



CHAPTER XII

HOW BIDEFORD BRIDGE DINED AT ANNERY HOUSE

'Three lords sat drinking late yestreen,
And ere they paid the lawing,
They set a combat them between,
To fight it in the dawning.'

Scotch Ballad.

EVERY one who knows Bideford cannot but know Bideford Bridge; for it is the very omphalos, cynosure, and soul, around which the town, as a body, has organised itself; and as Edinburgh is Edinburgh by virtue of its Castle, Rome Rome by virtue of its Capitol, and Egypt Egypt by virtue of its Pyramids, so is Bideford Bideford by virtue of its Bridge. But all do not know the occult powers which have advanced and animated the said wondrous bridge for now five hundred years, and made it the chief wonder, according to Prince and Fuller, of this fair land of Devon: being first an inspired bridge; a soul-saving bridge; an alms-giving bridge; an educational bridge; a sentient bridge; and last, but not least, a dinner-giving bridge. All do not know how, when it began to be built some half-mile higher up, hands invisible carried the stones down-stream each night to the present site; until Sir Richard Gurney, parson of the parish, going to bed one night in sore perplexity and fear of the evil spirit who seemed so busy in his sheépfold, beheld a vision of an

angel, who bade build the bridge where he himself had so kindly transported the materials ; for there alone was sure foundation amid the broad sheet of shifting sand. All do not know how Bishop Grandison of Exeter proclaimed throughout his diocese indulgences, benedictions, and 'participation in all spiritual blessings for ever,' to all who would promote the bridging of that dangerous ford ; and so, consulting alike the interests of their souls and of their bodies, 'make the best of both worlds.'

All do not know, nor do I, that 'though the foundation of the bridge is laid upon wool, yet it shakes at the slightest step of a horse' ; or that, 'though it has twenty-three arches, yet one Wm. Alford (another Milo) carried on his back for a wager four bushels salt-water measure, all the length thereof' ; or that the bridge is a veritable esquire, bearing arms of its own (a ship and bridge proper on a plain field), and owning lands and tenements in many parishes, with which the said miraculous bridge has, from time to time, founded charities, built schools, waged suits at law, and finally (for this concerns us most) given yearly dinners, and kept for that purpose (luxurious and liquorish bridge that it was) the best stocked cellar of wines in all Devon.

To one of these dinners, as it happened, were invited in the year 1583 all the notabilities of Bideford, and beside them Mr. St. Leger of Annery close by, brother of the Marshal of Munster, and of Lady Grenvile ; a most worthy and hospitable gentleman, who, finding riches a snare, parted with them so freely to all his neighbours as long as he lived, that he effectually prevented his children after him from falling into the temptations thereunto incident.

Between him and one of the bridge trustees arose an argument, whether a salmon caught below the bridge was better or worse than one caught above ; and as that weighty question could only be decided by practical experiment, Mr. St. Leger vowed, that as the bridge had given him a good dinner, he would give the bridge one ; offered a bet of five pounds that he would find them, out of the pool below Annery, as firm and flaky a salmon as the Appledore one

which they had just eaten; and then, in the fulness of his heart, invited the whole company present to dine with him at Annery three days after, and bring with them each a wife or daughter; and Don Guzman being at table, he was invited too.

So there was a mighty feast in the great hall at Annery, such as had seldom been since Judge Hankford feasted Edward the Fourth there; and while every one was eating their best and drinking their worst, Rose Salterne and Don Guzman were pretending not to see each other, and watching each other all the more. But Rose, at least, had to be very careful of her glances; for not only was her father at the table, but just opposite her sat none other than Messrs. William Cary and Arthur St. Leger, lieutenants in her Majesty's Irish army, who had returned on furlough a few days before.

Rose Salterne and the Spaniard had not exchanged a word in the last six months, though they had met many times. The Spaniard by no means avoided her company, except in her father's house; he only took care to obey her carefully, by seeming always unconscious of her presence, beyond the stateliest of salutes at entering and departing. But he took care, at the same time, to lay himself out to the very best advantage whenever he was in her presence; to be more witty, more eloquent, more romantic, more full of wonderful tales than he ever yet had been. The cunning Don had found himself foiled in his first tactic; and he was now trying another, and a far more formidable one. In the first place, Rose deserved a very severe punishment, for having dared to refuse the love of a Spanish nobleman; and what greater punishment could he inflict than withdrawing the honour of his attentions, and the sunshine of his smiles? There was conceit enough in that notion, but there was cunning too; for none knew better than the Spaniard that women, like the world, are pretty sure to value a man (especially if there be any real worth in him) at his own price; and that the more he demands for himself, the more they will give for him.

And now he would put a high price on himself, and pique her pride, as she was too much accustomed to worship, to be won by flattering it. He might have done that by paying attention to some one else; but he was too wise to employ so coarse a method, which might raise indignation, or disgust, or despair in Rose's heart, but would have never brought her to his feet—as it will never bring any woman worth bringing. So he quietly and unobtrusively showed her that he could do without her; and she, poor fool, as she was meant to do, began forthwith to ask herself—why? What was the hidden treasure, what was the reserve force, which made him independent of her, while she could not say that she was independent of him? Had he a secret? how pleasant to know it! Some huge ambition? how pleasant to share in it! Some mysterious knowledge? how pleasant to learn it! Some capacity of love beyond the common? how delicious to have it all for her own! He must be greater, wiser, richer-hearted than she was, as well as better-born. Ah, if his wealth would but supply her poverty! And so, step by step, she was being led to sue *in formâ pauperis* to the very man whom she had spurned when he sued in like form to her. That temptation of having some mysterious private treasure, of being the priestess of some hidden sanctuary, and being able to thank Heaven that she was not as other women are, was becoming fast too much for Rose, as it is too much for most. For none knew better than the Spaniard how much more fond women are, by the very law of their sex, of worshipping than of being worshipped, and of obeying than of being obeyed; how their coyness, often their scorn, is but a mask to hide their consciousness of weakness; and a mask, too, of which they themselves will often be the first to tire.

And Rose was utterly tired of that same mask as she sat at table at Annery that day; and Don Guzman saw it in her uneasy and downcast looks, and thinking (conceited coxcomb) that she must be by now sufficiently punished, stole a glance at her now and then, and was not abashed when he saw that she dropped her eyes when they met his,

because he saw her silence and abstraction increase, and something like a blush steal into her cheeks. So he pretended to be as much downcast and abstracted as she was, and went on with his glances, till he once found her, poor thing, looking at him to see if he was looking at her; and then he knew his prey was safe, and asked her, with his eyes, 'Do you forgive me?' and saw her stop dead in her talk to her next neighbour, and falter, and drop her eyes, and raise them again after a minute in search of his, that he might repeat the pleasant question. And then what could she do but answer with all her face and every bend of her pretty neck, 'And do you forgive me in turn?'

Whereon Don Guzman broke out jubilant, like nightingale on bough, with story and jest and repartee; and became forthwith the soul of the whole company, and the most charming of all cavaliers. And poor Rose knew that she was the cause of his sudden change of mood, and blamed herself for what she had done, and shuddered and blushed at her own delight, and longed that the feast was over, that she might hurry home and hide herself alone with sweet fancies about a love the reality of which she felt she dared not face.

It was a beautiful sight, the great terrace at Annery that afternoon; with the smart dames in their gaudy dresses parading up and down in twos and threes before the stately house; or looking down upon the park, with the old oaks, and the deer, and the broad land-locked river spread out like a lake beneath, all bright in the glare of the midsummer sun; or listening obsequiously to the two great ladies who did the honours, Mrs. St. Leger the hostess, and her sister-in-law, fair Lady Grenville. All chatted, and laughed, and eyed each other's dresses, and gossiped about each other's husbands and servants: only Rose Salterne kept apart, and longed to get into a corner and laugh or cry, she knew not which.

'Our pretty Rose seems sad,' said Lady Grenville, coming up to her. 'Cheer up, child! we want you to come and sing to us.'

Rose answered she knew not what, and obeyed mechanically.

She took the lute, and sat down on a bench beneath the house, while the rest grouped themselves round her.

‘What shall I sing?’

‘Let us have your old song, “Earl Haldan’s Daughter.”’

Rose shrank from it. It was a loud and dashing ballad, which chimed in but little with her thoughts; and Frank had praised it too, in happier days long since gone by. She thought of him, and of others, and of her pride and carelessness; and the song seemed ominous to her: and yet for that very reason she dared not refuse to sing it, for fear of suspicion where no one suspected; and so she began perform—

I

‘It was Earl Haldan’s daughter,
She look’d across the sea;
She look’d across the water,
And long and loud laugh’d she;
“The locks of six princesses
Must be my marriage-fee,
So hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat!
Who comes a wooing me?”’

II

It was Earl Haldan’s daughter,
She walk’d along the sand;
When she was aware of a knight so fair,
Come sailing to the land.
His sails were all of velvet,
His mast of beaten gold,
And “hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat,
Who saileth here so bold?”

III

“The locks of five princesses
I won beyond the sea;
I shore their golden tresses,
To fringe a cloak for thee.

One handful yet is wanting,
 But one of all the tale ;
 So hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat !
 Furl up thy velvet sail !”

IV

He leapt into the water,
 That rover young and bold ;
 He gript Earl Haldan's daughter,
 He shore her locks of gold ;
 “ Go weep, go weep, proud maiden,
 The tale is full to-day.
 Now hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat !
 Sail Westward-ho, and away !”

As she ceased, a measured voice, with a foreign accent, thrilled through her.

‘ In the East, they say the nightingale sings to the rose ; Devon, more happy, has nightingale and rose in one.’

‘ We have no nightingales in Devon, Don Guzman,’ said Lady Grenville ; ‘ but our little forest thrushes sing, as you hear, sweetly enough to content any ear. But what brings you away from the gentlemen so early ?’

‘ These letters,’ said he, ‘ which have just been put into my hand ; and as they call me home to Spain, I was loth to lose a moment of that delightful company from which I must part so soon.’

‘ To Spain ?’ asked half a dozen voices ; for the Don was a general favourite.

‘ Yes, and thence to the Indies. My ransom has arrived, and with it the promise of an office. I am to be Governor of La Guayra in Caraccas. Congratulate me on my promotion.’

A mist was over Rose's eyes. The Spaniard's voice was hard and flippant. Did he care for her after all ? And if he did, was it nevertheless hopeless ? How her cheeks glowed ! Everybody must see it ! Anything to turn away their attention from her, and in that nervous haste which

makes people speak, and speak foolishly too, just because they ought to be silent, she asked—

‘And where is La Guayra?’

‘Half round the world, on the coast of the Spanish Main. The loveliest place on earth, and the loveliest governor’s house, in a forest of palms at the foot of a mountain eight thousand feet high: I shall only want a wife there to be in paradise.’

‘I don’t doubt that you may persuade some fair lady of Seville to accompany you thither,’ said Lady Grenville.

‘Thanks, gracious madam: but the truth is, that since I have had the bliss of knowing English ladies, I have begun to think that they are the only ones on earth worth wooing.’

‘A thousand thanks for the compliment; but I fear none of our free English maidens would like to submit to the guardianship of a duenna. Eh, Rose? how should you like to be kept under lock and key all day by an ugly old woman with a horn on her forehead?’

Poor Rose turned so scarlet that Lady Grenville knew her secret on the spot, and would have tried to turn the conversation: but before she could speak, some burgher’s wife blundered out a commonplace about the jealousy of Spanish husbands; and another, to make matters better, giggled out something more true than delicate about West Indian masters and fair slaves.

‘Ladies,’ said Don Guzman, reddening, ‘believe me that these are but the calumnies of ignorance. If we be more jealous than other nations, it is because we love more passionately. If some of us abroad are profligate, it is because they, poor men, have no helpmate, which, like the amethyst, keeps its wearer pure. I could tell you stories, ladies, of the constancy and devotion of Spanish husbands, even in the Indies, as strange as ever romancer invented.’

‘Can you? Then we challenge you to give us one at least.’

‘I fear it would be too long, madam.’

‘The longer the more pleasant, Señor. How can we spend an hour better this afternoon, while the gentlemen within are finishing their wine?’

Story-telling, in those old times, when books (and authors also, lucky for the public) were rarer than now, was a common amusement; and as the Spaniard’s accomplishments in that line were well known, all the ladies crowded round him; the servants brought chairs and benches; and Don Guzman, taking his seat in the midst, with a proud humility, at Lady Grenville’s feet, began—

‘Your perfections, fair and illustrious ladies, must doubtless have heard, ere now, how Sebastian Cabota, some forty-five years ago, sailed forth with a commission from my late master, the Emperor Charles the Fifth, to discover the golden lands of Tarshish, Ophir, and Cipango; but being in want of provisions, stopped short at the mouth of that mighty South American river to which he gave the name of Rio de la Plata, and sailing up it, discovered the fair land of Paraguay. But you may not have heard how, on the bank of that river, at the mouth of the Rio Terceiro, he built a fort which men still call Cabot’s Tower; nor have you, perhaps, heard of the strange tale which will ever make the tower a sacred spot to all true lovers.

‘For when he returned to Spain the year after, he left in his tower a garrison of a hundred and twenty men, under the command of Nuño de Lara, Ruiz Moschera, and Sebastian da Hurtado, old friends and fellow-soldiers of my invincible grandfather Don Ferdinando da Soto; and with them a jewel, than which Spain never possessed one more precious, Lucia Miranda, the wife of Hurtado, who, famed in the Court of the Emperor no less for her wisdom and modesty than for her unrivalled beauty, had thrown up all the pomp and ambition of a palace, to marry a poor adventurer, and to encounter with him the hardships of a voyage round the world. Mangora, the Cacique of the neighbouring Timbuez Indians (with whom Lara had contrived to establish a friendship), cast his eyes on this fair creature, and no sooner saw than he coveted; no sooner

coveted than he plotted, with the devilish subtilty of a savage, to seize by force what he knew he could never gain by right. She soon found out his passion (she was wise enough—what every woman is not—to know when she is loved), and telling her husband, kept as much as she could out of her new lover's sight; while the savage pressed Hurtado to come and visit him, and to bring his lady with him. Hurtado, suspecting the snare, and yet fearing to offend the Cacique, excused himself courteously on the score of his soldier's duty; and the savage, mad with desire and disappointment, began plotting against Hurtado's life.

'So went on several weeks, till food grew scarce, and Don Hurtado, and Don Ruiz Moschera, with fifty soldiers, were sent up the river on a foraging party. Mangora saw his opportunity, and leapt at it forthwith.

'The tower, ladies, as I have heard from those who have seen it, stands on a knoll at the meeting of the two rivers, while on the land side stretches a dreary marsh, covered with tall grass and bushes; a fit place for the ambuscade of four thousand Indians, which Mangora, with devilish cunning, placed around the tower, while he himself went boldly up to it, followed by thirty men, laden with grain, fruit, game, and all the delicacies which his forests could afford.

'There, with a smiling face, he told the unsuspecting Lara his sorrow for the Spaniard's want of food; besought him to accept the provision he had brought, and was, as he had expected, invited by Lara to come in and taste the wines of Spain.

'In went he and his thirty fellow-bandits, and the feast continued, with songs and libations, far into the night, while Mangora often looked round, and at last boldly asked for the fair Miranda: but she had shut herself into her lodging, pleading illness.

'A plea, fair ladies, which little availed that hapless dame: for no sooner had the Spaniards retired to rest, leaving (by I know not what madness) Mangora and his Indians within, than they were awakened by the cry of

fire, the explosion of their magazine, and the inward rush of the four thousand from the marsh outside.

‘Why pain your gentle ears with details of slaughter? A few fearful minutes sufficed to exterminate my bewildered and unarmed countrymen, to bind the only survivors, Miranda (innocent cause of the whole tragedy) and four other women with their infants, and to lead them away in triumph across the forest towards the Indian town.

‘Stunned by the suddenness of the evils which had passed, and still more by the thought of those worse which were to come (as she too well foresaw), Miranda travelled all night through the forest, and was brought in triumph at day-dawn before the Indian king to receive her doom. Judge of her astonishment, when, on looking up, she saw that he was not Mangora.

‘A ray of hope flashed across her, and she asked where he was.

‘“He was slain last night,” said the king; “and I, his brother Siripa, am now Cacique of the Timbuez.”

‘It was true; Lara, maddened with drink, rage, and wounds, had caught up his sword, rushed into the thick of the fight, singled out the traitor, and slain him on the spot; and then, forgetting safety in revenge, had continued to plunge his sword into the corpse, heedless of the blows of the savages, till he fell pierced with a hundred wounds.

‘A ray of hope, as I said, flashed across the wretched Miranda for a moment; but the next she found that she had been freed from one bandit only to be delivered to another.

‘“Yes,” said the new king in broken Spanish; “my brother played a bold stake, and lost it; but it was well worth the risk, and he showed his wisdom thereby. You cannot be his queen now: you must content yourself with being mine.”

‘Miranda, desperate, answered him with every fierce taunt which she could invent against his treachery and his crime; and asked him, how he came to dream that the wife of a Christian Spaniard would condescend to become

the mistress of a heathen savage ; hoping, unhappy lady, to exasperate him into killing her on the spot. But in vain ; she only prolonged thereby her own misery. For, whether it was, ladies, that the novel sight of divine virtue and beauty awed (as it may have awed me ere now), where it had just before maddened ; or whether some dream crossed the savage (as it may have crossed me ere now), that he could make the wisdom of a mortal angel help his ambition, as well as her beauty his happiness ; or whether (which I will never believe of one of those dark children of the devil, though I can boldly assert it of myself) some spark of boldness within him made him too proud to take by force what he could not win by persuasion, certain it is, as the Indians themselves confessed afterwards, that the savage only answered her by smiles ; and bidding his men unbind her, told her that she was no slave of his, and that it only lay with her to become the sovereign of him and all his vassals ; assigned her a hut to herself, loaded her with savage ornaments, and for several weeks treated her with no less courtesy (so miraculous is the power of love) than if he had been a cavalier of Castile.

‘ Three months and more, ladies, as I have heard, passed in this misery, and every day Miranda grew more desperate of all deliverance, and saw staring her in the face, nearer and nearer, some hideous and shameful end ; when one day, going down with the wives of the Cacique to draw water in the river, she saw on the opposite bank a white man in a tattered Spanish dress, with a drawn sword in his hand ; who had no sooner espied her, than shrieking her name, he plunged into the stream, swam across, landed at her feet, and clasped her in his arms. It was no other, ladies, incredible as it may seem, than Don Sebastian himself, who had returned with Ruiz Moschera to the tower, and found it only a charred and bloodstained heap of ruins.

‘ He guessed, as by inspiration, what had passed, and whither his lady was gone ; and without a thought of danger, like a true Spanish gentleman and a true Spanish

lover, darted off alone into the forest, and guided only by the inspiration of his own loyal heart, found again his treasure, and found it still unstained and his own.

‘Who can describe the joy, and who again the terror, of their meeting? The Indian women had fled in fear, and for the short ten minutes that the lovers were left together, life, to be sure, was one long kiss. But what to do they knew not. To go inland was to rush into the enemy’s arms. He would have swum with her across the river, and attempted it; but his strength, worn out with hunger and travel, failed him; he drew her with difficulty on shore again, and sat down by her to await their doom with prayer, the first and last resource of virtuous ladies, as weapons are of cavaliers.

‘Alas for them! May no true lovers ever have to weep over joys so soon lost, after having been so hardly found! For, ere a quarter of an hour was passed, the Indian women, who had fled at his approach, returned with all the warriors of the tribe. Don Sebastian, desperate, would fain have slain his wife and himself on the spot; but his hand sank again—and whose would not but an Indian’s?—as he raised it against that fair and faithful breast; in a few minutes he was surrounded, seized from behind, disarmed, and carried in triumph into the village. And if you cannot feel for him in that misery, fair ladies, who have known no sorrow, yet I, a prisoner, can.’

Don Guzman paused a moment, as if overcome by emotion; and I will not say that, as he paused, he did not look to see if Rose Salterne’s eyes were on him, as indeed they were.

‘Yes, I can feel with him; I can estimate, better than you, ladies, the greatness of that love which could submit to captivity; to the loss of his sword; to the loss of that honour, which, next to God and his mother, is the true Spaniard’s deity. There are those who have suffered that shame at the hands of valiant gentlemen’ (and again Don Guzman looked up at Rose), ‘and yet would have sooner died a thousand deaths; but he dared to endure it from

the hands of villains, savages, heathens ; for he was a true Spaniard, and therefore a true lover : but I will go on with my tale.

‘ This wretched pair, then, as I have been told by Ruiz Moschera himself, stood together before the Cacique. He, like a true child of the devil, comprehending in a moment who Don Sebastian was, laughed with delight at seeing his rival in his power, and bade bind him at once to a tree, and shoot him to death with arrows.

‘ But the poor Miranda sprang forward, and threw herself at his feet, and with piteous entreaties besought for mercy from him who knew no mercy.

‘ And yet love, and the sight of her beauty, and the terrible eloquence of her words, while she invoked on his head the just vengeance of Heaven, wrought even on his heart : nevertheless the pleasure of seeing her, who had so long scorned him, a suppliant at his feet, was too delicate to be speedily forgone ; and not till she was all but blind with tears, and dumb with agony of pleading, did he make answer, that if she would consent to become his wife, her husband’s life should be spared. She, in her haste and madness, sobbed out desperately I know not what consent. Don Sebastian, who understood, if not the language, still the meaning (so had love quickened his understanding), shrieked to her not to lose her precious soul for the sake of his worthless body ; that death was nothing compared to the horror of that shame ; and such other words as became a noble and valiant gentleman. She, shuddering now at her own frailty, would have recalled her promise ; but Siripa kept her to it, vowing, if she disappointed him again, such a death to her husband as made her blood run cold to hear of ; and the wretched woman could only escape for the present by some story, that it was not the custom of her race to celebrate nuptials till a month after the betrothment ; that the anger of Heaven would be on her, unless she first performed in solitude certain religious rites ; and, lastly, that if he dared to lay hands on her husband, she would die so resolutely, that every drop of water should be deep enough

to drown her, every thorn sharp enough to stab her to the heart : till fearing lest by demanding too much he should lose all, and awed too, as he had been at first, by a voice and looks which seemed to be, in comparison with his own, divine, Siripa bade her go back to her hut, promising her husband life ; but promising too, that if he ever found the two speaking together, even for a moment, he would pour out on them both all the cruelty of those tortures in which the devil, their father, has so perfectly instructed the Indians.

‘So Don Sebastian, being stripped of his garments and painted after the Indian fashion, was set to all mean and toilsome work, amid the buffetings and insults of the whole village. And this, ladies, he endured without a murmur, ay, took delight in enduring it, as he would have endured things worse a thousand times, only for the sake, like a true lover as he was, of being near the goddess whom he worshipped, and of seeing her now and then afar off, happy enough to be repaid even by that for all indignities.

‘And yet, you who have loved may well guess, as I can, that ere a week had passed, Don Sebastian and the Lady Miranda had found means, in spite of all spiteful eyes, to speak to each other once and again ; and to assure each other of their love ; even to talk of escape, before the month’s grace should be expired. And Miranda, whose heart was full of courage as long as she felt her husband near her, went so far as to plan a means of escape which seemed possible and hopeful.

‘For the youngest wife of the Cacique, who, till Miranda’s coming, had been his favourite, often talked with the captive, insulting and tormenting her in her spite and jealousy, and receiving in return only gentle and conciliatory words. And one day when the woman had been threatening to kill her, Miranda took courage to say, “Do you fancy that I shall not be as glad to be rid of your husband, as you to be rid of me ? Why kill me needlessly, when all that you require is to get me forth of the place ? Out of sight, out of mind. When I am gone, your husband will soon forget

me, and you will be his favourite as before." Soon, seeing that the girl was inclined to listen, she went on to tell her of her love to Don Sebastian, entreating and adjuring her, by the love which she bore the Cacique, to pity and help her; so won upon the girl, that she consented to be privy to Miranda's escape, and even offered to give her an opportunity of speaking to her husband about it; and at last was so won over by Miranda, that she consented to keep all intruders out of the way, while Don Sebastian that very night visited Miranda in her hut.

'The hapless husband, thirsting for his love, was in that hut, be sure, the moment that kind darkness covered his steps:—and what cheer these two made of each other, when they once found themselves together, lovers must fancy for themselves: but so it was, that after many a leave-taking, there was no departure; and when the night was well-nigh past, Sebastian and Miranda were still talking together, as if they had never met before, and would never meet again.

'But it befell, ladies (would that I was not speaking truth, but inventing, that I might have invented something merrier for your ears), it befell that very night, that the young wife of the Cacique, whose heart was lifted up with the thought that her rival was now at last disposed of, tried all her wiles to win back her faithless husband; but in vain. He only answered her caresses by indifference, then by contempt, then insults, then blows (for, with the Indians, woman is always a slave, or rather a beast of burden), and went on to draw such cruel comparisons between her dark skin and the glorious fairness of the Spanish lady, that the wretched girl, beside herself with rage, burst out at last with her own secret. "Fool that you are to madden yourself about a stranger who prizes one hair of her Spanish husband's head more than your whole body! Much does your new bride care for you! She is at this moment in her husband's arms!"

'The Cacique screamed furiously to know what she meant; and she, her jealousy and hate of the guiltless lady

boiling over once for all, bade him, if he doubted her, go see for himself.

‘What use of many words? They were taken. Love, or rather lust, repelled, turned in a moment into devilish hate; and the Cacique, summoning his Indians, bade them bind the wretched Don Sebastian to a tree, and there inflicted on him the lingering death to which he had at first been doomed. For Miranda he had more exquisite cruelty in store. And shall I tell it? Yes, ladies, for the honour of love and of Spain, and for a justification of those cruelties against the Indians which are so falsely imputed to our most Christian nation, it shall be told: he delivered the wretched lady over to the tender mercies of his wives; and what they were is neither fit for me to tell, nor you to hear.

‘The two wretched lovers cast themselves upon each other’s neck; drank each other’s salt tears with the last kisses; accused themselves as the cause of each other’s death; and then, rising above fear and grief, broke out into triumph at thus dying for and with each other; and proclaiming themselves the martyrs of love, commended their souls to God, and then stepped joyfully and proudly to their doom.’

‘And what was that?’ asked half a dozen trembling voices.

‘Don Sebastian, as I have said, was shot to death with arrows; but as for the Lady Miranda, the wretches themselves confessed afterwards, when they received due vengeance for their crimes (as they did receive it), that after all shameful and horrible indignities, she was bound to a tree, and there burned slowly in her husband’s sight, stifling her shrieks lest they should wring his heart by one additional pang, and never taking her eyes, to the last, off that beloved face. And so died (but not unavenged) Sebastian de Hurtado and Lucia Miranda,—a Spanish husband and a Spanish wife.’

The Don paused, and the ladies were silent awhile; for, indeed, there was many a gentle tear to be dried; but at last Mrs. St. Leger spoke, halt, it seemed, to turn off the

too painful impression of the over-true tale, the outlines whereof may be still read in old Charlevoix.

‘You have told a sad and a noble tale, sir, and told it well; but, though your story was to set forth a perfect husband, it has ended rather by setting forth a perfect wife.’

‘And if I have forgotten, madam, in praising her to praise him also, have I not done that which would have best pleased his heroical and chivalrous spirit? He, be sure, would have forgotten his own virtue in the light of hers; and he would have wished me, I doubt not, to do the same also. And beside, madam, where ladies are the theme, who has time or heart to cast one thought upon their slaves?’ And the Don made one of his deliberate and highly-finished bows.

‘Don Guzman is courtier enough, as far as compliments go,’ said one of the young ladies; ‘but it was hardly courtier-like of him to find us so sad an entertainment, upon a merry evening.’

‘Yes,’ said another; ‘we must ask him for no more stories.’

‘Or songs either,’ said a third. ‘I fear he knows none but about forsaken maidens and despairing lovers.’

‘I know nothing at all about forsaken ladies, madam; because ladies are never forsaken in Spain.’

‘Nor about lovers despairing there, I suppose?’

‘That good opinion of ourselves, madam, with which you English are pleased to twit us now and then, always prevents so sad a state of mind. For myself, I have had little to do with love; but I have had still less to do with despair, and intend, by help of Heaven, to have less.’

‘You are valiant, sir.’

‘You would not have me a coward, madam?’ and so forth.

Now all this time Don Guzman had been talking at Rose Salterne, and giving her the very slightest hint, every now and then, that he was talking at her; till the poor girl’s face was almost crimson with pleasure, and she gave herself up to the spell. He loved her still; perhaps he knew that

she loved him: he must know some day. She felt now that there was no escape; she was almost glad to think that there was none.

The dark, handsome, stately face; the melodious voice, with its rich Spanish accent; the quiet grace of the gestures; the wild pathos of the story; even the measured and inflated style, as of one speaking of another and a loftier world; the chivalrous respect and admiration for woman, and for faithfulness to woman—what a man he was! If he had been pleasant heretofore, he was now enchanting. All the ladies round felt that, she could see, as much as she herself did; no, not quite as much, she hoped. She surely understood him, and felt for his loneliness more than any of them. Had she not been feeling for it through long and sad months? But it was she whom he was thinking of, she whom he was speaking to, all along. Oh, why had the tale ended so soon? She would gladly have sat and wept her eyes out till midnight over one melodious misery after another; but she was quite wise enough to keep her secret to herself; and sat behind the rest, with greedy eyes and demure lips, full of strange and new happiness—or misery; she knew not which to call it.

In the meanwhile, as it was ordained, Cary could see and hear through the window of the hall a good deal of what was going on.

‘How that Spanish crocodile ogles the Rose!’ whispered he to young St. Leger.

‘What wonder? He is not the first by many a one.’

· ‘Ay—but—By Heaven, she is making side-shots at him with those languishing eyes of hers, the little baggage!’

‘What wonder? He is not the first, say I, and won’t be the last. Pass the wine, man.’

‘I have had enough; between sack and singing, my head is as mazed as a dizzy sheep. Let me slip out.’

‘Not yet, man; remember you are bound for one song more.’

So Cary, against his will, sat and sang another song; and in the meanwhile the party had broken up, and wandered

away by twos and threes, among trim gardens and pleasaunces, and clipped yew-walks—

Where west-winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells—

admiring the beauty of that stately place, long since passed into other hands, and fallen to decay; but then (if old Prince speaks true) one of the noblest mansions of the West.

At last Cary got away and out; sober, but just enough flushed with wine to be ready for any quarrel; and luckily for him, had not gone twenty yards along the great terrace before he met Lady Grenvile.

'Has your Ladyship seen Don Guzman?'

'Yes—why, where is he? He was with me not ten minutes ago. You know he is going back to Spain.'

'Going! Has his ransom come?'

'Yes, and with it a governorship in the Indies.'

'Governorship! Much good may it do the governed.'

'Why not, then? He is surely a most gallant gentleman.'

'Gallant enough—yes,' said Cary carelessly. 'I must find him, and congratulate him on his honours.'

'I will help you to find him,' said Lady Grenvile, whose woman's eye and ear had already suspected something. 'Escort me, sir.'

'It is but too great an honour to squire the Queen of Bideford,' said Cary, offering his hand.

'If I am your Queen, sir, I must be obeyed,' answered she in a meaning tone. Cary took the hint, and went on chattering cheerfully enough.

But Don Guzman was not to be found in garden or in pleasaunce.

'Perhaps,' at last said a burgher's wife, with a toss of her head, 'your Ladyship may meet with him at Hankford's oak!'

'At Hankford's oak! what should take him there?'

'Pleasant company, I reckon' (with another toss). 'I heard him and Mistress Salterne talking about the oak just now.'

Cary turned pale and drew in his breath.

'Very likely,' said Lady Grenville quietly. 'Will you walk with me so far, Mr. Cary?'

'To the world's end, if your Ladyship condescends so far.' And off they went, Lady Grenville wishing that they were going anywhere else, but afraid to let Cary go alone; and suspecting, too, that some one or other ought to go.

So they went down past the herds of deer, by a trim-kept path into the lonely dell where stood the fatal oak; and, as they went, Lady Grenville, to avoid more unpleasant talk, poured into Cary's unheeding ears the story (which he probably had heard fifty times before) how old Chief-Justice Hankford (whom some contradictory myths make the man who committed Prince Henry to prison for striking him on the bench), weary of life and sickened at the horrors and desolations of the Wars of the Roses, went down to his house at Annery there, and bade his keeper shoot any man who, passing through the deer park at night, should refuse to stand when challenged; and then going down into that glen himself, and hiding himself beneath that oak, met willingly by his keeper's hand the death which his own dared not inflict: but ere the story was half done, Cary grasped Lady Grenville's hand so tightly that she gave a little shriek of pain.

'There they are!' whispered he, heedless of her; and pointed to the oak, where, half-hidden by the tall fern, stood Rose and the Spaniard.

Her head was on his bosom. She seemed sobbing, trembling; he talking earnestly and passionately; but Lady Grenville's little shriek made them both look up. To turn and try to escape was to confess all; and the two, collecting themselves instantly, walked towards her, Rose wishing herself fathoms deep beneath the earth.

'Mind, sir,' whispered Lady Grenville as they came up; 'you have seen nothing.'

'Madam?'

'If you are not on my ground, you are on my brother's. Obey me!'

Cary bit his lip, and bowed courteously to the Don.

‘I have to congratulate you, I hear, Señor, on your approaching departure.’

‘I kiss your hands, Señor, in return; but I question whether it be a matter of congratulation, considering all that I leave behind.’

‘So do I,’ answered Cary bluntly enough, and the four walked back to the house, Lady Grenville taking everything for granted with the most charming good-humour, and chatting to her three silent companions till they gained the terrace once more, and found four or five of the gentlemen, with Sir Richard at their head, proceeding to the bowling-green.

Lady Grenville, in an agony of fear about the quarrel which she knew must come, would have gladly whispered five words to her husband: but she dared not do it before the Spaniard, and dreaded, too, a faint or a scream from the Rose, whose father was of the party. So she walked on with her fair prisoner, commanding Cary to escort them in, and the Spaniard to go to the bowling-green.

Cary obeyed: but he gave her the slip the moment she was inside the door, and then darted off to the gentlemen.

His heart was on fire: all his old passion for the Rose had flashed up again at the sight of her with a lover;—and that lover a Spaniard! He would cut his throat for him, if steel could do it! Only he recollected that Salterne was there, and shrank from exposing Rose; and shrank, too, as every gentleman should, from making a public quarrel in another man’s house. Never mind. Where there was a will there was a way. He could get him into a corner, and quarrel with him privately about the cut of his beard, or the colour of his ribbon. So in he went; and, luckily or unluckily, found standing together apart from the rest, Sir Richard, the Don, and young St. Leger.

‘Well, Don Guzman, you have given us wine-bibbers the slip this afternoon. I hope you have been well employed in the meanwhile?’

‘Delightfully to myself, Señor,’ said the Don, who, enraged at being interrupted, and not discovered, was as ready

to fight as Cary, but disliked, of course, an explosion as much as he did; 'and to others, I doubt not.'

'So the ladies say,' quoth St. Leger. 'He has been making them all cry with one of his stories, and robbing us meanwhile of the pleasure we had hoped for from some of his Spanish songs.'

'The devil take Spanish songs!' said Cary in a low voice, but loud enough for the Spaniard. Don Guzman clapt his hand on his sword-hilt instantly.

'Lieutenant Cary,' said Sir Richard in a stern voice, 'the wine has surely made you forget yourself!'

'As sober as yourself, most worshipful knight; but if you want a Spanish song, here's one; and a very scurvy one it is, like its subject—

Don Desperado
Walked on the Prado,
And there he met his enemy.
He pulled out a knife, a,
And let out his life, a,
And fled for his own across the sea.

And he bowed low to the Spaniard.

The insult was too gross to require any spluttering.

'Señor Cary, we meet?'

'I thank your quick apprehension, Don Guzman Maria Magdalena Sotomayor de Soto. When, where, and with what weapons?'

'For God's sake, gentlemen! Nephew Arthur, Cary is your guest; do you know the meaning of this?'

St. Leger was silent. Cary answered for him.

'An old Irish quarrel, I assure you, sir. A matter of years' standing. In unlacing the Señor's helmet, the evening that he was taken prisoner, I was unlucky enough to twitch his mustachios. You recollect the fact, of course, Señor?'

'Perfectly,' said the Spaniard; and then, half-amused and half-pleased, in spite of his bitter wrath, at Cary's quickness and delicacy in shielding Rose, he bowed, and—

'And it gives me much pleasure to find that he whom I

trust to have the pleasure of killing to-morrow morning is a gentleman whose nice sense of honour renders him thoroughly worthy of the sword of a De Soto.'

Cary bowed in return, while Sir Richard, who saw plainly enough that the excuse was feigned, shrugged his shoulders.

'What weapons, Señor?' asked Will again.

'I should have preferred a horse and pistols,' said Don Guzman after a moment, half to himself, and in Spanish; 'they make surer work of it than bodkins; but' (with a sigh and one of his smiles) 'beggars must not be choosers.'

'The best horse in my stable is at your service, Señor,' said Sir Richard Grenville instantly.

'And in mine also, Señor,' said Cary; 'and I shall be happy to allow you a week to train him, if he does not answer at first to a Spanish hand.'

'You forget in your courtesy, gentle sir, that the insult being with me, the time lies with me also. We wipa it off to-morrow morning with simple rapiers and daggers. Who is your second?'

'Mr. Arthur St. Leger here, Señor: who is yours?'

The Spaniard felt himself alone in the world for one moment; and then answered with another of his smiles—

'Your nation possesses the soul of honour. He who fights an Englishman needs no second.'

'And he who fights among Englishmen will always find one,' said Sir Richard. 'I am the fittest second for my guest.'

'You only add one more obligation, illustrious cavalier, to a two-years' prodigality of favours, which I shall never be able to repay.'

'But, Nephew Arthur,' said Grenville, 'you cannot surely be second against your father's guest, and your own uncle.'

'I cannot help it, sir; I am bound by an oath, as Will can tell you. I suppose you won't think it necessary to let me blood?'

'You half deserve it, sirrah!' said Sir Richard, who was very angry; but the Don interposed quickly.

'Heaven forbid, Señors! We are no French duellists,

who are mad enough to make four or six lives answer for the sins of two. This gentleman and I have quarrel enough between us, I suspect, to make a right bloody encounter.'

'The dependance is good enough, sir,' said Cary, licking his sinful lips at the thought. 'Very well. Rapiers and shirts at three to-morrow morning—Is that the bill of fare? Ask Sir Richard where, Atty? It is against punctilio now for me to speak to him till after I am killed.'

'On the sands opposite. The tide will be out at three. And now, gallant gentlemen, let us join the bowlers.'

And so they went back and spent a merry evening, all except poor Rose, who, ere she went back, had poured all her sorrows into Lady Grenville's ear. For the kind woman, knowing that she was motherless and guileless, carried her off into Mrs. St. Leger's chamber, and there entreated her to tell the truth, and heaped her with pity, but with no comfort. For indeed, what comfort was there to give?

Three o'clock, upon a still, pure, bright midsummer morning. A broad and yellow sheet of ribbed tide-sands, through which the shallow river wanders from one hill-foot to the other, whispering round dark knolls of rock, and under low tree-fringed cliffs, and banks of golden broom. A mile below, the long bridge and the white walled town, all sleeping pearly in the soft haze, beneath a cloudless vault of blue. The white glare of dawn, which last night hung high in the north-west, has travelled now to the north-east, and above the wooded wall of the hills the sky is flushing with rose and amber.

A long line of gulls goes wailing up inland; the rooks from Annery come cawing and sporting round the corner at Landcross, while high above them four or five herons flap solemnly along to find their breakfast on the shallows. The pheasants and partridges are clucking merrily in the long wet grass; every copse and hedgerow rings with the voice of birds; but the lark, who has been singing since midnight in the 'blank height of the dark,' suddenly hushes his carol and drops headlong among the corn, as a broad-winged

buzzard swings from some wooded peak into the abyss of the valley, and hangs high-poised above the heavenward songster. The air is full of perfume; sweet clover, new-mown hay, the fragrant breath of kine, the dainty scent of seaweed wreaths and fresh wet sand. Glorious day, glorious place, 'bridal of earth and sky,' decked well with bridal garlands, bridal perfumes, bridal songs.—What do those four cloaked figures there by the river brink, a dark spot on the fair face of the summer morn?

Yet one is as cheerful as if he too, like all nature round him, were going to a wedding; and that is Will Cary. He has been bathing down below to cool his brain and steady his hand; and he intends to stop Don Guzman Maria Magdalena Sotomayor de Soto's wooing for ever and a day. The Spaniard is in a very different mood; fierce and haggard, he is pacing up and down the sand. He intends to kill Will Cary; but then? Will he be the nearer to Rose by doing so? Can he stay in Bideford? Will she go with him? Shall he stoop to stain his family by marrying a burgher's daughter? It is a confused, all but desperate business; and Don Guzman is certain but of one thing, that he is madly in love with this fair witch, and that if she refuse him, then, rather than see her accept another man, he would kill her with his own hands.

Sir Richard Grenvile too is in no very pleasant humour, as St. Leger soon discovers, when the two seconds begin whispering over their arrangements.

'We cannot have either of them killed, Arthur.'

'Mr. Cary swears he will kill the Spaniard, sir.'

'He shan't. The Spaniard is my guest. I am answerable for him to Leigh, and for his ransom too. And how can Leigh accept the ransom if the man is not given up safe and sound? They won't pay for a dead carcass, boy! The man's life is worth two hundred pounds.'

'A very bad bargain, sir, for those who pay the said two hundred for the rascal; but what if he kills Cary?'

'Worse still. Cary must not be killed. I am very angry with him, but he is too good a lad to be lost; and his

father would never forgive us. We must strike up their swords at the first scratch.'

'It will make them very mad, sir.'

'Hang them! let them fight us then, if they don't like our counsel. It must be, Arthur.'

'Be sure, sir,' said Arthur, 'that whatsoever you shall command I shall perform. It is only too great an honour to a young man as I am to find myself in the same duel with your worship, and to have the advantage of your wisdom and experience.'

Sir Richard smiles, and says—'Now, gentlemen! are you ready?'

The Spaniard pulls out a little crucifix, and kisses it devoutly, smiting on his breast; crosses himself two or three times, and says—'Most willingly, Señor.'

Cary kisses no crucifix, but says a prayer nevertheless.

Cloaks and doublets are tossed off, the men placed, the rapiers measured hilt and point; Sir Richard and St. Leger place themselves right and left of the combatants, facing each other, the points of their drawn swords on the sand. Cary and the Spaniard stand for a moment quite upright, their sword-arms stretched straight before them, holding the long rapier horizontally, the left hand clutching the dagger close to their breasts. So they stand eye to eye, with clenched teeth and pale crushed lips, while men might count a score; St. Leger can hear the beating of his own heart; Sir Richard is praying inwardly that no life may be lost. Suddenly there is a quick turn of Cary's wrist and a leap forward. The Spaniard's dagger flashes, and the rapier is turned aside; Cary springs six feet back as the Spaniard rushes on him in turn. Parry, thrust, parry—the steel rattles, the sparks fly, the men breathe fierce and loud; the devil's game is begun in earnest.

Five minutes have the two had instant death a short six inches off from those wild sinful hearts of theirs, and not a scratch has been given. Yes! the Spaniard's rapier passes under Cary's left arm; he bleeds.

‘A hit! a hit! Strike up, Atty!’ and the swords are struck up instantly.

Cary, nettled by the smart, tries to close with his foe, but the seconds cross their swords before him.

‘It is enough, gentlemen. Don Guzman’s honour is satisfied!’

‘But not my revenge, Señor,’ says the Spaniard, with a frown. ‘This duel is *à l’outrance*, on my part; and I believe, on Mr. Cary’s also.’

‘By heaven, it is!’ says Will, trying to push past. ‘Let me go, Arthur St. Leger; one of us must down. Let me go, I say!’

‘If you stir, Mr. Cary, you have to do with Richard Grenville!’ thunders the lion voice. ‘I am angry enough with you for having brought on this duel at all. Don’t provoke me still further, young hot-head!’

Cary stops sulkily.

‘You do not know all, Sir Richard, or you would not speak in this way.’

‘I do, sir, all: and I shall have the honour of talking it over with Don Guzman myself.’

‘Hey!’ said the Spaniard. ‘You came here as my second, Sir Richard, as I understood: but not as my counsellor.’

‘Arthur, take your man away! Cary! obey me as you would your father, sir! Can you not trust Richard Grenville?’

‘Come away, for God’s sake!’ says poor Arthur, dragging Cary’s sword from him; ‘Sir Richard must know best!’

So Cary is led off sulking, and Sir Richard turns to the Spaniard,—

‘And now, Don Guzman, allow me, though much against my will, to speak to you as a friend to a friend. You will pardon me if I say that I cannot but have seen last night’s devotion to—’

‘You will be pleased, Señor, not to mention the name of any lady to whom I may have shown devotion. I am not

accustomed to have my little affairs talked over by any unbidden counsellors.'

'Well, Señor, if you take offence, you take that which is not given. Only I warn you, with all apologies for any seeming forwardness, that the quest on which you seem to be is one on which you will not be allowed to proceed.'

'And who will stop me?' asked the Spaniard, with a fierce oath.

'You are not aware, illustrious Señor,' said Sir Richard, parrying the question, 'that our English laity look upon mixed marriages with full as much dislike as your own ecclesiastics.'

'Marriage, sir? Who gave you leave to mention that word to me?'

Sir Richard's brow darkened; the Spaniard, in his insane pride, had forced upon the good knight a suspicion which was not really just.

'Is it possible, then, Señor Don Guzman, that I am to have the shame of mentioning a baser word?'

'Mention what you will, sir. All words are the same to me; for, just or unjust, I shall answer them alike only by my sword.'

'You will do no such thing, sir. You forget that I am your host.'

'And do you suppose that you have therefore a right to insult me? Stand on your guard, sir!'

Grenville answered by slapping his own rapier home into the sheath with a quiet smile.

'Señor Don Guzman must be well enough aware of who Richard Grenville is, to know that he may claim the right of refusing duel to any man, if he shall so think fit.'

'Sir!' cried the Spaniard, with an oath, 'this is too much! Do you dare to hint that I am unworthy of your sword? Know, insolent Englishman, I am not merely a De Soto,—though that, by St. James, were enough for you or any man. I am a Sotomayor, a Mendoza, a Bovadilla, a Losada, a——sir! I have blood royal in my veins, and you dare to refuse my challenge?'

‘Richard Grenville can show quarterings, probably, against even Don Guzman Maria Magdalena Sotomayor de Soto, or against (with no offence to the unquestioned nobility of your pedigree) the bluest blood of Spain. But he can show, moreover, thank God, a reputation which raises him as much above the imputation of cowardice, as it does above that of discourtesy. If you think fit, Señor, to forget what you have just, in very excusable anger, vented, and to return with me, you will find me still, as ever, your most faithful servant and host. If otherwise, you have only to name whither you wish your mails to be sent, and I shall, with unfeigned sorrow, obey your commands concerning them.’

The Spaniard bowed stiffly, answered, ‘To the nearest tavern, Señor,’ and then strode away. His baggage was sent thither. He took a boat down to Appledore that very afternoon, and vanished, none knew whither. A very courteous note to Lady Grenville, enclosing the jewel which he had been used to wear round his neck, was the only memorial he left behind him: except, indeed, the scar on Cary’s arm, and poor Rose’s broken heart.

Now county towns are scandalous places at best; and though all parties tried to keep the duel secret, yet, of course, before noon all Bideford knew what had happened, and a great deal more; and what was even worse, Rose, in an agony of terror, had seen Sir Richard Grenville enter her father’s private room, and sit there closeted with him for an hour and more; and when he went, upstairs came old Salterne, with his stick in his hand, and after rating her soundly for far worse than a flirt, gave her (I am sorry to have to say it, but such was the mild fashion of paternal rule in those times, even over such daughters as Lady Jane Grey, if Roger Ascham is to be believed) such a beating that her poor sides were black and blue for many a day; and then putting her on a pillion behind him, carried her off twenty miles to her old prison at Stow Mill, commanding her aunt to tame down her saucy blood with bread of affliction and water of affliction. Which commands were willingly enough fulfilled by the old dame, who had always

borne a grudge against Rose for being rich while she was poor, and pretty while her daughter was plain ; so that between flouts, and sneers, and watchings, and pretty open hints that she was a disgrace to her family, and no better than she should be, the poor innocent child watered her couch with her tears for a fortnight or more, stretching out her hands to the wide Atlantic, and calling wildly to Don Guzman to return and take her where he would, and she would live for him and die for him ; and perhaps she did not call in vain.

