behold, and study, and love the nobility of soul and of performance which I have taught thee so greatly to admire, but which was yet to thee unattainable. I should have known thy quickness to love that which is lofty, and manful, and true. Had I but thought of thee, my child, with a proper thought, I should have kept thee from danger. But my heart was too much possessed by the wrongs of my people, and my head too much given to plans for redressing them, to think of my own blood, and of one so close to me as thou! I have erred in exposing thee to the danger—I may now only grieve for my blindness, and sorrow at thy fortune—I cannot blame thee that thou art overcome!"

"Speak not against thyself, my father. There is no danger that I fear—I have suffered nothing. I am not overcome, for my heart is strong for resistance," said the maiden.

"There is danger, and thou hast suffered, my child. Seek no longer to deceive me. Know I not that thy heart is given to the Prince Pelayo—that thou lovest him?

That he is all in thy thought and thy estimation, and that thou hast no affections now which are not given in tribute unto him?"

"Forgive me, oh, forgive, my father—thou hast spoken but the truth. I feel it, though I have not dared to say so much, even to myself."

"I believe thee, my child, for I know thy purity and meekness. Thy cheek, which now burns like fire upon my hand, is a proof to me that thou hast not been wanton in thy regards and thoughts."

"I have not, I have not, my dearest father, believe me."

"Thou hast loved unhappily, but not unworthily, my Thyrza. I trust me, my child, that thou also knowest that thou hast loved hopelessly."

"I do—I do, my father!" she replied, with broken accents and a choking voice.

"The God of Abraham look down upon thee in mercy, my beloved, for thou needest his blessing. Thou lovest deeply; thou hast set all thy heart upon the one object, and in thy affections is all thy life. Thou lovest hopelessly, my Thyrza, and I fear me thou wilt die."

She clasped her hands between his knees, and his hands were folded above her head, and they both prayed in silence, and both hearts were softened to resignation by their prayer.

II.

With a heart filled to overflowing as he thought upon the unrequited and profitless state of his daughter's affections, and the fate to which it would doom her, the position of Melchior was yet such that he could neither indulge in idle grief nor spare the necessary time to convey her once more, as was now his desire, into the deserts which they both sighed for. The business of

the Gothic-Jewish nation hung upon his hands, and to his undoubted capacity and sleepless energy alone had his people deputed their rescue from the tyranny under which they groaned in Iberia, and their hope for future security and the protection of a better government. This he had promised them to achieve, and to this he had solemnly devoted himself. Inspired with a patriotic and unselfish zeal not common to the time, and far less common among the nation of which he was a member, Melchior would have freely given up his child in sacrifice to the God whom he worshipped, and the people once so greatly the object of his care, to achieve his present object. It cannot, therefore, be held strange that he should now waive her claims as a child, and his own love as a father, to proceed upon toils which, individually, could bring him no advancement in place and no increase of the benefits of earth, and the prosecution of which involved him only in a thousand privations, not to speak of the risks of life which, as a notorious outlaw, he hourly incurred. Freely and joyfully would he, more than once, have given up the struggle, as he saw how few there were among his tribe who sought for freedom for its own sake. They all desired it for the security of their gains; but they desired only the liberty of the tradesman, and for this Melchior strove not. The freedom which he sought was that of the principles and the affections—the right to speak the truth, to look up to Heaven unrebuked, to resist injustice, to side with the victim against it, to frown upon the brutal and undeserving, to enjoy the air and the sunlight, and to yield up his sympathies, whenever they were demanded, in tribute to the beautiful and the good. The mere security of his goods formed but a humble portion of those desires in which his love of liberty had its origin. A cause even higher than his regard for his people prompted his labours, and permitted not a relaxation of his purpose. He laboured, like all true patriots, in the cause of truth;

and his own life and the life of his child—ay, the very existence of his people—were all as nothing in comparison with the great aim and principle which nerved and stimulated his patriotism.

III.

He gently pushed her from between his knees. His prayer was ended, and leaving her for the present to the care of Heaven, he went forth on that visit to Adoniakim his compatriot, which terminated, as we have already seen, in the temporary confinement of the wicked Amri. Little did he think that, at a season so perilous, the foolishly fond old man would so far have suffered his misplaced regard for the youth to have overcome his wisdom, as to have exposed himself within the dungeon which had been assigned for the safe keeping of his son; still less did he anticipate the employment of so successful an artifice as that which the cunning Amri had practised upon his sire to beguile him within the apartment. His own warnings to Adoniakim had been strong and earnest—and he thought them sufficient. It is true, he well knew how weak had been the father, but he held him to have been weak only because he had been so long deceived. But the mask had been taken from his eyes—the baseness and dishonesty of the son had been openly avowed, and Melchior did not dream that it was possible for Adoniakim to be again beguiled into his former weakness. He left him without fear of any evil consequences; and, returning to Thyrza, made his preparations for his own immediate departure from Cordova. He was required to travel far and fast during the two days which should intervene between that time and the night appointed for the great meeting of the conspirators at the Cave of Wamba. He was yet to notify Abimelech, the young warrior who led the Jews,

to gather his force along the neighbouring passes, and, bringing with him a select body of his men to the meeting at the cave, there provide himself for his entire array with the arms which, for some time before, Melchior had been studiously collecting in that place of retreat and supposed safety. There were yet other duties requiring his performance calling for despatch; and the time allowed for his parting with his daughter was much too brief for the love he bore her, and the sorrowing passion at his heart. Ere he reached the solitary chamber which was assigned her in the house of Samuel, he heard her sad voice in song—a deep, wild lay, seemingly the offspring of the moment-mood, and truly denoting the fond and sacred hopelessness of her pure and gentle spirit.

THE LAMENT OF THYRZA.

I.

And shall there be a song when I am sleeping?
And shall there be a voice when mine is dumb?
Ah, birds—ah, sisters! wherefore would ye sing?
Was not my song a music in the spring—
Was not my voice a bird's that bid ye come,
As if from sloping hills it saw ye leaping,
And gather'd gladness from each glancing wing?

II.

Have I not loved ye, sisters, with a spirit
That did not freeze to bid ye gather round?
Sweet birds—ye never dropp'd a silvery sound,
But my heart leap'd in ecstasy to hear it—
And can ye sing when I am in the ground?

III.

Alas, for me, since sorrow is undying,
And music is sweet sorrow—sad but sweet!
The birds shall lose no voice, though mine no longer
May fondly strive with theirs, for victory vying;
The bowers will not the less bestow retreat,
Nor streams deny to murmur at the feet
Of some sad sister, all denied like me;
While the big torrents, with an accent stronger,
Shall pour a rolling music like the sea.

IV.

These shall not wail the voice that is departed—
God's blessed things shall know not I am lost—
The temple will not lose me from its choir—
And but one star shall pale its sacred fire,
And shroud itself within the world unborn.
Exiled and hopeless—lone and broken-hearted,
But with no murmur, one old gray-hair'd sire
Shall miss me ever from the crowded host,
And call my name, and hear his voice return
In echoes, and no answer shall be given,
Unless it come from heaven!

V.

Yet in my heart, undying, the sweet feeling
That taught a love of flowers and innocent song
Still spreads its thousand hands to grasp the throng
Each sunny hour of life is still revealing.
My soul shall live in them—my spirit waken
To every blessed bird-note in the trees—
To every murmur when the leaves are shaken
By the sad, sighing breeze.
I cannot lose the lovely hues that rise
In summer-setting skies—
These go not utterly with parting breath,
Oh no! it is not death.

VI.

It is not death—it is but a resuming
Of childhood's peace and infancy's first vision,
The calm of confidence, and the native clime;
Death is the shadow-born, sole child of Time,
Truth's foil, and hope's derision,
The pathway of the blind alone beglooming.
I fear him not, for in my soul I feel it—
Sweet whispers, born of thought, do still reveal it—
These birds shall yet be mine—these songs, these treasures
Of day and sunlight, and the passing pleasures
The night-breeze flings us, which has newly fann'd
Yemen's fresh gardens and the Happy Land.

VII.

Yet, are these hopes to me? oh, what the flowers,
The songs of birds that nestle on my heart,
What if they all depart?
I may not weep to lose them, nor the glory,
The freshness of the blossom-bidden hours
That came about me with such sainted story,
And made heaven-haunted homes of hoary bow'rs—

I should not find sweet music in the bird,
The whispering hours, in solemn shadow heard,
The fairy, flowery throng,
Nor in the seats of haunt and hopeful song,
Though all with me transferr'd—
If, in that other home, I still abide,
A worshipper denied.

VIII.

My thought is of my childhood's thought no more—
In place of gentle birds and blooming flowers,
I dream of mighty things,
Such as Judea loved and look'd of yore!
An image of command and sceptred powers
Before my vision springs.
A voice is rising ever on mine ear,
A voice of majesty, of peerless sway,
Such as all men must honour and obey—
I see a proud array—
I hear the trumpet ringing, and the song
Of the young bird my childhood loved is lost
In the deep murmur of a marching host
And banner-counted throng.

IX.

Sisters! oh, sisters! these are not for me—
These people are not mine—these things I should not see.
Let the proud Gothic maid from the high tower
Look forth with glittering eye,
And hail, with happy voice, the mighty power
Of a great nation, clothed in majesty,
Marching with pomp of war, and many a cry
Of banner'd princes, on its enemy!
Oh! where should Judah's damsel find a place
Among that victor race!

X.

Yet, sisters, when he comes,
The victor in the fight,
Amid the clang of the barbaric drums,
And follow'd by a shout of far delight—
Be fond, and seek me then—
Bring some sweet flower that hath
Been trampled on his path,
And with a gentle song within mine ear
The pleasant tale declare
Of how he look'd among the crowd of men—
Sweet sisters, ye were bless'd
Thus hallowing my rest!

IV.

THE heart of Melchior was subdued within him as these sad strains fell upon his ears. He dared not then approach his daughter; but, leaving her for a time to the indulgence of her sorrows, he fled silently to his own chamber, and there, unseen, gave free utterance to his. When he came forth the traces of grief, other than it was his wont to show, were completely obliterated from his countenance. In sadness, but without any reference to the secret care of both their hearts, he now addressed her; he was about to take his departure for the country, and, as it was not his purpose to return to Cordova, he gave her directions as to her mode of procedure during his absence.

"You will here remain, my child, in the house, and with the family of my brother Samuel, until you shall have heard from me. Heed no word that you shall hear counselling your departure from this place, unless the bearer shall show to your eyes, when he speaks, the ring which now you see upon my finger. Do not leave this dwelling for less reason, unless it be that some cause to me unknown, and which I look not for, should compel you. Your own judgment must then direct your course, and the blessing of the Great Jehovah keep with you to protect and guide you."

"But if Amri, my father—should he again seek and pursue me, for truly do I think it was he who so assailed me when I was saved from his grasp by—"

She paused—she could not speak the name of Pelayo.

"It may be it was he. I thought not of that," said Melchior, musingly—"but now he cannot harm thee. He is secure for a season—secure from harming thee, as he himself is secure from harm."

Melchior then related the occurrence which had taken place at the house of Adoniakim, which resulted in the

commitment of the vicious youth to the temporary prison from which we have witnessed his escape. The cheek of Thyrza paled with apprehension as she heard the narrative.

"My mind misgives me, my father, if Amri be in possession of your secret," said the maiden.

"There would be danger, my child, were he free. But he is secure, and the bolt which fetters him is under the hand of Adoniakim."

"Alas—his father! I fear that he too greatly loves Amri to keep him in bondage. Amri will plead and promise, and Adoniakim will believe and set him free; and thy life, my father, and the life of—"

She did not finish the sentence. Melchior reassured her.

"I warned Adoniakim against his weakness, Thyrza, and his eyes are now fully opened to his son's unworthiness. There is too much at risk, my child, and the heavy responsibility upon Adoniakim will keep him bound to caution. He will not relax the bolt nor draw the bar which bind Amri until the meeting is over, and our people have all departed for the mountains, whither it is our present purpose to depart."

"Yet, my father, should it be that I see danger, or hear words of alarm ere the meeting in the cave be over?" inquired the daughter.

"Then don the garments of the page, my child, and seek me at the cave. Thou wilt find shelter among its close recesses from any present danger; and if there be danger, we shall encounter it, as heretofore we have ever done, together. Leave not thy weapon, but keep it secret about thee. Thy power to use it successfully will much depend on the ignorance of thy assailant that thou hast such weapon in possession. Thou knowest the path to the cave?"

"There are two—"

"Take thou that which leads by the Fountain of the

Damsels. It will be less noted than the other which is by the woods, and there will be fewer to suspect thy purpose being flight, as it is a trodden and familiar path. But I trust there will be no need of this. I would not have thee fly until I send thee word by a safe hand, for there may be blows to be given along the passes which lead to the Asturian mountains, whither we shall guide our footsteps; and the fierce soldiery will make it unsafe for thy present travel. Yet take thy own counsel if thou seest cause of fear in Cordova."

With other words of advice, mixed with cheering and fond language besides, the old man took his departure, leaving his now doubly-desolate daughter to her own sad moods and heart-sorrowing meditations.

V.

Melchior sped from Cordova mounted upon a noble steed, which he had chosen as a steed for battle. Long and late did he ride, and the villages were sought wherever the Jew could be found, and he who had pledged himself heretofore had a place and an hour appointed him for attendance. Similar duties had been assigned to Abimelech and other leading men among the Hebrews, so that a goodly number of the more adventurous and patriotic of the nation were prepared to assemble, ready to take arms, and gather under the lead of the princes, to fight against the usurping King Roderick.

Though the toils were great before him, yet did the venerable Melchior, covered with years and full of sadness, go forward with a fearless heart and most generous spirit. He executed the task assigned him so that nothing was left undone; and, with a speed somewhat relaxed, pushed his good steed forward on his returning track towards the Cave of Wamba, where the meeting of the chiefs was to take place. It was early in the

afternoon of the day on the night of which they were to assemble, when Melchior came in sight of the rocks which lay around the cavern. He alighted from his steed, which he carefully fastened in a hollow out of sight; then, pursuing his farther way on foot, he proceeded to the entrance. It lay in shadow and the deepest silence, yet the waning and sweetly-softened sunlight was smiling upon the surrounding hill-tops; and the old man, whose mind was never unconscious of the lovely and the lofty things of God's creation, stood a while beholding the rich glories spread around him. The tinkle of bells from a shepherd's flock reached his ears, and the shepherd, when he looked up, was descending in his sight along the slope of a distant hill which lay between him and the sunlight. The man was clothed in skins, and Melchior distinguished that he was a native. "Yet this man—this miserable man," said he, musing to himself, "will link his brute strength to that of the Goth who enslaves his mind and tramples upon his natural wishes, while denying his proper wants, to destroy the creature who has a thought unlike that of his tyrant. Little does he know that he who gives strength to injustice arms his own enemy, who in due time will turn his steel from the bosom of his foe to that of his creature."

He turned away from gazing, and, as if he strove not to think, hurried at once into the cave. It was unoccupied. A dull dead silence reigned over the wide enclosure save in one spot, near its centre, where a stream, having a natural basin, murmured continually, as it found a difficult and narrow aperture through a sunken chasm in the rock, through which, after much winding, and a long and secret passage, it found an outlet into the sunlight. The musing Melchior likened it to the spirit struggling after truth, which is the moral sunlight. "Thus," said he, "at first—it awakens into life with darkness around it. The rocks environ it. The cold hangs upon it in fog—men refuse it countenance, and it

struggles unheeded and without regard. But the sleepless water wears away the rock in time, and the spirit thirsting after the truth will find a passage from its dungeons. The rocks cannot always gird it in, and it makes a chasm. The walls divide—the rocks split; and slowly, but certainly, through difficulty and darkness, it emerges from its gloom and captivity, and the smile of God rests upon it in its freedom, even as the blessed sunlight hallows these waters when far down, at the foot of the mountain, they break away into the valley. And, Father!" he continued, "is not this our cause—the cause of truth? Is it not for this that we shroud ourselves in these gloomy places—these natural prisons of the earth? Find we not an emblem in this secret water? Shall we not emerge into the glorious sunlight free and unrestrained? Will not the rocks fail to keep us—shall we not break the chain—shall we not foil the vigilance, and defeat the wiles of our oppressors? Be thou with us, God of Abraham, and the cause of thy people is safe; the glory of Judah, so long departed, will again return to him, and the jubilee of his emancipation will be sung in thy temples."

From the cavern he emerged as his prayer was concluded. The blessed sunlight was still around him, and it was doubly sweet and beautiful in contrast with that shrouding darkness which in the cave had enveloped him. A playful bird hopped before his path, and led him onward with a sweet inviting hum to follow as it flew; and with a thoughtful and sanguine mind, that drew favourable auguries at every step as he proceeded, and led unconsciously his footsteps down the sides of the sierra, he wandered onward in the direction leading to Cordova. On a sudden he heard the flight of many birds, and looking before him, beheld a cloud of them rising from a wood at a small distance beyond him, and making their way towards the distant mountains. Another and another flock followed, and arrested his further attention.

"It is from the Fountain of the Damsels they rise," said Melchior, musingly—"some one approaches for water;" and, with no definite intention, he still continued his walk in the direction of the fountain.

VI.

It will be remembered that the impatient Amri, as the evening of that day approached at the close of which he hoped to obtain possession of the person of the Hebrew maiden, wrapped himself in a disguise which he deemed to be sufficient for concealment, and, accompanied by one of the soldiers of Edacer who was appointed to attend him, cautiously approached the dwelling of the Hebrew Samuel, and narrowly examined its several modes of entrance and egress. He was determined not to be foiled again by events, if possible; and he resolved to guard against the sudden flight of the maiden through any unknown passage. His examination resulted in a resolve to divide his attendants, in order that each of the three doors which he discovered to belong to the building might have its sufficient guard. This determined upon, and the station which he was appointed to keep designated to the eye of the soldier who was with him, Amri took his departure from the spot, and hurried away, as we have seen, to the fatal interview with Urraca, which so terribly foiled his schemes and terminated his career of crime.

But he pursued not his examination with so much caution, nor hurried away so soon as to escape notice and suspicion. It is not the guilty mind only which suspicion haunts. It is the mind of the weak, the humble, the oppressed—of him who is conscious of frequent wrong during the past, and who has little hope of better fortune from the future—which must regard all objects with suspicious fear, and every strange aspect

with jealous circumspection. Even kindness to such a spirit becomes an object of dread and apprehension, as it is too frequently found an insidious cover to beguile the poor heart into confidence the more securely to ruin and to sting.

The fortune of the persecuted Jew had made him thus jealous and apprehensive. Feeble and wronged, he could only oppose to strong-handed injustice the most sleepless vigilance and the nicest cunning. His eyes slept never, and his hands were always quick to convey his valuable possessions from the grasp of his tyrant. The children of Samuel the Hebrew had early imbibed the lessons of fear and watchfulness which the necessities of their father and their people had taught them. They beheld the suspicious stranger disguised in his heavy cloak, and closely followed by a ferocious and half-armed soldier of the governor, as he slowly walked before and lingered about their dwelling; and they at once conveyed the intelligence to the elder inmates. At the first glance upon the suspicious person, Thyrza was convinced that he was Amri, and a second look fully confirmed her in her fears of her base enemy. Amri had paused before the dwelling, and his hand was uplifted as he pointed out to the eye of his companion a door that opened from the house upon an inner court. His cloak was discomposed by the movement of his uplifted arm, and his bosom partially uncovered. The colour of his vest was familiar to the eye of Thyrza, and, with the oppressed and the suffering, to suspect is to fly.

"It is he," she exclaimed, "it is Amri. I must fly, my friends, I must seek my father."

They would have dissuaded her from this sudden determination; but she was resolute. Yet her resolve to fly arose from no apprehensions which she entertained for her own safety. She thought not then of herself. She thought only of the meeting at the cave of the conspirators—she feared for the life of her father—she

thought of the danger of another even dearer; and no argument of Samuel, and no persuasions of those about her, could move her from her purpose. She immediately sought her chamber and proceeded to her preparations. Once more the garment of the page was made to conceal her lovely person; once more the dagger of the desperate was fastened in her girdle, and hidden by her cloak; and when the unwelcome visiters were no longer to be seen in the neighbourhood, she sallied forth, with a trembling heart and hurried footsteps, on her way by the Fountain of the Damsels to the cave of Wamba.

VII.

Melchior, musing still, and with a mind filled to overflowing with various and thick-gathering thoughts, approached the Fountain of the Damsels. Art never yet has presumed to vie with nature in scooping out so beautiful a place. The water gushed from the hollow of a rock, and fell with a playful clatter into the basin of another and more spacious rock which lay beneath it, and innumerable fragments of stone were scattered around, upon which the young maidens who came for water were wont to sit during the pleasant summer. Trees grew from the clefts in many parts of the rocks around, and there were two large trees, the shadows of which entirely screened the fountains from the sun. It was one of the most lovely achievements of nature; and the ambitious art, vain and daring as it is, never yet dared to impair its loveliness by labouring idly at its improvement. It stood as it had stood from the first; and it was venerable and beloved in the regards of the people, as it had always been the same.

Melchior was aware, as he approached, that a boy sat upon a loose stone overlooking the fountain; but his

thoughts were busy within him, and he deigned no second glance upon the stranger until a faint, sweet, well-known cry reached his ears, and with a slight scream the boy bounded towards him.

"My father, oh! my father—I am glad, I am happy."

"Thyrza, my child—what brings thee here—what has happened to make thee fly from Cordova? Speak—let me hear."

"Amri!" she exclaimed—"Amri!"

"What of Amri!" demanded Melchior.

"He is free!"

"How! who set him free?—not Adoniakim! It could not be! He could not be so weak. Speak—what knowest thou?"

"Nothing do I know, my father, save that he is free," replied the maiden.

"How knowest thou that?" he demanded.

"Mine eyes beheld him," she replied, "but a few hours ago."

"Where didst thou see him?"

"He walked with a thick garment over him, as if for concealment, before the dwelling of Father Samuel."

"Art very sure, my child?" demanded Melchior, with much concern in his countenance.

"As that I live, my father. I knew him well even through his disguise; and once, when his arm was lifted, and he pointed out the dwelling of Father Samuel to the soldier who came with him—"

"Ha! a soldier with him!"

"Yes, my father—a dark, short man. To him he pointed out the dwelling, and when his arm was raised his vest was open—a purple vest, thou knowest—"

"How didst thou know, my child, that his companion was a soldier?"

"He had a half pike in his hands, my father, and walked stiffly like a soldier."

"Wore he a badge, my child?"

"Of yellow, on his breast—"

"Edacer's badge—'tis done! Some harm has surely happed to Adoniakim—he has not willingly suffered the boy to go free. He hath stolen forth, or done his father some harm to obtain his liberty; and, doubtless, hath told the secret to Edacer. Come with me, Thyrza. I must foil them yet."

Thus saying, the old man led the way to the hills where his horse had been fastened. He spoke not during his progress, except musingly to himself, and then his words were broken and few. At length, when he had reached the spot where his horse stood, he bade his daughter mount, which she did, behind him.

"It is not too late," he said, as much in soliloquy as for her ears; "Edacer can bring but a small force, and if I can urge forward the troops of Abimelech, they will be enough, with the leaders in the cave. We must ride fast, my child, and I will soon put thee in safety. Fear nothing, but grasp firmly upon my girdle, and be of good cheer. Some three leagues hence he bides—in two fair hours we shall be there—then thou wilt rest. In two hours more we can return to the cave. Yes—in that way only—but it must be done. Art sure of thy hold, my child?"

She replied in the affirmative. Melchior then gave the word to his steed, and they were soon stretching away for the lively plain where Abimelech held himself in readiness, with the Hebrews who had come out with him to the war.

VIII.

Two hours later, and the cavern which Melchior had left in solitude and darkness presented other aspects. It was illuminated by flaring torches, borne by the immediate attendants of several of the conspirators. A

hundred armed warriors were its occupants, and the reflected glare of the fire from their shining weapons and glittering armour made the spectacle a noble and imposing one. And it was noble and imposing in other and more essential respects. The true patriots—such as loved their country, and lamented her downfall and degradation—few though they were, and compelled to seek in secrecy and by stealth for their just rights, were now assembled for the last time ere they awoke the war-cry and drew the blade openly against the usurper. These were now met, claiming to be the national council of Iberia. They claimed to hold in their hands the true popular sovereignty of Spain; and from that hour we may date her deliverance from the Goth, and her first rise as a nation in the presence of the world. True, they had not yet the power and the sway, but they had the spirit for the achievement; and it does not need that we should now be told that where there is that spirit of freedom, there also will be, in time, the substance. The bands of the tyrant may press and repress, but it can be for a season only. Warriors are but flesh, and that perishes; but the true principle is immortal—though smothered and hidden in the caverns of the earth, the sacred fire is never utterly extinguished.

It was to meet this august assembly that Pelayo had brought his brother. They were assembled when the two princes reached the entrance of the cavern. Ere yet the elder Prince Egiza entered the subterranean apartment, and before his approach was known to those within, Pelayo once more addressed him. His language was earnest and imploring. He seized Egiza's hand as he spoke, and pressed it with all the warmth of a true affection.

"Brother," said he, "ere thou goest, and before our friends behold thee, I implore thee, shake off this weakness. Remember thy father, thy name, thy own hope and character. Let them not degrade thee as a cow-

ard, for assuredly will they do this if thou hangest back when thou shouldst go forward. Remember, it is the Council of Spain—the great Council of the Nation which receives thee—the nobles who yet cling to the throne of thy fathers, and to the ancient principles of the people. In them is the power of election—in them is the power of destruction. Life and death are in their hands, and by thy temper this hour will they judge thee."

The reply of Egiza was cold, and unresponsive to the warm appeal of his brother.

"It is thou that hast brought me into this peril, Pelayo," said he, reproachfully.

"Alas! my brother, wouldst thou not have perilled thy good name, thy honour, thy pledged word as well as mine. I have rescued thee from this peril. Be thou not now a traitor to thyself. Upon thy word now hangs thy honour; and more—I say to thee in warning—upon thy true action will depend thy life. Beware of thy weakness—pledge thyself to our people—become their leader, and let them crown thee, as, if thou falterest not, they will freely do, their king."

"No more," said Egiza, "no more! It may not be as thou sayest. It were a dreadful loss to me now were I to take arms against Roderick, and I am sworn not to do so."

"They will slay thee, Egiza, if thou sayest so," said Pelayo.

"My blood be upon thy head!" was the stern reply as they went forward.

IX.

The audience rose as one man to receive the princes, and a murmur of pleasure ran through the assembly, mingled with the half-suppressed shoutings of many. The ear of Egiza, however, could distinguish more fre-

quently the name of Pelayo than his own, and his hostile feeling to his brother found due increase from this circumstance. But he smiled scornfully as he reflected, for he thought that his brother had been improperly striving and seeking to supersede him in the estimation of the people. Pelayo saw his secret thought, and turned away in bitterness and sadness of spirit from the contemplation of one having his blood in his veins, yet so unworthy of it.

"We have waited for thee, Prince Egiza," said Count Eudon, speaking for the rest. "We looked to have found you here in grave preparation, and much has it grieved us that other matters of moment have made it needful that you should bestow your time otherwise than upon your people."

"Yet have I had no unfitting representative, my Lord Eudon, in the person of my brother. He, methinks, has not unworthily fulfilled the trust which I have given him. He hath laboured with you, if I err not, in this weighty business." The speech of Egiza, though uttered in a bitter mood and with sarcastic reference, was received in a literal sense by his audience.

"Rightly hast thou spoken, Prince Egiza. Pelayo has truly fulfilled his trust, and with a diligence and forward spirit that craved not slumber in the execution of his duties. Were it possible for a prince to fulfil his responsibilities to his people through the help of an agent, none better could have been found for his purpose than Pelayo. We, who have seen him toiling without craving rest, moving among his enemies without fear or precipitation, and devoting every thought and every energy to the good of his people and of his prince, may not scruple to confirm thy words, and award him the full justice which he merits. But we are not willing, Prince Egiza, to believe that the sovereign may sleep while his good servant works in his behalf; for then the king becomes but a shadow, and he who performs his offices

is wanting in his responsibility, and may not possess the high principles as he may lack the blood of his master. It were a sad misfortune to the nation of Spain, or to any nation, if its monarch ruled over its people by a deputy."

"My Lords, you are about to err in two ways," said Egiza, in reply to this reproachful speech. "You would assume for me, in the first place, the desire to be your sovereign—"

"And do you not?" cried Lord Eudon, and Count Aylor and many lords followed him in the demand.

"Hear him not, my lords; how can he gainsay his blood? How can Egiza refuse to be the King of Spain? He is bound to you by blood—by his father's name and bidding—by his own pledges!" exclaimed Pelayo.

"He is bound to obey the National Council of Spain," was the solemn response of Count Eudon; "and in its name, Prince Egiza, I demand of you, what has been done by you or after your command in the prosecution of our war against the usurper, Roderick the Goth."

"Perhaps it were better that you address such demand to him who has so ably been performing for your sovereign the duties which should have been his charge. Pelayo, there, shall answer you." The cold insolence of this reply was felt by all of the assembled lords, and by none more than Pelayo, but he said nothing. Leaning with his elbow upon the projecting ledge of a rock, he awaited the further proceedings of the council.

"Prince Pelayo, as it is the will of your brother, we would hear from you. We would not willingly proceed in any manner until we shall have been taught as to your proceedings, lest our several doings conflict unhappily, and end in peril to our cause. What is the word from the Lord Oppas?"

In obedience to the commands of Lord Eudon, who presided over the council, Pelayo advanced from the

rock on which he had been leaning, and thus addressed the assembly:

"My Lords, Nobles, and Gentlemen of Spain—

"Before I unfold to you my various performances in behalf of our prince and people, let me say, that from this moment I surrender up into your hands and the hands of my brother, from whom it came, all the authority under which I have toiled; and I would have you learn that, in all that I have willed or done, I have done as best it seemed unto a poor mind unskilled in the great affairs which belong to a nation, but not unmindful nor wanting in zeal to do that which to it seemed most necessary and proper to be done. And I give thanks here to the trusty and brave men, many of whom I see around me, who have freely seconded my poor labours, and lent their wise counsels to my assistance. This is all. I have done with this. I am not apt at mouth-speech even to speak my courtesy, trusting rather for its show to the action which speaks ever more than words. If now the Lord Eudon will propound his question, I am ready to answer according to my best capacities."

Pelayo paused; and after a few words of general compliment uttered among the nobles, Count Eudon repeated the inquiry which he had made ere Pelayo spoke.

"What word from the Lord Oppas?"

"A warm encouragement he sends to you to prosecute your present goodly enterprise. He has also placed at your disposal a large amount of money, of which he prays you to make such disposition as in your mind may best serve against Roderick. He limits you to this. He will not give for any other purpose."

"But comes he not to join us with his household?"

"He does not, my lord, for various reasons. It is for you to say with what propriety."

"May they be said, Pelayo?"

"They may, my lord, though it may be I shall not phrase them so ably as my worthy uncle might have done. The Lord Oppas loves stratagem, I prefer open strife. He would do, but he would do secretly; what I do, that would I do openly. He loves patience, I prefer liberty. Shall I speak more nicely? Thus, then. The lord bishop is summoned in close attendance upon Roderick. He is busy in Roderick's household, and I have his word that he is serving us ably with those who are about him. He hath a glozing trick of speech which I affect not, but which is a strong argument for right with many; and he promises me that he will soon be able, by this same trick of speech, to send us better aid than twice or even thrice the force of his household in battle. He hath a head full of artifice, and a tongue which so ably seconds it, that, spite of his blood relationship to us, he hath won a close confidence from Roderick, who holds him in long consultation upon great affairs of the nation."

"May he not betray us, Pelayo? May he not be won by Roderick, who but shows him this seeming confidence the better to practice upon him?"

"I think not, my Lord Aylor. My uncle hath a trick of the church—he hears confessions, but he makes none; he is true to us, though it would please me better if he rode the war-steed Courage instead of the jade Dissimulation. He will serve us, doubtlessly, quite as much where he is as where I would have him, though it would please me better that his word should be more manful."

"And what hope is there that Count Julian of Consuegra will leave the cause of the usurper, and find the right with us."

"None! Roderick has bought him to his service, and he now goes to meet the Saracens who arm against his government of Ceuta. There is better hope for our

open movement in his absence, since he will then take with him a veteran army that might greatly check our first efforts if employed against us."

"And of the Jews with whom thou hast made league —what of the old man, Melchior—the outlaw?"

"He should be here to-night," said Pelayo, anxiously; "I wonder that I see him not."

"Art thou sure of him? If he betray us—" said Aylor.

"I fear not that," said Pelayo; "but he hath many and active enemies in the city of Cordova, even among his own people, and the price set upon his head by Roderick makes his dwelling there perilous. I fear not that he will do us wrong—I only fear for him."

"What hath he done, Pelayo, so to secure thy confidence?"

"Given up his wealth; provided us with means we had else wanted; and been a sleepless labourer in the cause. These arms, my lords," pointing to the collection which filled a recess of the cave, "are of his provision solely; and already he hath shown to me the names of near a thousand of his people, pledged to join our ranks when it shall be said we need them. Even now they assemble in other places, and seek in small bodies the mountain passes of the Asturias, where I have sworn to meet them."

Pelayo then proceeded to unfold the particulars of his agency, which he related with a strictness, a fulness, and general regularity of detail which rendered all his statements perfectly clear to his audience. When he had done he received the cheering acclamations of the lords, and then sank back in silence to the place which he had formerly occupied, leaning upon a projection of the rock, and awaiting in sadness the further progress of events.

Meanwhile Egiza said nothing. The Lord Aylor then addressed him.

"Prince Egiza, the performances of thy brother, which to us are full of proof that he hath been a strict and provident servant of thy will, seem not to touch thee. Thou approvest of them?"

"If they please ye, my lords, what matters it whether I cheer or chide? Doubtless he hath done well."

"This is cold courtesy, prince, for noble service; and thy nobles in council assembled are grieved to behold a spirit in thee which looks adversely upon thy brother; and it has been said to us that you are but a laggard in the good cause which should warm us all—the cause of your king and country."

"I am not cold or laggard in the cause," said Egiza, "if it were hopeful, my lords; but it were a needless sacrifice of life and waste of valour, with our poor abilities, to strive against Roderick."

"Ha!" exclaimed Aylor, and his exclamation was seconded by many. Pelayo started forward.

"My brother would not risk ye, gentlemen—'tis for your sakes he pauses. But when ye speak, and show him that you nothing heed the risk, and freely take the danger to yourselves—"

"Nothing pledge for me," said Egiza, coldly. Pelayo persisted, however, and approached him.

"But, brother, when I show you that our force, Count Julian's being absent, will avail—"

"Show me nothing. You shall not force me at your pleasure, Pelayo, to do what I refuse."

"But 'twas your will, my brother."

"I have changed it," replied Egiza.

Pelayo turned away indignantly. This little dialogue had been conducted in under tones, but yet it reached the ears of the council, particularly the latter sentence of Egiza; and Count Aylor, as chief of the council, spoke.

"We do not change so soon in our purposes, Prince Egiza, nor are we a people bound to submit to such

caprice. Do you behold in us, prince, the National Assembly of Spain?"

"I hold you so, my lords," said Egiza, promptly.

"'Tis well; and now, Prince Egiza, it were better if, to the question I shall now put to thee, thy answer shall be equally prompt and pleasing. The National Council of Spain is now assembled to take measures for the overthrow of her tyrant, for the resumption of her rights, for the array of her armies. They call upon thee to help them in this service. Wilt thou, as first of blood, having a claim of lineage from Recared the Great, assume their lead? Wilt thou, if so they call, become their sovereign, bound by their old laws and pledged to their protection? Art thou ready? Speak!"

A general silence prevailed in the assembly when this question was put. The members were all anxious to hear the reply of Egiza, for it had been already said among them that he shrunk back from the work which he had been the first to begin, and that he was no longer willing to risk his life in the cause of the common liberty. Egiza beheld this anxiety, and he felt the toils closing around him. He turned and fixed his eyes upon Pelayo, but his brother was immoveable, and still stood leaning upon the rock. Egiza could not but see the anguish which was in his countenance, and he turned from beholding him with increased disquiet at his heart. He half believed that Pelayo had striven to drive him from those regards of his people, which he himself was now disposed to yield and set aside, and regarded the present meeting as one calculated rather to entrap him among enemies than to secure his services and influence for the nation.

Doubtless there were some in the assembly—perhaps many—who, if a choice between men were the question, would unhesitatingly have preferred Pelayo; but they were desirous of obtaining for their sanction the eldest son and most obvious successor of their late monarch;

and, perhaps, the unanimous voice was ready for the election of Egiza. But the unhappy prince could not believe this. He was wilful not less than bewildered. He had promised Cava not to take up arms against her father, and, by consenting to lead the conspirators, such an event was, perhaps, unavoidable. But whether he met with Julian in battle or not, the evil was not the less great to him, since it could not be supposed that her father would ever consent to her marriage with one denounced by his sovereign as a rebel in arms against his authority. It has been seen that there was no prospect of persuading Count Julian to adopt the same cause with himself; and, according to his passionate yet narrow mode of thinking, he adopted that course which, while it lost him the regards of the one, failed to secure him those of the other. Rebellion trusts not the half resolved, and tyranny is equally exclusive. The lords assembled in the cavern, and calling themselves the great council of the nation, were resolved upon having from him a direct acknowledgment of their authority. This he could not refuse to do without tacitly declaring for the usurper, since theirs was the only existing authority in the country at variance with his. They had heard vague rumours of his attachment to the daughter of Count Julian, and they were too jealous of those liberties, for which they were willing to die, to suffer them to be the sport of a doubtful leader or an ill-digested design. Egiza saw, in the countenances of all around him, that they were men of resolution; that they were well assured of their own authority, and determined upon its execution. He saw that they were not less able than resolute, and he felt that his opposition could only result in his defeat. Yet how could he yield? He could not. He could not yield to his own fears what he had refused to the reasoning of his brother, and the prayers of his brother and friends alike. Once more he looked upon Pelayo, and his jaundiced spirit fancied that he detected a smile

upon his lips, and the glance of his eye seemed to have correspondence with that of his questioner, Count Eudon. This resolved him. He looked proudly upon the chief of the council as he thus replied:

"Methinks, Count Eudon, there is little need that you should look to me to lead you in these matters. See I not, in the high thoughts which you all have of the worth and diligence of my brother, that in truth you look to him. He is your best servant. He hath no scruples such as trouble me. A hundred men will suffice with him to lead against the force of Roderick. I have no such skill in war. I cannot compass such great ends as these you design with so scant a provision. Let Pelayo be your choice, my lords—I will not be your sovereign."

"Prince Egiza!" exclaimed Lord Eudon, as the assembly gathered round, anxious and silent, "know you not that in the hands of the National Council of Spain lies the award of life and death, of honour and of shame, and that to deny their authority and to refuse obedience to their decree is to provoke their doom?"

"I deny not your authority, my lords; I hold you to be the National Council of Spain, and, as such, you have the powers of life and death. I deny not your authority, and I am willing to submit to your doom," calmly and gloomily replied Egiza, who now stood apart from the rest. Pelayo approached him with rapid strides.

"Say not so, my brother—recall your words, Egiza, and speak your readiness to do battle for your people. Give him time, my lords, press not upon him so. Grave matters, such as these, call for grave deliberation, and he should have it. Speak, my brother; declare yourself ready to lead them against Count Julian."

"Never! Away—thou hast betrayed me, Pelayo, and I would not hear thee speak," said Egiza, scornfully interrupting him. But Pelayo continued:—

"I forgive thee this too—I forgive thee all, Egiza, so thou wilt but speak as they would have thee. Thou art the rightful king—'tis but a word, and a new kingdom waits thee. A most noble kingdom, too, my brother—not of the Iberian, not of the Goth, not of the Roman, but of Spain's mingling people, all thy subjects. Speak—say, my brother, and the first knee that bends to thee is the knee of Pelayo."

"Thy words are hateful to me, Pelayo, for I hold thee to have brought me with bad design among mine enemies. Thou wouldst have my blood—thou wouldst push me from thy way. I know thee, and I scorn to hear thee speak."

The ire of Pelayo kindled in his eye, and his whole frame shook with his suppressed emotion. He drew back, however, and said no more, but again leaned against the ledge of the rock. Count Eudon then spoke.

"It surely needs not much time, Egiza, to resolve so clear a question. Thou hast had a long season for thought already; and it should have been a fixed answer in thy mind before, to say whether thou wilt obey the council of thy nation or abide its decrees. It calls upon thee, through me, to lead its armies against the common enemy—to take its power upon thee, and become, when they shall have lifted thee upon the shield, the true monarch of the realm of Spain. Speak I rightly, my lords—is not this your word?"

"It is—it is," was the unanimous cry.

"It may not be, my lords! I cannot lead you," said Egiza, with a calm, conclusive manner, and with his arms folded in resignation; but his eye was turned upon Pelayo in doubtfulness and in ire. Count Aylor then advanced into the centre, and, lifting his right arm on high, spoke aloud with a terrible voice.

"My lords and noble gentlemen, the National Council of Spain—hear me: I do pronounce the Prince

Egiza, son of Witiza, a traitor to the realm, and I claim judgment and the doom against him."

"He is no traitor," shouted Pelayo, rushing forward in the face of the assembly, and confronting Aylor. "He is no traitor, my lords. He hath erred, he still errs, and his wanderings I may not approve; but he is noble—noble as any gentleman in Spain. With my arm will I maintain his worth, and with good blows assert his truth against any warrior in this high presence. Who calls him traitor I will prove one, and hold from this moment my foe."

While thus generously Pelayo came forward in his behalf, the unhappy Egiza looked composedly around him, but said nothing. He seemed stubbornly indifferent to any direction which the affair might take. The Lord Aylor, nowise daunted by the rash challenge of Pelayo, and, indeed, nowise provoked to wrath, replied gently, but with sufficient firmness to show that he was neither to be driven from his position nor baffled in his purpose.

"Thy defiance, Prince Pelayo," he replied, "in no manner confounds or offends me. It is worthy of thy blood that thou shouldst be valiant; it is due to thy kindred that thou shouldst boldly come forth in defence of thy brother. I would that he had thus boldly come forward for himself. It had given better hope to his people that he was still worthy to lead them to our foe. But he has no voice; the spirit of valour has gone from him with the consciousness of virtue; he dares not, because he does not nobly. If he be no traitor, as I charge upon him, let him speak—let him strike—let him go with us in battle—let him approve his faith."

"He will—in good season will he do this, my lord," was the prompt response of Pelayo; "but, I pray you, noble lords and brave warriors of Spain, bear with me for a while. I have that to say in your ears which shall, I trust, acquit my brother of the charges which you so

heavily make against him ; and, if it do not utterly acquit him of error or of weakness, will at least bring ye to behold him with a sad reflection, and pity for the mischance of mind which seems to have befallen him. You all have seen him, my lords, when he battled first in the eye of our father, and won his bloody laurels from the insurgent Basques. That he is brave ye have but to look back to your memories for his gallant doings then. He was no laggard in that season, and his froward valour and his good success won him praises, as ye well know, from every tongue."

The reply of Aylor was no less ready than had been that of Pelayo.

"That we well know, Prince Pelayo ; and it is the greater wonder with us, that, having been so valiant then, he should prove himself so laggard now. Hence our unbelief in his virtue, and the reason which he gives us for thus shrinking from the encounter which is our aim. We well know that there is nothing coward in his blood ; and we can believe only that he has grown traitorous to our cause, and is sold to the usurper."

Egiza grasped the hilt of his sword, and his lip quivered with his anger ; but he closed his lips firmly, turned half aside from the presence of Aylor, whom he had angrily confronted while he spoke, and, with difficult effort, composed himself to silence, while Pelayo replied to the bitter speech which had so much roused him.

"A cruel thought, Lord Aylor, and most unkindly uttered ; a thought which it would better please me to meet with strife than other answer, but which I calmly speak to, as I would not disturb our purpose by show of that anger which were so much better shown to our enemies. Let me remind you, then, that the ban of Roderick is even now upon the head of Egiza. His mercenaries track our footsteps, and the knowledge of his place of concealment is fatal to his life. How, then, is he bought by the usurper? and wherefore should he

yield up his throne, by which he should have all that Roderick could give him, and far more? and what is the proud temptation which, in thy thought, has won him away from the faith which he had pledged to his people, and the homage which they proffer in return? What is the mighty bribe which has bought him to such dishonour?"

A grim smile on the lip of Aylor prefaced his reply.

"Thou shalt have my answer but too soon to thy confident demand, Prince Pelayo; the bribe which has bought thy brother from his faith is not less known to us than is his treason. The daughter of Julian of Consuegra is the price of his honour."

Three strides brought Egiza to the place where Aylor stood, and with a keen eye fixed upon the assailant, and a demeanour which might have terrified a less determined foe, he replied in tones of thunder to the charge.

"Lord Aylor, thou liest in thy throat—my soul is more free from dishonour, such as thou imputest to it, than is thine in thy slavish suspicion. I will not deny to ye, my lords, that I love the Lady Cava, the daughter of the Count of Consuegra—that I truly love her; yet with no such passion as would move me to yield in shameless sacrifice one solitary principle of right, one pledge of faith or service which I have ever made to ye or any; nor, let me add, without fear or shame, to what I have already revealed to ye—that my suit, though well advanced to the maiden and found gracious in her ears, is in no wise favoured or accepted by Count Julian. He, in truth, denies me, and with violence—"

The voice of Pelayo was heard at this moment—

"My lords, thus do I also avouch. I have heard the language of Count Julian in denial, and have seen his violence towards my brother."

The eye of Egiza was fixed scornfully upon him while he spoke, and his acknowledgments were thus made when he had concluded:

"My lords, if there be need of other lips to confirm the truth of what I have said, and would say, to the ears of this fair assembly, I speak no more. I have already said but too much for the complexion of mine honour."

Pelayo advanced, striving with conflicting feelings, while he gave utterance to the most earnest appeal to his brother's better feelings and more sober reason.

"Oh, brother," he exclaimed, "play not so wildly with thy own fortunes, and the affections which thou so little knowest to value. Take, I implore thee, a truer thought to thee of thy duties and of me. Defy not our love as our hate—beware of such rash defiance. I forgive thee—I forgive thee thy harsh and idle judgment of me and of my performances, but I cannot forgive thee, nor will these around forgive thee, thy most erring judgment of what should be thine own. Be wise, I pray thee, for thy own sake no less than for the sake of our good cause."

"No words with thee," was the cold answer. "I speak but to these noble lords—I have ears for no other."

"Thou speakest like a madman or a child," replied Pelayo, with a resumption of his former dignity, "and I regard thee with too much pity to be angry with thee now."

The Lord Aylor replied to Egiza after the following manner:

"So far, 'tis well, Prince Egiza; I bear with thy reproach of falsehood, since I now have some hope of thy truth. Having said that Julian denies thee, thou canst have no hope from him?"

"None!" was the reply.

"What hinders, then, that thou shouldst continue thy pledges to us? What binds thee to this apathy? Wherefore wouldst thou withdraw from thy own cause and ours, and forsake the honourable strife which is to give us a common liberty?"

"I answer thee," replied Egiza, sternly, "my own mood—my free, calm resolve denies thee, and hinders such pursuit. I am, I trust, the master of my own mind, and I yield it to no will of thine, Lord Aylor, nor to that of any other here."

"Then hear us, Prince Egiza," replied Aylor, with a stern solemnity; "if thou, having pledged to us a service which thou art pleased to withdraw from at thy will, art thus resolved, it will not offend thee to learn that we too have a will in this matter; and that the National Council of Iberia have, in addition to this will, the tribute powers of life and death, the power of judgment and doom no less than of reward and elevation. To their power I now refer thee for thy judgment, for I do, in Heaven's presence and thine own, pronounce thee a traitor to their authority not less than to thine own pledges; and I demand of them the doom upon thee such as the traitor may deserve—the doom of death, if they hold thee worthy of the headsman—or, if they think too meanly of thy valour, and yet distrust thy ambition, the shaven crown of the monk."

"I am before ye—in your power—it must be as ye will, my lords. Ye may destroy me by the axe, or ye may degrade me in your malice. Be it so! Yet," unsheathing his sword as he spoke, "though ye deem me base, ye will not find me coward! There must be strife ere ye do your will upon me, and one life or more shall pay for the doom and the dishonour which ye meditate."

Slowly receding as he spoke, he placed his back against a massive projection of the rock, and prepared with a manful valour to do battle to the last. His show of decision, though late, gave pleasure to Pelayo; and when Eudon, Aylor, and many other lords prepared with drawn swords to rush upon the refractory Egiza, Pelayo, also drawing his weapon, placed himself midway between them.

"Stay, my lords; ere you move in this procedure, I pray your attention to my words."

"Not now, Pelayo," was the prompt reply of Aylor, who was about to advance. The sword of Pelayo gleamed before his eyes.

"You hear me or you feel me, Lord Aylor. If you hear not reason, you are no less enemies to me than ye are to Egiza. Be not rash like him. What we do we do as a great people, not as wilful and passionate children. Hear me speak to you as such; I pray you hear me. I would resume my argument in behalf of my brother, and think to render good reasons which shall bespeak your indulgence for his most erring mood."

The Lord Eudon, who had officiated as moderator of the assembly, now prayed the hearing of the lords; and, having obtained silence, declared for the rest their readiness to listen. Thus encouraged, Pelayo began as follows, with an argument in defence of his brother which, though he urged it with all warmth, it is no disparagement to his honesty to add, he was not himself altogether satisfied to believe such as would or should be satisfactory to them. The tie of kindred gave the impulse which moved him to the defence, of which a deliberate reason might well have despaired.

"I have said, my lords," resumed Pelayo, in defence of Egiza, "that my brother, when fighting with the insurgent Basques, approved his valour, which became a lauded thing, and the theme of praise even among the bearded warriors of our army—men who had coped with the Roman legions. Nor in this warfare alone did he win the applause of our people. When the rebel Roderick first rose in arms, and we encountered his fierce lieutenant, the one-armed Palitus, whom he slew, it was a marvel to all how Egiza fought. The murder of my father—sad mischance!—then followed; and though the news spread panic among our followers, so that they deserted our banner, and fled to the caves and

heights for safety—not less courageous, though all alone, he kept a strong heart, and his counsel and resolve was then that we should do battle to the last. He took heart, even from the heartlessness of those who followed us, for a new and more desperate war. You all remember his counsels on the plains of Aurilia?"

Here the Lord Aylor, with a triumphant smile, thus interrupted him.

"All this but helps, Prince Pelayo, to approve my words, since it speaks loudly against the present temper of Egiza. Wherefore this sudden change of mood but in treason? Wherefore should he shrink now from the battle which he prayed for then, if he were not false to the principles for which we have striven in despite of danger and privation. Thy words but help to his conviction."

"Nay, be patient," replied Pelayo, "and thou wilt hear. Dost think that a natural force could so have altered him? could so have changed valour into cowardice, strength to weakness, and the noble into the base spirit? Impossible! The truth is, my lords, that my brother suffers from disease; some potent witchery is working in his brain, so to impair its reason and to enfeeble the manhood of his soul."

"Ay, the disease of treachery, Pelayo; the base malady which made him sell himself to Roderick, and give up the noble struggle for his own rights, such as manhood would have taken; preferring, as a boon, the life which he should rather lose than take at the hands of him by whose blow his father perished. He suffers the disease of a base selfishness only, which makes him heedless of the loss of liberty to his friends—their hourly risk of life—their long-continued privation, while he sneaks to base security, and to the womanish enjoyments which make up all his desire in existence."

"A while, my lord," replied Pelayo, with an effort at calmness which he saw was essential to his success in

pleading the cause of one for whom so little could be said; "a while, my lord, and, ere I pause, methinks I will give a sufficient answer to your harsh opinion. Egiza, surely, has not yielded this power to Roderick, and bows not in obedience to that tyrant without some recompense. Can ye say what is the pleasant boon which hath moved him to this baseness? What is the price of his treachery with which ye reproach him? I see it not, and, I make bold to say, ye see it not. Well I know Egiza hath none of it as yet. The countenance of Roderick hath no smiles for him. The ban of the tyrant makes him an outlaw no less than ourselves, and decrees him, if taken, to the same cruel doom. 'Twas but late that, with mine own eyes, I saw the usurper's lieutenant with threatening weapon at his breast. Ay, my lord, the same Count Julian, through whose fair daughter ye deem my brother to be bought by the tyrant; his weapon was set in serious anger at the bosom of Egiza, and their swords clashed, and, but for my arm, would have clashed fatally, in controversy together. Smacks this of treachery in Egiza? Looks it like favour in Julian's sight, or in the sight of Roderick, that the sword of the lieutenant struck at the rebel? Had it been that Julian had sent his daughter, with a goodly dowry and a mighty train to my brother, and he had taken her, there had been some reason in the thought which ye hold of his treachery. There is, sure, no reason now."

The words of Pelayo were not without some influence upon the assembly, but they did not satisfy the stubborn Aylor.

"Wherefore, then," he demanded, "this sudden change in his spirit? Why would he forego his hate to Roderick? Why withhold himself from the goodly cause in which his friends are yet striving, through peril but with hope, and deprive us of the valiant arm whose prowess we have witnessed, and which, in this same

cause, hath already so nobly striven? True, we see not that he hath the tyrant's reward as yet; true, the ban of outlawry is yet upon him; but have we assurance that it will be so long? What proof that the price of his treachery is not already on its way to reward him? We see no proof against this. We only know that he deserts our cause, dishonours his own pledges, and, if he be no traitor, plays a mad game, which gives him all the savour and countenance of one. Wherefore all this, Prince Pelayo? Unfold to us the mystery of this reason, and leave us to think upon it."

"My Lord Aylor," replied Pelayo, "this matter is no less a mystery to me than to you; but enough, as it is a mystery, that we should take no precipitate measures upon it which shall mislead our judgment into wrong. Truth to say, but that I have seen him brave, his late remissness had moved me to hold him coward; but that I *know* him honest, I had been led to think him base and treacherous, with a suspicion no less conclusive than your own."

"Thinking thus, Prince Pelayo," responded the other, "yet resolving as you do, is a mystery no less great to me. How name you, then, this disease of which you have spoken, and which, according to your thought, so enfeebles his soul and defeats his present action?"

"Truly, my lord, I have no name for it; but I regard it as none other than an evil power wrought upon him by some malignant enemy. We all do know that there are spirits of evil, which do work, even by Divine permission, for strange ends, upon the minds and bodies of men; usurping, in their thoughts, the place which had else been occupied with wisdom's councils, and infecting them with unfriendly and peevish moods, which make their victim no less desperate than erring; till, in season, he perishes by his own hand, or else gives provocation to another who shall destroy him. In such extremity of fortune do I hold my brother a victim—but

not wilful—that, were we to practice on him, we should but help the cunning purpose of the subtle fiend which hath so grievously possessed him."

In a time teeming with superstition, such as necessarily belonged to that period in the moral world when a fresher and purer religion is struggling for its place in the minds of men with those degrading ones which have debased and kept them down, a faith such as that professed by Pelayo in this particular was not only not uncommon, but was, indeed, of very general acceptance even among the better classes of mankind. The reply of the Lord Eudon spoke, therefore, the sentiments of all around.

"It may be, Pelayo," he said, "that such is the cruel misfortune of the Prince Egiza; and loath, indeed, were we to execute upon him a decree due more to his infirmity than to the unhappy victim upon whom it preys. It better pleases me to believe that such is his misfortune —though it gives me pain still that he should suffer from it—than to believe him base, unfriendly to our purposes, and untrue to the sacred pledges given to his dead father's memory and to our living liberties."

"Believe it, my lord, believe it all. He is not untrue, save as he is for the time the victim to untruth. He will recover—he will shake the demon from his hold, and ye shall see him strike, as before ye have seen him, in the cause of his people and his sire."

"And yet," said the Lord Aylor, who presided, "suppose we deem your reason good, Pelayo, and spare his life, and withhold the stroke of justice—which, to speak truth, we had resolved—upon him, what have we to secure us, that, in his infirmity, under this evil influence as in his wilfulness, he may not yet undo us by some bad practice, some unhappy treachery, some wild, perverse defection? This disease, which has led him thus far, may yet lead him farther. What pledge canst thou give us for his truth—for his forbearance of all treachery?"

"My life upon it—I pledge you my head in his behalf," was the unhesitating response of Pelayo.

Egiza, who had heard with momently increasing scornfulness, but without a word, the defence which Pelayo had made, and the various replies of Eudon, now, when the former had concluded the dialogue by a solemn offering of his own life as an assurance of his brother's truth, could forbear no longer. With an imperious voice and manner, he advanced from the rock against which he had leaned the while, and thus interposed:

"I need no pledge for my honour, my lord, and, least of all, the pledge of one who, to my thinking, has not always been heedful of his own."

"I pity thee!" was the involuntary reply of Pelayo.

"And thee I hate!" exclaimed the other, while the white foam was driven through his gnashing teeth, and gathered upon his lips, almost stifling their utterance.

"Thy wilful speech, Egiza," continued Pelayo, calmly, "and the insane direction of thy mood, do more than ever confirm me in the thought that thou art the victim of some unhappy malady. Thou shalt not anger me."

Thus speaking, he turned from the really almost insane youth, and, with a dignified firmness, addressed the assembly.

"My lords, ye have heard me. If ye deem a pledge wanting in Egiza's favour, ye have mine. I know him honest, fear not his treachery, and freely place my head at your disposition should he err to your injury. In a little space I trust that his malady will leave him to himself and to you. You shall then behold his sword among the foremost, piercing to the core of the usurper's battle—piercing, Heaven grant it, to his own! Now, spare him, I pray you, to his own bitter waywardness. It will give him more sorrow and shame than it will ever bring suffering to you. Let him go free till it shall please the good angel which should be his guardian to

come to his help, and expel from his bosom the unfriendly power which hath possessed it."

The appeal was made to them with a manner doubly touching, when it was remembered how unkindly Egiza had treated the noble brother who had, in truth, preserved him.

"What say ye, noble lords?" said Eudon. "Ye have heard the plea of Prince Pelayo for his brother. Methinks it is a good one. Wil't please you to give it your sanction, and grant the prayer which he makes in his behalf? Our indulgence will, in seasoning time, bring fit chastisement to the evil mood that preys upon him, and we may yet have him at our head, as he should be now, leading us upon the foe, and striking like a brave prince for the deliverance of his people. What say you, then? We are strong, and ready to execute, with rigorous hand, the power lodged within our hands, and may promptly perform whatever ye resolve on. My own persuasion would take the argument of Prince Pelayo for our own, and set Egiza free. Shall we do this, or obey that sterner rule of the Goth, which dooms to death the wilful sovereign or subject who dares dispute our decree? Speak, then, my lords. Shall this man be free, or shall he die?"

X.

This solemn question propounded to the council called for serious deliberation, at which it was thought advisable that neither the person whose fate was in suspense nor his brother should be present. This was signified to the two, who withdrew, though not together, towards the gorge of the cave, leaving the discussion unimpeded by their presence. There, the sturdy Britarmin, the follower of Pelayo, held the watch, and the advance of Egiza might have been perilous to that unhappy prince,

but that Pelayo went forward and communed first with the watchful Bascone. The two brothers kept aloof, Egiza full of jealousy, and doubtful of the honour of his brother; and though Pelayo had no such doubt with reference to him, yet the latter could not so readily forget, though he might forgive, the unkind words which the other had spoken.

Meanwhile the council proceeded with its deliberations; the Lord Aylor hotly urging the instant punishment of Egiza, who had dared, contrary to all reasonable expectation, to reject the honour which the council proposed to bestow upon him. Aylor pointed to innumerable precedents in the Gothic history to show the punishments, whether of death or of degradation, which had been inflicted upon the refractory in such cases; but his wishes were overruled, and it was finally resolved that Egiza should be free to depart, in compliance with his own demand and the solicitations of Pelayo.

But there was yet another question which this decision necessarily left open. Who was to be their sovereign? Who was to lead their arms in the absence of their sovereign? The general voice was at once in favour of Pelayo in both capacities; but, as much time was consumed in the discussion, it was deemed proper to give Egiza at once the freedom which he sought for. It was argued by Lord Aylor that, though excused from the penalties accruing to such an offence as his, he was no longer eligible as their monarch; and his voice was the first to speak of Pelayo as the proper choice of the council. This matter was suspended, however, and orders were given for the princes to reappear. They came before the assembly with mixed and differing feelings. The eye of Pelayo was sad and doubtful, while his face was full of anxiety; but Egiza had resumed all the dignified bearing of one having the blood royal in his veins. A calm, cold, haughty countenance he wore, and his form was raised to its fullest height. When the

decree of the council was repeated to him, which released him from his nomination, and which consequently discharged him from all the penalties incurred by his refusal of it, he made no manner of acknowledgment, but, with a smile of bitterness upon his brother, he passed from the cavern even as a gliding shadow. The eyes of Pelayo watched sadly his retreating form until it was lost from sight, but his lips uttered not a syllable. He turned then to the assembly, thanked them for the indulgence which they had shown to his unhappy brother, and received in return the appointment of generalissimo of the forces of Spain, raised or to be raised against the rebel who had usurped the royal authority.

Meanwhile Egiza made his way from the cavern, and sprang with a blind fury up the mountains. A desperate feeling drove him onward, for he felt that he was a degraded man. He had not suffered look, speech, or action to denote his agony while in the presence of that proud assembly. He would have met pride with greater pride, would have encountered hostility with defiance. But he had not been permitted this; and, conscious of his weakness and unresolve, conscious that he fully merited the award which his brother had averted, he had not yet the courage to go forward and redeem his error, and return to his duties. He had not even the consolation of that morbid sensibility which finds healing in the hope of vengeance. Upon whom could he wreak his vengeance? Pelayo? His brother? He was not mad enough for so criminal a desire; nor could he, in his secret conscience, be certain that Pelayo was guilty of the baseness which he yet charged upon him. Still less satisfied with himself at every moment of thought, he strove to forbear reflection by the precipitancy of his flight. In the dimness of the evening light he leaped forward along the mountain-paths with as much confidence as if he moved in daylight. Already the cavern of the conspirators was far behind him. In a little while,

and he should be beyond the reach of his friends, beyond their recall, and, at every moment, increasing the difficulties which lay in the path of his return. A careless desperation impelled him onward; and though the scalding tears blinded his eyes, with a desperate haste he rushed to the top of the hill he was ascending, and prepared in another instant to hurry downward into the vale below; but he was not so permitted. A spear-point was upon his breast, and the rude challenge of a soldier followed.

"Stand! in the king's name."

"Ha! who's here?" demanded the prince.

"No words!" cried the hoarse voice of Edacer, the governor of Cordova, "be silent, or you perish. Guide us instantly and without noise to the cavern, and name your reward."

A sudden joy rushed into the heart of Egiza; and the convictions of his mind and its resolves were equally instant.

"They shall know me better!" he murmured, internally; "they shall see that I am true to them, though I will not lead them."

He dashed aside the spear of the soldier, and, in the same moment, wheeled backward upon the path over which he came, and leaped down into the gorge that lay in darkness beside it. It was deep enough for concealment, and not, fortunately, for his injury. A divine instinct seemed to prompt his movements and to guide his footsteps, and he hurried onward, unheeding the search of the soldiers, who were now scattered in hot pursuit over the hills around him. Their cries were loud in his ears, their tramplings close behind him; but he fled onward with a spirit which this new danger had lightened of some of its most serious afflictions. It gave him an opportunity of relieving himself of the suspicion —the worst to the soul of honourable sensibility—of unfaithfulness to his friends; and this, in that night of degradation, was a triumph to Egiza!

"I will prepare them for the coming of the enemy, and, if need be, perish along with them."

The sounds of his pursuers' footsteps now ceased, but he heard their increasing cries in the distance. Had they lost the tracks of his flight? Did they pursue him no longer? These questions came to him as he fled, but they did not delay his speed. Once more he entered the gloomy cavern, where his judges still sat in earnest deliberation, unconscious of their own approaching danger.

XI.

The unlooked-for reappearance of the fugitive startled the grave assembly, and brought a new and unmixed delight to the brother. It was his hope that Egiza now came, with a returning sense of duty, to redeem his pledges to the people; but the words of the fugitive soon undeceived him as he related the true cause of his return. The warriors sprang instantly to arms.

"We are betrayed!" cried Eudon; "it is the Jew who has betrayed us."

Pelayo was silent; he could make no answer, for the absence of Melchior was no less matter of surprise to him than it was of fear to them. But, though he said nothing, he drew his good sword, and led the way to the entrance, the nobles following. He found Egiza beside him, and in that moment the brothers exchanged a glance of mutual sorrow and of mutual forgiveness. They went forward together.

"Britarmin!" said Pelayo to the Bascone, as they reached the spot where the sentinel was stationed, "thou hast thy maule, Britarmin?"

"Ay!" said the Bascone, with a hoarse laugh, waving it in air.

"Thou shalt have work for thy teeth, Bascone! Fol-

low me closely, and strike, as I show thee, against my enemies and thine."

The Bascone gnashed his teeth together until the foam gathered about his lips, but he made no other reply, nor did Pelayo deign him any other speech. The nobles pressed their way forward, and when they reached the entrance of the cavern they heard war-cries, and the clang and clash of a battle in the distance.

"By Hercules! but this is strange. What may this mean?" said Pelayo. "If there be a foe, my lords, there is also a friend; or it may be that the enemy has quarrelled among themselves, failing to compass us. Let us set on, and help the game to an ending. It hath manfully enough begun."

Thus speaking, Pelayo hurried forward, Egiza still beside him, and the fierce Bascone champing with his teeth at every stride in his progress. The nobles followed close; but, before they reached the scene of combat, they were encountered by fugitives. A few questions, briefly answered, soon put Pelayo in possession of the truth. The force of Edacer had been overtaken by the venerable but valiant Hebrew, Melchior, aided by a band of Hebrews whom he had brought along with him from the camp of Abimelech. That brave young Jewish warrior came with him; and, though few in numbers and wanting in arms—for the great body of the Hebrews were still to be provided—yet, with a chosen band, he had hastened on to the rescue of the chiefs whom Edacer would have environed in the cave. While the latter pursued Egiza, his scattered force was set upon by the advancing troop of Melchior and Abimelech. Thus assailed, the advantage for the moment lay with the assailants. But Edacer had not overrated his own courage and prowess when he uttered his vain boast to Amri. He was not confounded, though surprised by his assailants. With stentorian voice he arrested the pursuit which his men were urging after Egiza, and soon rallied

them around him. With his heavy anlace wielded above his head, he uttered the war-cry of the city, and

"Cordova, Cordova!" was echoed in a voice that struck terror into the hearts of many tried warriors among the Hebrew; for then they knew that they were now to encounter the entire force of that city. But the cry gave no apprehension to Melchior and Abimelech. The latter spoke cheeringly to his men, many of whom he addressed by name; while, wielding his heavy steel maule as if it were a reed, the former bore forward through the press, to encounter the fierce Edacer himself.

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" cried the patriarch—"for the Lion of Judah—my people—for the Temple and the City. Strike down the oppressor—strike for the lost freedom—for the pride and the power—for the home and the glory long departed!"

And bravely did the Jews fight; but their arms were wanting to the martial practices of the time, and they stood not long before the close array and the unshrinking muscle of the bands of Edacer. Melchior and Abimelech were almost fighting alone, when the war-cry of Pelayo rang above the vale in which they battled like the sudden clang of a trumpet from the hill-tops.

"Pelayo—a Pelayo to the rescue!" was the cry; and, in an instant after, the warlike prince drove his heavy weapon between the two contending chiefs, Melchior and Edacer, and opposed a fresh arm to that of the Gothic governor. The wrath of Edacer knew no bounds when he found himself opposed by the man whom he had hoped to entrap, without fighting, in the cavern; particularly, too, as, from the increasing weight of blows around him, he discovered that the strife was now one of greater peril than it had been when none but the unpractised Hebrews were arrayed against him. But his wrath and his blows were equally ineffectual against his new opponent, and the strokes of Pelayo fell too thick

and heavy for him to withstand. He gave back slowly, but still bravely fighting; and Pelayo, as his foe sank back, taunted him with a playful scorn.

"Thou art slow, my Lord of Cordova, thou art slow; thou canst guard ably, but thou dost not strike. My arm is not yet warmed by thy fury, and when I would press thee thou givest me no such press in return as they say thou bestowest upon the green women of the city. Am I less worthy of thy clasp than they, that thou shrinkest away from my approach? Perhaps I am not so winning. Say—is't not so, Lord Edacer?"

"Thy arm is fresh, Pelayo, else thou hadst not spoken thus lightly of the blows from mine. Perchance by this time thou hadst not spoken at all."

"Ha! ha! Thy song is but a sad one, Cordova!" exclaimed Pelayo, as he forbore to press farther upon Edacer, who defended himself stoutly, and was now supported by his soldiers, who made his person a gathering point. Pelayo, at the same time, heard other clamours approaching them from the distance, and dreaded lest his people, who were now scattered in several and desultory combats, might be cut off by newly-advancing enemies. He forbore, therefore, the pursuit of his particular foe, and commanded his own men together. But Edacer, who saw his object, and whose quick ears had also heard the sounds of approaching succour, resolved not to let his prey so easily escape. He thought, if he could keep Pelayo at bay until the succour which he looked for could reach him, that he should then be sure to overcome him. When, therefore, the prince forbore to press him, and sought to direct his attention to the lords who were contending on every hand with individual foes, Edacer advanced upon him.

"Thy mood grows warmer, my Lord of Cordova, but I cannot spare thee farther play!" said Pelayo, in a lively voice.

"Britarmin!" he cried aloud, as he parried with ease

the now repeated strokes of Edacer. The Bascone, who had that moment crushed a Gothic soldier with his maule, replied at the elbow of Pelayo. The prince adroitly pressed his weapon blade against that of his adversary, until Edacer, following the inclination of the elastic steel, was brought round full in the face of the Bascone. Pelayo then springing aside, left the two new opponents confronted, exclaiming, as he did so, to his follower,

"Now, Britarmin, use thy teeth upon thy enemy. He is the governor of a city, and thy maule cannot too freely play about his head for thy safety or his own honour."

The Bascone grinned and struck. Edacer, chafed and doubly angered to lose his particular prey, and to be left contending with a hind, shouted indignantly to Pelayo, but the prince gave him little heed.

"Speak to thy Hebrews, Melchior—the foe gather around us. We must strike boldly, and upon a single point, or they hem us in."

Pelayo then gave his commands, in quick stern accents, to the men around him, his friends and followers.

"Forbear to press upon them, my lords—we have brief space of time even for victory. Back there, Egiza; would you lose us all, my brother, in your rashness?—back there, and follow me. Melchior, to the left—I know the path. Forbear, Britarmin, let thy teeth have rest."

Thus rapidly commanding, Pelayo surveyed the field, and was as promptly obeyed by his followers. But the fierce Edacer was not willing that he should so escape. His succour was rapidly approaching, and he encouraged the men around him to new efforts. He would have led them, but the dogged Britarmin clung to him with bulldog tenacity; and, though Edacer was fully a match for him, yet he could not shake himself free from the assailant. When the commands of Pelayo reached the

ears of the Bascone, they found the sturdy follower unwilling to yield a momentary advantage which he had gained, and it was only when several of the Gothic soldiers gathered to the assistance of Edacer that he was made to obey his master's orders. But his desire was not now so easy of execution, and the blows of many assailants rang about his ears, preventing the possibility of escape by his own valour. Pelayo beheld his predicament.

"One blow more, men—one shout, one stroke, and we are safe—we must save our teeth—we must save our sleeper. Ho! Pelayo, Pelayo, and close ranks for Spain!"

Thus shouting, Pelayo led the way. The charge was like the first rush of a tempest. The foe gave back before it, and but a single man confronted Britarmin. The Bascone turned all his fury upon that one, but he was Edacer, and the maule of the Bascone swung idly in the empty air. Pelayo thrust the rude warrior aside.

"Ho! Cordova, thou hast too long lingered—Ho! for Spain—Ho! for victory—Pelayo strikes, Edacer—one, two—thou shalt know the blows of Pelayo."

And with every word the swift strokes came so fast, that they proved beyond the skill of Edacer effectually to ward. One blow, stunning, but not deadly, took effect upon the head of the Gothic governor, and he sunk heavily to the ground just as the re-enforcement was ascending up the hill to his relief. Coolly and conqueringly, even as he fled, Pelayo directed the retreat of his little and desultory band, ready for the foe the while, and defying his pursuit. They descended the valley, and ascended to a higher hill, which looked upon the scene of the recent combat. There they halted, having the advantage of position, in order to deliberate upon their next movements.

XII.

But there needed little time for consultation. The leading spirit of Pelayo at once became conspicuous beyond all the rest. He boldly took upon himself the full command, and the rest readily yielded him obedience as they beheld his promptness and efficiency.

"Make no fires," cried he, to those around him who were preparing to do so; "make no fires which shall guide our enemy. Let us first see what are his designs. If he builds fires, we will build them also; not that we would use them, for we must leave them soon, but that by them we may lead him to believe that we shall encamp here to-night. If he would assail us now, he must do so at disadvantage, which our fires would only lessen. We can hold council without their aid."

He was obeyed, and in the dim and imperfect light of the stars the chiefs deliberated together.

"Where are your Hebrews, Melchior?" demanded Pelayo of the venerable man.

"They wait us at the rocky pass beyond Abela," replied Melchior.

"Their number?"

"Near a thousand," replied Abimelech; "but they lack weapons of war."

"They must have them, Melchior," said Pelayo, promptly. "Let us now divide our weapons with the Hebrews who are with you, and of whom you shall take command. We will maintain the post here against the force of Edacer, while you shall pass, making a goodly circuit, to the Cave of Wamba. The course is free if you move with caution. Your men can bring with them all the weapons in the cave if they are not forced to fight, and in such event they may readily throw them aside. But I trust you will not need to do so. Edacer

will deem us too cautious and too few in number to encounter new risk by a division of our band; and, if he moves at all to-night, he will move on us who remain. To meet this chance you will ply your way with all speed. We wait you with open eyes, for we must arm your Jews ere the day dawns upon us."

Melchior was soon prepared and in motion. The movement was fitly assigned to a people accustomed to secret and wily operations. The outlaw was one well able to direct their course and counsel their designs, and Pelayo saw him depart with a full confidence in his success, which he might not so readily have felt had any of his own rash chiefs been appointed to the duty.

Meanwhile the re-enforcement of Edacer came quickly to his aid; but they were in no mood to pursue their enemies when they beheld the condition of their leader. He had been stunned by the blow of Pelayo, and his men, though not beaten, were disheartened by his fall, and by the death of several of their stoutest warriors. The stupor of Edacer continued for some hours after, and it was resolved, during this period, among his inferior officers, that they should keep the field and remain upon their arms all night, as they well knew the valuable estimate which Edacer had placed upon the prey before them. Their fires were accordingly lighted up, and they strove for the recovery of their leader, on the spot where he had fallen, as they readily saw that his injuries were too slight to require his removal.

The lighting up of their fires at once kindled those of Pelayo, and some few of his more light-heeled and venturous warriors stole down the hill to the edge of Edacer's encampment, and surveyed with impunity the condition of things in that quarter. The camp was not closely guarded, but sufficiently so to make surprise difficult, if not dangerous, with a force so small and so partially armed as that led by Pelayo. They came back to him with loud arguments in favour of the at-

tempt, but the game was too deep, the risk too great, to permit of his adoption of their counsels.

Meanwhile Edacer recovered from his stupor. His first words, with returning consciousness, were those of anger, which was duly increased when he discovered that his re-enforcement had arrived, yet had done nothing towards the capture of his foe.

"Knaves!" he cried, to the inferior officers, "why did ye not pursue? Ye were enough—what more? Are ye cowards; and could ye do naught unless I led, and bade, and showed you where to strike? But it is not yet too late. Their fires are lighted—they will stand us, will they? We shall see! Set on, knaves, as ye would escape the lash—set on—surround the hill on which they rest, and wait for no word from me. Cry 'Cordova,' and strike well."

Though weary and suffering pain with every movement, Edacer yet boldly led the way. He too well knew the value of his victims in promoting him to the further favour of Roderick, and nothing short of absolute incapacity could have kept him back from the pursuit. His men followed with a fierce war-cry, anxious to redeem themselves in the estimation of their captain; but they sought their enemies in vain. The hill on which Pelayo had built his fires was deserted—the foe was gone; already at some distance on their way, with arms in their hands, to join the assembled Hebrews gathered together by Abimelech.

The fury of Edacer knew no bounds. The game was to be begun anew; but he did not despair. Encamping where he was for the night, he despatched emissaries back to Cordova and to other places, calling for additional troops. A large force under one of the lieutenants of Roderick, which he had summoned to his aid before leaving the city, he expected to reach him before the morning. With this force, which arrived during the night, he pressed forward with the earliest glances of

daylight, and soon recovered from his anger as he found himself upon certain tracks of the hastily-retreating foe.

XIII.

But it was not now the purpose of Pelayo to retreat farther from the force led by Edacer, superior though he knew it to be, in many respects, to that which he himself led. He knew too well the importance to his cause of a successful blow at first, and the affair of the preceding night had only warmed the courage of his own people and stimulated the sanguine temper of the Jews. His position was now a good one, and his men were generally, though poorly, provided with arms. A wall of rocks surrounded them, and the passes were difficult of access. The place of gathering had been well chosen by Abimelech; and Pelayo resolved upon maintaining it until time could be given to certain friends, Spaniards and Hebrews alike, to join them from the neighbouring villages and cities. Towards evening the forces of Edacer came in sight, and his array was much more formidable than Pelayo had anticipated. The fires of Edacer that night surrounded the mountain upon which he had taken shelter, and he saw that there was safety only in complete success. There was no outlet for escape except through the hearts of the enemy. But this gave no disquiet to Pelayo. On the contrary, his energies seemed to kindle and his spirits to expand in proportion to the press of difficulties. A cheery and elastic courage filled his bosom and warmed the hearts of those around him.

"To-morrow," said he, "to-morrow, lords of Spain, we win the first of our possessions. God keep the brave men who strike for their liberties—God give them strength to crush their oppressors, and make themselves feared of the tyrant who would enslave them."

His words were received with ready acclamations. A universal shout rang through the mountain, and found a thousand echoes in the valleys below.

"Why shout the rebels?" cried Edacer to the chiefs around him. "What is their hope—for what do they exult? They are not mad to hope for victory over the force we bring against them?"

"Perchance they hope for escape by some secret passage," said one of his officers in reply.

"Perchance thou art fool or coward but to say so! Wherefore should they hope, or thou dream, a thing so impossible? Have we not put guards on all the passes, and how can they escape, unless such as thou turn coward and fly when they set on?"

Such was the furious speech of Edacer, whom the seeming certainty of his success appeared to madden. The officer thus reproached sank away in silence, and a general gloom hung over the camp of the assailants, quite unlike the cheery spirit which pervaded that of Pelayo. There all was harmony and honest hope. Pelayo arrayed and addressed his followers, assigned to each his station, and had for each chief a word meant for his particular ear, though full of force upon the ears of others. None who heard him had doubts of the approaching event; and, if Pelayo himself entertained any, he guarded himself well against any utterance, by look or speech, of his apprehension. When the watch was set, Pelayo led Egiza away to a remote quarter of the mountain, where several overhanging masses of the rock formed a sort of shelter. When there, and free from the passing glance or noteful ear of any intruder, the feelings of their mutual hearts had utterance without restraint. The hour had come, not less of danger than of mutual explanation and atonement. They both had faults to confess and wrongs to complain of; and the approach of a trial, in which they might both meet with death, was one to bring back their thoughts to a sense of justice,

and their late stubborn hearts to a renewal of all their old and sacred affections. Pelayo, having a secret purpose of good towards Egiza in his mind, began the conference thus reproachfully:

"Thou hast wronged me, brother—thou hast deeply wronged me—hast held me traitorous to thy service, dishonest in my councils, unfriendly to thy good. And when my heart was truest to its duty—when I strove most in thy service, and toiled, without heed of the toil and danger, to give thee honour and the crown—hast belied me to the ears of base men as one unworthy."

"I gainsay not thy words, Pelayo," was the humble response of the now subdued and repentant Egiza; "and if it will do thee right to hearken to prompt confession of my wrongs to thee, thou hast it."

"This cannot help me now, Egiza, nor pluck from my bosom the sting which thy hand, in its wantonness, hath placed there," was the gloomy answer of Pelayo.

"I stop not at confession of my wrong, brother—I will do yet further; I will yield thee free obedience. Thou art, thou shalt be my sovereign, though the lords of Iberia forbear to declare thee theirs. What more? If still unsatisfied, declare what thou wouldst have. My life? It is in thy hands. I will not murmur even if thou shouldst lift thy weapon to my breast, commanding me to instant death."

Pelayo did not immediately answer to the tenour of this speech, though his reply was unhesitatingly spoken.

"Thou hast thought, my brother," he proceeded, "and freely said thy thoughts to others, that I was dishonest to thy right, as I was basely tempted by the perilous glitter of a throne which was thy due; that I strove to win from thee the good regards of thy people; that I laboured for the vain honours of this hard command, which thou hast refused to take upon thee. Thou hast not forgotten it—thou canst not deny that thou hast spoken thus."

"Would I could forget, Pelayo—but I cannot—I do not. I pray thee to forget—I pray thy mercy. Speak of this no more."

"I must speak of it, Egiza; and thou must hear more, if not for thy good, for my revenge!"

"It is thy right—I may not deny thee," was the mournful reply; "and yet, my brother, when I confess to thee my wrong, thou shouldst spare me. Such confession should stay the award of justice, and disarm the hand of punishment."

"It may with other men; but thou, Egiza, should better know the nature of Pelayo than to deem him thus pliable and meek. I tell thee, brother, that I am unforgiving."

"Thou wert not always so," was the answer.

"Nor thou thus wilful, Egiza," promptly responded Pelayo. "We are both changed, my brother; and, since thou hast grown fond of injustice, I am sworn to be vindictive. Thou shalt hear my penalties—thou shalt bend thyself to the atonement which I demand of thee to make."

"Be it so, then," was the subdued reply; "I owe thee thus much, my brother."

"Thy thought of me was a base thought, dishonouring thyself and me!" said Pelayo.

"Have I not said it—have I not confessed it with my own lips, in my own shame?" was the melancholy question. "Wherefore wouldst thou dwell upon it thus in repeated language?"

"'Tis my humour—'tis part of the penalty, my brother," was the reply. "Thou hast confessed it; but the phrase in which thou makest it known is not the bitter phrase which I would best speak it in. Hear me out. In all this long time, when thus an evil spirit at thy heart was striving in hostility against me, what was my toil? It was a toil for thy good, for thy greatness, for thy true glory, my brother. Did it deserve

such meed as that thou gavest it—thou wilt not say so much?"

"I will not, Pelayo; yet hear me for a moment. I was blind, weak, foolish; not vicious, not wilful. Thou wert not all wrong when thou saidst to the lords in council that a demon had misguided me with erring thoughts."

Pelayo pursued his course of speech without seeming to regard the humble acknowledgments made by his brother.

"Thy subjects clamoured for thee in thy absence—thy nobles threatened—some bolder lips denounced thee—thine own ears heard them—what did Pelayo then? Performed thy duties—pleaded thy cause with arguments he could not hold himself—and spared no toil of hand or spirit in thy service.

"Thou didst all this, my brother; thou hast spoken but truly."

"Renewed thy pledges, and strengthened them with my own," he continued, "until thy madness, making thee neglectful of thy honour, involved the forfeiture of mine."

"Oh, my brother, spare me this cruel record," was the imploring speech of the defaulter.

"Still, not hopeless of thee altogether," continued Pelayo, "though all besides looked on thee as one dishonest—yea, denounced thee—I sought thee out, and rescued thee from a peril which had clipped thee from life and retribution—as thou thyself hadst severed the ties of honour from thy heart—and decreed thee to a death of shame, at the hands of the hangman."

"For all this I thank thee—I thank thee, my brother—I can requite thee in words only for thy noble service."

"With a friendly violence I tore thee away from thy shameful bondage, even as I had saved thee from thy enemy's weapon; and in thine ear, with an honest freedom thou hadst not found in court or camp, reproached thee with thy feebleness."

"Thou didst."

"Nay, more—such was my love for thee and for thy honour—until thy better sense had taught thee compliance with thy duties, I would have battled with thee even to my death or thine, so that thou shouldst come with me where our people awaited thee, having honours for thy brow which my own heart had scorned to struggle for. Did this seem the labour of a soul given up to smooth-lipped artifice and cunning? Did I toil as one aiming at the better rights of a brother? Do me full justice, Egiza, and say—did this seem falsehood to thine eyes? What madness made thee esteem it so? Speak—tell me."

"I know not; but it was madness," said the other. "I do thee right now, my brother; on my soul, I do. I have no distrust of thee now."

"Thou shalt not have; thou shalt do me right, Egiza. It is for this I speak to thee now. What next, my brother? Dost thou remember what was the language of Pelayo, when, in the presence of our angered people, he stood between thee and the headsman?"

"It was noble, as it had been ever," was the reply.

"I will say naught of thine," continued Pelayo. "They proffered thee—the very people thou didst say I dealt with by dishonourable arts—they proffered thee the crown of Spain—the regal prize—all which thou didst falsely impute to me as striving at through a base treachery that never moved my soul. Well! Though I knew that thou hadst wandered, and hadst been heedless of their rights and thy own duties, said my lips aught against thee? Did I say aught which might lessen thy favour or make my own greater in their eyes?"

"Thou didst not, brother."

"I have done question," said Pelayo. "I have dwelt, my brother, on these things, that I should not lack justification for the judgment which I put upon thee. Now hear me, as I doom thee, my brother, for these injuries."

"Forgive me for them, Pelayo."

"No! I must have vengeance. Hearken to me, Egiza."

He laid his hand upon the arm of the latter, looked steadfastly in his eyes, while his own beamed with an expression of tenderness which Egiza had not seen in them before for many days; and, after a brief pause, thus proceeded.

"Thou shalt take this rule, my brother, which our people, this night, have put upon me."

"Pelayo—no!"

"But thou shalt. Become their sovereign—begin thy duties, even as thou didst swear to us when the first tidings came of our father's ruin."

"I must not—I dare not."

"Cross me not; I am thy master—thy judge; I must have my vengeance upon thee. Thou hast done me wrong, and the right is mine to declare thy punishment."

"Yet not this—"

"Ay, this, or any thing, Egiza. Thou hast struck most keenly, most cruelly at my heart. Nothing will heal the blow but such severity of justice as may not be forgotten while thou livest, and the fruits of which shall go to thy children, and be known to mine."

"It must not be—"

"It must; and that the sting may touch thee, Egiza, until thy guilty heart burns like fire, I bend my knee to thee; I vow myself thy first subject. I declare thee to be my sovereign, and demand of thee to give me liberty from this bondage which is upon all our land, and vengeance upon this tyrant who has mantled it with blood."

XIV.

With these words the gigantic yet graceful figure of Pelayo was bent to the earth in prostration before the brother whom he had chastened but to improve—whom he had striven with but to strengthen. His noble self-sacrifice touched the heart of the already humbled Egiza.

"Stab me rather with thy steel, my brother," he exclaimed, "for thy words pierce me to the heart, and I am crushed by thy noble spirit. I feel how greatly I have wronged thee; I feel that I am unworthy of thy communion, and have but too little within me of the blood which our father gave us."

"Thou shalt grow worthy if thou art not yet," was the reply. "Take thy royal honours upon thee with thy duties. Cast out from thy soul the unruly devil which hath so far misled thee to thy undoing. Rise once more to thy dignity, as well of soul as of station, and be the monarch in all things which our lips proclaim and our hearts would have thee."

After a brief pause, given to feeling rather than reflection, in all which time Pelayo continued kneeling, Egiza answered him thus—

"Rise, my brother—rise, Pelayo, to thy proper and brave posture. Thy action shames me, and thy words but mock mine ear. I cannot be thy sovereign; I am not born for it. I feel that I lack in the qualities which would make me one; and all thy wish, and all the words of our people, would fail to endow me with the necessary ingredients of mood and mind, when God himself hath denied them. Besides, I will not have thee, to thy own loss, bestow upon me such noble justice."

"It is no loss; I lose not in thy gain," was the reply.

"Thou hast loss. The people who have made thee their leader must declare thee soon their king. The

rule is thine by their acclaim—thine to keep—how canst thou give it to another?"

"Let not that move thee to deny me. Our people will confirm my gift so thou but promise to receive it," said Pelayo.

"Thanks, my brother—thanks! But hear my answer. Thou hast dealt nobly with me; thou hast dealt ever nobly, even when thy language was most harsh, and thy mood most angry; while I have wronged thee with dishonouring thoughts, as much unworthy me as they were foully unjust to thee. Let me acquit thee of all crooked practice; let me pray for thy forgiveness. More than this; let me acknowledge my weakness in thy ear, though I would not have thee unfold it to other ears. I have not the soul for the toils of empire; I lack the spirit. Other desires have possessed me, and I pray but to be forgotten by the ambitious and striving world, as I would forget and fly from strife myself. Thou hast the temper which I lack—the quick spirit, sudden and true resolve, which should make thee achieve greatness as a leader. Thou wilt achieve it, and thou canst not but lead. Were I to accept thy proffer, and take the rule of this people upon me, I should not keep it long. Thy greatness would obscure me, and when men saw and wondered at thy deeds, they would smile and speak scornfully of mine. Keep thy honours, my brother, and wear them, as I know thou must, with grace and greatness hourly growing with their use. Thou hast won them valiantly—wherefore should I rob thee of them?"

"Thou dost not, my brother. Indeed, I love them not—I wish them not. 'Twill glad me to give them into your proper hands, and quit me of their burden."

"No, Pelayo; thy spirit calls thee to thy work not less than thy people. Thou dost wrong to thy own nature and high ambition. These duties better fit thee than me."

"How can this be? Thou dost not shrink from our battle. Thou wilt fight with us to-morrow, even as thou hast fought with us to-night, against our beleaguering foe. Why, then, shouldst thou shrink to be sovereign in the war, which, as a subject, thou must strive in despite of the danger?"

"It is a war I would not seek, Pelayo, and therefore I would not lead in it. To-night I fought because of thine own, and the close emergency of our friends."

"For the same reason," replied Pelayo, "wilt thou fight again. There will be yet more peril to-morrow, if I mistake not the signs of battle below, and thou wilt strike then with a better appetite for blows. See the array of Edacer; hear the clamours of his brawling warriors—how they shout in their security—how they howl in their confident hope of the coming triumph. They hem us in with thrice our numbers. They have more practice in the war, more courage, and better skill than these timid Hebrews; and theirs is the better choice of arms. In much of these we lack, and but the advantage of the ground is ours, which want of food will hourly lessen. We must descend to them ere noon to-morrow, and in desperate valour alone can we hope for success. Judge, then, of our hope, and what is there of escape. Thou must fight, Egiza—fight with full soul! 'Tis death, my brother—death or a great victory."

"I feel—I know it, Pelayo. The strife will be perilous; and, if thou conquerest, the greater will be thy glory."

"Ay, and thine! Thou wilt fight, even as a king should fight. Thou canst not choose but fight thus; nor to-morrow only—thou wilt have to strike day after day, until we perish or escape."

"Fear me not—I will do it. 'Till thou art free from thy leaguer in death or in victory, my brother, so long will Egiza strike for thee."

"Then 'twere better, my brother," replied Pelayo,

"that thou shouldst perish or conquer as a king than as a common soldier. If the doom be writ that we must perish, then be thy death becoming—let thy people behold thee leading them as thou shouldst—first in the foremost rank. 'Twere shame to die with others before thee—a shame no less to thy father than to thee and me, my brother."

"No matter how I die, Pelayo, so that I fear not death. Thou dost plead to me vainly, my brother, though thou pleadest warmly. Thy prayer touches me not—"

"But, sure, the argument, Egiza," replied Pelayo, impatiently interrupting him. The answer of Egiza was instant.

"Thy argument, though it may seem to thee full of crowning and conclusive reason, I do not heed, Pelayo. It is all profitless to me, and unconsidered. Hear me, and say no more. I have pledged myself—I have an oath—to lead no battle, such as now moves our people."

"Thou darest not give such pledge! Hast thou not one already to that people—one more sacred to the son of Witiza than any other? Thy oath is false, no less than base—it cannot bind thee."

"But it must, Pelayo. Be no longer cruel, my brother. Pierce me no longer with thy keen language and heavy censures. It may be that I have done evil, but urge me not, if thou hast pity. Look to me among the first to-morrow in the fight—believe me fearless and true to the last—'till thou art safe from thy present extremity, or hast nothing more to dread from human foe. Hold me sworn to this pledge, though I forget all other to our people."

"But if we 'scape?" demanded Pelayo.

"Then are my toils ended with thee, my brother. I leave thee and our people. I leave thee to the sole sway over them, not forgetting thee in my blight, Pelayo, but hopeful of thy fame—praying for it ever—and with

another, and no less fervent prayer, that in thy day of glory thou mayst not think of thy brother's base obscurity, nor summon from the grave of his defeated promises a single thought to chill thy own triumph to stifle the gladness at thy heart."

As he spoke these words in a manner which, while it sufficiently showed him firm in his present resolution, at the same time indicated a wish that the conference on this subject should have an end, the countenance of Pelayo underwent sundry ominous changes; and for a few moments, striving with his conflicting emotions, he dared not trust himself to reply. Composing himself at last, he regarded Egiza with a look of sorrow, such as a fond parent might express at beholding the wilful self-sacrifice of a beloved and only son, and spoke then as follows:

"Alas! my brother, I know not how to regard thee. The thoughts are strange and sad which fill my bosom. I know not whether to slay thee in thy shame, and with a feeling of my own, or to spurn thee with a scorn due to thy base and womanly spirit. My anger and my anguish strive together, and I tremble lest that I madden, and so far forget myself as to fall into some unhappy violence. Let us part a while, I pray thee. I would not do thee wrong, or myself wrong; and better that I should leave thee than linger where my mood may move me to both. Go, take thy rest, my brother—sleep, if thou canst. If thou feel'st with me, it will not be an easy labour. Thy sad defection will drive slumber from my eyes, as it has driven all hope of thee from my heart."

"Brother—Pelayo—stay—hear me!" cried the unhappy prince, who had so resolutely, yet weakly, chosen his own doom; but Pelayo proceeded on his way as if he had heard him not. Bitter, then, were the lonely thoughts and mournful the sad tones of Egiza's soliloquy.

"I am most wretched. I am crushed to the earth. I feel the heavy shame upon me like a mountain. Oh,

Cava! 'tis thou—'tis thy fatal beauty that has done all this. Thou hast destroyed me; thou hast sapped my soul of its good spirit; thou hast robbed me of life and substance; enthralled me in a bondage that checks all enterprise; taken from me the glory of good deeds, and the pride of honourable name; torn from me a generous and noble brother; reft me of a thousand friends. Yet I cannot reproach thee—I can love thee only. Oh, Pelayo—would thou hadst slain me with thy better weapon when we had battled among these hills. Then none had known my shame. Would thou hadst made my grave in some deep, narrow gorge of the highest mountain, where no curious eyes might remark my form lying in the base sleep of death—sleep far less base than that which thou hast doomed me to this night."

He threw himself upon his face as he said these words, and moaned audibly in his mental anguish to the unpitying rocks which sustained him; but, after a moment's pause, he rose again.

"Yet I must sleep!" he exclaimed; "I would not be backward to-morrow, and must sleep to-night for strength. It is long since I have slept. I must not be the last to meet the foe—I must be the first. Oh! Cava, give me no thought when I meet with the enemy in combat. If thou thinkest of me then, I will turn woman like thyself, and shrink from the bloody work. Spare me that shame. Let me not think of thee, lest I sink into a cowardice which shall make me shrink from that death which looks doubly terrible when it threatens me with loss of thee!"

With slow step and heavy heart he walked gloomily to a distant and dark section of the mountain, and, gliding into the shadow of an overhanging crag, sunk feebly down upon the flinty rock, whose hard bosom, in the anguish of his spirit, gave no disquiet to his form.

XV.

Leaving his brother to his own reproachful thoughts, Pelayo bent his steps to that part of the mountain which had been assigned to the Jewish leaders. Here he found none but Abimelech and a few of his under officers. To Abimelech he detailed his general plan of attack on the ensuing day, and gave him directions for his descent with his people from the mountain. He spoke to him cheeringly and without apprehension as to the result; but as he saw that Abimelech was a man, as Melchior had described him, firm of temper, and resolute to see and not to shrink from the danger, he freely dwelt upon the severity of the conflict which they had reason to anticipate. The main force of Pelayo's army at this period consisted chiefly of the Hebrews; for the Spanish leaders had assembled their followers in a secure and more remote spot, not daring to bring them nigh to Cordova until they could be made compact by a general assemblage of their party. Pelayo was not so sure of the courage and conduct of the Hebrews, but he greatly relied upon the ability of Melchior to make them fight. Having consulted freely with Abimelech, that warrior then gave him directions where Melchior might be found, and Pelayo accordingly proceeded to an isolated part of the mountain in search of him.

Melchior lay beneath an overhanging mass of the rock, and his daughter, still dressed in the page habiliments of Lamech, lay on the ground sleeping, her head softly resting upon his lap, while his own bent over her, screening her from the glances of the moon, and his sad eyes looked down with a mournful sort of happiness into her face. It was a picture to make one mourn, to think that one so beautiful, so pure, so full of the true wisdom which brings humility, and teaches resignation while it

warms and encourages hope—to think that one so highly endowed should yet be unblessed. Surely love is earth's bondage, else why should it wrong the innocent and good? Surely it is the fetter which keeps down the heart from its true hope, and makes it cling to the clay as if in scorn of its immortality. Yet surely these are to be rewarded. The meek and gentle shall not always suffer. There will come a season of security and recompense. Yet when—and how? Will that same love, which they sought and sighed for on earth, requite them in Heaven? Melchior, as he thought these thoughts, and in his own mind revolved this doubt, remembered the sad, hopeless song of his daughter—that part of it still thrilling through his senses in which she speaks of her indifference to the wonted enjoyments of life—to the song of birds, to the sweets of flowers, and to all those objects of earthly beauty and delight which, in man's imagination, make up the joys of Heaven—if in that other home she is still destined to abide

"A worshipper denied!"

It was a picture upon which the full heart might linger, even were there no sad story of a defeated hope imbodied along with it. That old man, his white beard streaming upon the wind, garbed after the fashion of an ancient patriarch of the Hebrew, with a full and flowing vestment, the long wide robes of the Egyptian hanging loosely about him, and around his head the white and thickly-wreathed turban, seemed too venerable for earth, or only designed for its adoration. Yet, in his eye, mingled with the fond glance which he gave upon his daughter's face, might be seen an expression of an earthly ire. The language of approaching battle was there legibly written—the anxious doubt, the fierce, impatient hope, the restless resolve of valour. By his side, emblematic no less of his earthly purpose, lay the heavy steel maule which he used in battle, glistening in the

moonshine, in spite of the many dark and speaking spots which former strife had left indelibly impressed upon it. In the distance, on one hand, lay his clustering tribe, relying on his valour and well-known wisdom—a timid race, whom frequent conflicts had weakened and scattered abroad, and whom the most galling tyranny, unrelaxing wherever they fled for safety, had in mind almost emasculated. Opposite and remote from them stood the gathered warriors of Spain—a small but trusty band, to whom the cry of battle had always been a pleasure, and to whom a reappearance in arms, at this moment, in opposition to the usurper Roderick, for the recovery of their liberties, brought a joyful hope, which made them indifferent to the fearful odds which the foe had brought against them. These several groups were in the eye of Pelayo, who now, in the transparent and serene moonlight, looked down upon the venerable Melchior and his sleeping daughter.

XV.

"Melchior," said Pelayo, as he stood before him. The maiden trembled even while she slept, for the voice thrilled through her, but she opened not her eyes nor gave any sign of consciousness.

"My prince!" said the old man, sadly, but respectfully. He had felt the sudden shiver of his daughter's frame, and well did he conceive the spell of power which had occasioned it.

"At length, Melchior," said Pelayo, "the war is declared. We no longer combat our enemy by stealth and in disguises. The arms are in our hands, the war-cry of liberty is raised, and nothing now is left us but to do our duty as becomes brave men fighting for their rights. We have nothing to hope from the justice or

the indulgence of our foe—we must only look now to our good weapons and to the God of battles."

"It is a prayer granted by Jehovah—we have both prayed for this hour, Prince Pelayo," said Melchior.

"Yet is the peril great, Melchior, and the odds are heavy against our cause. It is not a season when mere ordinary valour will avail us. We must do more than we might think to do were the trial not so pressing. We must address our souls to it, and put them into our swords. Nor into *our* swords only, Melchior; our men must feel with us, and strike after our example, or we can gain little by combat with the practised soldiers of Edacer. It was touching this last necessity that I came to thee, Melchior."

"Speak thy desires, Prince Pelayo—as I have promised thee will I perform. I have sworn myself thy subject, as I believe thee to be one chosen of Jehovah for the saving of thy country, of thy people, and of mine. I am ready to do thy will."

"It is thy daughter who sleeps within thy arms, Melchior," said Pelayo, glancing from the topic between them. The maiden shivered once more when she heard this inquiry. She could not sleep with Pelayo speaking beside her. With a sort of instinct, himself trembling with suppressed emotion, Melchior half drew her form up to his bosom ere he replied—

"It is, my lord. It was she who brought me tidings that prompted me to bring up the band which arrested the progress of Edacer to the cave—"

"And to which ready service we owe our safety, Melchior. I had not remembered to give thee thanks for thy good conduct and thoughtful valour. It is another claim which thou hast upon Spain when she is rescued from her tyrant."

"Speak no more of this matter, Prince Pelayo," replied the old man; "but say to me as thou didst purpose—what next shall Melchior do—what is the task

thou wouldst assign to the Hebrew? Speak freely—he shall do it."

"I would not do thy people wrong, Melchior, but thou knowest that for a long season their hands have been unweaponed—the sway of the Gothic princes has denied them arms."

"It was because Israel was still feared, though beaten as a dog, and a captive held to base services," replied the old man, somewhat proudly.

"Whatever was the motive of the denial, Melchior, its effects are still the same," replied Pelayo, calmly. "Thy people ceased to be warlike—they ceased to desire arms, and lost the noble exercises which make a warrior confident in his hand and weapon. It is this lack of confidence which I fear to-morrow. Hast thou no fears of this sort, Melchior?"

"Alas! my prince, what shall Melchior say to thee? Shall he speak, now that the beard of seventy winters is white upon his breast, of his own prowess and achievement? Surely, my prince, thou knowest that, even as the sower sows, so shall he reap—that the valour of the soldier is but a thriving plant from the good seed which the chief has first put to grow; and as the leader does, so will the soldiers, unless Jehovah wills it otherwise; and this I look not to see to-morrow. I will lead one half of the Hebrew warriors, and Abimelech will take direction of the other, if it pleases thee, my prince, that we shall do so; and we, in turn, shall be under the control and guidance of thyself in chief, and such other brave men as thou shalt put over us. The Jews will follow me, I trust, into the battle; and I will not shrink, my prince, to preserve a life that Jehovah has already lengthened beyond the ordinary limit, as if he designed it for this very service. It will not be unfitting that I yield it up as a sacrifice for my people, at a season when the promise is so fair that they will no longer need it."

Thyrza still seemed to sleep; but when she heard

these words, she turned her face to the bosom of her father, where it was now hidden. It was to conceal the big tears which gathered thickly in her eyes.

"Thy purpose pleases me, Melchior; it had been my thought before to have divided the Hebrews under thyself and Abimelech, though I would not have divided them equally. I would have assigned the greater force to thee, as I rely more upon thy words, and the general regard which thy people bear thee, to make their valour even and unshaken. One third of thy people will I give to Abimelech, who shall also have with him, to lead, though not to control, two Spanish nobles of tried valour, the Lords Eudon and Aylor—to thee would I give sole charge of the force remaining, but that thou mightst fall in the conflict, and leave them disheartened, lacking any other leader. Two other Spanish nobles will I appoint to lead with thee, and from among thy people thou shalt choose separate and strong bands to follow them. Does this disposition please thee, Melchior?"

The old man avowed himself satisfied, and Pelayo proceeded.

"Ere the night be over, I would have thee select from thy people some fifty bowmen—such as are slight of make and of least certain courage. These will I reserve and dispose in clefts and places along the mountain, free from the press of battle, yet ready to give aid to their brethren below by a close watch and a timely employment of their bows upon the more pressing of the foe. They must be counselled to select their enemies—to waste no shafts upon the followers, but only to shoot the plumed and bold chieftains. They will be the more collected to note their men, and perform this duty truly, as they shall be themselves free from all pressing and immediate danger."

"This was already thought on, my prince," said Melchior; "the men are chosen for this duty."

"Thy promptness gives me better assurance of the

end, Melchior, and I grow more confident as we devise together," replied Pelayo; "there is but one point more. There are three passes to the mountain—so I learn from Abimelech. By these three only can we descend into the plain for combat. The centre shall be mine—thou shalt give me from thy force some fifty warriors—a less number will I take from Abimelech—these, with our Spanish nobles, will I myself lead down to battle, and I trust that they will not miss thy command, Melchior, in the example I shall put before them."

"They will not—I fear not that, my prince," said Melchior.

"With thy force, Melchior, as the largest, thou wilt descend the main passage to the left—thy chosen bowmen being stationed along the space of rock lying between the left and centre. To Abimelech, the right pass I have assigned already. Upon our time of movement will I confer with thee ere the dawn opens upon us. There is no more to-night—yet, Melchior, I would that thy daughter were not here."

The old man pressed his finger to his lips, and looked down into the face of the seeming sleeper. Pelayo understood him, and spoke none of the apprehensions which were in his bosom. The conference was now brief between them, and given almost entirely to matters connected with the strife which was at hand. These will all have full development as we proceed. At length Pelayo prepared to depart.

"I must leave thee now, Melchior—I hear a signal that reminds me of a solemn duty which the Christian warrior must perform before he goes to battle, in which thy faith forbids thee to share. We administer to each other the holy sacrament, and make confession of our mutual and unexpiated sins. In thy way, and after the fashion of thy church, thou too wilt make thy confession before God, and prepare thyself, I doubt not, Melchior, for the approach of death to-morrow."

"Alas! my prince, wherefore would I confess what I may not conceal? Jehovah knows my heart, and keeps watch over its deepest recesses. For what says the Psalmist—'Whither shall I go from thy spirit—whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in the earth, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' I have no thought hidden from his justice—I have no thoughts which I would not he should examine; for I yield all things into his hands, and but strive, as, in my poor understanding, his judgment would seem to approve."

Pelayo, taught in other schools, could have found points of objection in the words of the Hebrew; but he had too much good sense for such controversy, and too many duties to perform requiring his thought and presence elsewhere. He left Melchior, therefore, to his sole communion with his God, and with the sweet maiden, who, whatever might have been her faith, was pure enough for any communion.

XVII.

It was a curious and a solemn sight in the eye of Thyrza to see those fierce Christian warriors shriving one another before battle, and confessing their several sins. She looked on, at a distance, with a maidenlike wonder, which was, at the same time, greatly rebuked by the solemn earnestness of the proceeding. It brought more terribly to her mind the dreadful consciousness of the approaching battle. She began already to realize in her thought, and almost to behold with her eyes, the thousand grim and fearful aspects which she well knew

the fight would put on, when she beheld those fearless and steel-clad warriors preparing, as it were, for death.

"Oh, my father!" she exclaimed, "is the danger so very great, and is there no hope that we may escape from the leaguer of the Goth?"

"None, my child; the danger is great, for the foe is numerous and well appointed, but we fear nothing, for the cause is holy. Jehovah will not turn from us in anger, and the clouds will scatter, and the storm will pass us by, and we shall behold it sweeping along the fierce array of the Goth, even as the vengeance of God smote of old the mighty Assyrian with the fiery blast from his nostrils."

"But, dear father, is not the Lord Edacer a famous captain among the Goth?" demanded the maiden.

"There is a mightier than he. If Jehovah be our captain, what fear we Edacer? He is the mightiest—he is the man of war—his right hand dashes the foe into pieces. What says the song of Miriam the prophetess, when she sung of the triumph of Israel by the bitter waters of Marah? I trust in the Lord. I fear not the Goth. Let the battle come in its terror. My heart will not quail, my hand will not tremble, my blows will be heavy for my people."

The maiden murmured by his side in song, while she repeated portions of one of David's most beautiful psalms, imploring safety from his enemies, and the old father looked up to heaven and beat time with his hand upon the side of the rock while she sang—

"Plead my cause, oh Lord! with them that strive with me—fight against them that fight against me.

"Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help.

"Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me; say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

"Let them be confounded—"

"Ay, they will be confounded, my child. The Lord hath spoken in thy song—they must be confounded. The prayer of the Christian and the Hebrew unite against the oppressor. The oppressor is neither Jew nor Christian, but he comes of the Midianite, the accursed of God. Set thy heart at rest, my child—fear nothing—with Jehovah is the shield of safety, and he comes with rushing wings to our help. He comes with the rush of wings and the force of spears, and he brings with him the breath of the whirlwind."

The religious devotions of the Christians had become contagious, and, even while they spoke together, the whole force of the Jews raised a universal song of deliverance, showing a spirit kindred to that which had seized upon the venerable Melchior. Under his guidance, so greatly did they esteem him, the ancient feelings of national veneration had grown once more alive and active in their bosoms, and wild, sweet fancies once more warmed their thoughts with images of the pride and the power of the ancient Jerusalem. They remembered old predictions, and they were happy in the remembrance.

"Let the curs howl to-night while they may," exclaimed Edacer, as their wild song came down to his ears in echoes from the mountain—"they will cry aloud to-morrow in another voice!"

But silence reigned not in the camp of Edacer any more than in that of Pelayo; yet the stillness there was broken by very different sounds and other emotions. Revelry, such as the Goth in his degeneracy exulted in; debauchery, such as debased him to a beastliness which only did not disgust as it was too universal to offend, followed him from the city to the camp, and in wine and licentious indulgences the night was half consumed among the leaguers, when rest was required, and other no less needful means of preparation for the trials of the ensuing day.

XVIII.

THE solemn religious rites of both Jew and Christian were ended, and the great body of both parties had thrown themselves down among the rocks to snatch a few hours of refreshing sleep before the dawning of that day of trial. But there were some among that beleaguered people that closed not their eyes, but kept watch throughout the long and weary hours of that night. Of this number was Egiza, whom a sense of degradation kept awake. Pelayo slept fitfully, but with his body only. Severe labours, continued without indulgence of sleep, had brought exhaustion of frame, but his mind addressed itself too earnestly to the task before him to allow of much indulgence now. He rose at intervals from the rocky ledge on which he had thrown himself for slumber, and perambulated the encampment. He saw that his sentries kept good watch, and the clamour of carousal from the tents of Edacer below relieved him from any apprehension of attack while the night lasted. The stillness of design and preparation was wanting to the enemy, and their heedless indulgence called for little precaution on the part of the beleaguered. But Pelayo relaxed not his diligence and watch, and throughout the night he made a frequent tour of observation, which kept his own men to their duties, and would have set at naught any enterprise of the foe. He was too good a warrior to suspend his caution because he saw that his enemy was deficient in adventure.

Not less sleepless were Melchior and his daughter. The conversation was long and sad between them. She had a thousand questions to ask of her deceased mother, of whom she knew but little, and of whom her father had always seemed most unwilling to speak. Her story had been one of many sorrows to herself and him. But now he spoke more freely. He recounted

their wanderings of the desert for twenty years, their toils and troubles, and of her final and violent death. It seemed as if their present extremity gave Thyrza a right to hear, which he had always before denied her. At length, by little and little, the subject of the Christian rites which they had just witnessed was glanced at by Melchior, who compared them with the awful pomp and measured ceremonials of the ancient Hebrew church, or, as he fondly styled it, the Church of God.

"Yet, my father," said the maiden, "if the doctrine of the Christian should be true—if the Nazarene were, in truth, a god!"

"It avails not that we should speak of this," said the old man. "Can a god die? No! He perished, my daughter, and though I would not that he had been slain, for he was a pure and blessed spirit, yet I cannot think the prophecy accomplished in his coming. It was a narrow policy in the Jewish people to seek his death, for, of a certainty, he strove for the rescue of Israel from the tyrannic sway of the Roman; yet was it not so much the deed of our people as of the selfish priesthood who led them. They feared the rise of another faith, which should swallow up their authority; and the Nazarene died, not because of the doctrine which he taught, but because he himself was a teacher. He was a good man, and his deeds and designs were holy; but I cannot think, my child, that he was a god, as the Christians regard him."

"But we do not know, my father—I would that we did—the Christians are men of wisdom not less than of valour, and the fortunes of the Jew—scattered and dispersed abroad over the nations—the outcast, as it were, of Heaven—would seem to uphold their opinion of us, that we are thus outcast from Heaven's favour because of our assault upon Heaven's King. If we could think like these Christians, my father, methinks our state would be more hopeful."

"Think, my child, as thou mayst. Thought is no

slave, that thou shouldst send it hither and thither. Thou hast no command upon thy thought save as thou shalt strive to know and to esteem the truth. It is for thee to know the truth, and from thy knowledge comes thy thought. If, after thou hast striven after the truth with all thy soul and with all thy strength, thou shouldst then think as the Christian or as the Jew, thou art equally good with either, and equally worthy in the sight of the Father; for it is religion no less than wisdom to labour only after the truth. The labour makes the religion. This done, thou hast done all. Thy mere opinions, in the end, whether they be right or wrong, I hold to be of little import in the making up of thy great accounts with Heaven. What matters it, in the sight of the great Jehovah, what is the thought of so frail a creature as man? He needs not his opinions for his justification, for he is just; he needs not his arguments for his state, for he is kingly beyond all the kings of the earth. He needs but his proper performance, that his obedience may be made manifest, and that the prediction shall be accomplished which is to bring all the tribes of men, and all the ends of the earth, in meekness and communion together. The thoughts of man and his opinions—made up of his narrow experience, and subject to his moods of temper or of education, of sickness or of health, are commonly error—God be merciful, and judge of us, not according to our thoughts, but according to our performances."

"Father, let us pray now, that we may think with becoming wisdom, and know those things only which are true."

"Thou art the truth, my child, the blessed truth—thy heart is on thy duties ever, and thou errest not from the path in which it is fitting thou shouldst go. Thy life to me hath been like some blessed star shining out ever from its appointed place, and looking always most lovely when the hour grew darkest. As thou sayest, let us pray."

XIX.

The day dawned in clouds upon the combatants. Ere the first glance of light the warriors of Pelayo were in motion. He himself was busied with his preparations, devising and directing in matters which he deemed essential to his success. Melchior sprang from his slumbers as he heard the clang of steel about him. Thyrza, who had slept with her head upon his arm, was aroused by his rising, and started to her feet. She beheld her father binding his sash around his waist and preparing his armour; but she beheld no objects distinctly. Heavy clouds were hanging in the firmament, and but a single and sad star in the western heavens looked forth upon them in encouragement, like hope. Light gray streaks veined the foggy summits in the east, and gave indistinct promise of the day. She started with a hurried exclamation as she beheld the preparations of her father.

"It is not yet day, my father—thou art not now to leave me."

"The warriors of the prince are busy, my child. Remember, thy father leads the Hebrew people, and they are this day to strike for the honour of Judah, not to speak of their own lives and liberties. I may not sleep longer."

"Alas! my father, that I may not give thee service in this strife. Would that I could help thee."

"My daughter, thou hast thy dagger?"

She put her hand upon her girdle, and detached the weapon so as to exhibit to his eyes the small rich hilt within her hand.

"It is well," said he. "Hear me, my child, my best beloved, life of my life, and more than any joy in life to me. Ere long I will leave thee—the strife will

be deadly and dangerous, and I may leave thee for ever. Let not thy weapon be far from thy hand—remember thy mother!"

The maiden wept bitterly. He continued—

"If the foe prevail—if the fight go against us—thou wilt see me no more. The sacrifice which I have vowed to my people will have been offered, and the toils of Melchior for their deliverance will be ended."

She moaned aloud, and clung to him, with her head upon his bosom, but said nothing.

"The foe will ascend these heights, and then—my child, thou knowest the brutal nature of the Goth—as a man, he will slay thee, but as a woman—! My child, my child, there is hope for thee while thou hast a weapon, and thy death will save thee from wrong when my arm will no longer be able to help thee. Swear to me that thou will not tremble to use upon thy bosom the steel which has drank the life blood of thy mother."

"I swear, my father," cried the maiden, with uplifted hands.

"Swear by her—by her pure blood—swear!"

"By her blood—by her pure blood, I swear to thee, my father, to perish by my own hands, and by this sacred steel, ere the Goth shall set his foot as a conqueror upon this mountain."

"God's blessing be upon thee, my child—I leave thee now. Yet heed thou, my child! look not down upon the fight when it rages. It is terrible and full of danger. Lie in safety behind this rock, where the shaft may not reach thee. I leave thee, Thyrza—I leave thee."

XX.

Melchior was busy in preparing and counselling his Hebrews for the approaching combat when Pelayo sought him for conference.

"You are ready, Melchior?" said the prince.

"Ay, my prince, we are all ready. We wait but the signal," was the immediate reply of Melchior.

"The trumpet will sound thrice before we move. At the first summons, set your men in motion; at the second, have them in readiness to descend the pass which has been assigned you; at the third, move down upon the foe, and the rest I leave to your own good conduct, and the guardian care of the Great Father of mankind."

"I feel, my prince, as if our battle were his battle, and this feeling gives me confidence and strength."

Pelayo smiled only, pressed the hand of the aged warrior in silence, and then departed, without further word, to the station held by Abimelech. To him he gave similar commands, and having satisfied himself that he had done all that could be done by him towards ensuring success, he departed for the central passage, which he had reserved for his own lead, and where his chiefs, and the detachment of Hebrews which had been given him by Melchior and Abimelech, were already assembled and prepared to follow him.

The dawn came on rapidly, and day was diffused around the mountain where they were gathered without yielding them much light for the discovery of distant objects. Heavy clouds still hung about the rising sun, who thus seemed to look inauspiciously upon their enterprise. But such omens troubled not Pelayo. He prepared to avail himself of the first light which would enable him to descend upon his foes, and he ordered

the first signal trumpet to sound. With the sound the several leaders completed their arrangements, which were, indeed, already more than half finished. But, though all ready with the second blast of the trumpet, Pelayo departed not from his original instructions, as he was resolute that the descent should be a concerted movement of the three divisions. He greatly feared the concentration of the force of Edacer at some one single passage, upon the party which might first make its descent in advance of the others which were intended to support it. Before the third trumpet was sounded, some of the bowmen, who were distributed along the intervals of rock between the passages, discovered the silent advance of Edacer's army, which had left its tents, and was arrayed in force at the foot of each of the several passes, ready to encounter those who should descend them, and who must necessarily do so at great disadvantage, fighting with an irregular footing, and presenting a narrow front, which could be assailed on three hands while emerging from the gorge, and which could be defended only on one. This movement of Edacer produced some anxiety and alarm among the people on the mountain, until the words of Pelayo reassured them.

"Now am I glad," said he, "that Edacer hath thus advanced. We have him at disadvantage, and can occasion disorder in his array which he will find it difficult to amend. Ho, there," he cried, to some of those whom he had employed as attendants, "go you to Melchior and to Abimelech."

He gave fitting directions to the couriers thus despatched, and then gave like instructions to his own people.

"Do as you see me do, brave chiefs and valiant men —one and all, to the rocks. Detach we these masses from the sides of the mountain, and send them down to Edacer as a token that we are coming. Ply your

spears, men, and the path will soon be free, I warrant ye. Speed, warriors, to the work—and ye shall see these Goths fly with even more haste than I look for ye to advance."

Thus speaking, Pelayo seized a spear from the hands of a soldier, and thrusting it under a heavy and detached rock that lay on the edge of the mountain, and just above the gorge which formed his passage-way down, with the strength of a giant he heaved it from the bed where it had lain for ages, and for a moment it vibrated and trembled upon a point ere it went bounding and thundering, without impediment, to the valley below. From side to side of the mountain it leaped with fearful concussions, tearing the earth from before its path, and detaching, in its downward progress, other masses of rock scarcely less weighty than itself, which joined it, without resistance, in its fearful flight. The example of Pelayo was followed on every side; and while the scattered bands of Edacer fled backward to their tents before this unlooked-for assault, Pelayo, under cover of the clouding dust which had been raised by the tumultuous rocks in their unresisted passage, led his warriors after them into the plain. When the cloud was lifted, what was the surprise of Edacer to behold his foe before him, not merely awaiting his assault, but boldly marching down in three dense masses upon his scattered troops.

Surprised, but not confounded, Edacer immediately sought to amend his error. He brought his men quickly together, and advanced to meet Pelayo. The first shock was terrific. The spirits of the mountain warriors had been duly heightened, and their confidence strengthened as they had seen the bands of Edacer scattering before the descending rocks. They rushed to the battle with a fierce cry, and closed in a warm fury with their enemy. Pelayo drew not his sword, but, armed with a curtal or short-handled axe, which he

wielded as if it were a part of his own arm, he moved like a terror and a tower through every part of the field, striking here and striking there, seldom twice, encouraging his people at every stroke, and showing himself particularly heedful of the Jewish warriors, whom he cheered by frequent words addressed only to themselves.

With the first encounter, the auspices of which were thus favourable to Pelayo, his troops drove back those of Edacer. The religious enthusiasm with which Melchior had inspired his people had impelled them forward with a zealous rage, that seemed more like the heedless indifference of madness than the practised sense and spirit of a tried courage. Their first shock had been irresistible, but that first shock was to be sustained by enduring hardihood; for though it gave them a decided advantage, yet, as the foe still held his ground, it called for new efforts of like character, to which the untried Hebrew warriors were not equal. The fierce Edacer—doubly furious, as, so far, he seemed to have been baffled—having rallied his men, rushed forward with a picked body upon his foe, and was encountered by Abimelech, whose troop was comparatively fresh, as it had been more remote from the tug and trial attending the first collision of the two armies. Success did not attend the onset of Abimelech. His followers recoiled from the heavy and close press of the Gothic spearmen; and that warrior himself, having the ill-fortune to encounter with Edacer, was thrust through and through with a spear, and fell dead on the spot. The spear of Edacer was broken with the fall of the enemy he had transfixed, and he now drew his thick Spanish sword, a massive, double-edged weapon, short and broad, which the Romans had adopted from the native Iberian, and had preferred to use before their sinews had been relaxed by the effeminacies into which they afterward fell. The overthrow of Abimelech dispirited his followers, while it gave encouragement to the Gothic soldiers. They gave

back before their enemy, who pressed hardly upon them, until the panic became a flight, the flight a rout, and they fled in utter confusion to the rocks from which they had descended. They were hotly pursued by the force with which they had engaged, and it was then that the bowmen whom Pelayo had stationed along the mountain side rendered good service to the fugitives. Their arrows fell fast and thick among the pursuers, singling out their several and leading victims, and daunting the rage of the pursuit with the terrors of an unexpected foe ; but this slight service could not long have saved the warriors of Abimelech, had not the troops of Melchior, which had been engaged with the right division of Edacer's army, and had obtained like advantages with those which he had won from Abimelech, now arrived to their aid and rescue. The battle was begun anew, and with new terrors. Melchior, with a vigour that came from the resolution and sacred strength in his mind, and which seemed to imbue him with all the spirit, and strengthen him with all the muscles of youth, led his men into the thickest of the enemy's array, and ploughed to the heart of Edacer's force with shaft and steel, until that fierce warrior himself was encountered. The heavy maule of Melchior clashed with the thick, short sword of Edacer. The fierce Goth opposed the venerable Hebrew, and terrible indeed was the spectacle to those around. But though Melchior seemed endowed with the strength of youth, it was not possible for him to strike long against the vigorous Edacer, particularly, too, as the weapon which he employed, though dreadful to strike, was not readily available, from its great weight, for the purposes of defence. Edacer pressed the venerable leader closely, and, chafed and mortified, Melchior gave back before him. The strokes of Edacer fell faster than ever as he found that he had gained this advantage, and they became now more difficult than ever for the Hebrew to parry and avoid ; until,

at length, aiming to defend himself from a severe blow meditated by the Goth, he threw up his maule cross-wise above his head, and the well-tempered steel of Toledo, drawn down by the muscular arm of Edacer with all its force, cut through the iron maule as if it had been a reed, and the head of Melchior lay bare to his blows. The force with which Edacer had struck carried him forward, and, falling upon Melchior, they both came heavily to the ground together. But the Goth instantly regained his feet, and stood with his heel upon his foe and his weapon uplifted. At this sight the whole array of the Israelites cried aloud as with one voice of unspeakable horror. The dreadful cry, significant as it was of the general wo of her people, reached the ears of the weeping and praying Thyrza, as she lay anxious and apprehensive behind the rock where her father had left her in safety. She started to her feet as she heard this dreadful clamour, and, rushing forward, beheld the white beard of Melchior upon the earth, and saw the fierce Goth bestriding his body. With a shriek of wo more piercing than the united cry of the host, she bounded away; and, without a consciousness of aught save of his danger, rushed down the mountain just as a flight of arrows was interchanged between those from below and those who still kept their places as bowmen upon the heights. One shaft penetrated her side, but she still went forward, shrieking all the while, and calling upon Pelayo, in whom she seemed to confide altogether and alone, for the rescue of her father. Nor did the call seem to have been made in vain. Before the blow of Edacer could descend upon the head of his hoary victim, the Iberian chief had dashed him away from the prostrate body of Melchior, and he now opposed his dreadful battle-axe, its edge smeared with hair and blood, that stood glued in thick clots upon it, to the thirsting blade of the Gothic sword. Two strokes had not been made between them

when the axe of Pelayo hewed down the shoulder of his foe—a second blow, and its dripping edge was buried deeply in his brain, and without a groan the Gothic warrior fell prostrate to the earth. The cry of Pelayo's warriors was that of victory. The Hebrews rallied as they beheld the sight. The bowmen rushed down from the mountain heights to the warm, close feast of the sword below; and, in the entire rout and flight of the Gothic warriors, the victory of Pelayo was complete.

XXI.

In a remote corner of the mountain, apart from the assembled and rejoicing warriors, Melchior sat in hopeless sorrow, the head of his dying child reposing in his lap. The light was fast departing from her eyes, and they unclosed at moments only when she strove to speak. A joyful and thrice-repeated shout startled her for an instant from the deepening dream of death, which was weaving its shadows around her.

"Wherefore is the shouting, my father. Has he not conquered? Are we not safe?"

"We are safe, my child. The shouting is one of joy. They crown the Prince Pelayo, my daughter; the warriors make him their king," was the reply of Melchior. The maiden clasped her hands, strove vainly to raise her head, as if desiring to behold the spectacle, but the blood gushed in a torrent from her side as she did so, and she sank back, and, in a moment after, slept in the immoveable embrace of death. Melchior had no words when Pelayo approached him.

"She died a Christian, Melchior—look! it is the holy cross which she bears within her hands!"

True it was, that, in her hands, now for the first time visible to her father's eyes, lay a small golden cross, which had probably been dropped by some hurrying

warrior as he went into battle, and which she had unconsciously picked up on the heights while awaiting the result of the conflict below.

"She died a pure and blessed child, my prince," said the desolate father, "and I heed nothing of her faith, as I know her heart. Alas! that so few live like her. Alas! for Melchior! He is now alone—he need not now seek the desert—it is here! it is here!"

And the hand of the old man smote heavily upon his heart as he spoke these words, and his head sank down upon the body of his daughter. The eyes of Pelayo were full of tears, and he turned away to conceal them.

L'ENVOY.

We have now, gentle reader, who hast borne with us so long, brought thee to the proposed resting-place in this our narrative. We trust that we have not journeyed together thus far unprofitably—that—though some moments may have hung heavily upon our hands, and something in our speech may have at times sounded tediously in thine ears—thou wilt forgive these, our involuntary transgressions upon thy good taste and good temper, in consideration of other passages in our progress which may have amply contributed to the strengthening of the one and the more perfect sweetening of the other. Ascribe not this speech to our vanity, but to our hopeful desire to please thee. At least, let it mar nothing at our next meeting, when we propose to resume this very narrative; bringing other actors upon the stage in addition to some of those with whom we have in part

brought thee acquainted, and to whom we have given either too little or too much of our regards. We hope soon to show thee the fearful progress of the usurper from sin to sin, and finally, as an inevitable consequence, to destruction. We will depict before thine eyes the downfall, with him, of the great empire of the Goth, and the rapid conquests of the wild tribes of Mauritania, the fate of the lovely Cava, and the unhappy, but not inexcusable, treason of the valorous Count Julian. But let us not vex thee now with these imperfect shadowings. Let it be, we pray thee, an equal hope between us, that we shall renew these journeyings together through the wild regions of romance and the wondrous events upon whose history we have thus begun. For the present, we give thee our hearty benison, and crave humbly for thy blessing in return.

THE AUTHOR.

THE END.