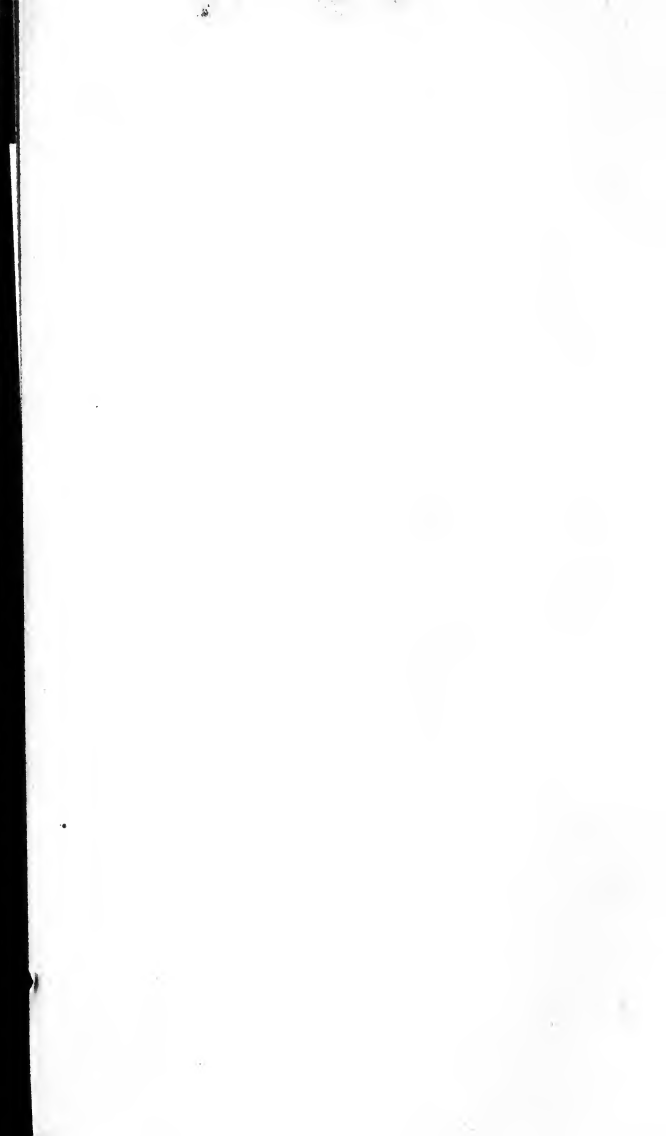


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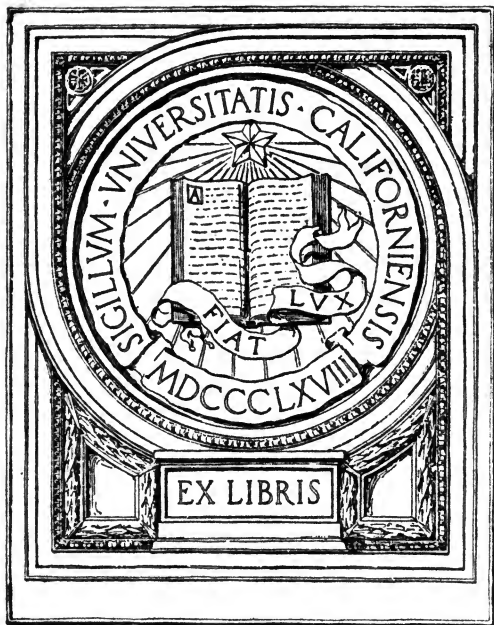
THE
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Maid of Monterey
BY NED. BUNTLINE
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THE VOLUNTEER:

—OR.—

THE MAID OF MONTEREY.

A STORY OF THE MEXICAN WAR.

BY NED BUNTLINE. *psent.*

(Judson, E. B. C.)



BOSTON:
ELLIOTT, THOMES & TALBOT,
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THE VOLUNTEER.

CHAPTER I.

"RURAL CHOICE."—THE VOLUNTEER.—THE BARBACUE.

No preface, reader, nor apology here—this is a story of thrilling scenes, daring deeds, and stirring times. We will leap the breastworks of reserve, and at once dash into its merits, as did the brave warriors who led the way and won the day at Monterey.

It commences with the fourth day of the attack upon Monterey—the day when our brave troops were forcing their way through the walls of the houses, step by step, toward the heart of the city—now meeting the foe hand to hand and knife to knife, then sending the deadly rifle ball among their desperate ranks, now pouring down their unerring volleys from the house-tops, then through casements and lattices where never before was seen aught but flowers and smiling faces, now treading with armed and blood-stained heels over silken carpets, then crushing the flowers that had been reared and cherished by the fair hands of many a sweet southern girl. But we'll do as others have often tried to do; we will begin ahead of our "commencement," and in that way work a traverse to introduce to you our hero.

The news of the battles of the eighth and ninth of May, 1846, had reached the government, and already had requisitions been made on several States for troops. The whole country

was in a feverish state of excitement, and the riflemen of Kentucky, that class of whom Byron says—

“And tall and strong, and swift of foot were they,
 Beyond the dwarfing cities' pale abortions,
 Because their thoughts had never been the prey
 Of care or gain; the green woods were their portions:
 No sinking spirits told them they grew gray,
 No fashion made them apes of her distortions;
 Simple they were, not savage; and their rifles,
 Though very true, were not yet used for trifles,

were already wending their way to the numerous recruiting stations in their State. To one of these, in a backwoods settlement, reader, we will wend our way.

The settlement of “Rural Choice” boasted one dwelling house, which served as tavern, post-office, and, whenever a travelling minister came along, for a church. Near this stood a small log hut, over which a little red flag was hoisted, to signify that it was a store, a place where grog, calico, sugar and salt could be bought for cash, or be had for “barter.”

The dwelling-house and store belonged to one of the first settlers in that portion of Kentucky, one who was known to all the settlement around, as “Uncle Ned Blakey,” a man who was loved by the good and honest, and feared by the vile; one who had the reputation of always doing by others as he would that they should do by him. He had come into that section with no property save his axe, rifle, and a healthy young wife whom he had brought from the mountains of Virginia, and by untiring industry and perseverance he had amassed a very considerable fortune. He had one son, and that youth was George Blakey, the hero of our romance.

George, at the time of our commencement, was just twenty-one, and a noble specimen of a backwoodsman. He stood just six feet and one inch in height, was straight as one of his own forest maples, had a brow high, fair, and unfurrowed by care or dissipation, an eye blue as an Italian sky, and clear as the waveless ocean off soundings; limbs that developed muscle and strength which would, in the days of Grecian splendor, have made him a favorite model for the sculptor's eye.

As the only son, he was the idol of his parents; as a handsome, dashing, true-hearted boy, he had ever been the favorite of all the girls in his neighborhood; as a generous, bold and lively

companion, he had been loved by all the boys of the settlement. Few indeed were more generally loved and admired than he. His education, if one should judge from his conversation, was good, yet that boy had never been inside of a school house. His mother had taught him to read; his father had always taken two or three newspapers, and here was the secret of his education. He was always conversant with the news of the day, had acquired a good judgment in literary matters, and was regarded by many, who knew not where he had gained his education, as the best read man in the country. There is a moral in this truth; we hope our readers will improve upon it. In the meantime, pardon our digression, and we'll open the web of our yarn.

Old Mr. Blakey, or "Uncle Ned," as every one called him, was seated at the breakfast-table one fine morning in July, 1846, his wife by his side, and his son George opposite to him. The latter had just read aloud the requisition upon the State for a regiment of troops, and as he closed, he sprang to his feet, and much to the alarm of his mother, perhaps to the surprise of his father, exclaimed:

"Old Logan county shall furnish one company, and I'll raise them!"

"What! *you*, George?" asked the mother, anxiously.

"Yes, mother, me! I'm sure that I can raise as fine a squad of boys as 'Old Rough and Ready' ever laid his eyes on, and the old codger needs *men* down there. I must be off!"

"Who'll take care of the store, and open the weekly mail, boy?" asked the father.

"O, let the girls come and help you. The store is a poor place for a *man* at any time, and no place for him in war time."

"There's a deal of truth in that," said Uncle Ned, "but it'll be hard for us to part with ye now. It is one-and-twenty years since I first looked into your blue eyes, and never have you been absent a single day from my side; but if your country calls you, why, boy, God bless you! I'd a done the same when I was of your age."

The voice of the father trembled a little with emotion as he spoke, and his lips quivered; but the feelings of the mother could not be kept under the same command. Bursting into tears, she cried:

"O, George, don't think of going to the wars. What would we do if you should be killed? We cannot let you go."

"Mother, it is my *duty*. It were better for me to fill a brave man's grave, than to live in a coward's place. The call is for *men*; you would yourself blush if I were so unmanly as not to respond to the call."

"Yes, Letty, the boy is right; you'd despise him if he'd back from duty," said Uncle Ned.

"Well, if it is best I'll try to bear it," said the mother. "I'll go to work and fix up your clothes."

"And I'll set the sights of 'old deer slayer,' and run some balls for her; she's the truest rifle that ever barked at a red-skin!" added the father.

"Thank you, father," said the young volunteer, "I'll jump on the gray gelding and ride through the settlement and see the boys. Do you put things in trim for a barbacue here to-morrow—I'll raise the boys and take their names there, for we must make quick work of it. The requisition says that the first who report will be accepted, and if I know 'Old Kentuck,' there'll be a rush for the first chance."

The parties separated—one to drum up recruits, the second to fit her son for the march, the last to arm him for the fray.

THE BARBACUE.

Some of our thousands of western readers will not need a description to know what a barbacue is, yet there are others among our eastern friends who know little or nothing of such a festival.

In a grove just back of the store at Rural Choice, beside a large, clear spring of ice-cold water, a long hole had been dug in the earth early on the morning of the day succeeding the one which opens our chapter. In this large quantities of wood had been laid, and before noon it had burned down into a bed of glowing coals. Over this bed, upon a grating of sticks, were laid several neatly dressed young pigs and lambs, and those were roasting whole at the time when we asked you to look at the barbacue. Upon the mossy rocks around the springs were clustered a large party of young men and women, and among the trees at a distance were tied the horses which had borne the company here. It would have been a goodly scene for a painter to sketch. The strong, healthy looking daughters, and the tall, hardy sons of the West, in their coarse but comfortable garb, scattered here and there.

George Blakey had been making a little bit of a speech to them, and now sat upon a rock with an old account book of his

father's on his knee, taking down the list of names on a blank leaf of the same, as the young riflemen crowded around to volunteer under his command. Among the girls there were tearful eyes, yet not one of them was weak enough to bid her lover stay; among the young men there were sad faces, yet not one faltered as he wrote his name or made his mark upon the roll which George held in his hand.

Thus, before the barbacue was done brown, the list of the "Logan county riflemen" was filled; and leaving his father to do the honors of the rude feast, and bidding his men to hold themselves in readiness for service on his return, young Blakey sprang upon his horse and hurried to Frankfort to report his company.

We will not tarry to explain the minutiae of mustering his company into service, but simply state that they were soon on their way to the seat of war, and that they joined General Taylor in time to participate in the siege and capture of Monterey. But for that look into the next chapter.

Mr. and Mrs. Blakey deeply felt the loss of their son, yet their sorrow was softened by the thought that he was doing his duty, and they were proud to know how quickly he had raised such a noble company, and how unanimously he had been elected to command it.

George left no sweetheart behind him to mourn his absence, for though he was a general favorite among the fair, yet he had made choice of no "bright particular star" on which to fix his heart-gaze. And it was well for him that it was so, perhaps.

O, how many a warm, tender heart has been broken during this war; how many a pale face and tearful eye now will read these words, and think of the noble and brave who have fallen on the battle field,—are buried beneath the ensanguined sod of a distant land! Be comforted, fair mourners, your separation is not eternal; a nation's gratitude is as a pall of glory resting over the tombs of your beloved. Though they lie at Monterey or on Buena Vista's plain, without a stone to mark their graves, the everlasting monument of Fame is theirs; they are linked with our country's history—they *never* will be forgotten! This thought, perchance, has cheered their dying moments, linked with memories of you, perhaps it has painted the smiles of contentment on their pale cheeks, and they, like the glorious Wolfe, on the Canadian heights, have said—"I die happy!"

CHAPTER II.

THE HEROINE OF MONTEREY A PRISONER.

THE pages of American history have already received the records of the glorious five days which were occupied in the siege and capture of Monterey, yet there were many incidents that occurred in that siege, which never have been registered on the historian's scroll; events which only can be gathered from the lips of the actors in the fearful drama. All know how gallantly the volunteers shared in the perils of that day, with the veteran troops of Palo Alto and Resaca's fame: the records of their killed and wounded speak for them, and tell how freely they hazarded their lives in their country's cause.

The "Logan county riflemen" arrived just in time to join General Worth's attacking division, and were used by him as a pioneer and ranging corps, which gave them an opportunity to have more than a fair share of service. Yet this was the desire of their young and ambitious commander, and his men loved him too well to falter, when he cried "follow."

On this kind of duty, he was sent in advance on the twenty-second of September, the day before General Worth made his last desperate and successful advance into the city, and had reached under cover of some hills within a short distance of the city, when he found advancing upon him a large body of lancers. Closing up his men into a solid square, behind a low wall, he awaited the charge of the enemy, and as they came within half pistol shot he poured in a volley from his deadly rifles with such terrific effect that the foe recoiled, and all save one—that one their leader, turned and fled from the field, leaving a portion of their comrades lying dead.

The leader seemed to have lost the control of his horse, or to have been carried away by the impetuous speed of his charge, for he dashed right into the midst of the riflemen, firing his pistol as he came on, and waving his sword as if his whole troop were at his back. A ball from one of the rifles had grazed his cheek, another had cut the stem of the coal black plume from his helmet, and it now drooped down upon his neck.

His horse fell as it leaped the wall, and in a moment he was in the hands of our men, one of whom with reckless haste raised his heavy bowie-knife to despatch him, but was stayed in the very moment of the intention, by the voice of his captain, who cried, sternly:

“What! strike a helpless foe! shame on you, Champ—put up your weapon.”

Sullenly the man obeyed, and Blakey, springing to the side of the Mexican officer, added:

“Yield, sir, you are my prisoner!”

“Yes,” replied the officer, handing his sword to Blakey; “deserted by my cowardly followers, it were madness in me now to resist.”

Blakey was astonished by the soft, sweet tone of the voice which addressed him, as also surprised by the pure English which the Mexican officer used. The latter seemed to be but a young boy, his dress, too, was singular, and his appearance far more feminine than his actions would denote.

“You are wounded, sir,” said Blakey, noticing the blood streaming down the officer’s cheek from the graze which I have already alluded to.

“Would that I were slain—better to die than to be a prisoner to my country’s foe!” answered the other, with a tone of sadness.

“Say not so, you will soon be exchanged; take again your sword; one who uses it so well, must not part with it. Your parole is all I ask,” said Blakey.

“You are very generous, senor,” replied the other, raising his helmet and bowing low, still speaking in a soft, musical tone.

Blakey was astonished at the luxuriant and glossy curls which fell from beneath the young soldier’s helmet as he raised it, and then a suspicion flashed across his mind that a female stood before him. A glance at the delicate foot and hand of the officer, one searching look at the long hair, and in the jet black eyes, so large, so dewy, and shaded by lashes of silken gloss, caused him to feel certain of it, and he spoke hastily:

“By heavens, you are a lady! Speak, is it not so? Has it come to this, that even the women of Mexico arm to repel their invaders?”

“It is time that they did so, senor, when the *men* prove so cowardly as those who have fled and left me to your mercy.

You have discovered my sex. I am a woman, yet I hold a commission as captain of lancers in the army of my country. I applied for it, Ampudia dared not refuse me, for my family are too well known to him. He dared not affront me by a refusal!"

"Lady, this is very strange. Give me your name."

"Edwina Canales, sister to the guerrilla chief, who is even now on your borders, one whose name is well known to your countrymen, one whose history is strange—one who has been made a foe by cruel wrongs, wrongs that have left us orphans! O, let the Texans beware of *our* revenge; we both have suffered by it; we and our young brother!"

"Lady, I know not of what you speak, yet, deep must have been wrongs which could induce you thus to unsex yourself, and face the fearful perils of war."

Tears gathered then in her eyes, as if the memory of her wrongs had swelled the fountain of feeling to overrunning, but her tone was firm, even bitter, as she said:

"It matters not to recall them. I am your prisoner, and helpless now."

"You are free, lady; Americans never war upon women," said Blakey, in a tone of deep feeling.

"Free?" echoed she; "free, yet not on parole?"

"No, lady, yet I hope for your own sake that you will not again meet our forces."

"I shall only accept freedom on terms that will allow me to join my countrymen in arms," replied the maiden. "Edwina Canales is wedded alone to her country's cause!"

"Lady, I cannot, will not detain you, yet I beseech you to retire from this city at least. To-morrow we assault it."

"Then to-morrow, if its defenders do but half their duty, will you be defeated?"

"Lady, we are led by *Taylor*!"

"He has been successful, he is brave, yet here we are fortified, and three to one in number opposed to him!"

"Yet we will succeed!"

"Perhaps so!" replied the lady, with a doubting smile, and then added: "if I am free, I will depart."

"Your horse is slain, lady, accept mine in its stead; it would not be gallant in me to permit you to return to your city on foot."

"I will accept your offer, as a loan to be repaid as soon as possible," replied the brave girl, and the next moment she was

mounted on Blakey's horse, and riding with a free rein toward the city.

"Beautiful as she is brave!" exclaimed Blakey, as his eye followed her noble figure, when she rode away.

A few moments after she had left the spot where she had been both captured and freed, Blakey saw an immense body of cavalry ride from the city, and once more he prepared for a struggle against odds which were too great for him even to hope for success. But he had no time to escape by retreat, only the officers of his corps were mounted on that morning, and his own horse was gone. Silently the little band re-formed their square, and awaited the attack of the advancing regiment. By this time it had been met by the freed maiden, who rode up to the officer at its head, and caused a halt.

The Kentuckians were most agreeably surprised to see the enemy in a few moments after turn back towards the city, and they knew that the attack had been suspended by some influence of their late prisoner. Blakey soon after regained his camp, where he had not been long, before the story of his adventure became circulated.

At the "mess" that evening, it was the topic of conversation, and many a joke and lively jest were perpetrated at the expense of Blakey and his fair captive. In the "mess" there was a person who, from his bullying and ungentlemanly manner, and his universally known brutality, was disliked by all, and particularly detested by Blakey. His name was Gorin; he was a captain in the Texan Rangers, and one whose proudest boast was, that he had never spared an enemy. On this occasion, he condemned Blakey bitterly for his mercy, charging him openly with a neglect of his duty.

"Had it been me that captured her," said he, "she never would have gone back to her camp alive. She should have either come to my tent, or I would have left her to feed crows upon the ground!"

"Thank God, sir, that you did *not* capture her; one stain upon our arms has been prevented!" replied Blakey.

The other was about to answer, probably with some new insult, when an orderly at the front of the mess tent called for Captain Blakey. On the latter answering the summons, he found before the tent a Mexican soldier, who had been admitted with a flag to see him. The soldier held two horses by their bridles. One was the same steed which Blakey had loaned to

his prisoner; the other was a coal black charger, of great beauty and strength; such a horse as a knight of the olden time would have chosen for the battle. The soldier handed a note to Blakey. Opening it, he read these words:

“The kind American will oblige the sister of Canales by accepting the steed which, with his own, will be delivered to him by the bearer. There is but one other like it in Mexico—that one is ridden henceforth by me alone. They are mates. Farewell. May we never meet on the battle field.”

There was no signature to the note. It needed none, Blakey knew well from whom it came. Taking from his cap the white band of silver lace which was around it, he handed it to the soldier, and bade him carry it back to her who sent him, and request her to wear it upon her arm, if ever she again met the American forces in battle. Then he retired to his own tent, for he was not in a mood to meet Gorin again.

The night passed away, and with the first dawn of the morning's light the troops, who had slept on their arms, were in motion. The caannon of the bishop's palace had been turned upon the city by our artillerists, and soon the troops advanced upon the city. As soon as they got within reach of the houses, a hot and deadly fire was poured in upon them from windows, doors and housetops, and they found cannons placed in the streets, so as completely to enflade them if they attempted to march up them.

The gallant Worth saw with pain that he would lose many of his brave men, if this was attempted, and at once adopted the plan which was so perfectly successful. He gave orders for his men to enter the houses, where they would be partially covered from the fire of the enemy, and by breaking down the walls to force their way, from house to house, towards the Grand Plaza in the centre of the city, where the main body of the Mexican troops had formed their camp.

With a few of the Texan Rangers, and his own company, Blakey had led the way on one side of the main street, now skirmishing with small parties of the enemy in the street, then firing from the house-tops, or again dashing down intervening walls, losing every now and then some of his most daring and useful men, until nearly night. They were already within a few hundred yards of the Plaza, and were gradually gaining

They had reached a large stone building, whose thick walls offered a very stout resistance; besides, it seemed to be defended by a very strong guard of soldiers, for three times had they endeavored to gain it by the street doors and windows, and each time had suffered a fearful loss. In the last repulse, Blakey was wounded, but his wound did not disable or dishearten him, for as he regained the cover of the adjoining house, he cried:

"We must force the wall again, my lads! At it with your pickaxes, and we'll soon have more elbow room!"

Beneath the heavy blows of the stalwart backwoodsmen, the walls soon began to crumble, and it was not long before an opening was made; but even now the danger seemed to increase, for two of the men with axes were shot dead at their work, while a rattling volley poured in from the other side, gave token that these men there disposed to defend their ground to the last.

"A few blows, boys, and we'll make room for a charge!" cried Blakey, seizing an axe himself, and springing to the work which the others shrank from, seconded by one who possessed courage, if nothing else (we mean Gorin), who, with a huge crowbar, dashed down the heavy stones as if they were mere pebbles.

In a moment the breach was large enough, and the men gathered together for a charge. The enemy on the opposite side could not now be seen; all was silent, and even Blakey began to think that the place could be gained without further resistance. They were about to spring through, when a voice loud and clear as a bugle, cried from the other side of the aperture:

"Keep back, on your lives, keep back! One step beyond the wall, and you all perish!"

"By heavens, 'tis her voice!" cried Blakey, recognizing the tones of his late captive; and then as he bent his eye to the aperture, he saw her, and also to his horror saw that a lighted match was in her hand, and that she stood by a train of gunpowder, which led to a barrel of the same dangerous material, which was placed against the wall which they had just forced. The band of silver lace was on her arm, but she did not appear to recognize him, though they were but a few feet asunder.

Gorin, too, bent down his head, and as he looked through the aperture, his face turned ashy pale, not with the fear of death, for he was proverbially reckless of danger, but with something even stranger.

"By all that's fatal, it is *she*," he groaned; "*she* has come again to curse me from the tomb. Helen Vicars, what do you here?"

The last question was spoken in a tone which she heard plainly, for her face lighted up with a smile as fiendish as ever rested on an angered woman's face, while she cried:

"Ah, thank God it is you! I thought I heard another voice, which might have stayed my hand; but for you, *death!* the doom you gave my gray-haired parents!"

As she said this, she bent down to touch the match to the train, but the one instant delay she had made to speak, enabled Blakey alone to spring through the aperture, and as she saw and recognized him, she paused, and dashing the match from her hand, cried: "*You shall not die—I will meet him again!*"

With the quickness of thought, she sprang through an open door behind her, through which her company had already retreated, and before Blakey could recover from his surprise, she had disappeared.

"On, men, on after her, and a hundred dollars to the man that takes her, dead or alive!" shouted Gorin, as he dashed through the breach.

"Death to the first man who raises a weapon against her life!" cried Blakey; but the object of the threat was already beyond harm's reach; and in a few moments afterwards the bugle sounded the truce, which resulted in the capitulation of the city.

"Captain Blakey, you had better beware how you ever attempt to thwart me!" cried Gorin to the former, when the men, obeying his order, desisted from the pursuit of the maiden.

Blakey paid no attention to the threat of the other, nor deigned to give him any answer. Yet he felt strangely anxious to know how it was that Gorin seemed to know and fear her, and why he had called her by another name than that given by herself to him.

On the next morning the capitulation was signed, and soon after the officers and garrison were permitted to depart with the honors of war. In vain did Blakey look among their retreating ranks for the form of his heroine; in vain did he make inquiry for her; she was not seen again with the Mexican army there. Her name, as spoken by Gorin, who seemed to know her as Helen Vicars, and, who was she—what had she to do with Gorin? This was the mystery.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO MAIDENS.—THE LOVERS.

WHERE, on the right, the mountain overhangs the celebrated "Riconada Pass," there stands an old castle which looks with its gray, moss-covered walls, as if it had been built in the year one. It was evidently a specimen of the ancient Spanish architecture, and had probably been erected to guard this pass during the early times of the country's settlement, by its discoverers. We know not how it came into his possession, whether by inheritance or purchase; but at the commencement of the war this old castle was the property of General Urrea, and to it, as a place of safety, he had removed his wife and daughter.

The latter was a sweet girl of twenty summers' blooming; one who possessed all of the beauty of her mother's Castilian stock, with the natural grace of her father's blood, which was that of the ancient Aztecs, the most kingly of the native tribes of Mexico.

The castle, which, after the pass that it commanded, was called "El Riconada," was hidden from the road which wound along beneath it, by a growth of thick forest trees; yet from the verge of the battlements there could be discovered little gaps in the thick foliage below, through which the sentinel on watch could catch an occasional glimpse of the path, as the breeze waved the branches to and fro.

At the time when we introduce the reader to this scene, a few days after the surrender of Monterey, the battlements overlooking the road was occupied by two females. One of them was Anita, the daughter of Urrea; the other was a lady whose age appeared to be about the same, yet whose appearance was very different. The former, as we have already said, had seen twenty years of life. She was small, delicately slender, yet beautifully and gracefully formed. Her face expressed a character of surpassing softness and sweetness: she looked as if

smiles and tears could come and go with her as with an April sky; as if she could grieve with the sorrowful, and smile with the happy; as if her heart was full of beauty and sympathy. She seemed to be all *woman*—all tenderness. Her companion was a tall, magnificent being, with eyes black as night, a complexion brilliantly clear, though of the brunette hue, hair that hung in a glossy flood of jet black curls down her graceful neck and shoulders; features that were as perfect as ever painter pencilled, yet of a sterner and more queenly cast than were those of Anita Urrea.

Both were dressed alike, in the style peculiar to the country, yet how different was each from the other, as they paced to and fro along the lofty parapet, engaged in conversation.

It was sunset, the birds were flying towards their nests, nature seemed to be settling down to her nightly rest, drawing over herself the cloak of twilight. The conversation of the maidens was upon the only topic which at that dark hour occupied all the true hearts of Mexico.

“So Monterey is fallen, and again the Northern foe is triumphant!” said Anita, sadly.

“Yes,” responded her companion, in a more impatient tone. “Yes, and eleven thousand cowards, who held a fortified town against only six thousand of the enemy, have given it up to them. I blushed for shame to hear the bugle sound a truce, and when I heard Ampudia say that he would surrender, I vowed not to be a witness of the shameful scene, and I am here!”

“Never, dear Edwina, to look upon scenes like those through which you have passed, I hope,” said the other.

“Not until I can find men who will not flee before they have at least tested the strength of their foes—twice have I been deserted by my cowardly followers; once, through their dastardly conduct, left to the mercy of the enemy, to whom I should have fallen a victim had it not been for the generosity of one of their officers, who saved me—who gave not only life, but liberty!”

“Life and liberty? And he an enemy!” said the other in surprise; and then she added: “he discovered your sex!”

“Yes,” said Edwina Canales, “he did—had I been a man, I think I should have fared worse.”

“And this stranger—this Yankee—was he handsome?” asked the gentle Anita.

"Why yes—I think so; that is, he looked *noble*, and that is beauty for me. He looked as if he had a warm, brave heart, a free, generous soul."

"And did you not love him?"

"Love him!" repeated the other; "love the enemy of my country—love the invader of this sacred soil!"

"You say that he was handsome—that he gave you life and liberty; how could you avoid loving him? I love him for it," replied the gentle Anita.

"I have given him his life in return, ay, and spared my deadliest foe, rather than injure him who served me. The debt is repaid," said Edwina, coldly.

"You are a very Diana for coldness, and a very Minerva in all other ways," said Anita, smiling.

"And you, Anita, are a foolish little Venus, always thinking of love and romance," responded her friend.

"Well, if I am a Venus, there comes my Adonis," said the laughing girl, in answer to her more serious companion, pointing at the same time toward a young man who was clambering along the hillside on their left, steering toward the spot where they were standing.

"It is Bonaventura, my dear young brother! He has come from your father's camp," said Edwina, while her eyes beamed with the warm light of sisterly affection and joy, and the two waved their hands to him in token of recognition.

Bounding from rock to rock, along the narrow and perilous pathway, the young man rapidly neared them, and as he came nearer the blush on young Anita's face deepened, and her swelling bosom throbbed with excitement. The youth did not seem more than eighteen; he was the very picture of his sister, in all his features, save that his form was more sturdy and less delicate and graceful.

As he reached the side of the ladies, he folded his sister in his arms and pressed his lips to her own; then turning to her companion, he raised the hand which was outstretched to meet his own, to his lips, and warmly but respectfully kissed it, blushing the while even more than she did, whose hand he held.

"Is my father well?" she asked, as he raised his head from the salute.

"Well in body, but sick in spirit at this last disgrace of our arms," replied the youth; and then added: "He has sent me

hither to have you prepare to follow him; he goes westward to collect more men for service, and he considers this an unsafe spot for you."

"His will must be obeyed," replied the young girl; "you go with us, do you not, Don Bonaventura?"

"Certainly, *senorita*, I command your escort."

"And you have been promoted, brother," said the fair Edwina, as she laid her hand upon the epaulets that denoted him now to be a captain.

"Yes, sister, thanks to my kind and noble general, who has advanced me," replied the youth, turning and again pressing his lips to her cheek.

As he did so, he saw the scar which we have mentioned, that was caused by the graze of a rifle-ball, in her first rencontre with Blakey's command in front of Monterey.

"How is this, sister?" he cried, in surprise; "you have been hurt."

"Only a scratch, brother," she answered, with a smile.

"A scratch—from what? Surely that is the searing mark of a bullet."

Yes—a Yankee rifle-ball, if you must know it. I was at Monterey, where rifle-balls were flying as thick as hail."

The youth shuddered when he looked upon her cheek and saw how narrowly she had escaped, and then said, sadly:

"Why did you expose yourself, dear sister?"

"To try to encourage Mexicans to fight as they ought, to show them that where a *woman* led, surely *men* should follow; but I failed, as you have heard."

"O, my sister, had I known that you were there, my agony would have been doubled. I little thought that you would leave this place of safety, where I had left you with Anita."

"Well, it matters not, brother, it is all over now," replied the sister, carelessly, as if her deeds or her dangers had been but pastime for her.

At the same time she made an excuse and left the spot, her brother and Anita remaining together. The latter turned to follow, but the youth, blushing deeply as he spoke, said:

"This twilight is so soft and balmy, *senorita*, that it is a pity so soon to leave the open air; will you not stay and enjoy it a little longer?"

"Yes, if you desire it, *senor*," said the maiden, archly.

"*Senor!*" echoed the young officer—"when I last parted

with you, Anita, you called me Bonaventura, not the cold title of senor."

"You were an ensign then—now you are a captain."

"Am I not still your lover—am I not now even more worthy to be your lover, that I have risen in rank?"

"You are, my own one, you are!" said the warm-hearted girl, and in a moment each had clasped the other fondly, and his lips met hers now; not again were they touched, as before, respectfully to her hand.

It would be uninteresting to our reader to follow the conversation of the two lovers, perhaps wrong to listen to their little secrets, and to intrude upon their fond *tete-a-tete*. Therefore we will change the scene.

On the same evening that this scene occurred, General Taylor was seated in front of his tent at Walnut Grove, in his camp near Monterey, engaged, as he ever was, in the many duties of his responsible and perilous service. A map of the country was on a drum head before him, his adjutant, Major Bliss, was looking at it with him.

Captain Blakey was standing by his side, holding the bridle of the magnificent black charger which had been sent him by his former captive. He was armed, and evidently about to depart on some mission, for an escort of mounted men were seated on their horses at a few yards distance, with their eyes fixed upon him.

"Captain Blakey, I want a reconnoissance made in the direction of Capallana; I think that Urrea must be in that direction. You will pass through the Riconada gorge, if it is not occupied by the enemy, and endeavor to find the whereabouts of the enemy and his force."

"I will, general," replied Blakey, and turned to depart, but was recalled by the general, who said:

"Stay a moment, sir. Look well at the map. This is a singular country, and you could easily get lost in it. Be careful not to expose your men to unnecessary danger, but if you do get in a scrape, *cut* your way out of it! You can do it. I know what Kentuckians are."

"You shall know them still better, general, if we get in a fight," said the young captain, gratified at the compliment. The next instant he was in his saddle and galloping off, followed by his little band.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSPIRATOR AND THE ASSASSIN.

AN eventful evening was that on which occurred the incidents of our last chapter. On the same evening, about an hour later than the time when young Blakey started on his reconnaissance, a man could have been seen stealing out from the American camp at Walnut Grove, crouching down as he passed the line of sentinels, like a midnight thief or assassin. After he had passed the cordon of sentinels, he resumed an upright position, and at a rapid pace made his way to a grove of orange trees near.

On arriving at the edge of this grove, he paused and whistled shrilly three times. Immediately a low call, sounding like the cooing of a ring-dove, was made from within the grove. On reaching a clear spot in its centre, he was met by a short, thick person, in the dress of a Mexican ranchero. As the moon threw its rays down upon this person's face, it disclosed features of decidedly an Indian character. The cheek bones were prominent, the nose aquiline, the eyes small, dark and snakish in expression; his whole face seeming to be a map whereon a character for cunning and ferocity had been plainly written by the hand of Providence.

The other, whom we have seen stealing out from the American camp, was a large, heavily built man, one whose dark brow, coal-black eye and swarthy hue made him much resemble the Mexican race, though the uniform which he wore was that of an officer of the American volunteers. He was armed with pistols and a sabre, as was also the Mexican whom he met. He addressed the latter in Spanish, speaking it with all the fluency of a native, but we will render his conversation into English. As he saw the man approach, the officer said:

"Is that you, Vicentio?"

"Yes, captain; I never fail in my promise to a friend or an

enemy," answered the Mexican, while his eyes gleamed with singular brightness, and an expression of strange meaning passed over his dark face.

"It is well; here is my part of the promise," said the officer, handing the Mexican a purse, and adding, "there are six doubloons; now satisfy me on all other points, and I will double the sum."

"Ask on, then," replied the other.

"Well, first, tell me how long you have known the woman who was dressed as an officer, and led a company of lancers in the last battle?"

"I have known her a year or more."

"What is her name?"

"Edwina Canales, sister to Canales the ranchero."

"Is she a native of Mexico?"

"I do not know—she is a Spaniard, for she speaks the language fluently."

"Do you know where she came from?"

"No. She and her two brothers have been among the rancheros for a year or so, and are much beloved by them. Her brother hates you Yankees to the death."

"I know all that; have you ever seen him?"

"Yes, often."

"Has he had the thumb of his left hand cut off?"

"Yes, captain; but how did you know that?"

The other answered not the question, but muttered, as if speaking to himself—"It is *he*, they were not drowned as I thought, and they are yet alive to torment me." Then turning to the Mexican again, he asked:

"Do you know where *she* is—Helen Vicars?"

"Who, captain?"

"She whom you call Edwina Canales."

"I know where she was two days ago."

"Where?"

"At the Riconada pass."

"What was she doing there?"

"Staying at the casa of General Urrea, with his daughter."

"Vicentio, she and her whole breed must die!" said the officer, in a tone which in itself spoke a hatred deep and bitter.

The other started as he heard this, and an expression of hate crossed his dark face, but in an instant he had recovered himself and answered:

"How much for the job?"

"Five hundred dollars; half in advance."

"Not enough—one thousand, and half in advance, or I have nothing to do with it," replied the Mexican.

"Well, swear to do it, and you shall have it."

"Why do you want to kill the woman?" asked the man, with a tone that to an observing mind would have betrayed unusual interest.

"That is my business—if I hire you to kill, it is for me to choose my victims."

"Very well, captain; when do you want this done?" said the other, in a careless tone.

"As soon as it can be."

"When will you give me the advance?"

"To-morrow night—meet me here."

"Very well, captain; I will be along at moon-rise," said the Mexican, and as he spoke, he passed on toward the back of the grove. As he went off, he muttered a few words to himself, that were not intended for the ear of his late companion, as their import would prove. He said, in a low, bitter tone:

"The Yankee is a fool; he will make his own net. Vicentio can't make money easier than to fool him a little. Kill Canales, my master and my friend! ha! ha! a likely thing for me to do for a cursed Yankee! Kill a woman, too! Vicentio isn't afraid of blood, but he can't kill a woman!"

When the American officer heard the footsteps of the Mexican no longer, he spoke out in audible soliloquy the thoughts that he had pent up in his bosom:

"So it is indeed she. She whom once I loved as few can love—one whom now I hate as none can hate! Yes, Helen Vicars, your parents scorned and reviled me—*me*, and now *they* are dead. You, too, shall die, you and yours. You shall know what it is to insult a *Gorin*! Twice have you escaped me—twice as by a miracle, but now I will not fail!"

The reader will recognize in this person a character whom he has met before—Gorin, the Texas ranger. Stealthily he crept back from the grove to the camp, and passed unobserved through the lines until he regained his own camp.

On reaching his tent, he aroused his servant, who slept by the door, a negro whose low forehead, very black skin, and immense lips, gave him the mark of an almost idiot. He had much difficulty to awake the fellow, and was obliged to admin-

ister sundry severe kicks upon the colored individual's shin before he could persuade him to come out of dreamland.

"Gabe, Gabe! you angel of soot, get up. I want you," he cried, as the negro began to show some signs of recovering consciousness.

"Ki, massa, how you kick um shin; you hurt poor nigger's soul," he grumbled, as he arose from the footcloth of the tent, where he had been lying. Then he asked:

"What you want, massa cap'n?"

"Which way did the Kentucky captain that I told you to watch go? Where is he?"

"Massa general send him off; he go towards whar de sun go down—ten men go with him."

"Didn't you hear which way he was to go?"

"Yes, massa cap'n, but de name crawl out my recollectshun box since I been gone to sleep. It was something about the Rikky nider, or some such sort of a man."

"Riconada—was that it—the Riconada pass?"

"Yes, massa cap'n, dat's him," answered the negro.

A smile of satisfaction passed over the face of the ranger as he heard this.

"So all turns out right," he said; "he goes to her vicinity; this will aid in my plot to fix his flint. No man ever yet crossed my path with impunity, and he shall rue the day he ever looked across my trail. I must see the general in the morning and see if I can't bring him on to a scent that'll run my range."

Leaving him for the night, we will relate the result of his morning's interview with "Old Rough and Ready."

He approached the noble general's tent soon after the breakfast hour was over, and was received by the old soldier with his usual urbanity, and invited to a seat on a rude bench, which served the general both as sofa and ottoman.

He opened his conversation by offering, as he frequently before had done, the services of his corps as spies.

"I am obliged to you, Captain Gorin, but I have at present no need of any more reconnoitering parties than are out now. I sent Captain Blakey to the Riconada pass last night, and Colonel May has gone towards Saltillo, by the eastern road, this morning."

"Captain Blakey was very willing to go in that direction, was he not, general?" said Gorin, in a most Iago-like tone.

"He is always willing to go where he is ordered, I believe,

sir," replied the general. "I know not that one direction is more pleasant to him than another."

"I think the direction he has taken will suit his taste; there are attractions for him in the vicinity of 'El Riconada' which he cannot well avoid."

"I do not understand you, sir. Explain."

"I only mean that a pair of black eyes will light him through the pass. You have heard of a female who led a company of lancers at Monterey, have you not?"

"One whom Blakey took prisoner, and set free when he found she was a woman, and in so doing met my approbation entirely?"

"Yes, general, the same; and a beautiful creature she was. Blakey is young and ardent; I can hardly say that I blame him for falling in love with her, yet that love may lead him to a neglect of duty."

"In love with her? I presume your fancy leads you ahead of the facts, captain," said the general, with an incredulous smile.

"No, sir, I do not go ahead of the truth. He is in love with that lady; she is at the Riconada pass, and will meet him there. By accident I became an unwilling listener to a messenger from her, who gave him the directions to find her."

"It is strange, Captain Gorin. Blakey has ever been faithful; even if this be true, I could not doubt his faith."

"Nor I, general," replied the consummate villain; "yet I know that he is a passionate, impetuous youth, and this beautiful woman is the sister of the celebrated Canales. She has encouraged his attentions, we can only guess *why*, yet there surely must be some good reason for her affection for an enemy to the country to which she and hers have proved so devoted."

"You speak truly," said the general. And now, while a shade of suspicion seemed to come upon his noble brow, a smile of quiet satisfaction stole over the face of the Iago in the scene.

"Had not another detachment better be sent to see that all is right, and to be certain of performing the duty you require?" asked Gorin.

The general paused a moment, and seemed to be wrapped in thought; then springing to his feet, he answered:

"Yes, take twenty of your rangers—follow him to the pass; if all is right, join him and aid him in the duty on which I have sent him—to find out the position and numbers of Urrea's division. If there is indeed treachery, then arrest and bring

him back for trial; yet I cannot believe him a traitor. He is brave; the brave are ever true."

"I will leave ere midnight on his trail, general," was the response of the now contented villain; and he soon left the camp as if for the purpose of preparation for his departure.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAMP OF CANALES, THE RANCHERO.

IT behooves us, reader, to make you acquainted, as fast as possible, with all of the different characters who take a part in our singular drama. Therefore do us the honor to look at the following picture:

Upon the banks of the upper Rio Grande, near where the Rio Sabinos mingles its clear waters with the larger stream, you will find a noble forest of oaks and pecan trees. The bank of the river is low and clear of shrubbery, so that from the encampment on the shore you may look out upon the broad stream, and see the many flocks of ducks and waterfowl which sport upon its waters.

The *encampment*, we said. We will explain. A number of small camp fires are ranged close along the river bank, and around these are groups of rude, warlike looking men, whose dress, consisting of loose trousers—jackets of green, trimmed with yellow—broad-rimmed hats, raw-hide boots, spurs of immense size and long rowels, show them to be Mexican rancheros. The red sashes around their waists are filled with pistols; broad hunting knives are also there. A long curved sabre is hanging to each man's belt, a sword too long for any service save that of cavalry.

The force in view would number, perchance, two hundred men. Their horses are picketed near; at each saddle bow hangs one of the dreaded lassoes; before each horse a lance is thrust in the ground, showing that at a moment's warning the party can mount for service. There is neither tent, banner, baggage wagon, nor sign of camp equipage near—save the few kettles which hang above the fires, containing their suppers, probably, for the sun is just sinking behind the trees to the westward.

Beneath a rude shed formed temporarily of green palmetto

leaves, in the centre of the encampment, sits one whose looks give evidence of his superiority over those around him, although his dress in no wise differs from theirs, save in the superiority of his weapons. In size he is small, but compactly—nay elegantly formed; his features are regular and delicate as a woman's; his eye large, black and dewy; his skin dark, yet clear as the rind of the sun-burned pomegranate. His hands were small and white; the left, however, had lost the thumb. His face was peculiarly expressive of a kind and womanlike disposition; his thin lips alone, curving downward at either corner, gave token of resolution and firmness. His eyes were deeply set beneath a high and overhanging brow, which might make his frown as dark and terrible, as his smile was sweet and pleasing. And this man—this gentle and mild-looking person, was Canales, the *Ranchero*—he whose name is so dreaded on the Texan borders—he who is a terror to the whole country where he ranges.

By a small fire close in front of the thatch where he sat, stood a very large, gray-headed negro, occupied in stirring the contents of an iron pot, which hung above the fire, with an old bayonet—lifting, ever and anon, a huge piece of meat to the light, as if to see whether it yet was done. The negro was full six and a half feet high, had a frame powerful in proportion, and his face was singularly expressive of character. He was armed much like the rest; yet his position and occupation showed him to be the body servant of Canales. The latter was seated, as we have described, beneath his thatch shed, smoking a cigaretta—casting a careless look, now and then, over his camp, and occasionally looking up and down the river.

When the sun went down, he arose to his feet, and taking a bugle from the ground by his side, blew one single, long call. The moment this was heard, the whole encampment ranged in line before his camp fire, without their horses. Canales passed along, glancing at every man, as if to note both his person and accoutrements—the men, as he passed, giving the soldier's salute; the officers raising their swords in the usual way.

The inspection over, the line was broken, and the night guard having been detailed, the rest of the force gathered again to the vicinity of their camp fires, to partake of their rude suppers. The guerrilla chief retired to his camp, and the large negro removed the iron pot from the fire, and placing a portion of its contents in a wooden tray, set them without a word

before his master, handing him at the same time a gourd of water, which he brought from the river.

The ranchero partook of his coarse meal, which consisted of nothing but plain boiled beef, without bread, in a manner that showed his appetite to be good, and having finished, motioned to the negro to remove it from before him. This duty the latter silently performed, preparing from the remnants a meal for himself, which he hastily swallowed.

This done, he cast himself lazily upon the ground, with his head toward the glowing embers of the fire, a habit singularly peculiar to Ethiopians, and within less than five minutes was sound asleep. Twilight was now wrapping up the scene in its gray blanket; the dull-toned night birds and the croaking frogs giving an unpleasant touch of most discordant music to the ear.

The men, as the night came on, sank down, one by one, to rest; the horses, too, saddled and bridled as they were, followed the human example, and soon all the camp was perfectly quiet. Here and there one could be seen standing near the light of the fires, but such were on the watch. It were hard, indeed, to surprise the camp of Canales, for *he* slept but little. One would scarcely believe that his slight and delicate person could undergo more fatigue, exposure, and actual hardship than could any man of his company; yet so it was. Not that he was physically stronger, but that his strong, stern will would never let the bodily powers droop while life existed in the mind.

We have thus given you a night view of the camp of Canales, that you may see how live the dreaded guerrillas, and how little such troops cost the country to which they ever have proved, and ever will be, the most effective arm of defence. Had Mexico, from the commencement of the war, depended on these alone, and fought no pitched battles in which her regular soldiery have become disheartened, we, instead of herself, would have been the sufferers. Our armies, before sudden, unexpected and oft-repeated attacks, harassing alarms, and sudden scouts to cut off their provisions and despatches, would have melted gradually but surely, as the winter snows before the springtime sun.

It was morning in the camp of the rancheros. The sun had come out with its soft, red light, tinging each leaf and branch with a flowery hue, and laying a coloring of gold upon the placid river's upturned face. Canales was up with the earliest dawn, as were all of his men. The latter each went to his

horse, the first care being to feed and dress their animals, and prepare them for service. The girths alone were loosed, and the bit removed, while from bags hung over their heads each steed ate his allowance of corn; and then each rider, replacing saddle and bit, rode his horse girth deep into the river, giving him water and bathing his limbs at the same time. All of this was done under the personal supervision of the chief, who paid particular attention to the manner in which the giant negro attended to a large gray gelding, of swift and powerful build, which had been standing close by the chieftain's resting place.

The horses all attended to, and once more fitted for immediate service, the men gathered around their fires to give heed to their own wants. While they were thus engaged, the negro, who kept ever near unto Canales, hung his iron kettle over the fire; but ere he could prepare its contents, his master, in a low, musical tone, such as he ever used in his hours of calmness, called him:

“Matteo—here!”

The negro answered not, but in an instant bounded to his master's side, with a step wondrously light and agile for one of his bulk and build.

“Matteo, Roberto has been gone into camp seven days. I fear something has happened to him!”

“Maybe, yes—maybe. No—rangers thick on Camargo trail, like wolf in prairie, but my boy got eye like eagle, nose like hound, ear like weasel, can hide like a snake in de grass.” responded the negro, speaking in good English, which was also the language used by his master in addressing him; and then he grinned an attempt at a smile, and added: ‘If Yankees catch him, de little debbil’ll fool ’em like possum!’”

The chief answered not, but seemed buried in thought for a moment; then springing to his feet, he gave a shrill whistle, at the sound of which the men all started to their feet. Beckoning one of them to him, he said, speaking now in Spanish:

“Pass the word for the men to prepare to mount; I’ve a ride for them to-day. Let each look well to his arms, and mount with the bugle call, when I sound it!”

The soldier turned away to obey the order, but had not passed three steps when the sound of galloping hoofs was heard coming up along the river's pebbly bank, and the next moment a little half-naked negro boy, mounted on a small but fiery mustang pony, dashed into the camp.

"Dere he be, de blessid little debbil, Massa Harry. Dere he be, my little Bob!" cried the huge negro, as with a look of pleasure he pointed toward the new comer. "What for you been so lazy? why for you been gone so long?"

The young negro, who could not be over fifteen or sixteen years of age, though having a face expressive of great intelligence, paid no attention to Matteo, who was his father, but springing, or rather tumbling a back somerset off his pony, lighted at the feet of the guerrilla chief, and in language entirely different from his father's thick and broken words, said:

"I've come back, master."

"Well, what news?"

"Monterey is taken—soldiers coming into the country thick as fleas in dog days—saw some this morning—counted them. Only fifty to take care of thirty wagons!"

"Monterey taken!"

"Yes, master—great many men killed—all the rest of our side give up or run away!"

"Did you go to the Riconada, where I sent you?"

"No, master—had no occasion to go there. I saw my young mistress in Monterey!"

"At Monterey? what do you mean? What did she there?"

"Showed men how to fight; mounted a horse with lance in hand, and led them on to battle!"

"What, Edwina thus peril herself for her adopted country! Has she met with harm?"

"No, master; when the rest gave up she went back to the Riconada! She wouldn't stay to see the disgrace of eleven thousand yielding to five thousand men, and giving up a fortified town. She sent this letter."

The young negro took from inside of his raw-hide boot a small package, which he handed to Canales. The latter hastily opened it, and from his muttered soliloquy as he read it, its import could be gathered. "Monterey has yielded—our brother is with the Urrea—I shall now go back to the Riconada. Your troops could be of use here to annoy the provision trains."

"Yes," exclaims the chief, aloud, as he read this passage. "You said you had passed a train this morning, Roberto. Where was it?"

"Only a few miles below. They have landed high up, and are taking the upper route to Serralvo!"

"Then we must overhaul them! I will capture them, and then move on to the south!"

The chief blew a single bugle note, and in a moment each horse had a rider—each rider held his lance in his hand. The large negro led the iron gray up to his master's side. The latter felt both girth and stirrup leather; then with a light bound, unaided by stirrup, threw himself upon the back of the noble animal, and rode along the line already formed by his men. Meantime the cooks of the encampment had hurriedly lashed the few kettles of the camp over the back of the pack mule that stood near, and the camp of the rancheros was broken up—the troops all ready for the march.

"Roberto, you must ride ahead, and scout for us! You are small, and can evade pursuit, or lull suspicion!" said the general to the little negro.

The latter smiled, as if pleased with this duty, and dashed off in the direction by which he had come.

"Dat's a *great* boy, if he *is* little," said the giant negro, smiling with two-thirds of his face open, as he saw the young imp dash off; and then seeming to recollect himself, he added, with a sigh: "I belebe me our massa forgot to eat our breakfus! It aint such times now as it was when we lived up in old Shelby in de Gorin settlements. Ah, dem was times! I nebber larn to like de rancheros—nebber; and dat Bob, he's jest fallin' into their ways as if he didn't come of 'spectable fadder. I wonder why my massa couldn't ha' gone summer's else dan dis!"

Thus muttering and growling, the old negro followed close after his master and the troop, who rode leisurely down the river bank. We will leave them here, and return to other characters in our story, and see how fares it with them.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ATTACK.—A BATTLE.—A RESCUE.

ALL of the night at the commencement of which he set out, did Captain Blakey and his little band ride rapidly on, under the guidance of a Mexican, who, recreant to all feelings of honor or principles of patriotism, was serving his country's foe for *gold*. The light of the young bright moon made their path almost as clear as if day was theirs, while the very fact of its being night, made their journey safe from meeting with other parties.

It was the orders of Blakey to travel only in the night, in order to make his reconnoissance more secret; therefore, as the dawn of day began to cast a grayer light across the moonlit earth, he turned a little aside from the main road into a thick chapparal, which was well suited for his purpose of concealment. The guide, who seemed well to know every inch of the country, led him into a little ravine a few rods back from the thicket, where a fine stream of water and a little prairie of grass afforded that which most was needed for a day camp— forage for the horses, on which while feeding they would remain quiet.

Before the sun arose, Blakey and his command were excellently well quartered for the day, and he with the guide having carefully effaced all traces of their entrance into the chapparal, felt perfectly secure until the return of night would permit him to resume his route.

The men soon lay down to prepare by sleep for the night's toil, but Blakey, not having all confidence in the honesty of his guide, remained on the watch, to look occasionally at the horses which were tethered in the little prairie; then, in company with the guide, passing out to the verge of the chapparal to glance along the road. The "eight weeks' truce" which had been agreed upon at the capitulation of Monterey were yet in

effect; therefore he had no occasion to act on the offensive in this scout, and though he saw several small parties of Mexicans pass close to his ambuscade, he gave no sign of his presence. Thus passed the day—his men and horses resting, he watching. When the sun was about an hour high, he awoke his men and bade them dress and re-saddle their horses; also to prepare their supper, intimating that he should start as soon as darkness came on.

While they were doing this, he returned alone to the roadside. At the moment that he reached the edge of the chapparal, standing in a spot where he was hidden from the road by bushes, and yet could see all that passed upon it, he was made aware of the approach of a party, by the neighing of horses, and the clattering of iron along the rocky way. Peering cautiously forth, he saw that it consisted of a Mexican officer, two ladies, and a small escort of ten or twelve soldiers, all mounted.

The officer was a young, boyish-looking fellow, who rode between the two ladies, gaily singing some lively catch, which kept one of his fair companions in a roar of laughter much more musical than his song. This lady, whose face was turned toward our hero, as she turned herself toward the young officer, was very beautiful; her figure slight and fairy—her position as she rode, elegant.

Blakey did not feel it in his heart to disturb the gaiety of this little party, and they were passing on quietly, when a crash caused by the breaking of a rotten branch, upon which he was leaning, caused them to look hastily toward the spot where he stood.

Then for the first time did he see the face of the other lady, and to his surprise recognized in her the heroine of Monterey—she who had claimed the name of Edwina Canales. He moved not, nor spoke, after the branch broke, and was so completely hidden in the foliage of the chapparal that they saw him not. The young officer, remarking that an armadillo, or something of the kind, was in the wood, resumed his song, and the party passed on.

The eye of Blakey followed his heroine—now, in her own dress, far more beautiful than before—and we need not add that his heart was with his eye. There was something so noble and exalted in her patriotism—something so queenly in her transcendent beauty—that his enthusiastic and romantic spirit could not withstand it. He was in love—in love with a foe!

He had scarcely glanced at the other lady—not even looked the officer in the face after seeing his heroine—therefore had no chance to note the twinlike resemblance between the sister and the brother, ere they passed on.

“Where can they be going,” said he to himself, “with so small an escort? Surely they are imprudent, for the country is filled with scouts which little will regard a truce flag when their breasts are burning with revenge for lost comrades. Did not their route lay directly contrary to mine, I should hover in their rear, and joy to protect that strange and beautiful girl.”

When the last lance-pennon that fluttered above the escort of the Mexican party had passed from his view, Blakey returned to his men, who had now saddled their horses, and were nearly ready for their march. Mounting his own powerful black, the mate of which he had seen but the moment before, Blakey cast an inspecting glance along his little line, to see that all was ready for the march. The sun was now sinking behind the trees, and night was gathering in its quiet and gloom.

Suddenly, from the northward, up the road in the direction just taken by the party whom Blakey had seen, came a rattling volley of musketry—then, quick as the thunder when lightning has left the cloud, a yell like that of the wild Comanche was heard. The sound had scarcely reached the ear of Blakey, when he drove his spurs into the flank of his noble horse, and while the animal reared with pain, pointed to the road, shouting—“follow me! follow me!” Then giving a loose rein to his steed, he dashed through the thick forest. His men needed no second command—their horses, too, felt spurs in their flanks, as, with loosened reins, they bounded on. A moment more, and Blakey had gained the road; swift as the cloud which curtains the hurricane, on he sped, still hearing an occasional shot, and the wild, fearful yells which told of the death struggle which was going on.

In a few moments he arrived in sight of a cloud of dust, which he knew shrouded the combatants, and though as he looked behind he saw that he had far distanced all his men, still he drove his noble courser on. Nor was his speed retarded when he heard a piercing shriek come from the distant scene, and a moment afterward a riderless steed—a horse coal black as his own—came dashing up the road. As the horse came near, it neighed. The neigh was returned by his own, and in a moment the flying courser wheeled and joined his, dashing

down toward the dust cloud, where now was heard no more the sound of gun and pistol. But yet the quick clash of steel showed that all was not over.

On into the cloud of dust rode Blakey, and as he reached it, his horse bounded over a group of dead bodies. The next sight he saw was one over which he had not time to shudder—it was the fallen form of the young officer, who lay, partly shielding with his form the body of the younger maiden, yet helpless and wounded.

Upon one knee, above him, was Edwina Canales, her eye flashing with anger, defending with her brother's sword his body, and protecting herself from the fierce attack of Gorin, the Texan ranger, who in a moment more must have crushed down her feeble guard. But with one wild shout Blakey dashed in upon him, striking him in the face with the heavy basket hilt of his sabre with a force sufficient to lay him senseless upon the earth.

The rangers, who from very shame had held back from aiding in their leader's attack upon a woman, would now have sprung upon Blakey, when the latter shouted:

“Hold back, if ye are men! Why has your leader broken the truce? What doth he mean by committing murder?”

At the same moment his own men appeared in the background, armed with their long Kentucky rifles; and this, with his speech, saved Blakey from immediate attack. He now turned toward her, whom he had so opportunely saved.

“Again I owe you my life, senor,” said she; “but I fear you came too late for my poor brother,” added she, looking down at the officer by her feet, whose feeble moans showed that he was yet alive.

“Your brother, lady? This surely is not Licencio Canales!”

“No, senor; it is our younger brother, Bonaventura.”

Springing from his horse, Blakey hastily examined his wounds, and responded:

“He is more stunned by his fall than injured by his wounds, lady. He will be able to ride in an hour. But the lady—is she, too, hurt?”

“O, I hope not—she is his betrothed!”

The fair girl, from whose lips came the shriek which Blakey had heard, had only fainted, and now began slowly to recover, assisted by a plentiful application of water from one of the sol-

dier's canteens. It was near twilight, and a singular tableau was presented to the spectators.

In the background stood Gorin's troop of rangers, undecided how to act without their leader, who still lay senseless on the ground near the feet of Blakey; by the side of Blakey, aiding in the restoration of her brother and his betrothed, knelt Edwina, yet holding in her hand the sword which she so well had wielded in his defence; around them stood Blakey's few but faithful followers; still beyond, lay seven or eight dead Mexicans, being those of the escort who had been slain in the onset. The rest of them had fled—dashing past the Texans, and escaping along the road. The moon arose as the sun went down, and as there was not a cloud between the stars and the earth, the darkness did not much increase with the departure of day.

The scene now began to change. Anita, recovering from the swoon, opened her great black eyes upon the face of her lover, who was now recovering his consciousness, and looked around with a face expressive of wonder, as if it surprised him to find himself yet alive.

"How is this, sister, Anita,—are ye both alive? Sir, are we your prisoners?"

"No, senor—I do not break the flag of truce, but have rescued you from yonder blot upon a soldier's name!"

"Yes, brother, this noble officer has twice saved my life; and now he has added to it by saving me from the bitterest enemy that ever persecuted woman. Do you know that face, Bonaventura?"

As she spoke, she pointed towards Gorin, who still lay motionless upon the ground. But his countenance was now so covered with blood from the blow which Blakey had given, that young Canales looked at it without recognition.

"Then I will tell you, brother—it is the murderer of our parents! He who has hunted us as the bloodhound hunts the slave—who never has stayed in the hunt save when he thought that we had perished! It is that fiend in human shape, Gorin!"

"What, and is he yet alive? He must die!" And as the youth spoke, he raised himself feebly from the earth, and drew a pistol from the holster of his dead horse, which lay beside him.

The next moment would have finished the career of the ranger, had not Blakey stepped between the young officer and his helpless victim, saying:

"This must not be, sir! I must protect my countryman, and you must wait till you can meet him in a fair field for your revenge, which I doubt not is well founded."

The very danger he had been in seemed to have aroused the ranger from his stupor—for while Blakey's back was turned, as he interposed to save him, he arose to his feet, and with a quick glance seemed to comprehend the state of affairs. Looking around to where his men were standing, uncertain how to act, he staggered toward them—at the same time speaking in a low, bitter tone to Blakey:

"So, you have dared once more to thwart me and step between me and my victims! Your time has come! Men, prepare to charge!"

The rangers each drew tighter his rein—their sabres had not yet been sheathed. Gorin was helped by one of them to remount his horse, and now he rode slowly up to within a few paces of Blakey, who had formed his little party in advance of his Mexican charge. When here, he drew his rein, and seeing the determined front of Blakey's force, evinced a desire to parley. With a voice forcedly calm, he addressed Blakey.

"Captain Blakey, I have no wish to have any difficulty with you, but I demand from you my prisoners, whom you have taken into charge without authority."

"Captain Gorin is aware that the eight weeks' truce has not expired, and that he has no right to break it. This officer and these ladies are not prisoners—they are under my protection, now. You had no right to attack them."

"Right? Preach you of right? I'll soon show that might is right here. Once more I demand them of you—and refuse me at your peril!"

"Peril or no peril, I will do my duty!" cried Blakey. "If you reach them, it will be over my body. Stand firm, men! Cover each a man with your rifles, but leave the wretch who leads them to me," added he to his own followers.

Gorin was about to give the word. He had already bent forward in his saddle, when the full blast of several bugles came sweeping up the road, and then followed a heavy clattering of hoofs, while could be seen an immense body of horsemen riding at full speed from the northward. Gorin paused in giving the order, for he saw that the flag of Mexico waved in the moon-beams over the advancing party, who were at least a full regi-

ment, and he was now willing enough to let the truce protect him if it could.

In another moment both of the small parties were surrounded by the larger, from which a group of officers immediately rode out, approaching the spot where Blakey stood. At their head was a short, dark-skinned, corpulent little man, whose eye glanced quickly over the scene. As the younger of the ladies saw him, she screamed, with a wild, glad tone, "it is my father!" and bounding forward, raised her lips to his own, as he bowed low from his fiery war steed.

"My general," said young Canales, "behold the saviour of your daughter, my sister and myself!" at the same moment pointing to Blakey, who unconsciously, perchance, had grasped the not withdrawn hand of Edwina.

"I have him to thank, then. But who was it that attacked you? Is this the way the Americans keep their faith?—is there no safety under their flag of truce?" said Urrea, bitterly—for this was no other than that general.

"There is no honor in yon disgrace to our army, general; but he shall pay dearly for this villany—a court-martial shall have cognizance of the affair, as soon as I return to camp."

"It will be well if they but hang him," replied the other. Then turning to his daughter and companions, he added: "I had feared to find you all slain. I met the fugitives of your party, who told me that you were surrounded and cut to pieces."

"So would we have been, had not this noble officer risked his own life to save us," replied young Canales; and then added—"Even now you came only in time to prevent yon wolf from attempting to wrest us from our protector's hand."

Urrea turned toward where Gorin and his band sat upon their horses, and while his dark brow grew darker with anger, he cried:

"Begone, sir! Do not remain here to tempt *me* to break the truce, and to hang you with your own halters. You can pass free now, but be beyond my hearing in ten minutes, or I will take justice in my own hands, and save future trouble."

Gorin seemed to know that this was neither time nor place to dally, and turning his rein, first speaking in a tone of mild bitterness to Blakey—"I ride back to inform upon traitors, and to prepare your gibbet!" rode away with his men. Dark and ominous was the villain's look as he made this threat, but it had

no effect upon Blakey, who knew that he had done his duty, both as a man and a soldier.

That night these Americans and Mexicans separated with different feelings than either had yet possessed during the war—each having a higher estimate of the other than they had before. Urrea encamped near where the skirmish had taken place—Blakey passed on upon his duty. Neither he nor Edwin Canales had been for a moment alone; yet they had stood hand in hand together, and when Gorin made his last threat, he had felt her hand tremble, as if she had not only understood the threat, but felt for his danger. He knew not that she loved him—he knew that he *did* love her, and in this state we will leave him.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL TAYLOR AND THE FALSE ACCUSATION.

ON the same day which in our fifth chapter the reader has found opening with the march of Canales and his rude rancheros from his camp, along a road not more than fifteen miles from that camp, a wagon train was wending its way slowly toward the American army, bearing provisions and ammunition for use. A small guard of dragoons were riding in advance, soldiers not of the regular army, but a detachment from a Tennessee regiment of cavalry. There was but one officer in charge, and he was such an odd character that we think him worth describing.

He was a bow-legged, thin slab of a man, built very like a crooked-neck squash, with a small head, superabundant with hair, and apparently superabundant with nothing else. He rode a large, quiet looking horse, which required a constant application of the spur to keep him on the move, and rode him as much like a pair of tongs slung across the saddle, as one can imagine.

His men were many of them fine, daring-looking fellows, who not only sat on their horses well, but handled their weapons as if they knew how to use them. The train moved slowly along, with this leader at their head—his men, about fifty in number, carelessly following, not in military order, but just as the fancy of each suited him.

Two or three times did the sergeant, who was evidently an old soldier, ride up alongside of the officer, and mention that it would be better to keep in file; but each time his commander replied, with an air of dignity:

"Don't trouble yourself, sergeant! This isn't my first campaign. When I was in the Florida war—"

"But, Captain Bilbo, this isn't the Florida war, nor the Florida country," replied the other.

"But it is very like it, sir, and I'm not afraid of a surprise; the country is open, very like the Florida country."

"Not so many hollow logs in it, sir," said the sergeant; and there was a quiet chuckle heard after he used this expression.

We know not what he meant by the "hollow logs," but the captain seemed to dislike the allusion, for he turned exceedingly red in the face, and replied:

"I wish you'd go to the rear, sir, and see how the train keeps together."

"I thought I'd touch him," said the sergeant, inaudibly, as he rode off to obey the order. "His Florida campaign sounds very well when I'm not alongside of him; I think he'll not speak of it often when I'm about, though."

As the sergeant fell back, the captain turned to a soldier who rode near him—a fellow who with a thin, peaked face, eyes like two half-ripe seeds in a rotten water-melon, and a form more short, but exceedingly like that of the officer, looked to be a bird somewhat of the same feather—and remarked:

"This is tiresome work, Trabou—worse than gulling the folks at home into the idea that our patriotism alone led us into the scrape. I'd rather stay there and preach law, by all odds, if the pay was only half as good."

"Yes, captain—and all I wish is, that my year was out. I didn't think we'd ever have a chance to get into a *real* fight here, when I started."

"O, I did, or I wouldn't have come!" responded the other, pompously. "When I was in Florida—O, Lord! what's that?"

And the brave captain's face turned pale, as he heard the shrill blast of a bugle sounding from the head of a ravine through which they had just passed, and in which the train was now completely shut in. At the same moment, a body of cavalry dashed down upon them at full speed.

The captain looked around; there was no chance to run and yet he gave no order! But his men, without waiting for orders,

poured in an irregular fire upon the enemy, which, though it did not check their charge, tumbled some of them from their saddles. In a moment the lancers were down upon them, and as they were not in ranks, or in any way prepared to receive them, the Americans were in a moment scattered—some of them disarmed, many of them slain. The action, if such it could be called, did not last more than a minute; the few Americans who resisted, were slain; all who could had escaped, and foremost among the latter, was the officer in charge.

We need only say that the attack was made by Canales, and was entirely successful. The whole train fell into his hands, and with it he hurried to the southward, to endeavor to join the western division of the army under Urrea which he knew to be in need both of ammunition and stores.

We will now change again our scene. It was only two days after Gorin had set forth from the camp, when he again made his appearance there, bearing the mark of some severe usage in his bandaged head and scarred face. Two of his men had also fallen in the affray which we have described. He instantly repaired to the quarters of General Taylor, who saw with surprise that he had been wounded, and exclaimed:

“Well, sir, what news? You seem to have been in a scrape?”

“Yes, general—and one that nearly became fatal to me, and has cost me two brave men.”

“How, sir? Explain. Where is Blakey?”

“I left him with General Urrea and the black-eyed lady of whom I told you before I left. He is, I expect, enjoying himself, now, as I left him on excellent terms with the enemy.”

“What, sir? I must see into this. How did you get wounded?”

“I was attacked by a small body of Mexicans, but repulsed them with a loss of eight or ten killed and had three taken prisoners, when Blakey came up, and interfering, rescued them from me, backed up by General Urrea and a whole regiment of lancers.”

“What! acted against you in co-operation with the enemy? I cannot believe it.”

“Summon my men, sir! Have him arrested, and see if he will dare deny it!”

“I fear it will be hard to arrest him, if he has gone over to the enemy.”

"He has not gone over to them permanently. His act, he says, is sanctioned by the truce."

"Was not the truce first broken by them?" And the general eyed the ranger sternly, as he spoke.

"Yes, they made the attack, sir!" replied the villain, with unblushing effrontery.

"Then if Blakey aided them and rescued prisoners taken in that attack, he is a traitor and shall die a traitor's death."

"Who were those prisoners?" asked an officer who stood beside the general.

"One was a captain—the brother of Canales! The others I did not know," was the response of Gorin.

"The brother of Canales! And was he thus taken in arms and permitted to escape? This is too bad! he was an important prisoner; his brother is more to be feared than Santa Anna himself. Those rancheros, like the guacheros of Buenos Ayres, can live forever in the saddle, and they are as brave as they are hardy."

At this moment an orderly hastened up to the general and presented him a packet, saying, as he handed it—"Despatches for the general, from Camargo!"

The chief hastily opened them, and as he read, his brow darkened with anger.

"So," he cried, "this truce is to be broken on all sides! A wagon train is taken by this same Canales, and several of the guard killed. If they *will* break the truce, let the consequences be on their own head!"

The general paused a moment and looked around, as if to see some officer; and as his eye fell upon one who was busily engaged in writing on a barrel-head near, he cried:

"Major Bliss, I want you!"

The officer started to his feet, and joined the general.

"Major, order out McCullough's rangers—all of 'em—and tell him to go and find Canales, and to give him *Jessie*, wherever he catches him!"

"While the truce is in force, general?"

"Yes—there's no truce for him! He's broken it, and may swallow the consequences. And while I think of it, order the arrest of Captain Blakey, Kentucky Volunteers, for treason—charges preferred by Captain Gorin."

"Captain Blakey on a charge of treason, General!" exclaimed

not a braver man, or a better soldier, attached to your army, or one more devoted to his country!"

"Then, sir, his trial will do him no harm," responded the old general, hastily.

"But, sir, Captain Gorin is his private enemy; his hostility is personal," added Bliss, earnestly.

"I deny it—it is not so, major!" said Gorin, hastily, but reddening as he spoke. "We had words once, but the affair was settled long ago."

"What was it about, sir?" asked the general. And again his stern glance was bent searchingly upon the villain.

"Only some trifling talk at the mess-table," was the reply.

"Again he speaks falsely!" said Bliss. "The quarrel was, that Gorin, in the capture of Monterey, tried to slay a woman, and was prevented by Blakey."

"Was this the trifling matter of which you speak so carelessly? If you are one who considers it a *trifling* matter to ill treat a woman, I shall be careful how I take your word in other matters. You will remain at camp, sir, and not go forth with your colonel. I wish to confront you with Blakey—and if you have misinformed me here, it shall cost you your commission?" said the general, sternly.

Major Bliss now left to convey the orders of the general, and Gorin slunk also away, not very well pleased at the result of his interview. On arriving at his tent, he found his negro, as usual, asleep. Giving him a few hearty kicks, to remind him of his return, he succeeded in awakening the servant, to whom he shouted:

"Wake up, you black dog—wake up!"

"Yes, massa cap'n Gabc's awake!" exclaimed the negro, as he slowly raised himself into a sitting posture.

"Get up then—get up and get me some grog!"

"Yes, massa cap'n, I will—only it's all gone."

"All gone, you bloody nigger! What do you mean? I left ten gallons in that cask there!" said Gorin, pointing to a cask at the back of his tent.

"Yes, massa cap'n, but soger tief come and bore um hole in de cask, behind de odder eend, and let out all de red eye."

"Perdition! Fooled and cheated on all sides! But I've got you yet, you bloody thief! why didn't you keep awake and watch it?" cried the enraged officer, darting upon the poor

black, and administering blows heavy enough to fell an ox, on his head and shoulders.

The poor fellow was now thoroughly awakened, and bounding to his feet, made for the door of the tent, out of which he was springing, when he came butt up against a person who was about to enter, and both met with a concussion which laid each upon the flat of his back.

"Golly gosh! What a thumper dat be!" cried the negro.

"Caramba! Mil diablos!" shouted the other, as soon as he could regain his breath; and then Gorin recognized the voice of Vicentio, his Mexican guide.

"Well, what do you want here? Our expedition has failed—she lives yet. What more do you want?" cried Gorin, as he saw the man who stood before him.

"You pull a spider's web to pieces once, twice—even three times, and he spins it again and catches his game!" responded the Mexican. "Do you give up because you have failed once?"

"No, I'll be burned if I do! But what can be done now? She is safe with Urrea."

"Safe!" and the assassin laughed as he repeated the word. "Safe! were she in the centre of ten thousand times his force, she would not be safe if I were after her. But you do not want her slain?"

"No, not if she can be brought to me alive; but if not, let her die. Her brothers must die!"

"Why do you hate them so?" And again the Mexican's eyes expressed that singular look of curiosity which we noted in his first interview with Gorin.

"That is my business; they are old enemies of mine, and they must be got rid of. But I'm tired to-night; come to-morrow, and I'll see you on this matter. Your pass, as my guide, will pass you safely through the camp."

Without answering, the Mexican left the tent, and Gorin, bestowing another kick on the negro, who had again gone to sleep without arising from the spot where he had been knocked down, turned to his grass hammock, which hung at the back of his tent, and lying down, was soon in a state as comfortable as that of the negro.

CHAPTER VIII.

URREA IN HIS "BAG OF FLOWERS."

ONE of the loveliest spots in the world, I think, is a little valley or basin in the mountains, a short way to the south of Presquera, called by the natives of that portion of Mexico, "*El Bolsa de Flores*," or, the bag of flowers. Well and aptly was it named, for here flowers ever bloomed—the orange, lime, agricarte, clabella and magnolia vied in their rich hues and varied perfumes; while the banks of a rapid little brook were shaded by tall forest trees, whose roots afforded hiding-places for thousands of silver-scaled fishes, which drew beneath their shade whenever the face of man was mirrored in the waters.

The valley was small; it might be half a mile square, perhaps, and save in spots where little groves had sprung up, was covered with fine green grass, which, like an embroidered carpet was interspersed with beautiful flowers. On all hands, save at the narrow entrance, the gray mountains rose in rugged majesty—their upper cliffs so mingling with the clouds, that the uplooking eye could not distinguish between them. The lower part of the mountains was covered with vines and shrubbery, but as the height increased, so more bare became the rocks, until all was naked, cold, desolate.

Pardon the digression, reader; but is it not thus with rising man, sometimes—nay, *often*? While he is lowly, his heart is full of the flowers of beauty and goodness; but as he rises in wealth and fame, as he begins to become elevated among his fellows, the flowers fade and wither. The higher he gets, the colder grows his atmosphere, until at last, like the cold, gray barren mountain side, he stands alone, in his lofty grandeur, without one warming principle in his bosom; majestic, but heartless; grand, but not pleasing; in short, a very monument of ingratitude.

But returning to our scene—the valley was chosen by General Urrea for his head-quarters, and here, a few days after we last

He had chosen it, because its narrow entrance could be easily guarded from surprise, and easily defended from attack, and also because water and pasture were convenient, and a good place afforded for drilling his troops. Here he erected his standard, from here he sent forth his recruiting officers, with orders to use every endeavor to collect men, so that once more he might take the field against the enemy.

He had a few tents, but the greater part of his force bivouacked in the open air, which is little hardship in a clime so mild and genial as that. In one of these tents Anita Urrea and Edwina Canales were quartered, and near there was the stately marquee of the general. Edwina had not again resumed her male attire, although she still held her commission in the regular army. This may appear singular to many of our readers; but there have been many instances of the kind, one of which we will mention: The wife of President Gamarra, of Peru, not only held a colonel's commission in the cavalry, but repeatedly led her regiment into action, and greatly distinguished herself for skill and bravery.

We will look into the tent of which we have just spoken, and see how the daughter and sister of warriors dwell; perchance some of our boudoir-loving readers will shudder, but if they do, we can't help it. The tent was set upon a soft carpet of grass, which, as its long green blades had been trampled down, gave up a perfume like that of new-mown hay. Its furniture consisted of a bed made of the same kind of grass, covered with three or four ponchos, or Mexican blankets; the saddles of the two ladies were used by them as seats, and a couple of small military valises probably contained their wardrobe. A large gourd of water hung by the tent post, and this probably was all of the material with which their toilet was provided. Their mirror might have been the eddies of the glassy brook whose murmuring reached their ears; none other was in sight. And yet we have seen city girls dressed far more slovenly than they, as there they sat conversing upon the past and about the future.

"And so you do not now feel willing to acknowledge that you love the young American, Edwina?" asked Anita. And then, as her companion hesitated to answer, she added: "I'm sure gratitude alone should impel you to love him! Twice has he saved your life and honor, and indeed he is handsome! It is well that Bonaventura won my love ere I saw him."

"Dear Anita, I have other things to think of beside love. I

have dark and deadly wrongs to avenge—and think you I can love a countryman of those who have wronged me and mine? No! Mexico has gained in our family no common friends—we are wedded to her cause, not that we love her, but that we *hate* her enemies!”

So wild and vehement was the maiden's manner, as thus she spoke, that Anita started back in surprise, exclaiming:

“Maldita, amigo mia! One would think you were a tigress, to hear you talk, instead of the dear, good girl you are. But it is so strange to me that you can avoid falling in love with that young officer. He is handsome, brave, honorable; and I am sure he loves you!”

“What! think you so, indeed?” exclaimed Edwina, with a tone which betrayed an interest she had forgotten to conceal. And then, while her cheeks reddened with blushes, she added: “No, no! I hope not, for his own sake. We shall yet meet as foes; I feel it but too surely, for all things now are dark before me.”

“No, not so. Peace will soon come; you will then meet this hero of yours—he will woo—you being woman, can be won—and then the romance will end, as good novels do, in matrimony and bliss!”

“Peace!” echoed the other. “Peace! When will there be peace in this distracted country now? Never, never! The Americans have got a foothold here—they have seen how rich and beautiful is the land they invade—and think you that now they will give it up? No, they will not; nor will the Mexicans, while one drop of Spanish blood runs in their veins, let them rest here. I see nothing but war—war to the knife, before us! Think you that it will be bloodless? No, the best blood of both nations will run out upon the battle grounds. Neither he nor I will see the end of this war—why should I love him?”

“Why, Edwina?”

“Yes, why?”

“Because if it had not been for him, both your power of hating and loving had ere this been destroyed.”

“True,” replied the other, thoughtfully; “but let us change the subject.” And then the two maidens arose and went forth from the tent.

As they stepped out beneath the shade of the great tree against which their tent was pitched, a blast of bugles came sweeping on the wind up the valley, and then came a long

of cavalry enter the gorge and come up at a rapid trot. Above them the green and yellow lance pennons fluttered, which denoted them to be Mexicans, and as they approached nearer, Edwina's eyes grew brighter, and she cried:

"It is Licencio, my brave brother!"

It was indeed he and his wild rancheros; and as he saw his sister, who stood waving her white scarf, he drove his spurs into his horse's flank, and at full speed dashed up to her side. Without touching stirrup or rein, he bounded to his feet and pressed her tenderly to his breast.

"My noble sister!" was all that then he said, and her reply—"Dear brother!" was equally as expressive of the full heart's affection, which needs no words to tell its depth or strength.

As he again pressed his lips to his sister's brow, a hearty, good natured voice at his back caused him to turn and salute General Urrea. The latter advanced, and as he grasped his hand, exclaimed:

"Welcome, my brave Canales—welcome to my camp! I'd rather see thee here than a hundred lances. Thou alone wert worth them all to me."

"I thank you, general," replied the other, and was about to say more, when a young officer, who had been writing, as the pen in his hand indicated, in the tent of the general, rushed out, exclaiming:

"Surely I heard my brother's voice! O, Licencio, have you come?"

The embrace of the brothers was even as warm as had been that of the sister and brother, and it was moments before the conversation between Urrea and the older Canales was renewed. When it was, they two seated themselves at the trunk of the tree, while the young lovers wandered up along the bank of the little stream. Edwina remained standing near the two former.

"What force have you here?" asked Canales of the other, as soon as they were seated.

"About one thousand, all told; but we are sadly off for provisions, and our musketeers have not over twenty rounds of ammunition."

"All this I can remedy."

"How? Have you stores?"

"Yes, I took a wagon train a short time ago. It will be here to-night."

"That is good news, indeed! Canales, in thee our country has a noble friend—our foes a bitter enemy."

"You flatter me, general."

"No, sir—it is your own actions that flatter you. Your name is heard everywhere."

"As what? As an assassin and a robber!" retorted the other; and his tone was bitter as he spoke. "Yes, I am forced with a paltry band of unpaid, unclothed rancheros, to maintain the dignity of a general's *nominal* commission. Let the republic give me an army, and then I would soon see if my name might not be linked with more glorious deeds than midnight scouts and petty ambushades!"

"It shall be yet, my friend," cried the other, as he warmly grasped the ranchero's hand. "I am now raising an army, and soon, with your help, we'll have a force beside us with which once more we can face the northern foe, and then—"

"You will conquer or die," cried Edwina, who had been breathlessly listening to the conversation. "Say, Licencio, is it not so?"

"Yes, sister, so shall it be," replied the other.

At this instant the attention of the party was attracted by a single Mexican, who, dressed like the common peasantry of the country, but well and heavily armed, rode toward them rapidly, coming from the direction of the open country.

"It is my spy—one whom I keep hovering about the enemy's camp, to watch his motions," said Urrea, as he saw the rider.

"I have seen him before, surely," said Canales. "O, yes, it is Vicencio Jarueta—one of my old followers, and a good soldier."

It was indeed Vicencio, whom the reader has already met as a plotter with Gorin.

Throwing himself from his horse, he bowed low before the generals, and still lower before the lady.

"Well, what news, good Vicencio?" asked Urrea.

"Much, senor general. The enemy are getting stronger every day, and preparing to go forward. An advance guard has already gone on to Saltillo."

"Well, let him go on. He will be easier crushed when he gets among the mountains."

"Heard they of the loss of a wagon train before you left?" inquired Canales.

"Yes, senor, and the loss is heavy to them. The general has

despatched a body of rangers after you, General Canales. He says that you have broken the truce, and has ordered them to take you, if they can."

"Which way have they gone?" asked the guerrilla chief, calmly.

"To the northward."

"Then they have gone on a wild goose chase, for I am done with the north at present."

"Does the general know a Texan named Gorin?" now asked the spy of Canales.

"Gorin! a fiend in human shape! Yes; what of him, and why do you ask?"

"He has only given me five hundred dollars for promising to kill you!" replied the spy in a calm, quiet tone.

"And you—"

"Promised, of course, and got my advance! I will give him his receipt for it when again we meet. I took his money, general, because I wanted it, and I wanted to know why he hates you so. He is useful to me in the camp. You know me too well to doubt me, or fear that I—"

"I fear nothing, Vicentio," replied the other. "But leave this Gorin to me; I have an account of long standing to settle with him. If he can be taken alive and brought to me, I will well reward you."

"It shall be done, general," replied the other.

Then turning to the lady, he added:

"And you are one, too, whom he hates, lady."

"I am aware of that, Vicentio," replied the other. And then she seemed about to ask a question, but paused as it was upon her lips.

"Where is he now—has he gone northward with the rangers?" asked Canales.

"No, senor; he is detained as a witness against a captain of Kentucky riflemen, who is accused of treason and of leaguings with you, General Urrea.

"His name? what is his name? is it he?" cried Edwina, hastily.

"His name is Blakey, lady," replied the soldier.

"Accused of treason? This is for rescuing me and your daughter from Gorin's hands!" cried Edwina to Urrea. Then turning to the spy, she asked, "When does his trial ensue? is he in danger?"

"His trial is to come off very soon. Gorin and his men are evidence against him, and I heard that his doom was certain," replied the spy.

"Brother—General Urrea, this must not be!" cried Edwina. "This noble man is in peril, for having done his duty as a *man* in protecting helpless females from insult and death!"

"What can we do? He is an enemy. Surely, it is little to us what his doom may be," replied Urrea, calmly.

"It may be little to you; it is all to me. I request from you, a letter to General Taylor, describing this whole affair. He shall not be condemned!" cried the excited girl.

"Who will bear it?" asked the general.

"Edwina Canales, captain in the army of the republic."

"My own, my noble sister," cried Canales, who till now had been a silent listener, "I love the generous spirit which prompts this act, but another messenger can be despatched! I like not to have you so exposed."

"What one—who is there that will be faithful and speedy?" asked she, as her dark, searching eye was bent upon him.

"Roberto, my body servant. He would die for you or me."

The maiden paused a moment—then seeming contented, said:

"General, please write that letter for me. I have one to prepare also. Have Roberto ready, brother; I will send him in an hour. This Gorin shall meet his match."

CHAPTER IX.

THE COURT MARTIAL.

WHEN the spy, Vicentio, said that the trial of Blakey was soon to ensue, and that his danger was imminent, he spoke truly. On the very next morning after the scene in our last, that trial commenced.

A military court-martial is perhaps one of the most striking scenes in the world. All of the officers save him who is to be tried, are dressed in their full uniforms, their swords by their sides, and surrounded by military paraphernalia. The prisoner alone is without his weapon. Before each member of the court are writing materials; each member wears a still and solemn

aspect, for here things are conducted far differently from those courts where a parcel of chattering lawyers, seeming to be afflicted with a diarrhœa of words, fight and squabble over the points of law, as hungry dogs do over some half picked bone. Here men of honor sit down calmly to investigate and decide upon that which gives to their brother soldier deep and lasting disgrace, or restores to him his doubted honor, that honor which to a soldier is life, ay, ten thousand times more than life.

On the occasion to which we refer, the court was composed of the elder officers at head quarters. General Taylor was not present; his duties and inclinations both prevented it. When Blakey was called before the court, his charges were read, specifying, among other things of a treasonable nature, that on the night which we have already recorded, he did interfere upon the side of the Mexicans, against his own countrymen, and rescued prisoners of the enemy, who had been taken by American troops in battle, and that he had held treasonable and friendly communication with Urrea, a general in the Mexican army.

When called upon to answer to this charge, with his eyes flashing indignantly, he answered, "Not guilty!"

The judge advocate then summoned as a witness to the stand, Captain Gorin, of the Texan Rangers. The witness advanced, his face flushed apparently with excitement, and took the prescribed oath to give true evidence, in a voice which, though thick and husky, evidently trembled. It seemed strange, too, that he avoided meeting the eye of the prisoner.

On being sworn, he gave in his evidence thus. He said that he had been ordered by the general-in-chief to follow Blakey, and to observe his motions—

"Stop a moment, if you please, sir. I have a question to ask here," said one of the members, one in whom the reader will be pleased to recognize Major Bliss; "Did you not request General Taylor to permit you to follow Captain Blakey?"

"No, sir," responded the witness, evidently displeased at the interruption.

"Did you not give some information to General Taylor, which alarmed him in regard to the prisoner, and did you not recommend that he should be followed and watched?" again asked his interrogator, sternly.

"I told the general of a conversation which I had overheard between the prisoner and a messenger from a fair lady who was with the enemy."

"The members will please note this acknowledgment. The witness may now proceed with his story," said Major Bliss, with a tone full of meaning.

With a voice less confident than before, Gorin now went on to say that, in obedience to his orders, he had set out upon the trail of the prisoner; that on the evening in question, he was attacked by a party of the enemy; that he not only defended himself but slew seven or eight of them, and took three prisoners, one of whom was an officer of importance and a brother to Canales the rancho; and that soon after he was himself attacked by Blakey, who rescued the prisoners from him, and who was closely followed by General Urrea and a whole regiment of lancers."

"Who were these prisoners?" demanded Major Bliss, sternly.

"Captain Canales, his sister, and a daughter of Gen. Urrea."

"Who gave you orders to capture women?"

"They were in company with the officer."

"Have you never seen any of them before?"

"I saw one of them fighting like a tigress when we took Monterey."

"Have you no cause of personal enmity to the prisoner?"

"None in the world, if he be true to our country," replied the hypocritical villain.

"What has the prisoner to say to this charge and evidence?" now asked the judge advocate.

"That it is partially false!" replied Blakey, calmly.

"Partially?" echoed Major Bliss; "in what, sir, is it true, and in what false?"

"It is true, sir, that on the evening in question I found yon villain maltreating a helpless female; a wounded officer, her brother, lay upon the ground; beside him lay a helpless girl, and Edwina Canales, the heroine of Monterey, was defending her helpless brother and friend against yon fiend. He, the *thing* who calls himself a *man*, had raised his arm against a *woman*, ay, had nearly succeeded in crushing her but too feeble defence, when I arrived upon the ground. I did strike the villain to the earth, I did rescue the helpless whom he had wronged. He however speaks falsely when he says that they attacked him. He broke the flag of truce—he with twenty men attacked this little band of ten, attacked them, as I know, for the purpose of destroying or capturing the lady whose name I have already mentioned, against whom, I know not how or

why, he has proved himself a bitter enemy. I met General Urrea, I met him as it becomes a soldier and a man of honor to meet another during a time of truce. Yon varlet was hooted from the presence of the general, hence his jealousy of myself."

At this moment a messenger came in and whispered some information to Major Bliss. The latter, requesting to be excused a moment, left the tent. Meanwhile the court seemed to debate upon the case of the prisoner, and it need not be wondered that some of them were much against him.

However, after a few moments' absence, Major Bliss returned, and proceeded with the examination. Calling upon the prisoner, he asked:

"Is there any truth in the statement of the witness, that you received a messenger from the lady, before you started on your scout?"

"None, upon my honor."

"Your meeting with her was purely accidental?"

"Purely accidental and providential," answered Blakey.

"*Very* accidental," said Gorin, with a sneer; "will he say upon his honor that that was the first time he had seen her on that day?"

"I had seen her pass my ambuscade on that road not ten minutes before the attack," replied the accused, "but was unseen by her; when I heard the sound of firing, I followed after them, and arrived in time to rescue her from the unhallowed grasp of yon wicked villain!"

"A *very* likely story, is it not, gentlemen?" said Gorin, with a sneer, in which, however, he showed too much of his own feeling to do him any good before the court.

Major Bliss now turned to him and asked:

"What part of Texas do you belong to, Captain Gorin?"

"The western."

"Do your parents reside there?"

"I have none, sir; they died while I was a babe; but I don't see what bearing these questions have on this case," replied Gorin, whom the question evidently nettled.

"It may have a decided bearing on your evidence, sir," replied Bliss, "and I have yet more to ask. Did you ever know one Helen Vicars, in Texas?"

Gorin started as if a serpent had bitten him, when he heard this question, and replied, in an angry tone:

"I stand here as witness against that traitor, Blakey. I an-

swer questions regarding his case. None others will I respond to."

"Sir, you will answer *all* questions here propounded to you," replied the president of the court, sternly.

"Again I ask, did you ever know Helen Vicars?" said Major Bliss.

"I believe that there was a girl of that name, who resided in my neighborhood some years ago, a girl of bad repute!" replied the other, in a tone of assumed carelessness.

"Villain! of whom do you speak?" said a voice clear as the note of a flute, at the entrance of the tent. Gorin turned pale and trembled from head to foot as he turned and beheld the tall form of Edwina Canales, who, in her maiden's dress, had that moment entered the tent.

So pure, so queenly and beautiful did she look, that the members of the court involuntarily arose to their feet, and gazed respectfully toward her, while she, with her face lighted up in all the brilliancy of angry excitement, continued:

"Behold how he trembles as he faces me with a lie yet upon his guilty lips! I am Helen Vicars—I am the maiden whose fame he would dare attempt to stain. I am Helen Vicars, and there stands the base murderer of my gray-haired parents! the attempted murderer of myself and brothers—the villain who, failing in all attempts to win my love, became a deadly foe, who has wronged me and mine to the utmost of his power.

"Now hear my evidence in this case—we, that is, my younger brother, Anita Urrea and myself, were riding peaceably along the road, relying upon the truce of eight weeks for our protection; we were met by yon villain, attacked, our escort slain, and the result—(Heaven only knows what it would have been), I was depending alone upon my weak arm, when that noble American who is now a prisoner before you, rescued us from perhaps a fate worse than death. And now, upon my honor, this and this only was all of treason that can be laid to the prisoner's charge!"

The court, carried away by the vehemence of her manner, had not looked toward Gorin during her remarks, but now as their eyes turned toward him, they saw him standing there as pale as if death was in his heart.

"What have you now to say?" said Major Bliss to Gorin.

At first the deep-dyed villain made no answer, then said in

tones so thick and husky that they could be scarcely understood:

"She speaks falsely! She is the sister of Canales."

"Yes, I am the sister of Licentio Canales, and if you will add the name of Vicars to it, you will have the name of one whom you knew but too well in Texas. One whom you and your Regulators drove to this country, where even now he might, had it not been for you, have been dwelling in peace on his own soil."

Every word and look of Gorin now testified his guilt, and the court, disgusted with his unmasked villany, at once put a stop to the proceedings. Blakey's sword was restored to him amid the congratulations of the officers, while the false witness endeavored to slink away and leave the spot. He had, unobserved, reached the door of the tent, when a short, thick, plainly dressed officer appeared before him, whose presence seemed anything but agreeable to him.

"Stand back, sir," said the officer, who held two letters in his hand, and was none other than old Rough and Ready—"stand back, sir, I want to look into this matter. Here is a letter from General Urrea, who puts a very different construction on your conduct, as also that of Captain Blakey, from which you represent, and here is a letter from a lady, which, if true, makes you a villain that Satan himself would kick out of the infernal regions!"

Major Bliss, hearing the general's voice, now stepped forward and said:

"Captain Blakey's innocence has been proved, general, and the crime of perjury is stamped upon yon scoundrel's brow!"

"Then let him be struck from the roll of the army," replied the noble old general, and while his high brow was clouded with a withering frown, he turned to the villain and said:

"I give you two hours, sir, to leave my camp. If after that time you are in its borders, beware of the punishment that shall follow."

Without one word in answer—his face black with mortification and anger, the villain turned from the tent. As he stepped out he saw two horses standing there, held by a young negro; one, from the saddle upon it, a courser of jet, symmetrical and beautiful in form, was evidently the steed of the Mexican lady; the other was the pony always rode by Roberto, the faithful servant of Canales.

The boy grinned as he saw Gorin come forth, with a face so clouded, and by his manner showed that he had seen him before. Gorin hastened to his tent, where he found his negro as usual, asleep. With a few kicks he soon brought him to, and astonished him by bidding him pack up his duds and get ready to clear out.

"Whar be we gwoin, massa cap'n?" asked the negro.

"To perdition, for all I know!—come, be lively, pack up my things for a march," replied Gorin, in a fierce tone.

"Massa go dere if he like, but dis child don't want to," replied the negro to himself, and hurried to obey his orders.

Within an hour Gorin had left the camp, no one knowing or caring which way he bent his steps. His negro was his only friend and companion.

CHAPTER X.

A DECLARATION OF LOVE.

WITHIN an hour after the favorable issue of the trial of Blakey, Edwina Canales was mounted upon her horse preparatory to returning to the camp of General Urrea. Blakey having applied for and obtained permission to escort her a short distance, was also mounted on the horse which she had presented to him, and together they rode forth, the young negro following at a respectful distance.

"You must not think me bold or indelicate, senor, for thus venturing to your camp," said the lady. "I heard that you were involved in a difficulty caused by my rescue from that bold, bad man, and I could not refrain from coming to be a witness in your behalf. I first intended only to write—and then I thought that it were better for me to go in person."

"I cannot speak my gratitude, lady; I feel but too much the kindness which has prompted you to take this trouble and risk upon yourself."

"Speak not of gratitude, senor; it is myself that should most be grateful. Twice have you saved my life—"

"And in so doing have only performed my duty as a man."

"Such duties as few men would have done, senor, and duties that I shall never, never forget," replied the maiden, warmly.

The young captain now rode on some ways in silence, which was broken by his saying:

“Were you born a Mexican, lady?”

“Yes, senor, I was born in the province of Texas, while the Mexican flag waved over its soil. Yet when the province revolted, we joined not with the Mexican arms—we became Texans in the true sense of the word.”

“And why are you now among our enemies?”

“Because we have been driven there by wrong and oppression.”

“Canales is not your name?”

“No—it was our mother’s name—we have assumed it here. You have heard my right name; it is Helen Vicars.”

“O, lady, there are many things which I would wish to ask, and—”

“Which I cannot now answer. My history is strange, too strange for reality, yet I cannot reveal it to you.”

“What have you to do with Gorin? He seems both to fear and hate you.”

“He has cause to fear me—I have cause to hate him. Yet I cannot tell you why, more than that he was once a suitor for my hand. I refused his hateful attentions, and from that time he became an enemy to me and my house.

“My parents offended him by forbidding his visits—he was in command of a party of ‘Regulators,’ a clan who made themselves the law-givers and enforcers of the country, and he warned us to leave the farm which we owned, in twenty-four hours. My parents would not do this—the consequence was that the house was burned over their heads. My father tried to resist—he was slain; my mother, too, was killed by a blow which with her own breast she warded off from her fallen, husband’s form. My brothers were not at home. I fled on the first attack, and succeeded in escaping and meeting my brothers. We were pursued by this Gorin and his band to the banks of the Neuces. The river at the time was swollen into an immense flood by the rain, and we attempted to cross it in a frail canoe. The canoe was leaky and rotten, and filled with us in the midst of the foaming, rushing waters. For a time we struggled in the river, my brothers supporting me, drifting out of sight of our pursuers, who, I afterwards learned, thought us drowned.

“We, however, succeeded in landing on the southern shore;

and afterwards joined ourselves to a party of rancheros or herdsmen, who have become much attached to my brother, and have made him their chosen leader. Thus much, and too much of my history have I revealed to you—I can no more.”

“But, lady, this Gorin is now abroad—I fear that he will yet seek your life. Would to heaven that I had slain him when we met the other night!”

“I am glad that you did not. His punishment is for my hand—he will yet cross my path.”

“I hope not, lady, for he is a fiendish, cruel foe!”

“You seem to take a strange interest in my fate, senor.”

“Why should I not, lady? You are brave and beautiful—ay, more, you are a patriot, such as my soul loves. O, lady, would to God you were not an enemy!”

“I surely am not your enemy, senor.”

“No—yet still are we foes. The banners under which we serve, are flung out upon the breath of the war-storm. Lady, O let me beseech you to retire from a further participation in the war.”

“Why, senor? my brothers are engaged in it, they are ever in danger; it were worse than death to me not to be near them.”

“Would that I was a brother to you, lady.”

“Why make you that wish, senor? Perhaps it is better not,” said the lady, archly.

“I make the wish, lady, because I would ever be near to protect and guard you.”

“And yet we are enemies,” said the lady, doubtingly.

“Yes, lady, but I have a remembrance of reading in a very wise and good book, the precept that we must love our enemies.”

“And you would practise the precept?”

“In your case, lady, I would. It is useless longer for me to dissemble my feelings. I love—I madly, wildly love you!”

“Senor,” responded the lady, sadly, “I am sorry for this. I am proud that you should deem me worthy of your thoughts, but you see how we both are placed—it is indeed madness to love me.”

The manner of the lady until now, except when speaking of her history, had been light and gay—but now it was sad and mournful.

“Lady, though it be madness—though it were even death, I cannot help it, I love you. O, is my love to be unrequited?”

must I not hope for love in return? Speak, and let me hope, or crush me with your coldness."

The hand of the lady trembled, tears rolled silently down her rich-hued cheeks, and though words seemed to tremble on her lips, still she spoke not. She seemed to be stifled with thoughts too heavy for utterance.

Again young Blakey spoke:

"Lady, you surely could not have taken all of this interest in my fate, without some feeling for me. O, say that I possess your love, and yet we will meet in happiness. This war may not last long."

"It may last longer than either of us shall live," responded the lady; and then she added, "let us not speak of love now. I am taking you too far from your camp. In yon little ravine ahead of us, my escort awaits me. It is better that we part. It is madness for us, situated as we are, to think of love!"

"O, not so, lady; if it is, let me be mad. O, set my heart at rest before we part; either give me hope, or let me know the worst."

The lady's smile, though still sad, was brighter, as she turned her large, black, tearful eyes toward him. She was about to answer, when the young negro rode rapidly up, and spoke two or three words in Spanish to her, at the same time pointing to a little hill, a few rods to their left, on the crest of which sat one on horseback, who seemed to regard the movements of the party with no common interest. As he saw their eyes turned toward him, he shook his clenched hand toward them, and seemed as if he was about to ride down and attack them, but on seeing the lady's escort of lancers ride forth, fifty strong, to meet her, he again shook his threatening hand, and dashed off at full speed to the southward. This person was Gorin.

"You see your enemy and mine," said the lady, as she pointed toward him. "Beware of him—he is cunning—treacherous—bloodthirsty—fiendish in all things."

"I fear not for myself, lady, but for you."

"I can defend myself," replied she, haughtily. "I fear not a man who treads the earth!"

"Lady—we shall join your escort in a few moments—again I beseech from you one cheering word."

"It would be cruel, senor, if I were to speak of hope when there is none. All is darkness before me. Why should I involve you in it?"

"All is light to me where you are!"

"Senor, how can it be? You love your country, you serve it with your life—and yet I am among her foes."

"O, cease to be a foe. Return with me to my native land I will wed you, and take you to a father and mother who for my sake will love you dearly."

"What, senor! would you now, after you have drawn your blade in this war, thus leave the field, and those with whom your honor is linked?"

"No, lady. No, I could not. The love I bear for you almost maddens me, yet even it cannot make me forget my duty."

"Now I love you; you are indeed a soldier and a man!" cried the beautiful girl; "enemy though you be, I will love you, and should we ever meet in peace, then may we be happy. Now we must part."

"Must we part thus in the first moment of joy?"

"Yes, it is best. Let us both strive to do our duty. I shall joy to hear that you become distinguished; if you fall, I will follow you."

"And can we not meet again?"

"I fear when next we meet, it will be on the battle-field. A great and decisive battle must soon be fought. I shall be there I know you will. Meet where we may, we will meet as friends."

"As lovers, rather," sadly responded the young officer, reinning in his horse at her request.

"You will wear this scarf for me," said Edwina, as she took a white scarf from her shoulder; "it will aid me to distinguish you if we meet amid the clouds of battle."

"It will, and you—"

"Have yet the band of silver lace," replied the other.

The lady now presented him her hand, which he raised to his lips and warmly kissed, then again they exchanged their love-toned adieus, and separated.

Edwina rode rapidly off to the westward to meet her escort. Blakey returned slowly and sadly to his camp. He was in love—he had just heard that his love was reciprocated—how singularly were the two lovers situated. Both were surrounded by perils, greater than either dreamed of.

As Blakey rode back he ascended the hill where but a few moments before he had seen Gorin, and looked over the surrounding country in hopes to learn the direction which he had taken. But it was useless, he could nowhere discover his

This seemed strange, too, for the country was very open, and save a few groves and small chapparals, was quite clear from obstructions to the view.

Gorin at this moment was concealed in a grove close by, in a spot where he plainly saw Blakey, but he had reasons for not being seen by the latter. It was his intention to lurk about in the vicinity of the camp until night. He had the countersign which had been given to all of the officers commanding companies, and knew that he could get into the camp if he wished. Besides, he expected again to meet Vicentio in the vicinity.

Speaking of the latter, makes it proper that we bring him again before the reader. When Donna Edwina reached her escort, this man was the first to ride forth to meet her.

"How has your errand sped, noble lady?" asked he.

"Well. The prisoner is saved—Gorin is disgraced and driven from the camp."

"Know you which way he has gone?"

"A few minutes since, he was on the top of yonder hillock, even where that brave but imprudent American has ridden," replied the lady, gazing at Blakey, who now, however, after looking in vain for his enemy, rode toward the camp.

"I must watch him—I shall make use of him for a little time, and then he is reserved for revenge," said the spy, while his dark eyes gleamed like those of an angry serpent.

"Whatever you do, watch over the life and welfare of the American who rides now toward the camp. Let the life of Captain Blakey be as dear to you as my brother's! Twice has he saved mine."

"It shall be as you wish, lady," said the spy respectfully, and now bowing low to her, he rode out from the escort, and took a direction which would lead him around the hill of which we have several times spoken, and at the same time in the direction of the spot where he had before met Gorin.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WARNING.—THE TOKEN.

WHEN Vicentio, the spy, left the escort of Donna Edwina, he rode, as we before said, slowly away in a direction which took him around to the southward of the hill. He had not ridden far before he came to a small grove of mountain oaks which stood near the hill which he was about to pass, when a sharp whistle to his right caused him to draw his rein.

It was repeated in a moment after, and then he recognized it as the peculiar signal generally used by Gorin. He at once turned his steed toward the grove, which he had penetrated but a short distance when he was met by Gorin. The appearance of the latter was strangely changed, since the spy had last met him. His face was pale as the white ashes of the camp-fire; his eyes were like two living coals of fire. His voice was husky and deep in its tone, as he addressed the spy:

“You have seen her—she who calls herself Edwina Canales, she whom you have promised me to get rid of, have you not?”

“Yes, I have just left her.”

“And she has told you all—told you how I have been dishonored for the sake of one whom she is making a fool of—she has told you all this?”

“All,” replied the spy, in his usual quiet tone.

“Curse her! She is the cause of it; why have you let her live so long?”

“Her time hasn’t come, yet.”

“You have been paid for her life—why do you not fulfil your promise?”

“Because I have not yet had a chance. Be patient, bide your time, and your side of fortune’s wheel will come up again.”

“Patience! preach patience to women—men have nought to do with it.”

“Yet men must have to do with it,” replied the other, and then added, “You are out of employment now, which way do you wend your course?”

"Which way? To the camp of the enemy. Ay, when General Taylor insulted me, he placed a nettle in his path, which yet shall prick him to death. I shall go at once to General Santa Anna."

"Why not to Urrea? I can get you a commission under him," replied the spy, in a tone of singular softness.

"Because he is the friend of that wretch who calls himself Canales. I wish not to meet him at present."

"What is the quarrel between you and Canales?"

"O, nothing but an old grudge; I have met him before, and he insulted me."

"And for nothing but an old grudge—a half-forgotten insult, you'd have him killed. You are indeed a bitter enemy," said the spy, in a tone which should have excited a suspicion in the ranger that the spy was no friend to his intentions, but he seemed not to heed or understand it, replying:

"He must be put out of my way."

"Why do you hate his sister so?" again asked the spy.

"Hate? I hate her because she gave me hate for love, when, like a whining fool, I knelt at her feet and prayed for her to smile upon me. I have loved her, O, how have I loved her! She spurned me like a dog from her feet, and think you I will bear this? No! by all that is sweet in revenge, no!"

"You think she loves this Blakey, do you not?"

"Think? No, I know it, else she would not have come here to ruin me and save him. But he shall pay for it—this night he dies."

"Dies? How, by whose hand?"

"By my own! I have the countersign, I can pass unknown to his very tent."

"What is it?" asked the Mexican, carelessly.

The ranger eyed him for a moment distrustfully, then seeming to be satisfied, answered, "Virtue."

"That must be a favorite word with the American commander," replied the spy, audibly; then added in an under tone only audible to himself, "I wonder it don't choke you to speak it."

"Well, about our other matters," said Gorin, "when will you get me rid of those enemies?"

"As soon as I can," replied the spy, "but I've other work on hand. I want to know if more reinforcements have come

"Yes, I will give you the number in the morning. To-night I shall be busy; but I wish to see you to-morrow."

"Where?"

"Here, or anywhere at a safe distance from the camp."

"Then let it be here—at sunrise."

The two parted, the spy riding off still further to the southward. The gray of twilight soon came over the earth, and as soon as it was sufficiently dark to conceal his motions from Gorin, the spy turned his horse toward the American camp, and dashing his spurs into his horse's flanks, drove him up to his speed. It was about an hour after dark that Blakey, while sitting in his tent, perhaps thinking of the wildwood home he had left, and of his dear old father and mother; or perchance thinking of her whom he had so lately learned to love, was told by an orderly that a man, apparently a Mexican, wished to see him.

"Admit him," replied Blakey, supposing it to be one of the guides or native laborers in the employ of the camp.

In a moment Vicentio entered, and as he appeared armed to the teeth, and was anything in appearance but the tame slave who did the menial duties of the camp, Blakey started from his seat, asking, as he looked at his visitor with a searching eye:

"Who are you sir, and what want you here?"

"When Captain Blakey is alone, I will tell him," replied the spy, looking at the orderly that lingered in the doorway of the tent.

Blakey made a sign for the soldier to withdraw, and then repeated his question.

"A friend, who wants to save your life, for the sake of Edwina Canales."

"A friend, who uses that name? Who are you?"

"Vicentio Jarueta, at your service, a soldier of the republic of Mexico."

"How did you gain admittance to the camp?"

"By 'virtue' of the countersign," replied the other, in a meaning tone.

"The countersign! you have it, by what means?"

"The means that informed me that your life was in danger."

"My life in danger? You spoke of that before. Explain all of this mystery."

"You have an enemy."

"I presume so—a good many of them. I hope so at least, for

I never knew a man that was good for anything that didn't have them."

"You have one who will try to assassinate you this night."

"Who—Gorin?"

"You have named him."

"He is banished from the camp. How can he return to it?"

"His 'virtue,' like mine, will pass him by the sentinels."

"Has he the countersign?"

"From him I got it—from his own lips I gained the knowledge that he intended to assassinate you this night."

"Who are you, that you should take this trouble to inform me of my danger?"

"One who would die to serve the sister of my chief, Licencio Canales, and she, when I parted from her, bade me guard your life if ever I found it in danger. I love you not—I hate your nation, but I love and serve her, and as you see have obeyed her last request."

"You are a noble fellow—take this in acknowledgment for your kindness," said Blakey, reaching toward him a purse apparently well filled.

"Vicencio Jarueta needs no reward for doing his duty. He only receives pay when he does some great villany."

"You are a strange man—is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes. When Gorin comes here to-night to kill you, avoid him, but do not detain him, I want him in the morning."

"You want him? your request is strange—why do you want him?"

"Donna Edwina may tell you some day, senor," responded the spy, drily; "may it be as I request?"

"It shall. I will keep out of his way, and fool him in some way."

"I thank you. Now give me a token for the lady, that she may know that I have seen you."

The young officer took the bowie-knife from his belt, and with its keen edge severed one of the long locks of hair from his head, saying, "let this be your proof."

The spy bowed, and the next moment was out of hearing.

The moment he was gone, Blakey turned his attention to preparing a trap to astonish his enemy. He took some clothes and formed a figure of a man, then placed it in such a way as to have it appear like himself asleep with his back turned

toward the entrance of the tent, covering it with his blankets as usually he did himself. He then placed his light so as to cast that portion of the tent somewhat in the shade, after which he went out and told the orderly that he had no further need of his services that night. The soldier he sent away, that Gorin might have no interruption in his visit. Then having prepared everything as he wished it, he hid himself behind some old rubbish in the back of the tent.

He had remained here on the watch until after midnight, and began to grow tired of his vigil, and think that his enemy had given over his fiendish design, when a very slight noise was heard at the back of the tent, close by his side—so near as almost to touch him. Scarce daring to breathe for fear of being discovered, he awaited the next movement. Soon the huge, shaggy head of Gorin was seen peering up from beneath the tent cloth, looking eagerly toward the spot where he supposed Blakey to be sleeping. The villain, not knowing that the orderly had been sent away, had taken this mode of entrance to avoid alarming him, and now cautiously crept through, cutting a rip in the tent large enough to let his body pass easily.

As soon as he got through, he arose cautiously with all the malignancy of a venomous serpent, he examined the edge of his huge knife, and then crept cautiously toward his supposed victim. He reached a spot where he was within striking distance of the figure, and then paused, as if to regain steadiness, for his whole frame trembled with excitement.

Gorin, black-hearted as he was, was not a coward, yet he trembled now. It was hard even for him to strike a sleeping foe, but at last he raised his knife, and while he drew in his breath, struck with a strong and steady hand the blow which he thought would send his victim to eternity. The knife was buried to the hilt in the bundle of clothes. Gorin had had too much experience in the way in which a knife walks into human flesh, not to know that he was fooled, and with a low, bitter curse, he drew the bundle of rags from its place, and in the impatience of his rage again and again dashed his knife into it.

“How could he have had a suspicion of this? Could he have feared an attack from me? or is this some trick of his, to get away from inspection?” said Gorin, in soliloquy; then as if fearing that he might be watched or in danger, he hurried from the spot, by the same way he came.

CHAPTER XII.

A GENERAL INSPECTION OF CHARACTERS.

SOME days have elapsed since the night of our last chapter, and all the actors in our scene have changed ground. We will pay them a visit, reader. First to the interview with Santa Anna, at San Luis Potosi, which gives to Gorin a captain's commission in the Mexican army.

Gorin, after the failure of his attempt to add Blakey to the number of his victims, had made his way with all despatch to the head-quarters of the Mexican general; his dark appearance and perfect command of the Spanish language enabled him to pass easily through the country, he having adopted the dress of the natives. On entering the presence of Santa Anna, the keen black eye of the latter was fixed upon him, and while he kept his look steadily upon his face, he asked:

"Where are you from, and what do you want?"

"I am a deserter from the American camp; I come to offer my services where they will be properly appreciated."

"A deserter! Why have you left your countrymen?"

"Because I have been wronged and insulted. Because I wish to be revenged upon them."

The general narrowly watched the expression of the speaker's face, impelled by suspicion; but the tone in which this was uttered, and the almost fiendish look which accompanied it, seemed to satisfy him, for he replied:

"If you have been injured by your ungrateful countrymen, you shall soon have ample opportunity for revenge."

"I shall improve it," replied the stranger, speaking in Spanish so pure that his interrogator noticed it, and remarked:

"You speak our language passing well; are you not Spanish born?"

"I was brought up in Texas, in a Spanish settlement; it was therefore the language of my early childhood."

The face of Santa Anna grew darker as Texas was mentioned. The word seemed to have an unpleasant jar on his ear, but he replied:

"Then we have a double claim upon your services. What was your rank in the army which you have left?"

"Captain."

"Then you shall now have the same here. I have a full company of deserters, mostly Irish, German and French Catholics; you shall have command of them, and if your conduct shall merit, promotion and honors shall be your own."

"Give me but a chance, general, and let my conduct prove me," replied Gorin.

"You shall soon have it," replied the other. "Within twenty days I will crush Taylor and his insolent army. I have now seventeen thousand men—within a week I shall certainly have from three to five thousand more."

"You will need them all; General Taylor is a horse!" said Gorin.

"A what?" cried the general, unused to the slang terms so much in use upon our borders.

"A man that is not easily whipped, but if you have a force of twenty thousand men, you ought to eat him up."

"I will meet him with at least that number before the month is out," replied the general, and then adding, "You will receive your commission in the morning," dismissed his visitor.

Thus we have followed Gorin into treason, and now we will hunt up some more of our friends.

The "Bolsa de Flores," where we left General Urrea encamped, was deserted at the time when the above interview took place, by all of the troops save a small party of foot soldiers, who were left to act as a guard to the daughter and wife of General Urrea, who were left here by him, who did not wish them to be placed nearer to danger, which must have been the case if they had followed his army. Edwina Canales had been there too, but on the night of the very day on which the army left, she, donning her male attire and attended by Vicentio, had started for San Luis Potosi, where the main force of the Mexican army was gathering. This she had done, in spite of the tears and entreaties of poor Anita, who, woman as she was, could not appreciate the feelings which prompted her stern companion to face the perils and share in the excitements of active service. As on the evening she sat by her mother's side,

poor Anita felt sadly lonesome, though were the truth known, she probably missed the brother of Edwina more than she did the maiden, and he probably caused by his absence the sighs which were so frequently heard to rise from her gentle bosom.

And think you, reader, that she was forgotten by him? No; and to prove it, we will take one glance at him as he sits in the tent of his general, at the same hour, in a camp about two days' march from San Luis Potosi. He is engaged at his writing desk, making out his official orders for the morrow, for he is acting as aid to the general, and these are among the many duties of his office. The general is seated near him on his saddle, which is laid upon the ground. He is engaged in his favorite occupation, smoking paper cigars, and giving from time to time the orders, which his aid commits to writing.

"You will give orders for your brother's regiment to lead the advance to-morrow," said the general.

"Yes, senor," said the young man, rapidly commencing to write the order, and then almost as quickly tearing it up, for he had commenced it thus: "Dear Anita, you will take the advance."

"What is the matter?" asked the general, as he saw the youth with an impatient gesture tear the paper into atoms.

"Nothing, senor, only I commenced this order wrong," replied the youth, blushing, and proceeding to direct it as he should at first have done to his brother.

We have only given this little incident to show where his thoughts were, and now, reader, we will take another march on our round of inspection, and find another of our characters, at the same hour. This one is Blakey, the decided hero of our story.

He was in his quarters in the city of Saltillo, for already had he advanced to this point, with the forces under General Worth. The army of General Taylor was advancing to the same point, and rumors of Santa Anna's approach were as thick as gamblers in Nashville. Blakey knew that a great and decisive battle must soon be fought, and knowing as he did that she whom he loved would be exposed to all its terrors, it need not be wondered that at this moment he was heart deep in the blues. Where she now was he knew not; he had not heard from her since the night when he sent her the token requested by Vicentio, yet he felt sure that she must be with Santa Anna's advancing army; her last words had left him no doubt but that

she would resume her old position on the re-commencement of hostilities.

Whatever his reveries may have been at this time we know not, but they were broken in upon by an orderly who entered the room and laid a document upon the table before him. Taking it up he read it aloud to himself. It was an order to start without delay, with a small force, to reconnoitre the forces of the enemy, and to hover in front of the advancing army of Santa Anna, and remit reports as fast as any change took place of any importance to our army. Though it was night, the ready soldier was soon in the saddle, and we will there leave him to obey his orders, while we look up one or two more of the friends in whose motions we feel an interest.

It was at this very hour that Edwina, having passed General Urrea on his march, arrived at San Luis Potosi, her only escort being Vicentio the spy. Her dress was that of a captain of lancers, and she looked it sufficiently to pass along in the night without her sex being discovered. She took her quarters up at a hotel, where, unknown to her, Gorin was also stopping. At the very hour she arrived, he had just returned to his room from his visit to Santa Anna, and that room was next to the one where "Captain Canales," as Edwina gave her name, was shown.

The vicinity of Gorin was first discovered by Vicentio, who, going to the stables to see the horses attended to in person, discovered the well known animal which Gorin rode, and making inquiry after its owner, found out where he was. The first thought of the spy was to use his dagger, the second was to acquaint his lady of her dangerous neighbor's vicinity, which last idea he acted upon. When he had told Donna Edwina of the neighborhood of his enemy, he proposed that he should now close up accounts with him, but she replied:

"No, Vicentio, it is not time yet—and I would reserve the pleasure for my own hands."

"But, lady, he may discover you."

"No—I shall plead sickness and keep my room for a few days, and supposing that he did, have I occasion to fear him?"

"No, lady, not while my right hand has strength to wield a weapon in your defence."

"I need no defence against him, Vicentio, one look can crush him. He turned pale and trembled when last he heard my voice. I fear him not."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PLOT DEEPENS.

Two days have passed away in our history, and still again have changed the positions of our characters. Urrea and Canales, having joined their forces to the army of Santa Anna, have swelled his force up to twenty thousand, and now he is ready to advance to meet the northern foe. On the evening of the day when this junction was made, Matteo, the large negro of Canales, whom in a former chapter we have placed before the reader, entered the kitchen of the hotel where Donna Edwina was stopping. The elder was accompanied by Roberto, the younger servant of Canales, who indeed was his son.

As they went in, they had cautiously to pick their way among a crowd of sleeping servants belonging to different officers who were quartered at the house; and this they were doing by the aid of a light in the hand of the elder negro, when the latter fixed his eyes upon the face of one who lay with his hands nearly in the ashes of the huge fireplace, and as he did so, started back in surprise.

"Look yar, Bob," said he to his son, "I'll be blessed if here aint a nigger dat we've seen before!"

And as he spoke, he bent down and took a closer examination of the sleeper, while his boy also looked down upon him, at the same time exclaiming:

"Yes, sure enough, it's old Gabe, that Gorin nigger, and nobody else! I wonder what he's doing here."

"Better wake de child an' ax him," replied the father.

The younger negro proceeded to act upon this advice at once, but found it rather a difficult matter, for Gabe was a capital sleeper. It was not until young Roberto had kicked his shins pretty heavily eighteen or twenty times, that he began to show any signs of returning consciousness, and then seeming to fancy that his master was calling him, he grumbled:

"Yes, massa cap'n, I tell 'em so, but de gol blasted fools keep

a sayin' 'no savy Ingles,' and dats all I can git out of 'em! Wish I was back in de cornfield."

Another hearty kick across Gabe's shins awoke him thoroughly, and he sprang to his feet, looking around, as his eyes opened, to see if his master was near. But when he saw only the two negroes, he became unusually wrathful all at once, exclaiming, in tones exceedingly bearish:

"What is you 'bout dar, awakin' gemplems up at dis time o' night!"

"Gabe, don't you know me—your ole fren?" asked the elder Ethiopian.

"Know you, nigger? no, I doesn't. How can one nigger know anudder when dey all look exackly like?"

"But you mus' know me, Gabe—ole Matty, dat use to go on possum hunts wid you, in de ole country?"

"Whah! dat you, Matty? Why, what are you a doin' here?"

"Dat's jist de question dat I axes you, an' as I'm de ole folks, I'se got de right to de first answer!"

"Den I gib in. My massa's turned Mexico, and come here to help Santa Anna."

"Den him an' my massa do de same business. My massa's a kurnel."

"Mine is a cap'n."

"Den, nigger, I ranks you! Have you got anything to eat here?"

"Reckon yes. Jist look dar at dat little nigger! he's at de grub a ready," said Gabe, in answer to the last question, pointing to the boy, who had, with natural intuitiveness, found his way to the cupboard.

"Dar ar a fact; dat's my boy, Gabe!" exclaimed the elder, with an indescribable tone of parental pride.

"What! dat ar little Bobby?" exclaimed Gabe.

"He isn't nobody else," replied the subject of this exclamation, as he returned from the cupboard, with his hands full of bread and meat.

"Wall, chile, you is growed up 'stonishin'!" said Gabe, as he turned his lesser friend round with a quick whirl, as if he wanted to see all his dimensions.

He then advised his two colored brethren to lie down and take a nap, following his precept by an example which in a minute or less left him in the same state in which they found him.

As soon as Gabe began to snore again, Roberto turned to his father, and said:

"Daddy, I don't like the look of things here. Dis Gabe's master and ours is at dead war!"

"So dey be. I forget dat. We oughtn't to ha' been so familiar wid dat nigger," replied the father.

"Well, I'll tell you he's a stupid nigger; he'll forget that he's seen us when he wakes in the morning. Let's clear out, and go somewhere else."

The elder agreeing to the proposition, the two left. It was broad day ere Gabe's eyes were again unclosed. His master had received orders to take post on the road toward Saltillo, and as was usually necessary, had come down in person to wake his sleepy servant. This he effected with his usual means. When Gabe awoke, he looked around him, as if he expected to see some familiar faces, then remarked to himself:

"Den dat was all a dream 'bout seeing dose niggers las' night. It was de plainest dream I ever 'members."

"What are you grumbling about? Come, be lively and wake up! We take a march this morning," cried his master.

"Yes, massa cap'n," replied Gabe, yawning; "but I've had such a dream!"

"You are always dreaming; but wake up now—you are wanted."

"Yes, massa; but doesn't dreams go by contraries?"

"Hang your dreams! Stir your stumps, and get my horse and things ready for the march."

"Case if dey does, den them niggers are dead, dat's all!" added the negro to himself.

And now being thoroughly awake, he hurriedly obeyed his master's orders, and both in a few minutes had left the hotel.

This early and fortunate start, although purely accidental, had kept Gorin and the elder Canales from meeting, which would probably have brought our romance to an untimely close; but fate seemed yet to defer the moment when the villain was to receive the richly merited reward of his crimes.

During the two preceding days, both Vicentio and Edwina had avoided becoming known to Gorin—the one by feigning sickness, the other by a deep and artful disguise. Now that she found her brother was here, the former, fearing that he would endeavor to keep her away from danger, determined still to remain unknown, and the better to secure herself, determined

to leave the city, and join the advance posts, not aware that Gorin, whom she knew had left, had adopted the same course by order of the general-in-chief. She was therefore still in his dangerous vicinity. Leaving them, we will now return to Blakey.

On receiving his orders, he at once set out upon his responsible but dangerous and unpleasant duty. The first two days of his ride gave out no adventure of any interest; but on the third day he found that he was in the neighborhood of the advancing posts of the enemy, and now began his time for danger and excitement. He had assumed, so far as he could, the disguise of a Mexican, he was furnished with a Mexican guide, and he had disguised his small force as much as possible.

On the evening of the fourth day, after having passed numerous small bodies of the enemy during the day, narrowly escaping discovery, he arrived at a small place called Salado, on the main road to San Luis. There was but one posada in the town, and to this he bent his course and applied for quarters, which he found obtainable.

He had always accustomed himself to attending to the grooming of his horse himself, and to seeing that the noble animal was properly cared for, and on this occasion followed the hostler to the stable. It was night, and quite dark; but as he entered the stable, he heard a voice singing the familiar old air of "Gumbo Jim," which he thought he recognized as one he had heard before. Pausing, he listened for a moment longer and then remembered where he had before heard it, and he knew then that he was in the vicinity of Gabe, Gorin's servant.

On cautiously advancing in the direction whence he heard the voice, he soon saw by the light of a lantern which hung near him, that the negro was engaged in rubbing down his master's horse, which bore the marks of travel.

He was revolving in his mind what steps to take, when another comer appeared in the scene, whom he perhaps might not have recognized, had not a noble-looking, coal-black horse, which he led, given a neigh of recognition which was answered by his own. One glance at the Mexican who led the horse, and he recognized Vicentio. Dangerous as it was for him to become known, he could not refrain from laying his hand upon the spy's arm as he was passing, at the same time whispering "be silent!" as he pointed to the negro.

The spy started as he felt the touch, and then recognizing the American, paused and glanced toward the negro, whom also he seemed to recognize, for in a low, hissing tone of anger, he exclaimed:

"Caramba! Is that dog always to be in our way?"

"Where is your mistress? is she here?" asked Blakey, eagerly.

"She has just come; but it will not do for her to tarry here, unless I make yonder darkie a free man, by cutting his master's throat!" responded the spy.

"I must see her! lead me to her at once," replied Blakey, not noticing the allusion to the necessity for the death of Gorin.

"Is it prudent? What are you doing here? Do you know that you are surrounded by our advancing troops?"

"I care not—I must see her!" replied the other, in a tone by far too earnest and loud for safety.

"I will tell her that you are here, but remember that now she is *Captain Canales!*" replied the spy, at the same time fastening his horse beside that of Blakey, and then returning toward the *posada*.

The loud tone in which Blakey spoke had reached the ear of one to whom his voice seemed unpleasantly familiar. Gorin himself was on the way to the stable, but when he heard that voice, and then heard another which he thought he recognized, he paused, and creeping cautiously along in the dark, came unobserved to a spot whence he could, by the dim light of the lantern, get a view of their faces. As he recognized them, a fiendish smile gathered upon his face, and in a low, fiendish whisper, he hissed:

"So *both* are here, and in my power. Now my time has come—both are in my power!"

He almost held his breath, as they passed him on the way to the house; and they had no sooner gone, than he hurried off to the quarters of his men to detail a force to carry out the intentions which he had so quickly formed. Meantime, Blakey was already in the presence of her he loved.

"O, holy mother! what means this rash exposure? Why are you here, *senor*—here, within our very lines?" asked Edwina, in a tone of deep sorrow, as she warmly returned the embrace of her lover.

"There is no danger that I would not face, to have the happiness of meeting you," replied he.

"O, what is that pleasure, when compared to the danger you run here! This is not the danger or the glory of a battle-field; if you are discovered, the death of the spy would be your fate."

"Ay, by heaven, she has spoken your doom!" cried a hoarse, rough voice, in the door-way; and at the same instant, Gorin, attended by a large party of soldiers, advanced into the room, with movements so quick, that ere Blakey could draw his sword, he was seized and pinioned.

"Lost! lost!" moaned Edwina, as she saw by whom the arrest was made; and then, as a sudden thought seemed to strike her, she turned to leave the room, but found that she, too, was a prisoner.

"Stay, fair lady!" cried her persecutor; "you cannot yet be spared. I have a desire that you should see a spy tried and dealt with. After that, I may take the trouble to inquire into your reasons for holding communication with the enemy."

"O, fiend! fiend! beware how you act! You shall be made to dearly rue this act, if harm comes unto him or me. You are not now in the American camp!" exclaimed the maiden.

"No, but I am commander here, and threaten as you may you are now in my power. It were better that you used me with a little more civility."

Edwina now looked around to see if Vicentio was near her, for she had seen him at the moment of Gorin's appearance peering in at the door. But she looked in vain; the spy was not there. Then, while her face wore a deep blush, she forced back the strong current of her pride, and in tones of anguish, cried:

"Gorin, as you are a man, spare him! for myself I ask no favors, but for the love of Heaven, do him no harm!"

"So you love him, eh?" asked the fiend.

"I do, I do! and on my bended knees I pray for his life!"

"Your words have doubly sealed his doom!" replied Gorin, with a sneer.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE EXECUTION.

IT was the dawn of day—the morning that followed the eventful night of our last chapter. In the same room in which he had been surprised by Gorin, was Blakey; and by his side sat Edwina Canales, her eyes red with weeping.

Gorin had condemned her lover to death! He was to be shot at sunrise; and with the purpose of adding to the victim's suffering, and making death even more painful, he had permitted a last interview between the two. Edwina's firmness had given way, when she found that her lover was indeed helplessly in Gorin's power—that the latter had his own company of reckless deserters with him, who would obey all of his orders. She thought not of her own danger; she only looked upon that of him whom she had so lately met and loved—him whom she was now to lose. Blakey, however, was calm and firm. He felt that Gorin would not dare to harm *her*, and he cared not for himself, so that she was safe.

"I have but one thing more to say, dear one," said he, as the increasing light warned him that his time had nearly come.

"Whatever it be, if my life is spared, your request shall be fulfilled," cried the weeping girl, who now, though dressed still in her male apparel, was again the *woman*.

"I have an aged father and mother," continued Blakey, who will be well-nigh broken-hearted when they hear of my death. When this war is closed, go to them, at their woodland home in Kentucky, and bear to them my last expressions of love. Here is a letter which I have always kept ready, in case I should become wounded mortally, or be slain. It bears their address. Go to them, tell them of our love, and for the love you have borne to me, be unto them a daughter."

"George, think you that I shall survive your death? No, if even he spared me now, I soon, soon shall follow you!"

"No, dear one, you must not talk thus."

He was interrupted here by Gorin and a guard, the former in a harsh tone exclaiming:

"It is time to put a stop to this. The sun will rise in five minutes."

"I am ready!" answered Blakey, in a firm tone.

Edwina seemed to regain her firmness, too, in the presence of her enemy, for as Blakey went forth, with a calm and steady step she walked by his side.

They were conducted to the open square, or plaza, which is found in the centre of every Mexican town, and here they found the firing party awaiting the arrival of the prisoner, as also a large body of the citizens whom the rumor of a military execution had brought out to be witnesses.

Without any beat of drum, or any of the solemn ceremonies which are usual on such occasions, Gorin marched his prisoner to the spot chosen for the execution, and preventing even the last embrace which Edwina requested, caused his party to prepare to fulfil his sentence.

At the moment when he was forming them in a line, a clattering of galloping steeds was heard in the entrance of the town, and before he could give the orders to proceed, a general officer, followed by a body of lancers, rode up at full speed. Edwina, as she saw this officer, screamed:

"'Tis Urrea! O, save him, my general—save him!"

She then fell fainting at his feet, when he alighted from his panting horse.

"Stay this execution! I wish to inquire into this matter!" cried he, who was indeed the general whom she had named.

"Who are you, sir? What right have you to interfere with my duties?" exclaimed Gorin, angrily.

"General Urrea, your superior officer," replied he.

Gorin glanced around, and saw that his "superior officer" had a force sufficient to back his orders, and sullenly answered:

"Yon prisoner is a spy; he has been condemned to death."

"By whom? What court has passed sentence upon him?"

"None!" cried Edwina, who now had recovered so as to comprehend the change of scene. "The American came here to meet me; he is no spy. Gorin is his enemy; he alone has condemned him to death."

"Gorin?" repeated Urrea; "Gorin? is he not the same from whom this American once rescued you and my daughter?"

"He is—he is a deserter from his own army, placed by Santa Anna in command of the deserter corps!"

"He is a fit leader for such traitorous dogs!" replied the general, in a tone of withering scorn; then turning again to him, he added: "You have far exceeded the bounds of your authority, sir! The prisoner, by this lady's own confession, is here only to meet *her*; and though both have erred in thus meeting at a time when war is between their flags, yet he has done nothing worthy of death. Moreover, had he been a spy, you have no right to take his execution into your own hands without a trial."

Then turning to the prisoner, he kindly smiled, and said:

"You are free, senor, in consideration of your past service to me and mine, and I will take this lady's word that you came but to visit her. Yet let me warn you that such visits are as dangerous to you as to her."

"They will not be repeated, senor," replied the now liberated American, who could scarcely realize or understand how he had been saved. Had his eye caught a glance of Vicentio's face, who, standing by the general's side, had gazed with a look of malignant satisfaction upon Gorin, whose face was almost black with anger at his defeat, he would have understood all.

On the night before, when he saw that his mistress and her lover had fallen into the hands of their enemy, he had taken a fresh horse from the stable, and riding back with all speed to the spot where he knew Urrea had encamped for the night, had made him acquainted with the danger which menaced Edwina Canales, and the preserver of his daughter. Urrea, mounting instantly, had arrived, as we have seen, just in time to save the noble American, and to frustrate the designs of Gorin.

Blakey, after he was freed, spent but a brief time longer with her whom he loved, then hastened to the northward to regain his own camp. The news that he had for his general was important; it was that Santa Anna, with twenty thousand men, was on his route to meet him. When he gave this information to General Taylor, he was astonished at the perfect calmness with which it was received. The general had brought up only about four thousand men to Saltillo, and many of these were men untried in battle—men whom he feared would not stand before a mass so immense as that which approached.

"Santa Anna numbers twenty thousand, you say?" was the remark of old Rough and Ready, as Blakey gave in his report.

"Yes, sir; and his men seem eager to be led to battle."

"They will be more eager to get out of it, I reckon," said the old general, with a smile, and then asked, "Has he many cannon?"

"About thirty pieces; but they are poorly fitted, and will be but poorly served."

"That's a bad lookout in him. His guns should be his first object—how is his cavalry?"

"Good, sir—he has an immense number of lancers and rancheros."

"Rancheros? They are apt to fight," said Taylor, thoughtfully; "what force of infantry has he?"

"Almost eleven thousand, so far as I could learn," replied the young officer.

"It is well. You have nobly done your duty in this case; you have nobly refuted the false accusation which brought you before a court martial. It will give me a double pleasure to bear witness to your zeal and ability, when I next write to the War Department."

"You remind me, in speaking of that court, that I saw my accuser while on this scout."

"Whom, Gorin?"

"Yes, general; failing to prove me a traitor, he has become one himself. He holds a commission with the enemy, and is in command of a company formed of deserters from us!"

"Then if he can be but recaptured, I will show him what a traitor deserves!" said the general, while his face grew dark with displeasure. "If he dares to face our troops in battle, it shall go hard with him. He shall be captured, if men and arms can do it."

The general was now joined by a number of officers, for whom he had sent to give them the news, and to counsel upon the steps to be taken. Many of his best troops had been sent for to join General Scott, at Vera Cruz; his favorite general, the gallant Worth, he whose "waving plume" had ever been seen in the battle's front, was gone. Yet Wool, with as gallant and noble a spirit as ever bounded at the thought of glory, was there; a part of the regulars who had, under Ridgley, Bragg, and the noble Ringgold, fought at Palo Alto, Resaca and Monterey, were yet with him, and he had determined to meet and fight the enemy.

When, therefore, he gave them the news, he did not ask the

advice of the officers whether or not he should fight the foe, but simply where they thought would be the best battle ground. The veteran Wool was the first to answer, and he at once described the ground, which now is so well known as the "bloody field of Buena Vista!" Others proposed a spot still further in advance, called "Agua Nueva," but the result of General Taylor's inspection was the choice of Buena Vista, to which, after marching as far forward as Agua Nueva, he fell back.

For some days after the return of Blakey, daily rumors of the approach of the Mexicans kept the camp in excitement, and hurried preparations for the battle that now appeared inevitable, were continually making. The generals and commanders of regiments kept their troops under a continual drill, much to the dissatisfaction of the latter, who could not appreciate the use or necessity of such severe lessons, although they soon afterward learned and acknowledged how much they were benefited by the course.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA.

It is not necessary for us to describe the ground of Buena Vista; already have an hundred descriptions, and even paintings of it, been scattered before our readers. Nor will we attempt a full description of the battle. It has already been recorded in the glorious pages of American history. We will only confine ourselves to the scenes and incidents in which the characters of our drama take part; in fact, we have only room to attend to them and their respective fates in this little story.

As our readers of course know, the two armies met on the *twenty-second* of February, the anniversary of the great Washington's birthday—an omen which could not be otherwise than favorable. This day was spent in skirmishing and manœuvring, without any decisive or very important advantage on either side. The troops slept upon their arms on that night—or, at least, lay down upon them, for we opine that sleep visited but few eyes on either side on that night. When the morning's sun arose on the *twenty-third*, then the Americans had a fair

view of the foe before them; of the labor which they must that day perform.

As far as they could look along the mountain sides, and in the valley, stood the serried host of the enemy, their arms glittering like silver in the rosy sunlight. And soon they began to move—those vast fields of men, whose flaunting banners shook out like tongues of defiance on the breeze.

Soon the roar of the tempest of war began; soon the adverse tides seemed to roll up to meet each other, and then the booming cannon, the rattle of musketry, and the sharper crackling of the American rifles, began to tell the tale of death and destruction that was going on.

The Kentuckians were posted in the centre on this day, although they had been engaged on the mountain side to the left, on the twenty-second. The gallant McKee was at their head; near to him was posted Washington's well-served battery.

Opposed to this force was the main body of the enemy's lancers, and among these, as the line advanced at a sweeping trot, Blakey felt almost sure that he recognized the form of Edwina Canales. It was indeed she whom he saw, ere that line started for the charge, ride along its front, waving her hat and cheering the men on to their duty.

The Mexicans came—a body of over six thousand horse—sweeping right down upon the Kentucky regiment under McKee and Clay, and the Illinoisans under Hardin. As they came fairly within range, the batteries of Sherman, Bragg and Washington opened upon them; yet on they came—fresh men filling up each gap made in their ranks by the storm of grape and canister which met them.

Soon they were engaged hand to hand—lance and sabre, pistol and bayonet, all in a fierce and dreadful melee, struggling for the victory. The numbers of the Mexicans made it indeed a fearful struggle—for their very weight seemed enough to crush our little army. Entirely surrounded by the foe, nobly did these gallant spirits stem the fierce tide of battle. Clay, McKee, Hardin, Zabriskie, Lincoln fell, yet steadily, desperately fought the survivors over their fallen friends, and finally the Mexicans, leaving the ground covered with their dead were forced to give way.

Twice Blakey saw Edwina Canales amid the storm of battle; once did he strike down the weapon of one of his own riflemen

which was aimed at her breast. She was so near to him, that he could distinguish that she wore upon her arm the band of silver lace which he had sent her at Monterey; he felt sure, therefore, that she could recognize the blue scarf which, a present from her hand, crossed his breast, making him more conspicuous as a mark for the enemy.

So far, he had not seen or heard of Gorin and his party of deserters, and he began to think that they had shrunk from the battle. He had seen, when the lancers gave way and fell back, that Edwina still rode, seemingly unharmed, among them; and as she had apparently left the field, he felt more at ease than when he knew that she was mingling in the perils of that dreadful charge.

He received orders at this moment to ride to the left, and to report the repulse of the enemy in the centre to General Taylor; and as the strife seemed to be fearfully hot on the left, he spurred his horse swiftly on, in hopes yet to share in the honor of serving immediately under the eye of his general.

He arrived at that fearful crisis when the whole fate of the day seemed to hang upon a thread—when the enemy, having by a ruse found out the station of General Taylor, had turned every gun in that direction, and advanced with almost all their force upon that point.

Protected by Bragg's battery alone, the infantry all having fallen back or taken ground more to the right, Blakey found his general. Calmly seated on his old white war steed, with but two or three of his staff around him, was Taylor, looking with a firm but anxious eye upon the advancing mass of the enemy.

Blakey here found that the lancers, who had been repulsed in the centre, had re-formed, and were again in the van of the enemy; and again he recognized the noble form of the heroine, as she rode with wild grace the coal-black horse which mated his own. He saw, too, that the cavalry of the Mexicans was supported in the rear by a large body of infantry; and when he looked around at the handful of men who were by the side of his general, he trembled for the result.

The Mexicans came on, and as they came within his range, Bragg opened his battery with fearful effect, mowing down horses and men in broad swaths as they came on. Yet it did not check the charge; on, on they came, and he was loading his guns for a last, it seemed a hopeless, effort. At this fearful

moment, when brave men felt that their hour was at hand—when Bragg's artillerists were preparing to contest hand to hand with the foe—as they were placing the last charge into their guns, which they could not load again before the foe would be upon them, a low, stern voice in the rear of the battery was heard, which seemed like magic to affect them. The words were few and simple:

“*A little more grape, Captain Bragg!*” was all that was said, yet he who spoke seemed so calm, so full of confidence, that the men knew from that moment that they were invincible while he lived.

“Double shot with grape! Double shot each gun!” cried Bragg, cheerfully, as he heard the voice of his commander.

“Double shot it is with grape—and give 'em Jessie!” responded the men, and the next moment each piece was filed almost to the muzzle with grape. Then came the order:

“Depress the guns for close work—now fire!” And with the sound of that fearful discharge, arose a cheer from the gallant artillerists that seemed almost to pierce the skies.

A thick cloud was between them and the foe; when it arose, they saw but a struggling heap of men and horses. The whole front of the cavalry line was mowed down—not shattered or scattered, but mowed down by that fearful discharge.

Yet the Mexicans seemed resolved not to give up the prize which lay before them. The infantry was ordered to advance, and now, for the first time, Blakey saw Gorin and his company of deserters. They were detailed as a forlorn hope to take the battery, and right gallantly they dashed on toward it. But the “grape” was again prepared for them; one more fearful volley, and over two-thirds of the company lay dead upon the ground. The Mexican infantry turned and fled, and Gorin, cursing their cowardice and his own bad luck, followed them slowly.

Blakey, seeing that he had but a few men with him, collected a few horsemen, and with the permission of the general, attempted his capture; but he was too late to reach him before he had regained the main body of the enemy, whom it would have been madness for him to attack, with but twenty men at his back.

He had lost sight of Edwina after that last, deadly shower of grape; and now, as he rode slowly back, his eye glanced anxiously along that dreadful winnow of death, fearful lest it should light upon her mangled form.

He had passed nearly by the front ranks, when he heard his name murmured near him. He glanced around; his face turned deathly pale. He indeed saw her, as she lay there, amid the dead and dying, beside her noble steed, which had been almost cut in two by the shot. In a moment he sprang from his horse and knelt by her side, raising her head to his bosom.

"O, Heaven! are you wounded, dear one? Thank God I have met you so soon!" he exclaimed, calling at the same moment to a soldier to come and aid in raising her from the gory heap in which she was half buried.

"I am hurt more by the fall of my horse, under which I at first fell," replied she. But at the moment she spoke, the blood, gushing from a wound in her shoulder, told of a still more serious injury from a shot.

It was but a few moments before Blakey and his men had extricated her from her perilous position; and confiding her to the charge of two of them, he bade them hasten with her to Saltillo and there procure a surgeon, and guard her with every care and kindness until he could leave the field and attend her in person.

This done, he returned to the side of his general, who had been too busy in watching the appearance of the field, to note his last adventure. The storm of battle still rolled along the right, but soon May and Pike, with the dragoons, closed the scene there—losing poor Yell, and other noble spirits, in the charge, but completely driving the foe before them.

Although the battle was still kept up by small, detached parties, the fate of the day was no longer uncertain. Victory was ours! Taylor had won his fourth and most glorious battle.

When darkness came over the sky, the black-mouthed cannon ceased to give its loud thunders to the air. But sadder tones were now heard! The shrieks and moans of hundreds who were dying in such agony as none save those who have felt it can know, filled now the heavy and stifling air; near three thousand dead and dying men lay scattered over that terrible field.

All of that night, groups of kind angels, women of Mexico, were scattered about the ensanguined plain, attending to the suffering, careless whether it was to friend or foe that they extended this kindness, so that it was a sufferer whom they could assist.

CHAPTER XVI.

GORIN CAST ADRIFT FROM THE MEXICANS.

It was but a few days after the battle of Buena Vista, wher Urrea, with all of the forces which he had left, by making a detour around the mountains, regained his old position in the "Bolsa de Flores," to the westward of Monterey. Canales the elder had gone to the northward, sad and disheartened at this last defeat, and mourning the loss of his noble sister, who was reported among the slain, which he doubted not, for her company was cut to pieces. He had not crossed the path of Gorin, who had become as unpopular among his new friends, as he had before been among the Americans. Urrea found his wife and daughter safe on his return, and the latter was full of joy, in that her lover had returned safe to her side.

We are opposed to love scenes; no, not opposed to them exactly either, but opposed to describing them, therefore we will not give the reader a picture of the first interview between Anita and young Canales; but a conversation which ensued as they walked up the valley on the same evening, was sufficiently sober and sensible for us to give to the reader's eye.

"You are very, very sad to-night, dear Bonaventura," said Anita, as she gazed up into the dark eyes of her young lover.

"Yes, dearest, I am thinking of my poor sister."

"Perhaps she lives yet," replied the fair girl, in whose fond heart everything rested on hope.

"No, I fear it is useless so to hope. She was seen to fall, her company was all slain. I saw Vicentio in the mass of dead and dying, and asked him where she was. He told me that she had fallen in the charge made to capture the American general."

"Is Vicentio slain, too?"

"No, he was badly wounded; but I think if he was cared for, he may have been saved."

“Would to Heaven that I could hope!” sighed the brother; “but no, I will not; I will let hope die, while my revenge shall burn until death!”

“O, talk not so wildly; would to Heaven I could have prevailed upon her to remain by my side.”

“Would to Heaven you had—but there is a soldier riding this way. He is pale, and looks as if he was weak and travel-worn.”

“Yes; but look, Bonaventura, surely I have seen him before. It is, it must be Vicentio.”

The eye of Bonaventura brightened as he recognized in the pale soldier who rode slowly toward him, the spy, the one whom we have already known so faithful to Edwina. As he saw him, he bounded to his side, exclaiming, as he reached him:

“Are you indeed alive? O, where is my sister—is she dead?”

“Read her letter,” said the spy, faintly; “I have brought it from her own hand.”

“Thank God!” exclaimed the youth, as with a trembling hand he tore open the letter which the wounded soldier handed to him.

“Is she much injured?” now asked Anita, while her eyes glistened with the tears of joy which were rising in them.

The young brother read her letter aloud, the better to assure the young girl of his sister’s welfare, It was as follows:

“DEAR BROTHER:—I write that you may not feel uneasy regarding my fate. I was sadly wounded, but was found, providentially, upon the battle-field, and have since been attended with tender and devoted care by the same noble American unto whom I was twice before indebted for my life, Captain Blakey. I am better, but not sufficiently well to leave the camp; in fact, it seems that it will be long ere I shall feel willing to leave a place where I have been so kindly and tenderly treated.

“Let our brother know that I am safe—give my warm regards to Anita, and believe that I am as happy as any one in my situation can be.

EDWINA.”

“Seemed she happy when you left her?” asked the young officer.

“As happy, senor, as you would be if you were too weak to

leave the side of yon blushing young lady. She, too, has a lover."

"A lover? surely she has not loved one of the enemy!" exclaimed the brother.

"She surely has; one who has saved her life so often as this Blakey, certainly deserves some gratitude in return."

"But not the love of my sister," said the proud young brother, seeming to think that her love was indeed a priceless boon.

"I should love him had he been thrice the saviour of my life," said Anita. And as she spoke, the youth seemed to yield to the force of her argument, for he smiled sadly and said:

"It is well, perhaps, that it is so, yet I would rather she had not given her love unto one of the Saxon blood. She is from one of the proudest stocks of Spain. I would that she had wed a Spaniard or remained single."

"The blood of this lover of hers may not be Spanish, nor his line of descent so haughty as her own, but this he has proved: that he is ready to die for her—that her life is precious to him," said Anita, with spirit.

"It is true," replied Bonaventura; "but I must go and see her; I must know all this from her own lips."

The cheeks of Anita turned pale as she heard this; she liked not this sudden parting with her lover; she liked not that he should be exposed in the dangerous vicinity of the American camp again, for fearful rumors of the excesses committed by the troops in revenge for their loved and lost leaders, came but too often, we need not say falsely, to her ears. Therefore she cried in answer:

"Surely you can write to her. It will be dangerous for you to go to their camp; besides, you know how strict now is my father. He has forbidden any communication with the enemy, under the fearful penalty of death."

"I must see my sister," replied the youth, firmly. "I can do so in three or four days, and your father will not know where I have gone."

"O, Bonaventura, do not leave me," sighed the young girl. "I have a sad presentiment that if we part now, our parting will be eternal."

"O, shake off such foolish thoughts, Anita; I will return safely within three or four days," replied the other.

Her only answer was tears and sobs; and leaving her in these, he that night set out, leaving an apology to the general for a

few days' absence. In thus proceeding he acted contrary to the rigid rules of military discipline, but he had counted much upon his general's usual kindness towards him, perhaps too much, but let the sequel show.

After the battle of Buena Vista, Santa Anna, who had only paused to collect his scattered forces at San Luis Potosi, and whose temper had not been much sweetened by his defeat, caused Gorin to be summoned before him. The latter hastened to obey the order, expecting some reward for his bravery on the field, for he had indeed fought desperately well, as the loss of over two-thirds of his men proved. But he was taken all aback with astonishment to find that abuse instead of praise, censure instead of reward, was to be his.

"We have no further need of deserters in our service, sir; you and your company are not needed any longer," said the Mexican general.

"Do I understand you, general?" said Gorin, evidently doubting his own ears:

"You certainly ought so to do," replied the former, in a cold, contemptuous tone. "You are no longer needed in my army; you had better return to that from which you came."

"Is this the reward which I am to have for all my services?" asked the other.

"Perhaps you may get a higher reward in your own camp," said the Mexican general in a sarcastic tone, at the same time turning on his wooden stump and stumping away.

Gorin paused a moment, his whole frame quivering with excitement and anger; his brow clouded with mortification. He had become a traitor to his country, only to be foiled in all his aims. His revenge had been thwarted, his services despised and passed over unrequited; in short, without benefiting himself in any way, he became a traitor and an outcast from both sides, one who seemed to be cursed by a most untoward and relentless fate.

After this insulting interview he retired to his quarters, where for a short time he made his future course a subject of study. He had about twenty men left—deserters, fellows who were devoid of principle and all things save mere brute courage. They were fit tools to serve his villany, and his first thought was now to form them into a banditti corps, determining to prey on either side, whenever plunder was to be had or revenge to be obtained.

"Ay," said he, in a bitter tone, though speaking to himself, "ay, I will show them what a desperado and wronged man may do for revenge. I will hover around until every enemy has felt my power. I will have full and ample vengeance. Canales is terrible, but I will be more so. Let him—Blakey, let all beware of me. Henceforth I belong to no side, I war with the whole world."

He hastened to the quarters of his men, and having, with many additions, related the insulting dismissal of himself and company from Santa Anna's service, proposed to them his plan, to make both parties their prey henceforth. As he expected, his proposition was acceded to with loud acclamations, and on the same night, he and his "free companions" were mounted and speeding to the northward, unto a richer country than that which they were then in. Leaving them for the present, we will return to another of our characters.

It was not until the day after the battle that Blakey could be so relieved from his duties as to get time to pay a visit to Edwina, whom, however, he had heard from favorably, through the surgeon who had dressed her wounds. As soon as his duties permitted, however, he hastened to her side. To his inquiry as to her situation, her weak, low-toned reply was:

"I am better, now that I know you are safe. But this has been a fearful time."

"Yes, dearest; never have I seen its like before—never may I look upon it again!"

"I think you will not. I fear me that Santa Anna never will have the power to raise such another army as that which you have conquered. Your general is indeed invincible."

"So it seems," replied Blakey, proudly; "but his success in this dreadful battle has been almost providential. At times the fate of the day seemed to vacillate from side to side, as you have seen some mighty tree trembling as it received the last few blows of the woodman's axe, first swaying a little to one side, and then to the other, leaving the beholder uncertain which way it would fall."

"Yes, it was too true; when with fluttering pennons and bloody spurs we advanced to that last charge, it seemed to me impossible that we could be stayed, but that fearful cannonade was more than the warriors of the Cid in the olden times could have faced."

CHAPTER XVII.

URREA AND HIS DAUGHTER.

"ANITA, are you aware which way Don Bonaventura Canales has gone?" asked her father, sternly of Donna Anita, a few hours after his departure. "The young man dares much to leave my camp in times like these, without my consent."

The young lady dared not answer her father directly, for she saw that his mood was angry, and she knew well that her lover had taken a rash step, therefore she answered:

"He has gone to take a short journey, my father, caused by a sudden message which he received."

"From whom, child?"

"From some relative—who wished his presence."

"Know you when he will return?"

"Four days, he told me, would be the time of his absence."

"Four days! in four days he can travel far,—Anita, you know all of his secrets—I demand of you where he has gone," cried the father, in a tone more stern than he generally used.

She dared not equivocate now, and replied: "To the American camp, to see his sister."

"His sister! was she not slain?"

"No, my father he got a letter from her last evening, and set out at once while you were absent."

"And he knew the orders that I had given—yes, for he copied them himself, forbidding any communication with the enemy on pain of death," said the general, sternly. "He is trifling with his own life."

"O, my father, surely he cannot be blamed for wishing to see his wounded and helpless sister—perhaps he has gone to rescue her from her captors."

"He is to be blamed, ay, and punished for disobeying orders," replied the general. "I would rather have cut off my left arm, than he whom I have so loved should be the first to disobey my orders, yet it is his own fault—on his head must rest its punishment."

"O, my father, you surely are not intending to take serious notice of this act?" cried the unhappy girl, bursting into tears.

"My daughter, there is no use in giving orders if obedience is not enforced. Don Bonaventura must be court-martialed on his return!"

"O Heaven—and if court-martialed, there is but one doom. My father, if he is lost, you lose your child. I love Don Bonaventura as none save I can love. He is my life, my all!"

With an astonishment which words could not express, General Urrea gazed upon his daughter, as he heard her utter these words. He had not dreamed that they who were so young had yet thought of love, nor had he wished it. Much as he was pleased with young Canales, whom he deemed brave and active, he looked upon him as far beneath his daughter in birth and station, and he did not think that the young man had ever aspired to more than the friendship of his daughter. Therefore it will not seem so strange that he replied:

"Love, child? Talk you of loving that unknown boy, you who are the only heir of the Urrea?"

"Yes, my father—I not only speak of love, but I avow that Bonaventura Canales has all of the love which my poor heart can give! Now, sir, try him, shoot him if you will, but remember that his life is mine!"

The father answered not, but with a clouded and troubled brow passed from the spot, leaving his daughter in tears. But she did not long remain so. With her mother's beauty, she had inherited all of her mother's tenderness, yet she did not entirely lack the spirit of her impetuous father. He had left her but a few moments, when she dashed away all appearances of grief, and summoning a female servant to her side, bade her seek out Vicentio the spy, and send him to her. When the spy appeared, she bade the girl leave the room, and then turning to the spy, said:

"Vicentio, I am going to the American camp—will you go with me?"

"To the American camp, lady?"

"Yes—to the American camp, or to meet on the road from it, Don Bonaventura Canales. His life is in danger—he must not return here—I must see him."

"Lady, I will go to him. The danger is too much for you—but what is the peril to his life?"

“He has gone to the American camp to see his sister, without my father’s permission. The penalty is death.”

“But surely your father will not enforce it on him!”

“In his duty my father knows no favorites—he is sterner to his friends than to any others.”

“I will go and warn him of his danger, lady—but you must not undertake the journey.”

“O, good Vicentio, say not so. I would see him again before we part, perhaps forever.”

“Lady, you will not be long separated. I know your father well—his heart will soften when he sees your sorrow; the young officer will be pardoned and soon recalled. I pray you not to leave this place of safety—I will at once see him and put him on his guard.”

“Be it so then, good Vicentio; carry to him my warmest words of love, tell him not to return until I send him word that he can do so safely.”

“I will, lady,” replied the spy, and soon left her presence, she being now more cheerful, for her heart was again reanimated with hope, for she knew that the spy by fast riding would be sure to overtake him.

Her father, re-entering the room a few moments after, seemed surprised that she had so soon checked the overrunning current of her grief, but made no remark upon it. He came to bid her prepare for a journey to the northward—he was about to move his position. She would have given much to have known this but a few moments sooner, but now it was too late for her wish, the spy was already speeding on his route toward the American camp. To this we will ourselves pay a brief visit.

Bonaventura Canales, coming with a white flag, and begging permission to visit his wounded sister, found no difficulty in gaining admittance to the American camp, and soon clasped her weak form to his bosom. Almost as kind and tender was his meeting with Blakey, for he could not look upon the man who thrice had saved his sister’s life and once his own, without feeling the full tide of gratitude rushing up from his heart’s warmest depths. After the first thrill of joy at the meeting had passed away, the three engaged in a conversation touching the prospects of a peace, which all of them seemed ardently to wish for.

“I am tired of a war in which we get nothing but hard knocks

and poor pay," was the natural remark of the younger Canales. And his sister added:

"Yes, brother—a war in which those who are most innocent are the greatest sufferers. I am sure that the poor peasantry whose fields are laid waste, and whose little all has been destroyed, who have been preyed upon by their own countrymen more than by their foes, had but little to do in drawing the desolating storm of war down upon themselves."

"It is one that I have seen enough of to satisfy me for a lifetime," added Blakey; "and as my term of service soon expires, it will probably be the last war of invasion in which I shall ever participate. I would die for the defence of my country, but never again will I leave her borders to seek for glory."

Edwina was about to reply, when an orderly came in and announced a Mexican soldier, who had come into the camp, inquiring for Captain Blakey's quarters. We need scarcely inform the reader that it was Vicentio, and his information was soon imparted to the younger Canales.

"What steps will you adopt?" asked his sister.

"I shall return to the camp," answered the other.

"No, it must not be—you will only go there to die," responded the sister.

"General Urrea is a man—he surely cannot carry out his orders in this case, when he reflects upon the sacred duty which caused me to break them."

"I fear for you, my brother; yet if you will return, and I am not considered a prisoner, I shall go with you. I have much influence with Urrea," said Edwina sadly, looking toward Blakey, who now had become an accepted lover, their engagement to be consummated at the closing of the war.

"You surely are not a prisoner, yet indeed it will be painful for me to separate from you, and you are yet too weak to endure the fatigue of a journey, dearest," replied Blakey.

"I will only stay if my brother will defer his return to the camp of his general."

"For your sake I will change my course, dear sister, and by easy stages we can rejoin our brother, who is on the northern borders. I can easily find his camp," said the brother. And to this they all consented.

The brother now left the two alone for a short time, in order to prepare for his return, taking Vicentio with him. When they were alone, Blakey sadly remarked:

"I had not dreamed of parting so soon from you, dear Edwina. I had almost hoped that we might be together until the close of the war. I am sure that peace must follow this last decisive battle."

"It will be better for us to part now," replied the lady. "I am but an incumbrance here—I am now able to travel, and if peace is soon made, the sooner we will meet again."

"But you are not an incumbrance upon my duties, dear one; and moreover, in one week more my term of service expires, my company will be discharged, and then I shall seek my northern home—would to God that you were going with me!"

The lady sighed, but answered not, and he continued:

"Why can you not go with me? Why may we not even now be united?"

"My brothers are here—how can I desert them? they are fighting for their adopted country."

"They will join us when the war is over—we will no more mingle in its horrors, but live henceforth for each other only."

"It cannot be—you had better defer it until you return to your home. I shall remain faithful to you."

"I fear not your want of constancy, dearest, but it will be painful for me to leave you here in a land of strife—to know that you are in danger."

"I am used to that—I should not be at home were I not in peril," she replied, with a sad smile. "But we soon shall meet again, if this war is as near its close as you think."

"And if not—"

"I will meet you and leave my brothers, after I have seen my noble Licencio once more," replied she.

"Where can I meet you?"

"At Matamoras, or some point in that vicinity," replied Edwina.

"Then, dear one, on these conditions I will bear our separation with patience and hope, and will hasten homeward to prepare my parents to receive their daughter—to make my home ready for my bride."

Edwina was blushing deeply, when at this moment her brother returned, and prevented further remarks of that nature.

"I hope we shall again meet, senor, when the storm of war is over, and no clouds may overshadow us," said the younger Canales, as he signified his intention at once to depart.

"We shall, I trust," replied the other; then as if a sudden

thought had struck him, he asked, "where do you think you will find your brother?"

"To the west of Camargo, somewhere—not far from the road to the Rio Grande," was the response of the young officer.

In a short time they had separated, very sadly, but tenderly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

URREA ON HIS WAY NORTHWARD.

ON the day which succeeded that on which General Urrea bade his daughter prepare to go northward, he despatched his troops toward a point in that direction, where he intended to take post temporarily, near the Camargo road, for the purpose of cutting off some of the many wagon trains which were used to convey stores and munitions to the American army. As nothing of our force was stirring in the vicinity save the few escorts of the wagon trains, who never left the road, he feared no reverses of his successor here, and bidding his commanding colonel keep clear of that until he rejoined him, he permitted the troops to take up their march. He was delayed from following them at once, by Donna Anita, who became suddenly ill, too ill to travel, and therefore it was the morning of the fourth day before he was ready to follow his division. He did not know what had caused his daughter to recover her health with almost the same rapidity with which she became ill; but the reader will understand it, when we inform him, that before dawn on that day, Vicentio, the spy, had returned to El Bolsa de Flores, bringing, unknown to her father, a message to the lady from her lover, who was already on his route to the north.

In fact, the strange girl was now as anxious to hasten her father, as for the four preceding days she had been to delay him. To this he had no objection, but wished, by riding rapidly, soon to overtake the rear guard of his little army, for he did not much relish travelling with only his few servants as an escort. Therefore for a couple of days they made very rapid progress, and had nearly overtaken the troops, stopping on the second night at a small rancho, which they had passed that day at noon. The general had determined to rest here for the night

knowing that a few hours' ride in the morning would enable him to regain them.

There was but one decent house at the rancho, and this, as were also the huts which surrounded it, deserted by all of the inhabitants except one old negro, who, in answer as to where the people were, could only say that Canales had been there the day before, and forced the men to take up arms, and that the women, of choice, had followed his camp. This was pleasant news to Urrea, for he was made aware that Canales, whom he greatly valued, was near him, and he desired to form a junction with him, to attack some of the northern posts.

Posting a servant as a sentinel before his door, the general took up his quarters with his wife and daughter, in the house. He retired very early, in order to be ready for his start at the dawn.

It was near that dawn, that he was awakened by the report of his sentinel's musket, which was followed quickly by the reports of fire-arms at the door, and by the sound of curses and shouts. Springing at once to his feet, he seized his weapons and rushed to the door, which he opened only to find that he was entirely surrounded, that three of his servants were slain, and himself wholly in the power of the enemy, whom he judged to be soldiers of the American army, as they spoke in English. Seeing that resistance would be useless, he exclaimed, to him who seemed to command:

"I surrender to you—I am General Urrea—and claim protection for my wife and daughter."

"So, ho! we are old acquaintances, then," cried the individual whom he addressed. "I am exceedingly glad to have the pleasure of meeting General Urrea and his family."

To his surprise, Urrea readily recognized the voice of Gorin, whom he still supposed to belong to the Mexican army, and now replied, in a different and more haughty tone:

"Ah, is it you, sir? Then you have made a slight error in this midnight attack, whereby you have slain my servants and placed my life in jeopardy. You are too rash, sir."

"Not at all, sir, nor have I made any mistake," replied the robber, coolly.

"Sir, beware how you address your superior! do not forget the distance between a captain and a general."

"The distance between us, sir, is a very convenient one for putting a stop to this conversation, and repaying you for having

thwarted me in my revenge once. Do you remember Salado?"

"You are insolent, sir! Are you not aware that here you are to respect me as your general, as if all of my troops were around me?"

"No, sir, I respect no one, I acknowledge no general—I am free, and general only for myself."

"Do you not belong to the Mexican army?"

"No—I have had the honor of a dismissal, and now have an undoubted right to fight on my own hook, with whom I please, and when it suits me."

"You have turned robber, then?" exclaimed Urrea, in a tone of alarm.

"Yes, if you like the name, or land-pirate, if you like it better. I have some twenty friends here, who have an ardent desire to become rich. I am anxious to assist them," replied the villain, in the same sneering tone, and then he added:

"You spoke of your wife and daughter—are they alone with you, or have they any female friends with them?"

"They are alone, and I claim respect for them, at least. I am willing to pay a ransom for them and myself."

"I have no doubt you are," sneered the other; "but is not one who calls herself Edwina Canales with them? I am exceedingly anxious to find that lady."

"No; she is in the American camp, a prisoner."

"A very willing one, doubtless; but as she is not here, where is her brother?"

"With her, at the American camp. But leaving this, name your ransom—I wish not to be detained."

"O, we are in no hurry, noble general. Make yourself easy; I must see your daughter, and see what her ransom is worth. I never saw her but once, and then as it was twilight, and I was very busy, had but little opportunity to see whether she were pretty or not."

"Sir, I wish no insult; I only pray that you may name your ransom. My military chest is not far from here—name your price, and permit me to despatch a servant, if I have one left, for the money," cried the general, who now felt a deep anxiety, as he heard the coarse allusions of his captor.

"And I suppose you have troops to guard your military chest—it would be exceedingly easy to bring a few of them to take care of the ransom. But you don't trap me, sir. I will let you go and bring it, and keep your wife and daughter as securities."

If you come alone and bring the money, you shall have them again; if not, I reckon I can take care of them."

As the robber said this, there seemed to be a fearful meaning in his words, and Urrea feared for the worst, yet determined to defend his wife and daughter to the last, and responded:

"No, I will not leave them; I am willing to send a messenger for the money, but I shall not leave them."

"They must be worth guarding—I must see the precious jewels," cried the villain. "Just have the goodness to introduce me." And as he spoke, he advanced.

"Stand back! you do not enter this door, save over my dead body!" cried Urrea, who still retained his weapons, and now raised his sword.

"Well, well; if you wish to have your *quietus*, I can accommodate you," sneered the villain, drawing a pistol from his belt. As he took a deliberate aim at the breast of the general, he added:

"Now will you move out of my way, senor?"

"Never—never! But for God's sake, ransom us, and permit us to go," cried the other.

"Go and get your ransom—bring me ten thousand dollars, and you may go."

"Let me take my wife and daughter with me, and on my honor—"

"Honor! Ha, ha! You must think me a fool! Come, come—this is no time for playing or tampering. Get out of my way, or abide by the consequences."

As the villain said this, he advanced, but the sword of Urrea was at his breast, and with a look of fiendish malice, he raised his pistol with a deadly aim; one moment more, and Urrea would have been slain, but his daughter, who had been listening in the agony of terror, sprang forward, screaming:

"O, spare him—for the love of Heaven, spare my father!"

O, how beautiful, even in terror, she looked, her hair unbound and lying loose upon her uncovered neck and shoulders, for she was in the *dishabille* of her night dress. The eye of the robber gleamed with lustful pleasure as he saw her, and while in flinging her arms around her father's form to attempt to shield him with her own body, she disabled his resistance, he villain rushed in upon him, and with the aid of two or three of his desperate followers, in a moment had overpowered and bound him. While this was done, the daughter uttered piercing

screams, which, though they echoed wildly through the air, called vainly for help, for who was near to help them?

"You needn't make so much noise, my pretty friend, it is of no use; I am in power, now," cried the villain, as he seized her and attempted to stifle her cries, but as she felt his touch, she sprang as if his hands were of fire, from his reach, and again uttered a piercing shriek.

At this instant the sound of galloping horses was heard, the sparks of fire from steel-shod hoofs were seen in the darkness, showing that horsemen were coming along the rocky road, and before Gorin could again reach her side—for she had fallen to the earth near the camp fire which illuminated the front of the house and showed the actors in the scene—the form of an armed cavalier crossed the space between them, and with a sweeping blow of his sabre, would have crushed him, had he not darted aside. The cavalier, however, did not strike a useless blow; it fell upon the head of one of Gorin's followers, and ere these could know by whom or how many they were attacked, two more had uttered their death yells. The clattering of other hoofs was now heard, and Gorin, struck with panic, shouted:

"To horse, boys, and be off; I expect the whole pack is on us! The deuce take the hindmost!" and setting the example, was in a moment lost in the darkness, followed by all of his gang save the three who had fallen by the stranger's sword.

One moment afterward Anita Urrea opened her eyes. The rescuer had sprung from his horse, and knelt by her side. As she looked up in his face, her wildly-gleaming eyes changed in their expression, and with a glad cry, she clasped her arms around his form, screaming:

"O, my Bonaventura, is it indeed you?"

"None other, my loved one." And then as the other rider came up, he added, "Dear sister, our friends are in trouble; do aid this poor girl in recovering, while I unbind her father."

The one whom he addressed was indeed Edwina, who hastened to assist her friend, while the brother turned to aid the general, who lay helpless upon the ground, where he had been left by the villain Gorin, who had bound him, and his wife, who had fainted in the doorway.

"Are you hurt, my general?" he asked, as he bent over and cut the cords which bound him.

"Is not that Bonaventura Canales who speaks? Have you alone rescued us from our fearful peril?"

"It is I who am at your side. The villains, whoever they are, have fled—all but three of them," replied the other.

"You are a noble boy; I owe to you more than life, most probably my daughter's honor!" exclaimed the general. Then as he looked down upon the bodies of his servants, he exclaimed, "Poor Vicentio, Matteo, Salado—all gone. That rascal, Gorin, intended to make sure work of it."

"Was it he who attacked you? O, would to Heaven I had known it, I would not have missed my blow. But he had force with him, he may return. We had better leave this spot ere the light of day comes on, to show the weakness of our party. He must have thought that your whole regiment was upon him, he decamped so rapidly."

"I hope that a part of my force is near," replied the other, "for I like not to travel so nearly alone, in this dangerous neighborhood."

At this moment the call of a bugle was heard near; the long, regular blast, as used in the cavalry.

"Who can that be? If it is a body of troop, they march early," cried Urrea.

"I will soon see," cried the young man, mounting his horse. "I will return in a moment," he continued, as he rode rapidly off in the direction whence the sound had come.

CHAPTER XIX.

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF URREA AND HIS PARTY.

WHEN the young officer mounted his horse, he rode rapidly away to the northward, led by the occasional blast of the bugle which seemed to be approaching, yet it was at some distance from him, for near half an hour elapsed ere he came sufficiently near to hear the tramp of the horsemen. It was the gray of dawn when he paused and cautiously examined their appearance, to endeavor to learn if they were friends or foes. He did not remain long in doubt—one eager look showed him that they were lancers; he knew that the Americans had no corps of that kind in the country, and therefore these must be

friends. He dashed his spurs into his horse's side, and in a moment was in the presence of his brother! One moment was passed in a warm and tender embrace, as each bent forward on their steeds, and then the elder asked:

"What do you here? Where art thou going, Bonaventura?"

"I was seeking you, brother—but I have no time to answer questions. Our sister is near, with General Urrea, and his daughter and wife. They may be in danger now—they have just escaped from imminent peril."

"Peril—what is it?" cried the other, turning his steed, and bidding his men follow at the same time.

"Gorin is near," was the reply of the youth, as he sped back toward the spot which he so lately had left.

"Gorin? O, grant that I may find him! Where is he? Have you seen him?"

"An half hour ago—Urrea and his daughter were in the villain's power. I rescued them—he fled, I know not where—but he must still be near."

"If he is, he shall yet be taken, for, by Heaven, I sleep not till the whole country is roused for the search. Has he a large force?"

"Eighteen or twenty villains—who seem not over brave, for they all ran from me and my sister alone, although they thought there were more of us, very probably."

The party had now nearly reached the rancho, though it yet was hidden from them by the thickness of the chapparal, through which they were riding. Raising his bugle to his lips, Licencio Canales blew a cheerful peal, to give notice to the general that friends were near, and then dashed on at a gallop with his men. It was now broad day, and the red sun was tinging the tree-tops with its rose light.

As they came in sight of the clearing where stood the buildings of the rancho, the younger Canales put his horse to its speed, and rode on ahead, to carry his good news, but to his horror, those whom he expected to see were not there. Bounding from his steed, he rushed into the house—not a soul could he find within its walls.

O, who can tell his misery as he gazed around, and called upon their names, yet saw not, nor heard anything to give an idea of where they were? The thought struck him that they might have ridden off to meet him, but the horses of Urrea were in the stable—that which his sister rode alone was gone. There

were no marks of blood save those which were there when he left, no signs of any struggle having taken place—all was a dead and terrible mystery!

The elder brother, as he rode up, looked at the pale, horrified expression of his brother's face, then gazing around and seeing that he stood alone, seemed to divine the meaning of his looks.

"Are they gone?" he asked.

"Yes, gone—I fear forever gone! Gorin must have returned and surprised them; what could three feeble women and one man do to resist him!"

The youth groaned in his unutterable agony, as he thought of their danger; but his brother, more thoughtful, cried, sternly:

"Mount your horse! This is no time for delay. Take you ten of the men, and ride to the west. I will divide them off into tens, and have them scour the country in every direction. If the enemy are discovered, let the blast of a bugle call the others to the spot. Divide, men, and a thousand pesos to the first man who sees them; and hark! let no man slay the leader of the robbers, but at all risks, secure him a prisoner. He is my prey; I have a judgment for him. Away!"

Swiftly the lancers, dividing off into squads, hastened to obey their leader, and soon were galloping off in contrary directions. At the first order the younger brother had spurred off with a party, and now in a moment the elder turned his rein to the south, and the open ground was left vacant.

We owe you an apology, reader, for neglecting two very interesting, or at least two very worthy characters in our story, whom we have not alluded to since our first chapter. We mean the parents of Captain Blakey. They had heard of his bravery at Monterey, and had learned with pride that he was the favorite of his general, beloved by his soldiers, and had turned out to be a man in every sense of the word. They had received but very few letters from him; for his duties, as well as the few opportunities of remitting letters, had made it impossible to keep up a regular correspondence.

The first news which they received of the glorious battle of Buena Vista, had been through the papers, and days of agonizing suspense had they passed, ere they could learn that he had not fallen among the host of noble Kentuckians who on that day sealed their devotion to their country with their heart's blood. But at last the official despatches came, and his name was not among the killed and wounded; and then again in a

few days more they received from him a letter, describing the dangers through which he had passed, and assuring them of his safety. His time had nearly expired, and they were in hopes soon again to clasp him to their hearts.

We cannot better describe their feelings, than to give a conversation which passed between them, on receiving a letter from their son, which, as the old gentleman read it aloud to his lady, we are permitted to hear. It ran thus :

“DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER:—I write with a glad heart, and a hand trembling with pleasure, to tell you that within one week from this date my time of service expires, and I shall return home, for I don't believe we shall ever have another fight worth seeing in this part of the country. Tell all of the Logan County girls that I'll bring home their sweethearts, all except the poor fellows who fell at Buena Vista, for my company will return with me, and be paid off in New Orleans.

“I did intend to bring home a Mexican wife, but I can't prevail on her to make peace with me, until the war is over, so that I shall come home without her, and get things ready for her as soon thereafter as I can, for I am bound to have her. She is such a beauty! Eyes and hair as black as a thunder-cloud, teeth like pearls, a form like a picture, and moreover, she can fight like a tiger! Now isn't that a wife worth having?”

“But laying aside joking, my dear parents, I am indeed engaged to a noble girl, and shall marry her as soon as she will have me. Expect me within a very few days after you get this letter.

“I am now and forever heartfully affectionate, your son :

GEORGE BLAKEY.”

When Uncle Ned had finished reading this letter, he laid it down upon his knee, then deliberately removed his spectacles, and waited for the comments which he expected from his wife. But Aunt Letty spoke not; she seemed struck dumb either with pleasure or surprise, at the contents of the letter. Therefore Uncle Ned made the first remark :

“I'm glad the boy is coming home safe and sound. It will be a happy hour when I take his hand again!” said he.

“What was it he said about a wife, and her black eyes, and being one that would fight?” said the old lady, abstractedly. “Read me over that part of the letter, husband.”

The kind old gentleman slowly fixed his spectacles in their

place again, unfolded the letter, and read again that portion of it.

"Well, I can't see why he couldn't have got a wife good enough for him amongst the girls of our own neighborhood. As to the fighting—why, if that's true, he's a fool to have her, and I'm sure blue eyes are prettier than black ones, any day," was her remark now.

"But the boy wants to bring home some curiosity of the country, I suppose," said the father. "His pay is little enough for such hard duty, and he deserves some reward above it."

"I don't know whether such a wife would prove a reward or a punishment," replied the old lady, who did not much admire her son's description of his intended.

"Well, it's to be hoped that she's worth having. He always was a lad of fine taste—he takes after his father in that way!" And the worthy old gentleman chuckled at this double compliment to his wife and himself.

She, too, seemed pleased with it, for in a very pleasant tone, she said, "I'm glad, at any rate, the dear boy is coming home; I'm sure that if he brought a bear with him, I'd love it for his sake."

"Yes, I know you would; and if he brought a wife you would take to her as tender as if she were your own daughter. By the way, it's time George was married. We are getting too old to be troubled with business, and it's time we rested and took a little comfort."

"Yes, that's true," replied the old lady. "But, husband, this is too good news to keep from the neighborhood. The Logan County girls ought to know that their sweethearts are coming."

"Yes—I'll soon have the news scattered," replied the old man; "and we must have a real 'old-time' barbecue, to welcome him—I wish he was indeed going to bring his wife along with him."

"So do I," said Aunt Letty, forgetting how decidedly she had at first been opposed to the idea.

Reader, we know you are in a peck of trouble to know the fate of those whom we have left literally in the dark, those whom the band of Canales were in search of, in the commencement of this chapter, and as soon as we can, we will accommodate you, proceeding on our way to do so.

CHAPTER XX.

CAPTURE OF GORIN.—THE TRIAL.

A FEW days before Blakey's term of service expired, he received permission to return to Matamoras with his company, thence to take shipping for New Orleans, where they were to be paid off and discharged.

It is needless for us to expatiate on the pleasant thoughts which must have filled those soldiers' breasts, when they knew that their toil and peril was so nearly ended, that they were about to return to their firesides and homes, rendered cheerless by their prolonged absence; and it were painful for us to look back with them upon the graves of Buena Vista, where sleep some of their brave comrades, some whose relatives will never again meet them on earth.

Blakey started with only his own company, mounted and still under all the rules of military discipline, keeping as strict a guard as if he was advancing into, instead of leaving, the enemy's country. He had been only two days on the march, yet had ridden fast and far, when we again bring him before the reader. He always started with the dawn, so as to travel as far as possible in the cool of the day, and on the morning of his third day was in the saddle before daylight.

He rode rapidly along the road, listening to the cheering sounds of the birds which hopped about among the dewy branches, and followed close by his men. It was a few moments only after sunrise, when he saw a body of men riding rapidly across the road, a few hundred yards in advance of him, and take their course down a ravine which led to the east. He thought that they rode too rapidly for honest men, but as he only got a passing glimpse at them, and cared not about getting into any skirmishes now, he determined not to notice them, or attempt to see who they were. But his sergeant, a quick-sighted backwoodsman, had seen more than he, and riding up to his side, exclaimed:

"Captain, hadn't we better overhaul them ar yaller skins ahead thar? There's some deviltry agoin' on amongst 'em."

"Why do you think so? I suppose they are only peasants."

"Peasants don't carry so many tools as them ar fellers, and besides they had women on their horses, held there before them. I seed three petticoats, sartain."

"Are you sure?" asked Blakey, who had now with his party reached the head of the ravine, down which the others had ridden.

"Sartin, cap'n; and, by golly, do you hear that?" he replied, as a female shriek was heard from far down the ravine, "that's one of 'em, or Dan Maple's a liar."

"Wheel to the right, and follow me, men!" was the only answer made by Blakey, as he spurred down the ravine at full speed.

Once again he heard that shriek, and now it seemed as if it was a tone that thrilled upon his heart strings, and he drove his noble steed, his black war-horse, swift as the wind, over the rocky ground. As he emerged from the ravine and came out into a little grove of oaks beyond, he came in sight of the party whom he pursued, and he was close upon them. They had dismounted, and he saw in a moment that females were among them by the fluttering of their dresses in the morning breeze.

Another sight, however, met his eye; it was the form of an officer dangling by a rope from a limb of one of the oaks, to which it seemed he had just been hoisted, for he was struggling horribly. The females were on their knees upon the ground, while some dozen ruffians were grouped around them, still a dozen more being engaged in pulling upon the rope which was fastened around the neck of their unhappy victim.

Without drawing rein, close followed by his trusty riflemen, Blakey dashed on, and ere the others fairly saw him, he was upon them. One blow from his gleaming sabre and the rope which held aloft the struggling officer was severed, the next moment the same blade was crossed with the sword of the leader of the party, whom now he recognized as Gorin, and who had sprung upon his horse at the moment of alarm.

When each saw with whom he had to fight, hate settled upon both countenances, and each involuntarily shouted, "*To the death!*"

Without heeding the others, who were already engaged with steel, and with their pistols, the two superior foes bent their

sole attention to each other. Blows swift and heavy were given and parried; both were excellent swordsmen, and neither seemed to gain any advantage of the other, until an exclamation of joy in a tone but too well remembered by him, caused Blakey to turn a quick glance to one side to see if she was safe. That instant enabled the quick eye of Gorin to detect an opening in his guard, and with the speed of thought he took advantage of it, passing his keen point inside of the other's blade, and inflicting a fearful wound in the shoulder of Blakey, who dropped his weapon at the same instant.

Gorin would have finished his deed, but as he glanced around he saw that all of his followers were slain or taken, and also saw Sergeant Maple rushing toward him with his clubbed rifle, and thinking that he yet might escape, turned his horse's head up the ravine, in the direction from which he had before come with his prey, and darted off at full speed.

The sergeant hastened to reload his rifle, but ere this was done, the villain had passed beyond his reach up the ravine. At this moment the blast of a bugle was heard in that direction, and in another moment it was answered by others from different quarters.

Blakey, when he fell from his horse, found himself in a moment in the arms of Edwina, who attempted to staunch his bleeding wound, while Anita and her mother endeavored to restore General Urrea to consciousness, for he had been nearly strangled by the cravat which Gorin had placed around his neck.

The sergeant was about to turn to the assistance of his captain, when he saw Gorin once more appear, riding from the ravine at full speed, endeavoring to pass them, followed closely by a small party of lancers. Quick as thought he raised his rifle to his eye, and took a steady aim, not at the rider, but the steed. He fired, the horse fell headlong, pitching his rider some yards in advance, who had not time to regain his feet ere the lancers were upon him.

"Slay him not—reserve him for me!" cried their leader, in a tone of thunder, a voice which Gorin, to his terror, recognized as that of Licencio Canales.

Obedying this order, the lancers used their lassos instead of their steel, and Gorin in a moment was securely bound.

The sergeant, meantime, had quickly formed his men, ready to repel a charge, not knowing whether he was to receive the

Mexicans now before them as friends or foes, but he was somewhat re-assured when he found that the leader advanced alone.

"Thank God, it is my brother!" cried Edwina; and Blakey, whose wound had been partially staunched by the hand of the noble girl, gave orders for his men to fall back, and Canales at once rode up, and springing from his horse, embraced his sister, and responded to the salutation of Urrea and his daughter.

In a moment more another bugle was heard near, and the younger Canales, with a glad cry of joy, was seen to ride toward them.

"All safe, Anita—Edwina?" he cried, as he leaped from his steed and gazed around; then as he saw Blakey, wounded and stretched upon the ground, he cried:

"You here, too, my noble friend—and hurt? What does this mean?"

"He was hurt in once more preserving my life, and saving me from the hand of our fiendish foe," replied Edwina.

"Gorin? Was it he who tore you away from the rancho? Is he yet alive? O, do not say that he has again escaped."

"No—nor shall he now!" replied Licencio, pointing to where the villain stood, with dark and lowering eyes, and a face pallid with terror, between two lancers, and too securely bound to think of escape; "and now, my sister, tell us how he again got you in his power."

"It was but a few moments after Bonaventura left us this morning to go in search of the party whose bugle was heard, that the villain, who must have watched and seen how defenceless we were, rushed in upon us, bound us, and placing us all on horses before his men, dashed off at full speed, taunting us at the same time with the coarsest threats. He only paused when we arrived at this spot, and here commenced a drama which I fear would have ended far differently for us all, had not this noble American been sent by Providence to our aid."

"Yes, for the villain had already commenced my murder," added Urrea, whose face was still black with the effects of his strangulation.

"Well, his time has come—he has prepared his own means of execution," cried the elder Canales, pointing to the rope which had been left dangling over the limb.

Then calling to his lancers, he bade them bring the prisoner before them. Gorin turned pale and trembled in every joint,

as he was led to the spot, for he knew that now there was no escape for him. He could have died in strife without fear without a quiver, but even *he* could not look upon death,—how painful, death in the presence of his enemies, without fear. O, it takes a man, indeed, to face such a death calmly; he must have right and purity on his side, or he cannot.

When Gorin was brought to the place where but a few moments before he had doomed a fellow-being to the death he was about to suffer, he looked around as if in hopes to see one pitying face, but his glance was in vain. The females had turned their heads away, and he looked upon men, who knew him for the deep-dyed, crime-burdened villain that he was.

“You will not murder me, a prisoner, without trial, or a chance for my life?” he asked, in tones of misery.

“No, not without a trial,” replied Licencio Canales, in tones so deep, so calm, so thrilling, that they sunk deep into the heart of the prisoner like words of eternal doom. “No not without a trial. But first place that rope around his neck, then let twenty men take the other end. I wish all ready, if you are proved guilty.”

“Mercy—mercy, for the love of God, spare me!” moaned the unhappy wretch.

“Did you ever listen to the cries of mercy, dog!” cried Canales. “But to the trial. I charge you with the murder of my gray-haired parents! a thousand crimes have you committed, yet that one is all I name.”

“I charge you with the same!” cried the younger brother.

“And I,” said Edwina, in a low, firm voice.

“I charge you with treason and deserting your country’s flag, and with murdering your countrymen on the field of Buena Vista,” said Blakey.

“And I—and I,” echoed each of the riflemen, who had gathered near.

The prisoner seemed unable to breathe—his frame quivered like an aspen leaf, hot tears gushed from his eyes—he seemed for the first time in all his life to exhibit one sign of human feeling. When the last echo of his accusers’ voices died away, Canales again spoke in the same stern and thrilling tone:

“You have heard, now dare you say that all of these charges are not true? Speak, wretch, are you not guilty?”

“Guilty—guilty; but mercy, mercy!”

“You gave it not to my gray-haired parents.”

"O, spare me but for an hour! I am not fit to die."

"No—and were you to live an eternity of innocence now, you could not wash away the past. In one minute more you must die!"

"O, mercy, give me but an hour!" gasped the wretch.

The only answer was a sign from Canales to the lancers who held the rope, and in another moment the wretch was choking, struggling, and moaning horribly in the air; hanging by the same rope which he had destined for Urrea. It was a terrible but a just retribution.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOVE AND DUTY WAVERING.—LOVE WEIGHS DOWN THE SCALE.

THE next morning's sun found the whole party, whom we left in our last chapter witnessing the end of Gorin, at the camp of General Urrea. Blakey was weak with his injury, but it was only a flesh wound, he was not confined to his bed, but was able, with the rest of the party, to join the general at his breakfast table. No truce had been spoken of between them, yet neither he nor his men looked upon these Mexicans as enemies, nor did they regard him as a foe. The circumstances under which they had met, had made them friends.

"You are on your return to your country, I am told," said Urrea to our hero, as they sat at the table.

"Yes, general, for I hope that this war is over. It has been a sad one for both countries—one in which much noble blood has been lost—one which neither government can gain by."

"I wish that it was over, or that we could even see a prospect of its termination," replied Urrea.

"Do you not think it near its conclusion?"

"No—hardly at its commencement. My countrymen are as stubborn as mules. They will struggle, even though defeated on every hand; you must crush, nay extirpate, before you can conquer them! Our climate, our wild country, all favor us, and act against you. Your country will find the expense of such a war ruinous, and will give it up in the end in disgust."

"Possibly so," said Blakey, doubtingly; at the same time

adroitly changing the conversation, and mentioning that he intended to resume his journey on that morning.

To this both Urrea and Edwina's brother made objection, begging him to remain and accept of their hospitalities until he had at least recovered from his wound. Edwina spoke not; but her looks told the wishes of her heart, for when she heard him speak of going, her face turned pale, her lips quivered, and her dark eyes grew moist in a moment. But Blakey was firm, and gave orders to his men to make ready for the march.

However, he did not go on that day; and the only way we can account for it, is by giving the result of an interview which occurred immediately after the above conversation ensued—an interview between Blakey and Edwina. They had retired to her tent to converse for a moment before parting, and here he renewed again his request for her then to become his. He talked in this wise:

"It is useless, dear one, for us to await the close of this tedious war; it would be cruel to delay our happiness. We are both determined not again to join in it—why should we not be united?"

"It is indeed hard for us to separate—it seems like death to me," she replied. "But how can I leave my brothers? They will surely remain."

"Dear one, I love you more than they can!"

"That were difficult," she answered, smiling. "But again there is another difficulty!"

"And it—"

"Is that I fear that they will not consent to our union; Licencio is a deadly foe to your nation. He has been deeply, woefully wronged by them!"

"But I have never wronged him!"

"No; on the contrary, you have deserved his eternal gratitude. But he loves me and has strong prejudices."

"I can overcome them," replied the persevering suitor.

"You have! noble friend, you have!" said a soft, pleasant voice in the door-way of the tent. "An unintentional listener am I; I heard my name mentioned, and that caused me to hear the following remarks."

"My brother!" said Donna Edwina, blushing and hiding her face against her lover's shoulder.

"Yes, dear sister, and a brother who will never cross your path of happiness with a single cloud. This noble American

has asked your hand; your *heart* he had no occasion to ask for." The beautiful girl blushed, but answered not, while her brother continued:

"It will be better for you to be removed from the perils of this distracted country. It is my wish that you take him. He has won a right to you, by his repeated services; you should devote a life to him which he has thrice saved! Take him! he is worthy of you."

The fair girl took the hand of Blakey; then gazing for a moment upon her brother's face, burst into tears—tears of mingled grief and gladness.

"How can I leave you, my brother?" she sighed.

"It is but temporary, dearest; if I survive this war, I will visit you, in your happy northern home!"

"And Bonaventura?"

"He shall even now go with you, if he will. Let us go forth and meet him."

They went out, and before the tent of General Urrea saw the general, his daughter and Bonaventura, standing, in conversation.

"Ah!" said the general to Blakey, smiling, as he saw him approach slowly, arm in arm with Edwina. "You have determined not to leave us this morning, have you not?"

"They will not go until to-morrow," replied Licencio, answering for Blakey.

"*They?*" echoed the general. "Surely you mean that he intends taking a prisoner with him?"

"Yes, he has made a captive of my sister."

"Well, that is all right; I approve his taste, and admire his courage. I congratulate you on your capture sir."

"I thank you, general; I think I have much cause for congratulation."

Licencio now turned to his young brother, who did not seem much astonished at the turn which things were taking, and said:

"Will you go to the north with your sister, Bonaventura?"

"North with my sister!" exclaimed the youth, in surprise.

"No, brother, I wish to remain and serve my general, if he will permit, and forgive my late error in disobeying his orders."

"Bless you, boy, I had forgotten that entirely!" replied the old general; "and, by the way, I was to have had you shot for it. But you'll not be troubled about it again."

"Then I may remain and serve under your banner?" asked the youth.

"Certainly, if you wish it," responded the general; then turning to his daughter, who stood pale and breathless, listening to the conversation, he smilingly added, "if you wont make love to my daughter."

"I had rather serve without conditions, senor," replied the youth, blushing as deeply as she did.

"The only way that I can keep you from making love to my daughter, it appears then, will be to make you marry her!" responded the general, laughing.

"Such an order would be extremely pleasant to me, senor—one which I should not hesitate to obey," replied the youth.

"And you, child—how would such an order please you?" asked the father, as he pressed his lips to his fair daughter's brow.

"I will ever obey the wishes of my dear father," replied she.

"Then you and Bonaventura may settle the matter between you—no, upon second thought, I'll do it for you!"

Then turning to Edwina and Blakey, he asked:

"When will your union take place?"

"This hour, if the lady makes no objection," replied Blakey.

"Which of course she will not do; so that I can safely send for our regimental chaplain and have a double job performed—for I may as well put a stop to those young people's love-making at once."

Blakey turned to Edwina when he spoke, and in her warm look of love he saw no sign of the objection alluded to; therefore, the general at once sent an orderly for the priest. The latter soon appeared, and there, in that rude camp, the marriage ceremony was performed between those four young and noble persons; not with all the show and pomp which is usual beneath cross-crowned domes or marble palaces, but with vows full as binding, solemn and sacred as could be taken there. All of that day was spent by both the troops and their leaders as a festival, but on the next morning Blakey and his few followers prepared to depart on their route to the Brazos, whence they were to embark for New Orleans, on their way to Kentucky.

This made one more painful scene in our history necessary—the parting of Edwina with her brothers. This took place in the tent which had been assigned to her and her husband, and as none save the three were present, we cannot describe the

scene. After this last, painful interview, Edwina came forth to where her husband and his riflemen awaited her. Her own black steed was saddled for her use, and a band of her brother's troops were in their saddles, ready to escort the party as far as the Rio Grande on their route.

Edwina came forth, sad and pale, but her step was firm and resolute; yet her eyes were heavy with tears, for she was about to separate from her brothers—her only living relatives—perhaps forever. This she felt the more, that she left them amid the perils and dangers of war—a war which might deprive her of both of them. Licencio led her to Blakey's side, and while he aided in placing her on her saddle, said to him, in a tone of deep emotion:

"We give you our dearest treasure, noble American; we know that you will guard and cherish her. You have won her by your own prowess. Take her, and God bless you!"

For a moment his voice choked with his emotion, and then he continued:

"Should peace ever come to this unhappy country, we may meet again; but while this war continues, I shall be where foes are thickest. You will often hear the name of Licencio Canales spoken, for I have brave men under me—men who love liberty, and will never yield an inch to your forces save with life!"

"I hope that peace will soon come to restore them to their homes," replied Blakey.

"I fear me that hope is vain," responded the other, with a sigh, "and I dare not dream of it. I believe not in presentiments, yet sad thoughts will come to my heart—thoughts which say we shall never meet again; but if I fall, it will not be with discredit."

Edwina wept, as she heard this; but she spoke not. Her husband alone answered:

"Why cannot you retire from service, as do I? O, if you will but go to my home, a tender welcome shall there await you! This is not your native land."

"No, but it is mine by adoption; and sooner would I rend my own heart from my body than desert it now, in its hours of darkness."

"Then we must bid you farewell—though with the hope of a speedy meeting!"

"Farewell, my sister and my brother!" cried Licencio.

"Farewell, my own Edwina—farewell, my brother! Our

hearts go with you!" cried the younger brother. And both once more pressed their lips to Edwina's brow, as she bent from her saddle.

The sobs of Anita, who had before parted with Edwina, could be heard from within her tent, and the scene was too painful to be kept up. Therefore, grasping again the hands of General Urrea and the two Canales, and breathing again a warm adieu, Blakey rode away, attended by his double escort. On the same day, Urrea and Canales broke up their camp and marched to the southwest, occupying again the passes of the mountains.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STORM.—FEARFUL PERIL.

BRIGHT and beautiful was the morning when Blakey and his sweet bride set sail from the Brazos de Santiago on their return to the United States. They sailed in a small schooner, the "Jenny Hunt," because she was the first vessel homeward bound, and they were anxious to reach port as soon as possible. The whole of Blakey's company was crowded on board the little craft, which, being a Baltimore built vessel, was indeed a beauty in her own way. Her captain, Ned Boynton, was not only a capital sailor, but a noble, warm-hearted fellow; and when Blakey found himself afloat in this little craft, with a fair breeze and a flowing sheet, he felt contented and happy.

But how often do our fairest hopes become clouded! how often are we awakened by dread realities from our brightest dreams! On the evening of the second day out, though the sky was clear and the wind still fair though light, Blakey observed that Captain Boynton paced the deck with an uneasy tread, and that his brow, as he looked to the northward, wore a cloud of anxiety. Approaching him, he asked:

"Do you think this wind will last us to get in, captain?"

"No, sir—I'm afraid not. There's a norther brewing, or the sky wouldn't be so clear as it is; but I reckon if it does come, my Jenny can weather it. She's a staunch craft of her size!"

As the captain predicted, it was not long before the wind veered around to the northward, coming at first in fitful squalls,

then settling down into a breeze which, as the sails were trimmed aft, laid her lee gunwales down to the water.

"All hands to reef sail!" cried the captain, as he saw that his vessel could not bear all her canvas.

Soon the three fore and aft sails were close reefed, and the lighter sails snugly furled; then laying as near to her course as she could, the schooner kept on, plunging into the heavy sea, and quivering under the force of the fast rising gale.

As night came on, the wind increased, and men who had faced the perils of Monterey and Buena Vista with a smile, now began to pale and tremble—for here was an enemy which they could not quell. When the sun went down, it settled in a cloud-bank—a sign ever ominous of a gale—and every one on board of the schooner was on deck to witness it, as if there was a presentiment among them that this was the last time that they should ever gaze upon the god of day. Edwina, leaning upon her husband's arm, noted the look of care upon his countenance, and as she saw it, said:

"We have new perils to face, dear husband, have we not?"

He looked in her face a moment and saw that all was calm and peaceful there, then answered:

"I know that you are brave, my dear one; therefore I need not conceal from you that we are about to meet a very heavy storm—one that perchance will place us in much peril."

"Thank God we are together then!" she replied. "If one dies, then will the other also; come what may, we cannot now be separated."

"True, my own one; be it life or death, your fate and mine are linked forever."

The lady was about to respond, when Captain Boynton coming aft, said:

"The deck is getting very wet and unpleasant, madam—let me beg you to go below; it is more comfortable there."

"You are kind, sir, but I prefer remaining on deck where my husband is; I can far better face a real danger, than fancy an unseen one."

"Be it as you like, lady; but in less than one hour the sea will wash our decks fore and aft, if it continues to rise as it does now."

The vessel again began to plunge heavier and heavier under the force of the rising gale, and the captain soon saw that her canvas must be shortened in. Though with regret, he ordered

both the mainsail and jib to be taken in, and then taking a balance reef in the foresail, put her helm a lee and brought her to.

For a time she lay to, like a duck; but the gale increased, the waves became higher and more broken, and every little while broke with tremendous force across her decks, forcing the crew to cling to the rigging to save themselves from being swept overboard.

"Lady, you must go below! Captain Blakey, I must insist upon *her* being removed from danger, at least; I shall have to batten down the hatches; we haven't got half of this gale yet!" cried the captain, in an excited tone.

But it was in vain that he insisted. The brave girl would not shrink from this danger, for she knew that she had passed even greater perils than this before—and she would not now shrink from this. Therefore she bade Captain Boynton batten down his hatches as soon as he liked, for there was no need to wait for her to go below—she would not leave her husband's side.

Before midnight, the gale had seemed to reach its height; and grand, as it was terrific, appeared the scene. Above, the great black clouds rushed wildly along, groaning out thunder, and spitting forth tongues of jagged lightning; the wind shrieked like supernatural voices through the rigging. Below, the huge waves, dark at their base, but white upon their crests, rose and fell and tumbled over one another, as if an earthquake was pitching a world of snow-capped mountains together. And like a broken winged bird did the strained little schooner buffet with this tumultuous mass—now drenched and almost hidden in spray, then topping the crests of the waves, as if she was about to take a flight in the upper air. When the lightning flashes illumined the sky and water, each face, and the expression thereon, could be seen as plain as if it were at noonday.

The commander of the vessel had taken the helm himself, and as the little craft came up and fell off before the gale, watched each sea with deep anxiety, and with consummate skill and coolness managed to make her meet them easy. Things now appeared favorable for her to weather the gale, if it did not increase any higher, for they were well over to windward in the gulf, as they supposed, and had no lee shore to endanger them.

At last daylight came, and with it the sight of another sail, which had been buffeting the storm like themselves. And now the clouds cleared away, and the red sun rose above the waters, gilding each wave crest and making the sea in the distance look

like molten gold. Yet even at this moment, when all appeared to be brightening, and hope began to cheer each heart—when all was brightly changing—as comes a death-knell amid the music of a marriage feast, came up a cry from below decks in the schooner: “A leak! a leak!”

It was but too true! The gushing dash of water in the hold could be heard, and a hasty examination proved that several of the bow planks had been started, and that the water was rushing in with fearful rapidity. The pumps were instantly manned, but the face of the captain paled as he saw the steady increase of the water, and knew that his two small pumps would be of no avail to keep her free.

Now the gaze of each was fixed upon the sail in sight, which seemed to be a steamer—one of the large government transports, so useful upon the coast during the war. She was not more than a mile distant, yet the sea was too rough for her to attempt to bear away to the schooner without great danger. But this was the only hope for the hapless crew and passengers of the latter, for she was settling fast, and had but one small boat, which could not hold one-tenth of her passengers, if it could for a moment live in so rough a sea.

Captain Boynton at once gave orders to hoist the American flag Union down in the forerigging—the usual signal of distress; and its effect upon the steamer was watched for with deep interest by many who felt that their lives depended upon the aid which they thus implored.

We will now step on board the steamer—the “James L. Day”—commanded by Captain Wood, a good seaman, brave man, and a warm-hearted, generous fellow. When the dawn showed him the schooner under his lee, Captain Wood turned to his mate, Mr. Hudson, and as he pointed her out, remarked:

“A nasty time must that little tub have had, in such a blow as this! We’ve had our hands full; I don’t see how she has stood it so well.”

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“I reckon she has felt it; she lays mighty low in the water, and—by the pipers of Moses, there it goes!” replied the mate.

His last ejaculation was caused by the signal of distress being hoisted on board the schooner. Captain Wood, as he saw this, looked for a moment at the heavy sea, then at his mate.

“What can we do for them, Hudson? It will be running the risk of our own lives to bear away, with such a sea as this running.”

The mate, who had been steadily regarding the schooner for some time through his spy-glass, replied:

“Risk or no risk, there is another signal aboard that craft which neither you nor I will desert in peril.”

“What is it—is she showing more signals?”

“There is a petticoat aboard of her! I can see a woman clinging to the main rigging.”

“Then we will do something for them, or die in trying!” responded the noble Wood. “Were they all *men*, they might take men’s chances as we do; but a *woman* makes our duty a different matter. Tell the engineer to fire up! we must try and get some steam on her, for she can’t show any canvas yet.”

Glad were the hearts of those who stood upon the spray-washed decks of the *Jenny Hunt*, as they saw, by the black smoke arising from the stacks of the steamer, that she was preparing to come to their rescue, and again hope began to warm their fear-frozen hearts.

It was not long before the steamer began slowly to edge down toward them, ever keeping head on to the sea—for she was managed by one who had before aided in reaching, in many a fearful storm, his fellow-beings in peril. Captain Wood had taken his first lessons in such work while commanding a wreck-er on the reefs of Florida; and his perfect skill in the present case, showed that he had not forgotten his former experience.

A long hour did it seem to those on board the schooner, that was spent in edging down the steamer, till she gained a position about a cable’s length distant on her weather bow, which made a lee for her boats in their attempt to reach the schooner. The latter was settling very fast; her decks were almost even with the water’s edge, but three well-manned whale boats now bore down from the steamer, and in a few moments her whole crew—Blakey, his bride, and the unfortunate Captain Boynton, stood in safety upon the deck of the steamer.

Within a half hour, while they were gazing sadly upon the gallant little craft which had borne them through the heaviest of the furious gale, they saw her pitch forward, reel for a moment, then disappear from sight—not leaving a vestige to mark her fate to the wandering mariner. The gale having commenced falling as the sun arose, had so abated before noontide, that the steamer again renewed her course toward New Orleans, where she arrived two days after.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MAIL-CARRIER AND HIS NEWS.

DID you ever see a western mail-carrier, reader? We have, for there are many portions of our "great West" which are visited but once a week by the mail, which is carried on horseback over the mountain paths, and through forest trails which would not be passable to the mail coaches which traverse more settled parts.

It was not quite two weeks after the incidents of our last chapter, that the carrier of the mail destined for the "Rural Choice" neighborhood, was jogging along at a very easy pace—whistling a stanza now of one and then of another negro song, making a hash of music. Had he been aware of the good news which was in his mail-bag, perhaps he might have touched his old gray horse with the rusty spur at his right heel—for he wore but one; yet to him it mattered little whether he bore the news of life or death, of joy or sadness, so that he made his usual time and got his pay therefor.

It was therefore near the eventide, when the carrier got in sight of Rural Choice; and as he saw the eyes of several who waited were fixed upon him, he spurred up his nag and went in at a very respectable trot. Before the store quite a group of men were assembled—for now the arrivals of the mail possessed a new interest to them, as it had done, in fact, ever since their friends and relatives had gone to Mexico.

"Come, hurry up your cakes!" was the cry of several, as the mail-rider approached; "you come like a sick snail. What's the news? Anything from Mexico?"

"Don't know—aint in the habit of lookin' in the mail-bags myself!" replied the rider, at the same time pitching the leathern bag into the door of old Mr. Blakey's store.

The latter hastened to put his spectacles astride his nose, and while his hand trembled with eagerness, applied the United

States key to the rusty old lock. With a grating jar it opened, and then the mail, consisting of about twenty letters and as many papers, was exposed to view.

The first letter which "turned up," was addressed to the postmaster; but with commendable patience the old gentleman put it aside, and commenced assorting the others.

"Here's one for you, Mr. Maple," said he to a gray-haired, ruddy-complexioned man, who appeared to be about his own age. "I reckon it's from your boy."

The eyes of the old man glistened, and his hand trembled, as he took the letter; and glancing at the superscription, he cried:

"Yes, it is from our Dan; I know his hand-writing as well as I do a furrow of my own ploughin'." And then breaking the seal, he looked for a moment at its contents.

Each second thus spent seemed an age to those around him—for they wanted to hear the news. Meantime they, too, were receiving letters from their relatives; but old Mr. Maple had the start of at least a minute in breaking seals. Suddenly he threw his hat from his head, gave a yell which might have been heard a mile as it echoed through those "grand old woods," and commenced clapping his hands as if the spirit of a real backwoods camp meeting had lighted on him.

"What in *cre-ation* is the matter now?" cried out a half-dozen of the party.

"The boys are a comin' home—they'll be here by to-morrow! Hurrah, hurrah!" shouted the old man.

But his stentorian voice was drowned in the shout that arose from every throat in the crowd except that of the worthy old postmaster, who, acting upon the principle of "business before pleasure," still knelt by the side of his letter-bag and assorted out its contents, preparing it for the next office, which was some ten miles further along.

The huzzas of the crowd continued, as letter after letter, to different persons among them, told the same glad news. At last the mail was arranged, the old bag again locked, and the rider, placing it upon his nag, mounted and rode off—his speed considerably accelerated now, for he knew that he had good news under him, and he felt quite like a hero.

"Well, I reckon I'll read my news now, for I've a letter from the *captain*," said Uncle Ned. He had always laid a stress upon that word *captain* ever since the battle of Buena Vista,

for, as every one said, his son had turned out to be a regular captain there.

The old gentleman therefore took off his spectacles, and prepared, by thoroughly wiping them, to read his letter. But at this moment a shrill, but not unmusical voice from the dwelling-house porch was heard.

"Mr. Blakey—O, Mr. Blakey, do come here a minute! What *ar* the men folks a hollerin' so for? Has there been another fight?"

"Got a letter, wife—got a letter from George!" responded the old man, waving the precious missive in the air.

"Do come here quick. Do come right along, for I can't wait! How is the dear boy?" cried the old lady, with true woman-like impatience.

"I must go, but just you all hold on here till I come back," cried the old gentleman. "I want to see you about fixing up things for giving 'em all a regular blow-out, when they come!"

And the old gentleman hurried toward his house; but when he had taken three or four steps, a sudden thought seemed to cross his mind, for he turned round to the group and cried:

"There's a keg of old rye broached there, boys, in the back end of the store, if any of you want a dig—all's free to-night. Hurrah for the boys!"

And then came one more cheer from the party, who soon took to the rye, without a wry face among them, to drink one health to the Logan county boys.

When Uncle Ned got to the side of his wife, he waited not to wipe his spectacles, but hastily tore open the seal and commenced reading to himself, his good lady looking over his shoulder as if she could read it too—though, as she was without her glasses, she could scarcely make one line out from another.

"Do tell us—do tell us what he says! Is he coming home—has he got his wife—is he well—when will he come—what is the news? Do tell!" cried Mrs. Blakey, or Aunt Letty, as we have called her, in a tone far too rapid for a response to be given between the questions.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" shouted Uncle Ned, in response; and then he added: "George is a comin' here to-morrow—young wife—all right—God bless him!"

His tone and language conveyed only the general idea that

he had good news, and his cheer was again echoed from the crowd at the store.

Having again read his letter carefully, Uncle Ned now gave Aunt Letty the joyful information that George and his company were coming home, and that George was indeed bringing home a wife.

"A real Mexican gal?" asked Aunt Letty.

"Yes, I reckon so, from her name and what he says about her. But we'll see when to-morrow comes."

"O, dear, what shall we do to get ready in time for 'em? I must go to baking cakes to-night, and then the back room must be cleaned. O, my! how can we get ready for 'em so soon?" cried the old lady.

"We're ready for 'em now, Letty—rough and ready, eh?" And the old man laughed at this ready jest, and then he added: "You may look out for the indoor fixins'—I'll go and see the men folks. We must have a regular Fourth of July time of it, when they come!"

In a few moments a regular caucus was held in the store, for it was now dark, to arrange for the reception of the volunteers in the morning.

"Ill send a whole beef for the barbacue!" cried old Mr. Maple.

"And I a hog, and I a dozen turkeys!" cried others of the party; and soon a collection was made for a regular western feast.

"Ill throw in the drink, and all the bread fixins' and chicken doins'!" cried Uncle Ned; and when the capacities for swallowing "rye," so common to those hardy woodsmen, is considered, Uncle Ned had undertaken the most expensive supply of all.

"Mustn't we have a speech made to 'em?" squeaked a lean, long-visaged, no-souled looking fellow, who had been taken suddenly sick when the company was raised for the war, and who, under pretence of having been to a city and looked at a college, passed for a scholar, in his own opinion, and who now thought that he had a chance for glory.

"No, we don't want none o' your speeches, John Martin!" said old Mr. Maple. "I've an idea that you might get sick again, if you was to try it."

"Well, I only thought I'd offer my services," whined the fellow.

"You didn't think of offerin' your 'services,' when the boys

made up to go to the war, and it's my 'pinion that you're a regular sneak, a tarnal pole cat of a varmint, John Martin—a thing that nobody can touch without hurting themselves; and the sooner you get out of decent people's company, the better for them and you too!" cried the old gentleman, appearing rather angry.

The fellow winced, as he listened to the not very choice appellations showered upon him by Mr. Maple, and began slowly to back from the crowd, muttering, as he went:

"If this isn't pretty treatment for John Junius Martin, Esquire, a born gentleman, to receive at the hands of a backwoods boor!"

Unfortunately for Mr. Martin, the old man heard his last words; slightly misunderstanding them, however, for he shouted:

"What's that you call me, you slanderin', white-livered, lyin' nigger's pup, you? Me a backwoods boar, eh? If Dan Maple was here, he'd skin you worse than he did when you lied about his Mary, because she wouldn't let you court her!"

Then crying to those who stood between them, "Get clear o' my track, and let me get my paws on to that cur, and I'll show him if I be a backwoods boar or not!" old Mr. Maple made a rush as he thus shouted, but Mr. Martin was taken *sick* again, and very suddenly decamped.

The confusion attendant upon this little interruption having passed away, the neighbors made all their arrangements for receiving George and his company at noon the next day, when they were expected to arrive. There was little sleeping that night at Rural Choice, or in its neighborhood.

Ever and anon the majestic old woods would echo with the shout of some joyful heart, really too full of joy to repress the voice; and many a messenger rode along the narrow trails to bear the news to all around that a barbacue was to be had at Uncle Ned Blakey's on the morrow, and that the boys would then be home from the wars.

The sun had scarcely silvered the dewy forest leaves on the next morning, when the people began to pour in—and it was a glorious sight to see them. Old men and women, young girls, fair matrons, and bright-eyed children—sometimes two or three on a horse—they came, until full a thousand souls encircled the spring which we alluded to in our first chapter, as being the favorite barbacue ground.

At last when the tall trees, leaving no shadow on the ground, gave sign that the sun was at its meridian, the cheerful note of a bugle was heard ringing loud and clear from down the road which had before been passed by the mail-rider. Then, as in a moment after the head of a galloping cavalcade could be seen approaching, and George Blakey's noble form could be recognized, with a lady riding, too, at full speed by his side, there arose such a shout as never did those old trees echo before.

Then came a weaker, yet still a gladder shout from the lips of Blakey and his followers, who the next moment were among them with their dark, sun-bronzed faces—seamed, too, with many a scar. There were not so many as when they left—no, Buena Vista had sadly thinned them down!—nor were they as well clad; but they had served their country, and each of them was now a hero.

We need not, cannot describe the joys of meeting, or the various ways in which those rude, pure, whole-hearted people expressed it. All of this we will leave to the imaginations of our readers, who, should any of them pass through Logan county, must call at Rural Choice, and see how happy the MAID OF MONTEREY is.

THE END.

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