

Grace Stebbing

*Gold and glory; or,
Wild ways of other
days, a tale of early
American discovery*

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INTRODUCTION.

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Only an apology for having written this historical tale.

My private opinion is, that all writers of historical tales should return me thanks if I apologize for them with myself, all in a body, the truer the tale the ampler being the spirit of the apology.

While I have been writing this tale, sometimes in its most important or serious portions, I have been startled by detecting my own mouth widening with an absurd smile, or by hearing a ridiculous chuckle issuing from my own lips, and have suddenly discovered that I was quite unconsciously repeating to myself the famous old Scotch anecdote of the old woman and the Scotch preacher—"That's good, and that's Robertson; and that's good, and that's Chalmers; ... and that's bad, and that's himsel'."

Turning the old woman into the more learned among my possible readers, and the Scotch preacher into myself, I read the anecdote—"That's good, and that's Prescott; that's good, and that's Robertson; that's good, and that's guide-book; that's good, and that's Arthur Helps; and that's bad, and that's hersel'."

I can only wind up my apology by pleading, that at least my badness has not gone the length of distorting a single fact, nor of giving to this wonderful page of history any touch of false colouring.

G. S.

GOLD AND GLORY,

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Wild Ways of other Days.

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CHAPTER I.

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A POISON-FLY FOR THE HEART OF ARAGON.

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In an apartment, gorgeous with a magnificence that owed something of its style to Moorish influence, were gathered, one evening, a number of stern-browed companions.

A group of men, whose dark eyes and olive complexions proclaimed their Spanish nationality, as their haughty mien and the splendour of their attire bore evidence to their noble rank.

The year was 1485: a sad year for Aragon was that of 1485, and above all terrible for Saragossa. But as yet only the half, indeed not quite the half, of the year had gone by, when those Spanish grandees were gathered together, and when one of them muttered beneath his breath, fiercely:

"It is not the horror of it only, that sets one's brain on fire. It is the shame!"

And those around him echoed—"It is the shame."

During the past year, 1484, his Most Catholic Majesty, King Ferdinand of the lately-united kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, had forced upon his proud, independent-spirited Aragonese a new-modelled form of the Inquisition. The Inquisition had, indeed, been one of the institutions of the noble little kingdom for over two hundred years already, but in the free air of Aragon it had been rather an admonisher to

orderliness and good manners than a deadly foe to liberty. Now, all this was changed. The stern and bitter-spirited Torquemada took care of that. The new Inquisition was fierce, relentless, suspicious, grasping, avaricious, deadly. And in their hearts the haughty, freedom-loving Aragonese loathed its imperious domination even more than they dreaded its cruelty.

"It was not the horror of it only," said Montoro de Diego truly, "that made their eyes burn, and sent the tingling blood quivering into their hands. It was the shame."

And those others around him, even to Don James of Navarre, the King Ferdinand's own nephew, echoed the words with clenched hands, and between clenched teeth—

"It is the shame!"

But what cared Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor, that mortal wounds should be inflicted on the noblest instincts of human nature? or what cared his tools in Aragon? Crushed, broken-spirited men would be all the easier to handle—all the easier to plunder or destroy.

Montoro de Diego had been one of the deputation sent by the Cortes to the fountain-head, as it was then believed, of all truth and mercy and justice, to implore release from the new infliction; for whilst one deputation had gone to the king himself, to implore him to abolish his recent innovation, another, headed by Diego, had gone to the pope. But the embassy was fruitless. The pope wanted money, and burning rich Jews, and wealthy Aragonese suspected of heretical tendencies, put their property into the papal coffers. The pope very decidedly refused to give up this new and easy way of making himself and his friends rich. The

king's refusal was equally peremptory, and the deputations returned with dark brows and heavy hearts to those anxiously awaiting them.

The burnings and confiscations had already begun.

Soon after Diego and his companions entered the city of Saragossa they encountered a great procession, evidently one of importance judging from the sumptuousness of the ecclesiastics' dresses, their numbers, and the crowds of attendants surrounding them, crucifix-bearers, candle-bearers, incense-bearers, and others. There was no especial Saint's Day or Festival named in the Calendar for that date, and for a few moments the returning travellers were puzzled. But the procession advanced, and the mystery was solved.

In the centre of the gorgeous train moved a group so dismal, so heart-rending to look upon, that it must have rained tears down the cheeks of the Inquisitors themselves, had they not steeled their hearts with the impenetrable armour of a cold, utter selfishness.

Deadly pale, emaciated, unwashed, uncombed, with wrists and fingers twisted and broken, and limping feet, came the members of this group clad in coarse yellow garments embroidered with scarlet crosses, and a hideous adornment of red flames and devils. Some few of the tortured victims of base or bigoted cruelty were on their way to receive such a pardon as consisted in the fine of their entire fortunes, or life-long imprisonment; the others—they were to afford illuminations for the day's ceremonies with their own burning bodies. For each member of the wretched group there was the added burden of knowing that they

were leaving behind them names that were to be loaded with infamy, and families reduced to the lowest depths of beggary.

"And all," muttered a voice beside Diego's elbow, "for the crime, real or suspected, or imputed, of having Jewish blood in their veins."

"Say rather," fiercely muttered back the noble—"say rather, for the crime of having gold and lands, which will so stick to the hands of the Inquisitors, that the king's troops in Granada will keep the Lenten fast the year through, before a sack of grain is bought for them out of those new funds."

"Ay," answered the unknown voice, "the Señor saith truth, unless there shall be hearts stout enough, and hands daring enough, to rid our Aragon of yon fiend Arbues de Epila."

Montoro de Diego turned with an involuntary start to look at the speaker of such daring words. For even though they had been uttered in low cautious tones they betokened an almost mad audacity, during those late spring days when the very breath of the warm air seemed laden with accusations, bringing death and ruin to the worthiest of the land, at the mandate of that very Arbues.

But Diego's eyes encountered nothing more important than the wondering brown orbs of a little beggar child, who was taking the whole imposing spectacle in with artistic delight, unmixed with any idea of horror, and who was evidently astonished at the agitated aspect of his tall companion, and irritated too, that the Señor should thus stand barring the way, instead of passing on with the rest of the rabble-rout trailing after the procession.

Whoever had ventured to express his fury against the new Inquisitor of Saragossa, it was evidently not this curly-headed little urchin, and with a somewhat impatient gesture of disappointment the noble turned away in search of his companions. But they also had disappeared. Carried away by the excitement or curiosity of the moment, they also had joined in the dread procession of the Auto da Fé.



CHAPTER II.

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CONSPIRATORS.

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"It is the shame," that was the burden of the low and emphatic consultation that was being held by the group of men, gathered privately in the palace of one of the indignant nobles of Aragon. Little more than twenty-four hours had passed since the disappointed deputation to Rome had returned, in time to witness the full horrors of the cruel tribunal they had so vainly tried to abolish, and the feeling of humiliation was keen.

And shame, indeed, there was for the brave, proud Aragonese, that the despotic tyranny of the Inquisition should hold sway amidst their boasted freedom and high culture.

"We are not alone in our indignation," added Montoro de Diego after a pause, and with a keen, swift glance around at the faces of his companions to satisfy a lurking doubt whether the muffled voice at his elbow, yesterday, had not indeed belonged to one of them.

But every face present was turned to his suddenly, with such vivid, evident curiosity at the changed and significant tone of his voice, that the shadowy supposition quickly faded, and with a second cautious but sharp glance, this time directed at doors and windows instead of at the room's occupants, the young nobleman replied to the questioning

looks by a sign which gathered them all closer about him as he repeated:

"No; we are not alone in our just resentment. The spirit of disaffection is rife in Saragossa."

"The Virgin be praised that it is so," muttered one of the grandees moodily, while another asked hastily:

"But how know you this? What secret intelligence have you received?"

"And when?" put in a third questioner somewhat jealously.

The new system was already beginning to grow its natural fruit of general suspicion and distrust. But Diego speedily disarmed them as regarded himself on this occasion. His voice had been low before, it sank now to a scarcely audible whisper as he answered:

"One, I know not who—even the voice was a disguised one I believe—spoke to me yesterday in the crowded streets; one who must have marked the anger and mortification of my countenance I judge, and thence dared act the tempter."

"But how?" "In what way?" came the eager, impatient queries.

"In the intimation that the world were well rid of Arbues de Epila."

As those few weighty words were rather breathed than spoken, those self-controlled, impassible grandees of Spain started involuntarily, and stifled exclamations escaped their lips.

Arbues de Epila! The day was hot with brilliant sunshine. Even in that carefully-shaded room the air was heavy with

warmth, and yet—as Montoro de Diego muttered the hinted threat against Arbues de Epila, the crafty, cruel, unsparing Inquisitor—those brave, dauntless, self-reliant men felt chill. They were in a close group before, but involuntarily they drew into a still closer circle, and looked over their shoulders. In open fight with the impetuous Italians or with the desperate Moors of Granada, no more fearless warriors could be found than those grandees of Spain, but against this new, secret, lurking, unaccustomed foe their haughty courage provided them no weapons. To be snatched at in the dark, torn secretly from home, fame, and family, buried in oblivion until brought forth to be burnt; and branded, unheard with the blackest infamy—these were agonies to fill even those stout hearts with horror.

Stealthy glances, of which until the present time they would have been altogether disdainful, were cast by each and all of them at one another. Who should say that even in their own midst there might not be standing a creature of the Inquisition, bribed to the hideous work by promises of titles, lands, position, or Paradise without Purgatory?

Quailing beneath these strangely unaccustomed fears all maintained a constrained silence for some time. But meanwhile the suggestion thrown out yesterday, and now repeated, worked in those fevered brains, and at length the fiercest of the number threw back his head, folded his arms across his breast, and spoke. Not loudly indeed, but with a concentrated passion that sent each syllable with the force of an alarm into the hearts of his hearers.

"The stranger was right. We have been cravens—children kissing the rod, with our petitions. Now we will be men once

more, judges in our own cause, and Arbues shall die."

As he pronounced that last dread word he held out his hand, and his companions crowded together to clasp it, in tacit acceptance of the declaration. But there was one exception. One member of the group drew back. Montoro de Diego stretched forth no consenting hand, but stood, pale and sorrowful, gazing at his friends. They in turn gazed back at him with mingled astonishment, fear, and fury. But he never blenched. His lip indeed curled for a moment with something of scorn as he detected the expression of terror in some of the gleaming eyes turned on him. But scorn died away again in sadness as he said slowly:

"Is it so then, truly, that we nobles of Aragon have already yielded ourselves voluntarily for slaves, accepting the despicable sins of slaves—cowardice and assassination! Now verily it is time then to weep for the past of Aragon, to mourn over its decay."

But bravely and nobly as Montoro de Diego spoke, he could not undo the harm of his incautious repetition of the stranger's fatal hint. Some of his companions had already their affections lacerated by the loss of friends, torn from their families to undergo the most horrible of deaths, the others were full of dark apprehensions for themselves, or for those whose lives were more precious to them than their own. And the thought of getting quit of the cruel tormentor took all too swift and fast hold of the minds of that assembled group.

"It is very evident," muttered one of the party with a scarcely stifled groan—"it is very evident, my Diego, that you count amongst the number of your friends none of

those whose names, or position, or country, place them in jeopardy."

"Ah! indeed," added another, without perceiving the flush that suddenly deepened on the young noble's cheeks, "and it is easy enough to discover, even if one had not known it, that Diego has neither wife nor child for whose sake to feel a due value for his life and lands."

Again that sudden flush on the handsome face, but Montoro stood in shadow, and none marked it. The gathering of men, now turned into a band of conspirators, was more intent on learning from Montoro de Diego whether he meant to betray their purpose, than in taking note of his own private emotion, and once assured of his silence they let him depart, while they remained yet some time longer in secret conclave, to concert their plans for destroying Arbues and the Inquisition both together.

"There cannot be much difficulty one would imagine," muttered one of the conspirators, "in compassing the death of a wretch held in almost universal odium."

But others of the party shook their heads, while one, more fully acquainted with the state of affairs than the rest, replied moodily:

"Nay then, your imagination runs wide of the mark. The difficulty in accomplishing our undertaking will be as great as the danger we incur. The cruel are ever cowards. Arbues wears mail beneath his monastic robes, complete even to bearing the weight of the warrior's helmet beneath the monk's hood. And his person is diligently guarded by an obsequious train of satellites."

"Then we must bribe the watch-dogs over to our side," was the stern remark of the haughty Don Alonso, who had been the first to seize upon the suggestion thrown out by the unknown voice in the crowd.

Immediately after that declaration the noblemen dispersed, for it was not safe just at that time for men to remain too long closeted together.

CHAPTER III.

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RIVALS AT DON PHILIP'S HOUSE.

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When Montoro de Diego quitted the palace of Don Alonso his face betokened an anxiety even greater than that warranted by the conversation in which he had just taken part. To say truth his secret belief was, that the deadly decision arrived at by his friends was the frothy result of recent disappointed hopes, and that with the calming influence of time bolder and more honourable counsels would prevail. As he left the palace, therefore, he left also behind him all disquietudes especially associated with the late discussion, and the settled gravity of his face now belonged to matters of more private interest.

Don Alonso had declared, that it was easy enough to see that Don Diego had no friends amongst those looked upon with evil eyes by the authorities of the Inquisition. But Don Alonso was wrong. The two friends whom Don Diego valued more highly than any others upon earth were reputed of the race of Israel. Christians indeed, for two generations past, but still with a true proud gratitude clinging to the remembrance that they had the blood in their veins of the "chosen people of God." They were Don Philip and his daughter Rachel.

Don Miguel had remarked with something of a sneer that it was easy enough to remember, from his present action, that Don Diego was unencumbered with family ties. And

Don Miguel was so far right that Montoro de Diego was as yet a bachelor. But he was on the eve of marriage with Don Philip's daughter, and the words of his fellow-nobles had rung in his ears as words of evil omen. As he paced along the streets he tried in vain to shake off his dark forebodings, and it was with a very careworn countenance that he at length presented himself at the home of his promised bride.

To his increased disturbance, upon being ushered into the presence of Don Philip and his daughter, the young nobleman found a stranger with them; at least, one who was a stranger to him, though apparently not so to his friends, with whom he appeared to be on terms of familiar intercourse.

Don Diego at once took a deep aversion to the interloper, for he had entered with the full determination to press upon Rachel and Don Philip the expediency of an immediate marriage, in order that both father and daughter might have the powerful protection of his high position, and undoubted Spanish descent and orthodoxy. But it was, of course, impossible to speak on such topics in the presence of a stranger. So annoyed was he that his greetings to his betrothed bride partook of his constraint, and the girl appeared relieved when her father called to her:

"Rachel, my child, the evening is warm; will you not order in some fruit for the refreshment of our guests?"

As the beautiful young girl left the apartment in gentle obedience to her father's desire the stranger followed her with his eyes, saying with studied softness:

"Your daughter is so lovely it were a pity that she had not been dowered with a fairer name."

The old man sighed before replying: "Perchance, Señor, you are right. And yet, in my ears the name of Rachel has a sweetness that can scarcely be surpassed."

"It might sound sweeter in mine," rejoined the stranger still in tones of studied suavity, "if it were not one of the names favoured by the accursed race of Israel."

A momentary flash shot from the eyes of Don Philip, but hastily he dropped his lids over them as he answered with forced quietude: "Doubtless I should have bestowed another name upon my child had I foreseen these days, when it is counted for a crime to be descended from those to whom the Great I Am, in His infinite wisdom, gave the first Law and the first Covenant."

He ceased with another low, quiet sigh, and a short silence ensued, during which Don Diego felt rather than saw the sharp, searching glances being bestowed upon himself by the stranger, who at length rose, and said coolly:

"Ay, truly, Don Philip, a crime it is in the eyes of Holy Mother Church to have aught to do, even to the extent of a name, with the accursed race, and so, to repeat my offer to you for the hand of your fair daughter. I support my offer now with the promise—not a light one, permit me to impress upon you—to gain the sanction of the Church that her old name of Rachel shall be cancelled, and a new and Christian one bestowed upon her?"

As he finished speaking he turned from Don Philip with a look of insolent assurance to Don Diego, who in his turn had started from his seat, and stood with nervous fingers grasping the hilt of his rapier. As the nobleman met the

sinister eyes, full of an impertinent challenge, he made a hasty step forward with the haughty exclamation:

"And who are you pray, sir, who dare ask for the hand of one who is promised to Don Montoro de Diego? Know you, sir, that the daughter of Don Philip is my affianced bride?"

"I have heard something of the sort," was the reply, in a tone of indescribable cool insolence. "Yes; I have already learnt that you have had eyesight good enough to discover the fairest beauty in Saragossa. But you had better leave her to me, noble Señor. She will be—" and the speaker paused a moment to give greater emphasis to his next slowly-uttered words—"she will be safer with me than with you—and her father also." And with a parting look and nod, so full of latent knowledge and cruel determination that Don Diego's blood seemed to freeze in his veins as he encountered them, the new aspirant for the beautiful young heiress took his leave.

As the great iron-bound outer door clanged to, behind him, the head of the old man sank forward on his breast with a groan. His daughter re-entered the apartment at the moment, and the smile which had begun to dawn on her countenance at the departure of the unwelcome guest gave way to a cry of dismay. Flying across the floor she threw herself on the ground beside her father with a pitiful little cry.

"Oh! my father, are you ill?—What ails you, my father?"

For some seconds the old man's trembling hand tenderly caressing the soft hair was the only answer. At last he asked with a choked voice:

"My daughter—couldst thou be content to wed yon Italian?"

The words had scarcely passed his lips when the girl sprang to her feet, gazing with wild eyes at her questioner.

"Kill me, my father, but give me not to yon awful, hateful man. Besides—" and with a look of agonized entreaty she turned towards Don Diego—"besides, am I not already given by you to another?"

"And to another who has both the will and the power to claim the fulfilment of the promise," exclaimed Montoro de Diego, coming forward, and clasping the girl's hand in his with an air of iron resolution.

Once again there was a heavy silence in the darkening chamber, and when it was broken the hearers felt scarcely less oppressed by the sound, although the words themselves seemed to speak of happiness.

"My son," said the old man in low and urgent tones, "it is true, I have given you my child—my only one. Fetch the good old priest Bartolo now, at once, and secretly, and let him within this hour make my gift to you secure."

A faint protest against this sudden, unexpected haste was made by the young bride, but Don Diego needed no second bidding to the adoption of a course he considered to be dictated as much by prudence as affection. Two hours later Montoro de Diego wended his way to his own palace with his young wife, Rachel Diego, by his side.

"Do not weep so, my Rachel," entreated the young nobleman as he led his bride into her new home.

But the tears of the agitated girl flowed as bitterly as ever as she moaned, "My father—oh! my father! If but my

father had come with us!"

"He has promised to take up his abode with us, if possible, within the next few weeks, my Rachel," returned Montoro de Diego, in the vain endeavour to give her comfort. But she dwelt upon the words, "if possible," rather than upon the promise. She guessed but too well the fears which had dismissed her thus summarily from her father's home. She had heard but too much of the hideous tragedies of the past two months, and her husband himself was too oppressed with forebodings to give her consolation in such a tone of confidence as should secure her belief.

Don Philip had offered his life for his daughter's happiness, and his daughter well-nigh divined the fact.

Had the Christianized Jew consented to give his daughter, and his daughter's princely fortune, to the vile informer of the Inquisition, he would have escaped harm or persecution, at any rate for that season. But he counted the cost, and taking his life into his hand, for the sake of his child's happiness, he committed her henceforth to the loving charge of the noble-hearted Don Diego. The fulfilment of the sacrifice was not long delayed.

The days went by, and the weeks—one—two—three. The second day of the fourth week was drawing to its close, since the group of Spanish noblemen had muttered their passionate resolves to rid their Aragon of Arbues de Epila. They had not been idle since then. Time had not quenched their burning indignation, but rather fanned it fiercer as they gathered fresh adherents, and gold, that ever needful aid in all enterprises. But the one adherent Don Alonso and Don Miguel most longed for still held aloof.

The lengthening shadows of that day belonged also, as the reader knows, to the second day of the fourth week since Don Diego's marriage, and his new ties made him but increasingly anxious to keep in the most careful path of rectitude, for the sake of expediency now as much as honour.

The name of Montoro de Diego was hitherto so unblemished, his rank was so important, that he might well believe himself a safe protector for his young bride, and for his new father-in-law, even though it was not wholly unmixed, pure Spanish blood that flowed in their veins. And he was firm in his refusal to have any part in schemes of danger. His wife was safe, hidden up in the recesses of his palace; and his father-in-law, he trusted, had secured safety in flight.

On the day succeeding that on which Don Philip had refused to purchase peace at the price of his daughter's welfare, Rachel Diego had received a few hurried lines of farewell from him, saying that he was going into exile until safer times for Saragossa, and bidding her be of good cheer, as all immediately concerning themselves now promised to go well.

Under these circumstances Don Diego might be pardoned, perhaps, if for a time he forgot the miseries surrounding him—forgot his hopes to infuse a bolder, nobler spirit of upright resistance to evil, into his comrades, and rested content with his own happiness.

But there came a dark awakening.

The day had been one of dazzling heat; and as the sun's rays grew more and more slanting, and the shadows longer,

Don Diego bid his gentle young wife a short adieu, and sauntered forth to draw, if possible, a freer breath out-of-doors than was possible within.

He had been more impatient in seeking the evening breeze than most of his fellow-citizens, for the streets were still almost deserted. There was but one pedestrian besides himself in sight, and Montoro de Diego was well content to note that that one was a stranger, for he was in no mood just then for parrying fresh solicitations from his friends by signs, and half-uttered words, to join their secret counsels. He was sufficiently annoyed when he perceived at the lapse of a few seconds that even the stranger was evidently bent on accosting him. Determined not to have his meditations interrupted he turned short round, and began to retrace his way towards his own abode.

But not so was he to secure isolation. The rapid pitpat of steps behind him quickly proved that the stranger was as desirous of a meeting as he was wishful to avoid it; and scarcely had the Spanish nobleman had time to entertain thoughts of mingled wonder and annoyance, when he shrank angrily from a tap on his arm, and faced round to see what manner of individual it might be who had dared such a familiarity with one of the *grandees* of Aragon. The explanation was sudden and complete.

A low, mocking laugh greeted the involuntary widening of his eyes. Don Diego stood face to face with the man he had seen but once before; but that was on an occasion never to be forgotten, for it was the evening of his marriage, and the man before him was the one who had dared try to deprive him of his bride. For that he bore him no love, nor for the

hinted threats then uttered; but now his blood curdled with instinctive horror as he gazed at the sinister, cruel face mocking his with an expression on it of such cool insolence.

Don Diego's most eager impulse was to dash his companion to the ground and leave him; but for the first time in his life fear had gained possession of him. Fear, not for himself, but for those whom he held more precious.

"Why do you stay me? What would you with me?" he questioned at last, in tones that vainly strove for their customary accent of haughtiness. The cynical triumph of the Italian grew more visible.

"Meseems, my Señor," he replied with a sneer; "meseems from your countenance, and your new-found humility of voice, that your heart must have prophesied to you that matter anent which I have stayed you, that counsel that I would, for our mutual advantage, hold with you. It is of Don Philip and his daughter Rachel that I wish to speak with you."

Montoro de Diego inclined his head in silent token of attention, and the foreigner continued in slow, smooth speech:

"Doubtless, my Señor, you remember that in your presence, some few weeks ago, I made proposals of marriage for the fair, rich daughter of Don Philip. The night of the day on which I made these proposals the birds flew from me, and from my little hints in case of contumacy, out of Saragossa. That was a foolish step to take, my Señor, was it not?"

He paused for an answer, and the dry lips of Don Diego replied stiffly: "Don Philip asked me not for counsel in his

actions, neither did I give it."

"Ah!" resumed the Italian with a second sneer, "that may perchance be a true statement, Don Diego; but I shall be better inclined to accept it worthily, when you shall now reverse your professed behaviour, and accept the post of adviser to the obstinate heretic."

"I cannot," was the hasty exclamation. "Don Philip is no heretic, but a faithful son of the Church, and I have no clue to his retreat."

"Then I can give you one," was the low-spoken answer. "Don Philip has been tracked, and brought back. But his daughter is not with him. He refuses to confess her hiding-place, although he is now in the dungeons of the Holy Inquisition, and can purchase freedom by the information."

"Cruel, black-hearted villain!" exclaimed Don Diego, shocked and infuriated at length beyond all prudence; "know this, that Rachel, daughter of Don Philip, is now my bride. And know this yet further, that the nobles of Aragon are not yet so ground beneath the feet of a new dominion that they cannot protect their wives, and those belonging to them, from the perjured baseness of dastards who would destroy them."

Once more the young nobleman turned to quit his abhorred companion, but once more that hated touch fell upon his arm, and the Italian again confronted him with a face literally livid with malice as he hissed out:

"The nobles of Aragon are doubtless all-powerful, my Señor, and yet for your news of your bride I will give you news of her father. Ere this hour to-morrow the burnt ashes of his body will have been scattered to the four winds of

heaven. Take that news back to your bride to win her welcome with."

Don Diego was alone. Whether he had been leaning against the walls of that heavy portico five seconds, five minutes, or five hours, he could scarcely tell when he became conscious of his own painful reiteration of the words, "Ere this hour to-morrow—ere this hour to-morrow."

"What is the matter, Montoro? rouse yourself. What about this hour to-morrow?" asked the voice of Don Alonso at his elbow. And Montoro shudderingly raised himself from the wall, looked with dazed eyes at his friend, and repeated:

"Ere this hour to-morrow. Will she know?"

"Will who know?" again questioned Don Alonso, as he passed his arm through his friend's and drew him on, for the street was no longer empty. Doors were opening on all sides, and the people pouring forth to the various entertainments of the evening. Some curious glances had already been cast at Don Diego, as he leant there stupefied with horror and anguish for his wife's threatened misery.

In the early part of the evening the Italian tool of the Inquisition had sought Don Diego. When evening had given way to night, Don Diego sought the Italian, and as a suppliant.

"It ill suits an Aragonese to sue to the villain of a foreigner," said the wretch, with malicious sarcasm. "It makes me marvel, my Señor, that you should deign thus to condescend."

"I marvel also," murmured the Spaniard, rather to himself than to his unworthy companion. "When the sword of the Moor was at my throat I disdained to sue for mercy; when I

lay spurned by the pirate's foot I felt no fear; but now—ay now, if you will—I will give you the power to boast that one of the greatest of the nobles of Aragon has knelt at your feet to sue for a favour at your hands."

"And you will not deny the humiliating fact if I should publish it?" demanded the Italian, with a half air of yielding, and Montoro Diego, with a light of hope springing into his face, exclaimed:

"No, no. I will myself declare the deed, if for its performance you will obtain me the life and freedom of Don Philip."

Like a drowning man stretching forth to a straw, Montoro had snatched at a false hope. With that low, mocking laugh that issued freely enough from his thin, cruel lips, the Italian said slowly:

"Ah! your wish is very great, my Señor, I see that—truly very great to save a heart-ache to your bride. But—see you—you have hindered Jerome Tivoli of his desire, and now it is his turn, the turn of the 'base, black-hearted villain,' Jerome. And he takes your desire into his ears, he tastes it on his palate, it is sweet to him, sweetened with the thought of revenge, and then—he spurns it—spits it forth from him—thus!"

The Aragonese tore his rapier from its sheath, and darted forward, his fierce southern blood aflame with fury at the insult. But his companion stood there coolly with folded arms, content to hiss between his teeth:

"We are not unwatched, my Señor. I have plenty to avenge me if you think Doña Rachel will be gratified to lose husband now as well as father."