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THE

ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS

OF

SANTILLANE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

LESAGE.

A NEW EDITION:

WITH ENGRAVINGS FROM PAINTINGS

By ROBERT SMIRKE, Esq. R. A.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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1822.

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HISTORY

OF

GIL BLAS

OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

The tender attachment between Gil Blas and dame Lorenza Sephora.

AWAY went I to Xelva with three thousand ducats under my charge, as an equivalent to Samuel Simon for the amount of his loss. I will have the honesty to own, that my fingers itched as I jogged along, to transfer these funds to my own account, and begin my stewardship in character; since every thing in this life depends upon setting out well. There was no risk in preferring instinct to principle; because it was only to ride about the country for five or six days, and come home upon a brisk trot as if I had done my business, and made the best of my way. Don Alphonso and his father would never

have believed me capable of a breach of trust. Yet, strange to tell, I was proof against so tempting a suggestion: it would scarcely be too much to say, that honour, not the fear of being found out, was the spring of so praiseworthy a decision; and as times go, that is saying a great deal for a lad, whose conscience had been pretty well seasoned by keeping company with a long succession of scoundrels. Many people who have not that excuse, but frequent worshipful society, will wonder how such squeamishness should have prevailed over my good sense: treasurers of charities in particular; persons who have the wills of relations in their custody, and do not exactly like the contents; in short, all those whose characters stand higher than their principles, will find food for reflection in my overstrained scrupulosity.

After having made restitution to the merchant, who little thought ever to have seen one farthing of his property again, I returned to the castle of Leyva. The count de Polan had taken his departure, and was far on his journey to Toledo with Julia and don Ferdinand. I found my new master more wrapped up than ever in Seraphina; his Seraphina equally wrapped up in my master, and don Cæsar just as much wrapped up as either in the contemplation of the happy couple. My object was to gain the goodwill of this affectionate father; and I succeeded to my wish. The whole house was placed implicitly

under my superintendence; nothing was done without my special direction; the tenants paid their rents into my hands; the disbursements of the family were all under my revision; and the subordinate situations in the household were at my disposal without appeal: and yet the power of tyrannizing did not give me the inclination: as it has always hitherto done to my equals and superiors. I neither turned away the male servants, because I did not like the cut of their beards; nor the female ones, because they happened not to like the cut of mine. If they made up to don Cæsar or his son at once, without currying my favour as the channel of all good graces, far from taking umbrage at them on that account, I spoke out officiously in their behalf. In other respects too, the marks of confidence my two masters were incessantly lavishing on me inspired me with a substantial zeal for their service. Their interest was my real object: there was no slight of hand in my ministry; I was such a caterer for the general good, as you rarely meet with in private families or in political societies.

While I was hugging myself on the well-earned prosperity of my condition, love, jealous of my dealings with fortune, was bent on sharing my gratitude by the addition of a higher zest. He planted, watered, and ripened in the heart of dame Lorenza Sephora, Seraphina's confidential woman, an abundant crop of liking for the happy steward. My

Helen, not to sink the fidelity of the historian in the vanity of the man, could not be many months short of her fiftieth year. But for all that, a look of wholesomeness, a face none of the ugliest, and two good-looking eyes of which she knew the efficient use, might make her still pass for a decent bit of amusement in a summer evening. I could only just have been thankful for a little more relief to her complexion, since it was precisely the colour of chalk; but that I attributed to maiden concealments, which had eat away all the damask of her cheek.

The lady ogled me for a long time, with ogles that savoured more of passion than of chastity; but instead of communing in the language of the eyes, I made pretence at first not to be sensible of my own happiness. Thus did my gallantry appear as if arrayed in its first blushes; a circumstance which was rather tempting than repulsive to her feelings. Taking it into her head therefore, that there was no standing upon dumb eloquence with a young man who looked more like a novice than he was, at our very first interview she declared her sentiments in broad, unequivocal terms, that I might have no plea for misinterpretation. She played her part like an old stager: affected to be overwhelmed with confusion while she was speaking to me; and after having said all she wanted to say in a good audible voice, put her hand before her face, to hide the shame which was not there, and make me believe that she

was incommoded by the delicacy of her own feelings. There was no standing such an attack; and though vanity had a larger share in my surrender than the tender passion, I did not receive her overtures ungraciously. Nay more, I presumed to overlook decorum in my vivacity, and acted the impatient lover so naturally, as to call down a modest rebuke upon my freedoms. Lorenza chid my fondness; but with so much fondness in her chidings, that while she prescribed to me the coldness of an anchoret, it was very evident she would have been miserably disappointed if I had taken her prescription. I should have pressed the affair at once to the natural termination of all such affairs, if the lovely object of my ardent wishes had not been afraid of giving me a left-handed opinion of her virtue, by abandoning the works before the siege was regularly formed. This being so, we parted, but with a promise to meet again: Sephora in the full persuasion that her reluctant resistance would stamp her for a vestal in my esteem, and myself full of the sweet hope that the torments of Tantalus would soon be succeeded by an elysium of enjoyment.

My affairs were in this happy train, when one of don Cæsar's under servants brought me such a piece of news, as gave an ague to my raptures. This lad was one of those inquisitive inmates, who apply either an ear or an eye to every keyhole in a house.

As he paid his court constantly to me, and served up some fresh piece of scandal every day, he came to tell me one morning that he had made a pleasant discovery; and that he had no objection to letting me into the fun, on condition that I would not blab: because dame Lorenza Sephora was the theme of the joke, and he was afraid of becoming obnoxious to her resentment and revenge. I was too much interested in coming at the story he had to tell, not to swear myself into discretion through thick and thin: but it was necessary that my motive should seem curiosity, and not personal concern; so that I asked him, with an air of as much indifference as I could put on, what was this mighty discovery about which he made such a piece of work. Lorenza, whispered he, smuggles the surgeon of the village every evening into her apartment: he is a tight vessel, well armed and manned; and the pirate generally stays pretty long upon his cruize. I do not mean to say, added he with supercilious candour, but that all this may be perfectly innocent on both sides: but you cannot help admitting, that where a young man does insinuate himself slily into a girl's bedchamber, he takes better care of his own pleasure than of her reputation.

Though this tale gave me as much uneasiness as if I had been verily and romantically in love, I had too much sense to let him know it: but so far stifled my feelings as to laugh heartily at a story, which

struck at the very life of all my hopes. But when no witnesses were by, I made myself full amends for having gulped down my rising indignation. I blustered and stormed; muttered blessings on them the wrong way, and swore outright: but all this without coming nearer to a decision on my own conduct. At one time, holding Lorenza in utter contempt, it was my good pleasure to give her up altogether, without condescending so far as to come to any explanation with the coquette. At another time, laying it down as a principle, that my honour was concerned in making the surgeon an example to all intriguers, I spirited up my courage to call him out. Thus dangerous valour prevailed over safe indifference. At the approach of evening I placed myself in ambuscade; and sure enough the gentleman did slink into the temple of my Vesta, with a fear of being found out that spoke rather unfavourably for the purity of his designs. Nothing short of this could have kept my rage alive against the chillness of the night air. I immediately quitted the precincts of the castle, and posted myself on the high road, where the gay deceiver was sure to be intercepted on his return. I waited for him with my fighting spirits on the full boil: my impatience increased with the lapse of time, till Mars and Bellona seemed to inhabit my frame, and enlarge it beyond human dimensions. At length my antagonist came in sight. I took a few strides, such as

ully Mars or Bellona might have taken; but I do ot know how the devil it came to pass, my courage ent further off as my body came nearer; my frame as contracted within somewhat less than its human imensions, and my heart felt exactly like the heart ' a coward. The hearts of Homer's heroes felt actly the same, when the dastardly dogs were not acked by a supernatural drawcansir! In short, I as just as much out of my element as ever Paris as, when he pitted himself against Menelaus in ngle combat. I began taking measure of this perator in love, war, and anatomy. He appeared be large limbed and well knit, with a sword by s side of a most abominable length. All this ade me consider, that the better part of valour is scretion: nevertheless, whether from the superior- of mind over the nervous system in a case of nour, or from whatever other cause, though the nger grew bigger as the distance diminished, and spite of nature which pleaded obstinately, that nour is a mere scutcheon, and can neither set a g nor take away the grief of a wound, I mustered boldness enough to march forward towards the rgeon sword in hand.

My proceeding seemed to him to be of the droll- t. What is the matter, signor Gil Blas? exclaimed . Why all this fire and fury? You are in a ban- ring mood, to all appearance. No, good master aver, answered I, no such thing: there never was

any thing more serious, since Cain killed Abel. I am determined to try the experiment, whether as little preparation serves your turn in the field of battle as in a lady's chamber. Hope not that you will be suffered to possess without a rival that heaven of bliss, in which you have been indulging but this moment at the castle. By all the martyrdoms we phlebotomizers have ever suffered or inflicted! replied the surgeon, setting up a shout of laughter, this is a most whimsical adventure. As heaven is my judge! appearances are very little to be trusted. At this put off, fancying that he had no keener stomach for cold iron than myself, I got to be ten times more overbearing. Teach your parrot to talk better Spanish, my friend, interrupted I: do you think we do not know a hawk from a hernshaw? Imagine not that a simple denial of the fact will settle the business. I see plainly, replied he, that I shall be obliged to speak out, or some mischief must happen either to you or me. I shall therefore disclose a secret to you; though men in our profession cannot be too much on the reserve. If dame Lorenza sends for me into her apartment under suspicious circumstances, it is only to conceal from the servants the knowledge of her malady. She has an incurable ulcer in her back, which I come every evening to dress. This is the real occasion of those visits which disturb your peace. Henceforward, rest assured that you have her all to yourself. But

f you are not satisfied with this expectation, and ıre absolutely bent on a fencing-match, you have ɔnly to say so: I am not a man to turn my back ıpon a game at sword-play. With these words in ıis mouth, he drew his long rapier, which made my ıeart jump into my throat, and stood upon his guard. It is enough, said I, putting my sword up ıgain into its scabbard, I am not a wild beast, to turn a deaf ear to reason: after what you have told me, there is no cause of enmity between us. Let us shake hands. At this proposal, by which he found out that I was not such a devil of a fellow as he had taken me for, he returned his weapon with a laugh; met my advances to be reconciled, and we parted the best friends in the world.

From that time forward Sephora never came into my thoughts, but with the most disgusting associations. I shunned all the opportunities she gave me of entertaining her in private; and this with so obvious a study, almost bordering on rudeness, that she could not but notice it. Astonished at so sudden a reverse, she was dying to know the cause; and at length, finding the means of pinning me down to a tête-a-tête, Good Mr. Steward, said she, tell me, if so please you, why you avoid the very sight of me? It is true that I made the first advances; but then you fed the consuming fire. Recal to memory, if it is not too great a favour, the private interview we had together. Then you were a maga-

zine of combustibles; now you are as frozen as the north sea. What is the meaning of all this? The question was not a little difficult of solution, for a man unaccustomed to the violence of amorous interrogatories. The consequence was, that it puzzled me most confoundedly I do not precisely recollect the identical lie I told the lady; but I remember perfectly that nothing but the truth could have affronted her more highly. Sephora, though by her mincing air and modest outside one might have taken her for a lamb, was a tigress when the savage was roused in her nature. I did think, said she, darting a glance at me full of malice and hideousness, I did think to have conferred such honour as was never conferred before, on a little scoundrel like you, by betraying sentiments which the first nobility in the country would make it their boast to excite. Fitly indeed am I punished, for having preposterously lowered myself to the level of a dirty, sniveling adventurer.

That was pretty well; but she did not stop there: I should have come off too cheaply on such terms. Her fury taking a long lease of her tongue, that brawling instrument of discord rung a bob-major of invective, each strain more clamorous and confounding than the former. It certainly was my duty to have received it all with cool indifference, and to have considered candidly that in triumphing over female reserve, and then not taking possession of

e conquest, I had committed that sin against the x, which would have transformed the most femine of them into a Sephora. But I was too irritable bear abuse, at which a man of sense in my place ould only have laughed; and my patience was at ngth exhausted. Madam, said I, let us not rake to each other's personal misfortunes. If the first bility in the country had only looked at your ick, they would have forgotten all your other arms, and have boasted but little of the sentients they had excited you to betray. I had no oner laid in this home stroke, than the enraged ienna visited me with the hardest box on the ear at ever yet proceeded from the delicate fingers of woman scorned. Such favours might pall on petition; so I did not wait for a second, but took elter in the nimbleness of my legs from the clatter castigation she was going to shower down on me. I returned thanks to the protecting powers for ving brought me clear off from this unequal enunter, and fancied that I had nothing further to prehend, since the lady had taken corporal venance. It was likely too that she would be wise d hold her tongue, for the honour of her own ck: and in point of fact, a full fortnight had apsed, without my hearing a word upon the subct. The very tingling in my own cheek began to ate, when I was told that Sephora was taken ill. ith that forgiveness of injuries so natural to me, I

Drawn by R. Smirke R.A.

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GIL BLAS.

THE ENRAGED DUENNA.

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as sincerely afflicted at the news. I really felt for ıe poor lady. I concluded that, unable to contend ith a passion so ill repaid, that hapless victim of ɜr own tenderness was giving up the ghost. It as with exquisite pain that I turned this subject in y thoughts. I was the cruel cause that her heart as breaking; and my pity at least was the ıenna's, though love is too wayward to be con- ouled by advice. But I was miserably mistaken her nature. Her tenderness had all curdled into ɜrimonious hatred; and at that very moment was ıe plotting to be my bane.

One morning while I was with don Alphonso, that niable young master of mine was absent, moody, ıd out of spirits. I enquired respectfully what was e matter. I am vexed to the soul, said he, to find ɜraphina weak, unjust, ungrateful. You are not a tle surprised at this, added he, remarking the ɜpression of astonishment with which I heard him; ɜt nothing is more strictly and lamentably true. I ıow not what reason you have given dame Lorenza be at variance with you; but true it is, you are ɜcome so unbearably hateful to her, that if you do ɔt get out of this castle as soon as possible, her ɜath, she says, must be the sure consequence. ou cannot but suppose that Seraphina, who knows ɔur value, used all her influence at first against a ɜejudice, to which she could not administer with- ıt injustice and ingratitude. But though the best

women, she is still a woman. Sephora brought r up; and she loves her like a mother. Should r old nurse die shortly, she would fancy she had r death to answer for, had she refused herself to y of her whims. For my own part, with all my ection towards Seraphina, and it is none of the akest, I will never be guilty of so mean a com- ance as to side with her on this question. Perish r duennas, perish the whole system of our Spanish ilance! but never let me consent to the banish- nt of a young man, whom I look upon rather as rother than a servant!

When don Alphonso had thus expressed his sen- ients, I said to him: My good sir, I am born to the mere whipping-top of fortune. It had been r hope that she would leave off persecuting me en under your roof, where every thing held out me happy days and an unruffled life. Now, the rt for honour to take is to tear myself away, what- er hankering I may feel after my continuance. , no, exclaimed the generous son of don Cæsar. ave me to bring Seraphina to a proper view of ngs. It shall never be said that you are sacrificed the caprices of a duenna, who, on every occasion, s but too much influence over the family. All you l get by it, sir, replied I, will only be to put Sera- ina in an ill humour by opposing her wishes. I had ch rather withdraw, than run the risk by a longer ode here of sowing division between a married

pair, who are a model of conjugal felicity. Such a consequence of my unhappy quarrel would make me miserable for the remainder of my days.

Don Alphonso absolutely forbad me to take any hasty step; and I found him so determined in the intention of standing by me, that Lorenza must infallibly have been thrown into the back ground, if I had chosen to have stood an election against her. There were moments when, exasperated against the duenna, I was tempted to keep no measures with her; but when I came to consider that to unravel this surgical mystery would be to plunge a dagger into the heart of a poor creature, whose curse had been my fastidious prejudice against an ulcerated back, and whom a physical and mental misfortune were conjointly handing down to the grave; I lost all feeling but that of compassion towards her. It was evident, since I was so portentous a phenomenon, that it was my imperious duty to re-establish the tranquillity of the castle by my absence; and that duty I performed the next morning before daybreak, without taking any leave of my two masters, for fear they should oppose my departure from a misplaced partiality towards me. My only notice was to leave behind in my chamber a memorial, containing an exact account of my receipts and disbursements during the time of my stewardship.

CHAPTER II.

What happened to Gil Blas after his retreat from the castle of Leyva; shewing that those who are crossed in love are not always the most miserable of mankind.

I WAS mounted on a good horse, my own property, and was the bearer of two hundred pistoles, the greater part of which arose from the plunder of the vanquished banditti, and the forfeiture of Samuel Simon by the inquisition; for don Alphonso, without requiring me to account for any part of the said forfeiture, had made restitution of the entire sum out of his own funds. Thus, considering my effects, however obtained, as converted into lawful property by a sort of vicarious sponsorship, I took them into my good graces without any remorse of conscience. An estate like this rendered it absurd to throw away any thought about the future; and a certain likelihood of doing well, which always hangs about a young man at my age, held out an additional security against the caprices of fortune. Besides, Toledo offered me a retreat exactly to my mind. There could not be a doubt but the count de Polan would take a pleasure in giving a kind reception to one of his deliverers, and would insist on his accepting an

apartment in his own house. But I only looked upon this nobleman as a very distant resource; and determined, before laying any tax on his grateful recollection, to spend part of my ready cash in travelling over the provinces of Murcia and Grenada, which I had a very particular inclination to see. With this intention I took the Almanza road, and afterwards, following the route chalked out, travelled from town to town as far as the city of Grenada, without stumbling on any sinister occurrence. It should seem as if fortune, wearied out with the school-girl's tricks she had been playing me, was contented at last to leave me as she found me. But she still had her skittish designs upon me, as will be seen in the sequel.

One of the first persons I met in the streets of Grenada was signor don Ferdinand de Leyva, son-in-law, as well as don Alphonso, of the count de Polan. We were both of us equally surprised at meeting so far from home. How is this, Gil Blas? exclaimed he; to find you in this city! What the devil brings you hither? Sir, said I, if you are astonished at seeing me in this country, you will be ten times more so, when you shall know why I have quitted the service of signor don Cæsar and his son. Then I recounted to him all that had passed between Sephora and myself, without garbling the facts in any particular. He laughed heartily at the recital; then, recovering his gravity, My friend, said he, my

mediation is at your service in this affair. I will write to my sister-in-law ..... No, no, sir, interrupted I, do not write upon the subject, I beseech you. I did not quit the castle of Leyva to go back again. You may, if you please, make another use of the kindness you have expressed for me. If any of your friends should be looking out for a secretary or a steward, I should be much obliged to you to speak a good word in my favour. I will take upon me to assure you that you will never be reproached with recommending an improper object. You have only to command me, answered he: I will do whatever you desire. My business at Grenada is to visit an old aunt in an ill state of health. I shall be here three weeks longer, after which I shall set out on my return to my castle of Lorqui, where I have left Julia. That is my lodging, added he, shewing me a house about a hundred yards from us. Call upon me in a few days; probably I may by that time have hit upon some eligible appointment.

And, in fact, so it was; for the very first time that we came together again, he said to me: My lord archbishop of Grenada, my relation and friend, is in want of a young man with some little tinge of literature, who can write a good hand and make fair copies of his manuscripts; for he is a great author. He has composed I know not how many homilies, and still goes on composing more every day, which he delivers to the high edification of his audience.

As you seem to be just the thing for him, I have mentioned your name, and he has promised to take you. Go, and make your bow to him as from me; you will judge, by his reception of you, whether my recommendation has been couched in handsome terms.

The situation was, to all appearance, exactly what I should have picked out for myself. That being the case, with such an arrangement of my air and person as seemed most likely to square with the ideas of a reverend prelate, I presented myself one morning before the archbishop. If this were a gorgeous romance, and not a grave history, here might we introduce a pompous description of the episcopal palace, with architectural digressions on the structure of the building: here would be the place to expatiate on the costliness of the furniture like an upholsterer, to criticise the statues and pictures like a connoisseur; and the pictures themselves would be nothing to the uninformed reader, without the stories they represent, till universal history, fabulous and authentic, sacred and profane, should be pressed into the service. But I shall content myself with modestly stating, that the royal palace itself is scarcely superior in magnificence.

Throughout the suite of apartments, there was a complete mob of ecclesiastics and other officers, consisting of chaplains, ushers, upper and menial servants. Those of them who were laymen were

most superbly attired; one would sooner have taken them for temporal nobility than for spiritual under-strappers. They were as proud as the devil; and gave themselves intolerably consequential airs. I could not help laughing in my sleeve, when I considered who and what they were, and how they behaved. Set a beggar on horseback! said I. These gentry are in luck to carry a pack without feeling the drag of it; for surely if they knew they were beasts of burden, they would not jingle their bells with so high a toss of the head. I ventured just to speak to a grave and portly personage who stood sentinel at the door of the archbishop's closet, to turn it upon its hinges as occasion might require. I asked him civilly if there was no possibility of speaking with my lord archbishop. Stop a little; said he with a supercilious demeanour and repulsive tone: his grace will shortly come forth, to go and hear mass; you may snatch an audience for a moment as he passes on. I answered not a single syllable. Patience was all I had for it; and it even seemed adviseable to try and enter into conversation with some of the jacks in office: but they began conning me over from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head, without condescending to favour me with a single interjection; after which they winked at one another, whispered, and looked out at the corners of their eyes, in derision of the liberty I had assumed, by intruding upon their select society.

I felt, more fool that I did so, quite out of countenance at such cavalier treatment from a knot of state footmen. My confusion was but beginning to subside, when the closet door opened. The archbishop made his appearance. A profound silence immediately ensued among his officers, who quitted at once their insolent behaviour, to adopt a more respectful stile before their master. That prelate was in his sixty-ninth year, formed nearly on the model of my uncle, Gil Perez the canon, which is as much as to say, as broad as he was long. But the highest dignitaries should always be the most amply gifted; accordingly his legs bowed inwards to the very extremity of the graceful curve, and his bald head retained but a single lock behind: so that he was obliged to ensconce his pericranium in a fine woollen cap with long ears. In spite of all this, I espied the man of quality in his deportment, doubtless because I knew that he actually happened to be one. We common fellows, the fungous growth of the human dunghill, look up to great lords with a facility of being overawed, which often furnishes them with a Benjamin's mess of importance, when nature has denied even the most scanty and trivial gifts.

The archbishop moved towards me in a minuet step, and kindly enquired what I wanted. I told him, I was the young man about whom signor don Ferdinand de Leyva had spoken to him. He did

not give me a moment to go on with my story. Ah! is it you, exclaimed he, is it you of whom so fine a character has been given me? I take you into my service at once; you are a mine of literary utility to me. You have only to take up your abode here. Talking thus condescendingly, he supported himself between two ushers, and moved onwards after having given audience to some of his clergy, who had ecclesiastical business to communicate. He was scarcely out of the room, when the same officers who had turned upon their heel were now cap in hand to court my conversation. Here the rascals are, pressing round me, currying favour, and expressing their sincere joy at seeing me become as it were an heir loom of the archbishopric. They had heard what their master had said, and were dying with anxiety to know on what footing I was to be about him; but I had the ill nature not to satisfy their curiosity, in revenge for their contempt.

My lord archbishop was not long before he returned. He took me with him into his closet for a little private conference. I could not but suppose that he meant to fathom the depth of my understanding. I was accordingly on my guard, and prepared to measure out my words most methodically. He questioned me first in the classics. My answers were not amiss; he was convinced that I had more than a schoolboy's acquaintance with the Greek and Latin writers. He examined me next in

logic; nor could I but suppose that he would examine me in logic. He found me strong enough there. Your education, said he with some degree of surprise, has not been neglected. Now let us see your hand-writing. I took a blank piece of paper out of my pocket, which I had brought for the purpose. My ghostly father was not displeased with my performance. I am very well satisfied with the mechanical part of your qualifications, exclaimed he, and still more so with the powers of your mind. I shall thank my nephew, don Ferdinand, most heartily for having sent me so fine a lad; it is absolutely a gift from above.

We were interrupted by some of the neighbouring gentry, who were come to dine with the archbishop. I left them together, and withdrew to the second table, where the whole household with one consent insisted on giving me the upper hand. Dinner is a busy time at an episcopal ordinary; and yet we snatched a moment to make our observations on each other. What a mortified propriety was painted on the outside of the clergy! They had all the look of a deputation from a better world: strange to think how place and circumstance impose on the deluded sense of men! It never once came into my thoughts that all this sanctity might possibly be a false coin; just as if there could be nothing but what appertained to the kingdom above, among the successors of the apostles on earth.

I was seated by the side of an old valet-de-chambre, by name Melchior de la Ronda. He took care to help me to all the nice bits. His attentions were not lost upon me, and my good manners quite enraptured him. My worthy sir, said he in a low voice after dinner, I should like to have a little private talk with you. At the same time he led the way to a part of the palace where we could not be overheard, and there addressed me as follows: My son, from the very first instant that I saw you, I felt a certain prepossession in your favour. Of this I will give you a certain proof, by communicating in confidence what will be of great service to you. You are here in a family where true believers and painted hypocrites are playing at cross purposes against each other. It would take an antediluvian age to feel the ground under your feet. I will spare so long and so disgusting a study, by letting you into the characters on both sides. After this, if you do not play your cards, it is your own fault.

I shall begin with his grace. He is a very pious prelate, employed without ceasing in the instruction of the people, whom he brings back to virtue, like sheep gone astray, by sermons full of excellent morality, and written by himself. He has retired from court these twenty years, to watch over his flock with the zeal of an affectionate pastor. He is a very learned person, and a very impressive declaimer: his whole delight is in preaching, and his congrega-

tion take care he should know that their whole delight is in hearing him. There may possibly be some little leaven of vanity in all this heavenly-mindedness; but, besides that it is not for human fallibility to search the heart, it would ill become me to rake into the faults of a person whose bread I eat. Were it decent to lay my finger on any thing unbecoming in my master, I should discommend his starchness. Instead of exercising forbearance towards frail churchmen, he visits every peccadillo, as if it were a heinous offence. Above all, he prosecutes those with the utmost rigour of the spiritual court, who wrapping themselves up in their innocence, appeal to the canons for their justification, in bar of his despotic authority. There is besides another awkward trait in his character, common to him with many other people of high rank. Though he is very fond of the people about him, he pays not the least attention to their services, but lets them sink into years without a moment's thought about securing them any provision. If at any time he makes them any little presents, they may thank the goodness of some one who shall have spoken up in their behalf: he would never have his wits enough about him to do the slightest thing for them as a volunteer.

This is just what the old valet-de-chambre told me of his master. Next, he let me into what he thought of the clergymen with whom we had dined. His portraits might be likenesses; but they were too hard

featured to be owned by the originals. It must be admitted however, that he did not represent them as dishonest men, but only as very scandalous priests. Nevertheless, he made some exceptions, and was as loud in their praises as in his censure of the others. I was no longer at any loss how to play my part so as to put myself on an equal footing with these gentry. That very evening, at supper, I took a leaf out of their book, and arrayed myself in the convenient vesture of a wise and prudent outside. A clothing of humility and sanctification costs nothing. Indeed it offers such a premium to the wearer, that we are not to wonder if this world abounds in a description of people called hypocrites.

CHAPTER III.

Gil Blas becomes the archbishop's favourite, and the channel of all his favours.

I HAD been after dinner to get together my baggage, and take my horse from the inn where I had put up, and afterwards returned to supper at the archbishop's palace, where a neatly furnished room was got ready for me, and such a bed as was more

likely to pamper than to mortify the flesh. The day following his grace sent for me quite as soon as I was ready to go to him. It was to give me a homily to transcribe. He made a point of having it copied with all possible accuracy. It was done to please him; for I omitted neither accent, nor comma, nor the minutest tittle of all he had marked down. His satisfaction at observing this was heightened by its being unexpected. Eternal father! exclaimed he in a holy rapture, when he had glanced his eye over all the folios of my copy, was ever any thing seen so correct? You are too good a transcriber not to have some little smattering of the grammarian. Now tell me with the freedom of a friend: in writing it over, have you been struck with nothing that grated upon your feelings? Some little careless idiom, or some word used in an improper sense? Oh! may it please your grace, answered I with a modest air, it is not for me, with my confined education and coarse taste, to aim at making critical remarks. And though ever so well qualified, I am satisfied that your grace's works would come out pure from the essay. The successor of the apostles smiled at my answer. He made no observation on it; but it was easy to see through all his piety, that he was an arrant author at the bottom: there is something in that dye, that not heaven itself can wash out.

I seemed to have purchased the fee-simple of his good graces by my flattery. Day after day did I

get a step further in his esteem; and don Ferdinand, who came to see him very often, told me my footing was so firm, that there could not be a doubt but my fortune was made. Of this my master himself gave me a proof some little time afterwards; and the occasion was as follows. One evening in his closet, he rehearsed before me, with appropriate emphasis and action, a homily which he was to deliver the next day in the cathedral. He did not content himself with asking me what I thought of it in the gross, but insisted on my telling him what passages struck me most. I had the good fortune to pick out those which were nearest to his own taste; his favourite common-places. Thus, as luck would have it, I passed in his estimation for a man who had a quick and natural relish of the real and less obvious beauties in a work. This indeed, exclaimed he, is what you may call having discernment and feeling in perfection! Well, well, my friend! it cannot be said of you,

Bæotum in crasso jurares aere natum.

In a word, he was so highly pleased with me, as to add in a tone of extraordinary emotion: Never mind, Gil Blas! Henceforward take no care about hereafter: I shall make it my business to place you among the favoured children of my bounty. You have my best wishes; and to prove to you that you have them, I shall take you into my inmost confidence.

These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than I fell at his grace's feet, quite overwhelmed with gratitude. I embraced his elliptical legs with almost pagan idolatry, and considered myself as a man on the high road to a very handsome fortune. Yes, my child, resumed the archbishop, whose speech had been cut short by the rapidity of my prostration, I mean to make you the receiver-general of all my inmost ruminations. Hearken attentively to what I am going to say. I have a great pleasure in preaching. The Lord sheds a blessing on my homilies; they sink deep into the hearts of sinners; set up a glass in which vice sees its own image, and bring back many from the paths of error into the high road of repentance. What a heavenly sight, when a miser, scared at the hideous picture drawn by my eloquence of his avarice, opens his coffers to the poor and needy, and dispenses the accumulated store with a liberal hand! The voluptuary too is snatched from the pleasures of the table; ambition flies at my command to the wholesome discipline of the monastic cell; while female frailty, tottering on the brink of ruin, with one ear open to the siren voice of the seducer, and the other to my saintly correctives, is restored to domestic happiness and the approving smile of heaven, by the timely warnings of the pulpit. These miraculous conversions which happen almost every Sunday, ought of themselves to goad me on in the career of saving souls.

Nevertheless, to conceal no part of my weakness from my monitor, there is another reward on which my heart is intent, a reward which the seraphic scrupulousness of my virtue to little purpose condemns as too carnal; a literary reputation for a sublime and elegant style. The honour of being handed down to posterity as a perfect pulpit orator has its irresistible attractions. My compositions are generally thought to be equally powerful and persuasive; but I could wish of all things to steer clear of the rock on which good authors split, who are too long before the public, and to retire from professional life with my reputation in undiminished lustre.

To this end, my dear Gil Blas, continued the prelate, there is one thing requisite from your zeal and friendship. Whenever it shall strike you that my pen begins to contract as it were the ossification of old age, whenever you see my genius in its climacteric, do not fail to give me a hint. There is no trusting to one's self in such a case; pride and conceit were the original sin of man. The probe of criticism must be entrusted to an impartial stander-by, of fine talents and unshaken probity. Both those requisites center in you: you are my choice, and I give myself up to your direction. Heaven be praised, my lord, said I, there is no need to trouble yourself with any such thoughts yet. Besides, an understanding of your grace's mould and calibre will last out double the time of a common genius; or to speak

with more certainty and truth, it will never be the worse for wear, if you live to the age of Methusalem. I consider you as a second cardinal Ximenes, whose powers superior to decay, instead of flagging with years, seemed to derive new vigour from their approximation with the heavenly regions. No flattery, my friend! interrupted he. I know myself to be in danger of failing all at once. At my age one begins to be sensible of infirmities; and those of the body communicate with the mind. I repeat it to you, Gil Blas, as soon as you shall be of opinion that my head is not so clear as usual, give me warning of it instantly. Do not be afraid of offending by frankness and sincerity; to put me in mind of my own frailty will be the strongest proof of your affection for me. Besides, your very interest is concerned in it: for if it should, by any spite of chance towards you, come to my ears that the people say in town, "His grace's sermons produce no longer their accustomed impression; it is time for him to abandon his pulpit to younger candidates," I do assure you most seriously and solemnly, you will lose not only my friendship, but the provision for life that I have promised you. Such will be the result of your silly tampering with truth.

Here my patron left off to wait for my answer, which was an echo of his speech, and a promise of obeying him in all things. From that moment there were no secrets from me: I became the prime favou-

rite. All the household, except Melchior de la Ronda, looked at me with an eye of envy. It was curious to observe the manner in which the whole establishment, from the highest to the lowest, thought it necessary to demean themselves towards his grace's confidential secretary: there was no meanness to which they would not stoop to curry favour with me: I could scarcely believe they were Spaniards. I left no stone unturned to be of service to them, without being taken in by their interested assiduities. My lord archbishop, at my entreaty, took them by the hand. He got a company for one, and fitted him out so as to make a handsome figure in the army. Another he sent to Mexico, with a considerable appointment which he procured him; and I obtained a good slice of his bounty for my friend Melchior. It was evident from these facts, that if the prelate was not particularly active in good works, at least he rarely gave a churlish refusal, when any one had the courage to importune him for his benevolence.

But what I did for a priest seems to deserve being noticed more at large. One day a certain licentiate, by name Lewis Garcias, a well-looking man still in the prime of life, was presented to me by our steward, who said: Signor Gil Blas, in this honest ecclesiastic you behold one of my best friends. He was formerly chaplain to a nunnery. Scandal has taken a few liberties with his chastity. Malicious stories

have been trumped up to hurt him in my lord archbishop's opinion, who has suspended him, and unfortunately is so strongly prejudiced by his enemies, as to be deaf to any petition in his favour. In vain have we interested the first people in Grenada, to get him re-established: our master will not hear of it.

These first people in Grenada, said I, have gone the wrong way to work. It would have been much better if no interest at all had been made for the reverend licentiate. People have only done him a mischief by endeavouring to serve him. I know my lord archbishop thoroughly: entreaties and importunate recommendations do but aggravate the ill condition of a clergyman, who lies under his displeasure: it is but a very short time ago, since I heard him mutter the following sentiment to himself. The more persons a priest, who has been guilty of any misconduct, engages to speak to me in his behalf, the more widely is the scandal of the church disseminated, and the more severe is my treatment of the offender. That is very unlucky, replied the steward; and my friend would be put to his last shifts, if he did not write a good hand. But happily, he has the pen of a ready scribe, and keeps his head above water by the exercise of that talent. I was curious to see whether this boasted hand-writing was so much better than my own. The licentiate,

who had a specimen in his pocket, shewed me a sheet which I admired very much: it had all the regularity of a writingmaster's copy. In looking over this model of penmanship, an idea occurred to me. I begged Garcias to leave this paper in my hands, saying, that I might be able to do something with it, which should turn out to his advantage; that I could not explain myself at that moment, but would tell him more the next day. The licentiate, to whom the steward had evidently talked big about my capacity to serve him, withdrew in as good spirits as if he had already been restored to his functions.

I was in earnest in my endeavour that he should be so; and lost no time in setting to work. Happening to be alone with the archbishop, I produced the specimen. My patron was delighted with it. Seizing on this favourable opportunity, May it please your grace, said I, since you are determined not to put your homilies to the press, I should very much like them at least to be transcribed in this masterly manner.

I am very well satisfied with your performance, answered the prelate; but yet I own that it would be a pleasant thing enough to have a copy of my works in that hand. Your grace, replied I, has only to signify your wishes. The man who copies so well is a licentiate of my acquaintance. It will give him so much the more pleasure to gratify you, as it may

be the means of interesting your goodness to extricate him from the melancholy situation to which he has the misfortune at present to be reduced.

The prelate could not do otherwise than enquire the name of this licentiate. I told him it was Lewis Garcias. He is in despair at having drawn down your censure upon him. That Garcias, interrupted he, if I am not mistaken, was chaplain in a convent of nuns, and has been brought into the ecclesiastical court as a delinquent. I recollect some very heavy charges which have been sent me against him. His morals are not the most exemplary. May it please your grace, interrupted I in my turn, it is not for me to justify him in all points; but I know that he has enemies. He maintains that the authors of the informations you have received are more bent on doing him an ill office, than on vindicating the purity of religion. That very possibly may be the case, replied the archbishop; there are a great many firebrands in the world. Besides, though we should take it for granted that his conduct has not always been above suspicion, he may have repented of his sins; in short, the mercies of heaven are infinite, however heinous our transgressions. Bring that licentiate before me; I take off his suspension.

Thus it is that men of the most austere character descend from their altitudes, when interest or a favourite whim reduces them to the level of the frail. The archbishop granted, without a struggle, to the

empty vanity of having his works well copied, what he had refused to the most respectable applications. I carried the news with all possible expedition to the steward, who communicated it to his friend Garcias. That licentiate, on the following day, came to return me thanks commensurate with the favour obtained. I presented him to my master, who contented himself with giving him a slight reprimand, and put the homilies into his hand, to copy them out fair. Garcias performed the task so satisfactorily, that he was reinstated in the cure of souls, and was afterwards preferred to the living of Gabia, a large market town in the neighbourhood of Grenada.

CHAPTER IV.

The archbishop is afflicted with a stroke of apoplexy. How Gil Blas gets into a dilemma, and how he gets out.

WHILE I was thus rendering myself a blessing first to one and then to the other, don Ferdinand de Leyva was making his arrangements for leaving Grenada. I called on that nobleman before his departure, to thank him once more for the advantage-

ous post he had procured me. My expressions of satisfaction were so lively that he said: My dear Gil Blas, I am delighted to find you in such good humour with my uncle the archbishop. I am absolutely in love with him, answered I. His goodness to me has been such as I can never sufficiently acknowledge. Less than my present happiness could never have made me amends for being at so great a distance from don Cæsar and his son. I am persuaded, replied he, that they are both of them equally chagrined at having lost you. But possibly you are not separated for ever; fortune may some day bring you together again. I could not hear such an idea started without being moved by it. My sighs would find vent; and I felt at that moment so strong an affection for don Alphonso, that I could willingly have turned my back on the archbishop and all the fine prospects that were opening to me, and have gone back to the castle of Leyva, had but a mortification taken place in the back of the scare crow which had frightened me away. Don Ferdinand was not insensible to the emotions that agita ted me, and felt himself so much obliged by them, that he took his leave with the assurance of the whole family always taking an anxious interest in my fate.

Two months after this worthy gentleman had left us, in the luxuriant harvest of my highest favour, a lowering storm came suddenly over the episcopal

palace; the archbishop had a stroke of apoplexy. By dint of immediate applications and good nursing, in a few days there was no bodily appearance of disease remaining. But his reverend intellects did not so easily recover from their lethargy. I could not help observing it to myself in the very first discourse that he composed. Yet there was not such a wide gap between the merits of the present and the former ones, as to warrant the inference that the sun of oratory was many degrees advanced in its post-meridian course. A second homily was worth waiting for; because that would clearly determine the line of my conduct. Alas, and well-a-day! when that second homily came, it was a knock down argument. Sometimes the good prelate moved forward, and sometimes he moved backward; sometimes he mounted up into the garret; and sometimes dipped down into the cellar. It was a composition of more sound than meaning, something like a superannuated schoolmaster's theme, when he attempts to give his boys more sense than he possesses of his own, or like a capuchin's sermon, which only scatters a few artificial flowers of paltry rhetoric over a barren desert of doctrine.

I was not the only person whom the alteration struck. The audience at large, when he delivered it, as if they too had been pledged to watch the advances of dotage, said to one another in a whisper all round the church: Here is a sermon, with symp-

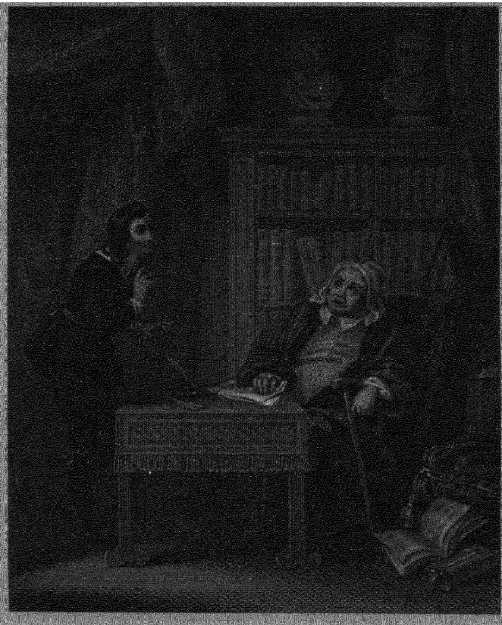
toms of apoplexy in every paragraph. Come, my good Coryphæus of the public taste in homilies, said I then to myself, prepare to do your office. You see that my lord archbishop is going very fast; you ought to warn him of it, not only as his bosom friend, on whose sincerity he relies, but lest some blunt fellow should anticipate you, and bolt out the truth in an offensive manner. In that case you know the consequence; you would be struck out of his will, where no doubt you have a more convertible bequest than the licentiate Sedillo's library.

But as reason, like Janus, looks at things with two faces, I began to consider the other side of the question: the hint seemed difficult to wrap up, so as to make it palatable. Authors in general are stark mad on the subject of their own works; and such an author might be more testy than the common herd of the irritable race: but that suspicion seemed illiberal on my part; for it was impossible that my freedom should be taken amiss, when it had been forced upon me by so positive an injunction. Add to this, that I reckoned upon handling the subject skilfully, and cramming discretion down his throat like a high-seasoned epicurean dish. After all my pro and con, finding that I risked more by keeping silence than by breaking it, I determined to venture on the delicate duty of speaking my mind.

Now there was but one difficulty; a difficulty indeed! how to open the business. Luckily the

orator himself extricated me from that embarrassment, by asking what they said of him in the world at large, and whether people were tolerably well pleased with his last discourse. I answered that there could be but one opinion about his homilies; but that it should seem as if the last had not quite struck home to the hearts of the audience, like those which had gone before. Do you really mean what you say, my friend? replied he, with a sort of wriggling surprise. Then my congregation are more in the temper of Aristarchus than of Longinus! No, may it please your grace, rejoined I, quite the contrary. Performances of that order are above the reach of vulgar criticism: there is not a soul but expects to be saved by their influence. Nevertheless, since you have made it my duty to be sincere and unreserved, I shall take the liberty of just stating that your last discourse is not written with quite the overpowering eloquence and conclusive argument of your former ones. Does not your grace feel just as I do on the subject?

This ignorant and stupid frankness of mine completely blanched my master's cheek; but he forced a fretful smile, and said: Then, good master Gil Blas, that piece does not exactly hit your fancy? I did not mean to say that, your grace, interrupted I, looking very foolish. It is very far superior to what any one else could produce, though a little below par with respect to your own works in general. I



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GIL BLAS.

THE ARCHBISHOP OFFENDED AT THE OPINION OF GIL BLAS.

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know what you mean, replied he. You think I am going down hill, do not you? Out with it at once. It is your opinion that it is time for me to think of retiring? I should never have had the presumption, said I, to deliver myself with so little reserve, if it had not been your grace's express command. I act in entire obedience to your grace's orders; and I most obsequiously implore your grace not to take offence at my boldness. I were unfit to live in a Christian land! interrupted he with stammering impatience; I were unfit to live in a Christian land, if I liked you the less for such a Christian virtue as sincerity. A man who does not love sincerity sets his face against the distinguishing mark between a friend and a flatterer. I should have given you infinite credit for speaking what you thought, if you had thought any thing that deserved to be spoken. I have been finely taken in by your outside shew of cleverness, without any solid foundation of sober judgment!

Though completely unhorsed, and at the enemy's mercy, I wanted to make terms of decent capitulation, and to go unmolested into winter quarters: but let those who think to appease an exasperated author, and especially an author whose ear has been long attuned to the music of his own praises, take warning by my fate. Let us talk no more on the subject, my very young friend, said he. You are as yet scarcely in the rudiments of good taste, and

utterly incompetent to distinguish between gold and tinsel. You are yet to learn that I never in all my life composed a finer homily, than that unfortunate one which had not the honour of your approbation. The immortal part of me, by the blessing of heaven on me and my congregation, is less weighed down by human infirmity than when the flesh was stronger. We all grow wiser as we grow older, and I shall in future select the people about me with more caution; nor submit the castigation of my works but to a much abler critic than yourself. Get about your business! pursued he, giving me an angry shove by the shoulders out of his closet; go and tell my treasurer to pay you a hundred ducats, and take my priestly blessing in addition to that sum. God speed you, good master Gil Blas! I heartily pray that you may do well in the world! There is nothing to stand in your way, but the want of a little better taste.

CHAPTER V.

The course which Gil Blas took after the archbishop had given him his dismissal. His accidental meeting with the licentiate who was so deeply in his debt, and a picture of gratitude in the person of a parson.

I MADE the best of my way out of the closet, cursing the caprice, or more properly the dotage of the archbishop, and more in dudgeon at his absurdity, than cast down at the loss of his good graces. For some time it was a moot point whether I should go and lay claim to my hundred ducats; but after having weighed the matter dispassionately, I was not such a fool as to quarrel with my bread and butter. There was no reason why that money, fairly earned, should deprive me of my natural right to make a joke of this ridiculous prelate; in which good deed I promised myself not to be wanting, as often as himself or his homilies were brought upon the carpet in my hearing.

I went therefore and asked the treasurer for a hundred ducats, without telling a word about the literary warfare between his master and me. Afterwards I called on Melchior de la Ronda, to take a

long leave of him. He was too much my friend not to sympathize with my misfortune. While I was telling my story, vexation was strongly imprinted on his countenance. In spite of all his respect for the archbishop, he could not help blaming him; but, when in the fever of my resentment I threatened to be a match for the prelate, and to entertain the whole city at his expense, the prudent Melchior gave me a salutary caution: Take my advice, my dear Gil Blas, and rather pocket the affront. Men of a lower sphere in life should always be cap in hand to people of quality, whatever may be their grounds of complaint. It must be admitted, there are some very coarse specimens of greatness, which in themselves are scarcely deserving of the least respect or attention; but even such animals have their weapons of annoyance, and it is best to keep out of their way.

I thanked the old valet-de-chambre for the good counsel he had given me, and promised to be guided by it. Pleased with my deference to his opinion, he said to me: If you go to Madrid, be sure you call upon my nephew, Joseph Navarro. He is factotum in the family of signor don Balthazar de Zuniga, and I can venture to recommend him as a lad in every respect worthy of your friendship. He is just as nature made him, with all the vivacity of youth, courteous in his manners, and forward to oblige: I could wish you to get acquainted with

him. I answered that I would not fail to go and see this Joseph Navarro as soon as I should get to Madrid, whither I meant to return in due time. Then did I turn my back on the episcopal palace, never to grace it with my presence again. If I had kept my horse, I should perhaps have set out for Toledo immediately; but I had sold it during the period of my administration, supposing that I was in office for life, and should not henceforward be migratory. My final resolution was to hire a ready-furnished lodging, as I had made up my mind to stay another month in Grenada, and then to pay the count de Polan a visit.

As dinner-hour was drawing nigh, I asked my landlady if there was any eating-house in the neighbourhood. She answered that there was a very good one within a few yards of her house, where the accommodations were excellent, and the company select and numerous. I made her shew me where it was, and went thither sharp set. I was shewn into a large room, resembling the hall of a monastery in every thing but good cheer. There were ten or a dozen men sitting at a long table, with a cloth spread over it that fretted in its own grease; but they, with unoffended nostrils, were engaged in general conversation, though they dined individually, each having a miserable scrap for his portion. The people of the house brought me my allowance, which at another time would have turned

my stomach, and have made me sigh after the luxuries of the table I had just lost. But at this moment I was so indignant against the archbishop, that the homely fare of a paltry eating-house seemed more palatable than the dainties of his sumptuous board. It was a burning shame to see such a waste of provisions served up in soups and sauces to pamper the appetite. Arguing like a deep examiner into the economy of the human frame, and reasoning medically as well as philosophically on the disproportion between the simple wants of nature and the complexity of luxurious indulgence; cursed be they, said I, who invented those pernicious dinners and suppers, where one must sit on the tenter-hooks of self-denial, for fear of overloading the storehouse and shop of the whole body! Man wants but little here below; and provided he can but keep body and soul together, the less he eats the better. Thus did I, in my surly vein, give utterance to wise saws; which however just in theory, had hitherto been little recommended by my practice.

While I was dispatching my commons, without any danger of a surfeit from repletion, the licentiate Lewis Garcias, who had got the living of Gabia in the manner above-mentioned, came into the room. The moment he recognised me, he ran into my arms with all the cordiality of friendship, or rather with the extravagant joy of a lover after a long exile from his mistress. He folded me repeatedly within

his sincere embrace, and I was compelled to stand the brunt of a long-winded compliment on the unparalleled disinterestedness of my conduct towards him. Gratitude is a fine virtue; and yet it is wearisome when carried beyond due bounds! He took his seat next me, saying: Well! a parson must not swear; though by the mass, my dear patron, since my good fortune has thrown me in your way, we will not part without a jovial glass. But as there is no good wine in this shabby inn, I will take you, if you please, after our make-shift dinner, to a place where I will treat you with a couple of bottles, rich, genuine, and old, in comparison of which the Falernian of Horace was all a farce. The church will give us absolution, in the cause of gratitude! If I could but get you for a few days down at my parsonage of Gabia! Mæcenas was never more welcome to the poet's Sabine farm, than the author of all my ease and comfort to the choicest produce of a glebe which is mine only by your benevolence.

While he was holding this high-flown language, his little slice of dinner was set before him. He fell to without the fear of indigestion before his eyes, still heightening the luxury of the repast at intervals, by fine speeches addressed to me in the most fulsome style of flattery. I took the opportunity, when his mouth was filled with something more substantial, to edge in a word or two amidst the torrent; and as he had not forgotten to ask after

his friend the steward, I made no bones about acknowledging that I was no longer a hanger-on of the church. I even went so far as to particularize the most trivial circumstances attending my resignation, to all which he listened with an attentive ear. After all his fine professions, who would not have expected to see him moved even to tears with the throes of resentful gratitude, to hear him thunder bulls and interdicts against the superannuated archbishop? The devil a bit! he did neither the one thing nor the other. But his countenance fell, and his whole air was that of an absent man; the rest of his dinner was bolted down without the garnish of intermediate talk about Mœcenas; as soon as he had done, he hurried from table without minding grace or gratitude, wished me good day with a cold and distant air, and got off as fast as possible. The unfeeling scoundrel, perceiving that I was no longer in a situation for him to pump any thing out of me, would not even take the trouble to draw a decent veil over his dirty principles. But such a blackguard could excite no other sensation than contempt and laughter. Looking at him with derision, the fittest chastisement for fellows like these, I called after him loud enough to be heard by the whole room: Stop there, you nun's priest! Go and put those two bottles in ice against Mœcenas comes to the Sabine farm! Be sure they are rich, genuine, and old; or they will be a farce to Falernian.

CHAPTER VI.

Gil Blas goes to the play at Grenada. His surprise at seeing one of the actresses, and what happened thereupon.

No sooner had Garcias rid the room of his presence, than two gentlemen came in, extremely well dressed, and took their seats close by me. They began talking about the players of the Grenada company, and about a new piece which just then had a great run. According to their account it was quite the town talk. Nothing would do for me, but to go and see it that very day. I had never been at the play since my residence at Grenada. As I had lived nearly the whole time in the archbishop's palace, where all such profane shews were condemned as uncanonical, I had been cut off from every recreation of that sort. All my knowledge of men and manners was drawn from homilies!

I repaired therefore to the theatre at the appointed hour, and found a very full house. All around me, discussions were going on about the piece before the curtain drew up; and there was not a soul in the numerous assembly but had some remark to make upon it. One liked it; another could not bear it. Do not you think the dialogue is particularly

happy? said a candid critic on my right: Was there ever such miserable stuff! cried a snarling critic on my left. In good truth, if bad authors abound, it must be admitted that the public are at variance about what is good and what is bad: but the bad judges have a right to be pleased for their money; and as they far outnumber the good ones, their favourite writers can never want employment. When one only considers through what an ordeal dramatic poets have to pass, it is matter of wonder that any should be found hardy enough, at once to contend against the ignorance of the multitude, and the random shot of those self-created guides in matters of taste, who always pretend to lead the blindness of the public judgment, and too frequently push it into the mire of absurdity.

At length the buffoon of the piece came forward by way of prologue. As soon as his grotesque countenance was visible, there was a general clapping of hands; a sure indication of his being one of those spoiled actors, who are allowed to take any liberties with the pit, and to be applauded through thick and thin. In fact, this player neither opened his lips, nor moved a muscle, without exciting the most extravagant raptures. He would have performed better, had he been less conscious what a favourite he was. But he presumed on that circumstance most abominably. I observed that he sometimes forgot what was set down for him, and took

the licence of adding to his part out of his own free fancy; a common cause of complaint against low comedians, which, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve. Would the audience but receive such mirth with hisses, instead of crying bravo, they might restrain the absurd practice, and purge the stage from barbarism.

Some of the other performers were greeted with the usual tokens on their entrance, and particularly an actress who played the chambermaid. There was something about her which more than usually attracted my attention; and language must sink under the labour of expressing my astonishment at tracing the features of Laura, that fair, that chaste, that inexpressible she, whom I supposed to be still at Madrid, warbling in one key, with hands, sides, voice, and mind incorporate with Arsenia. But there could be no doubt of her identity. The kick in her gallop, the leer in her eye, and the tripping pertness on her tongue, all conspired in evidence that there could be no mistake. Yet, as if I had refused belief to the affidavit of my own eyes and ears, I asked her name of a gentleman who was sitting beside me. What the deuce! Why where do you come from? said he. You must unquestionably be a new importation, not to have seen or heard of the divine Estella.

The likeness was too perfect for me to be mistaken. It was easy to comprehend why Laura,

changing her sphere of action, changed her name also; wherefore from curiosity to know how matters stood with her, since the public always pry into the most private concerns of theatrical persons, I enquired of the same man whether this Estella had any particular affair of gallantry on her hands. He informed me that for the last two months there had been a great Portuguese nobleman at Grenada, his name was the marquis de Marialva, who had laid out a great deal of money upon her. He might have told me more, if I had not been afraid of becoming troublesome with my questions. I was better employed in musing on the information this good gentleman had given me, than in attending to the play; and if any one had asked me what it was all about, when the piece was over, I should have been puzzled for an answer. I could do nothing but decline Laura and Estella through all cases and numbers; till at length I boldly made up my mind to call at her house the next day. Not but there was some risk as to the reception she might give me: it might be suspected without excess of modesty, that my appearance would give her no great pleasure in the high tide of her affairs; nor was it at all improbable that so good an actress, to revenge herself on a man, with whom certainly she had an account to settle, might look strange, and swear she had never seen his face before. Yet did none of these apprehensions deter me from my venture.

After a light supper, for all the meals at my eating-house were regulated on principles of economy and temperance, I withdrew to my chamber with an anxious longing for the next day.

My sleep was short and interrupted; so that I got up by daybreak. But as it was to be recollected that a mistress in high keep was not likely to be visible early in the morning, I passed three or four hours in dressing, shaving, powdering, and perfuming. It was my business to present myself before her in a trim, not to put her to the blush at acknowledging my acquaintance. I sallied forth about ten o'clock, and knocked at her door, after having enquired her address at the theatre. She was living on the first floor of a large and elegant house. I told a chambermaid who opened the door to me, that a young man wanted to speak with her lady. The chambermaid went in to give my message, when all at once I heard her mistress call out, not in the best tempered tone in the world, Who is the young man? What does he want? Shew him up stairs.

This was a hint to me that my time was ill chosen; that probably her Portuguese lover was at her toilette, and that she spoke so loud, with the laudable design of convincing him that she was not a sort of girl to allow of any impertinent intruders. This conjecture of mine turned out to be the fact; the marquis de Marialva lounged away almost every

morning with her: I had made up my mind to be kicked down stairs by way of welcome; but that admirable actress, never forgetting her cue, ran forward with open arms at the sight of me, exclaiming: Ah! my dear brother, is it you that I behold? On the strength of so near a kindred, she was no niggard of her embraces; but recollected herself so far as to say, turning round to the Portuguese, My lord, you must excuse me if nature will put in her claim, and trench upon good breeding. After three years of absence, I cannot see a brother once again, whom I love so tenderly, without expressing my feelings in all their warmth. Come! my dear Gil Blas, continued she, addressing me afresh, tell me some news of the family: in what circumstances did you leave it?

This whimsical scene disconcerted me at first; but I was not long in seeing through Laura's intention; and playing up to her with a spirit scarcely less than her own, answered according to the plot: Heaven be praised, sister, all our good folks are in perfect health, and well in the world. I make no doubt, resumed she, but you must be very much surprised to find me an actress in Grenada; but hear me first and blame me afterwards. It is three years, as you may recollect, since my father thought to have established me advantageously in marriage with don Antonio Cœllo, an officer in the service, who took me from the Asturias to Madrid his native

place. Six months after our arrival, he got into an affair of honour in consequence of his violent temper. Some attentions incautiously paid to me were the cause of the affray, and his antagonist was killed. This gentleman was of a family high in rank and interest. My husband, who though well born, had very few connections, made his escape into Catalonia with every thing he could get together in jewels and ready money. He embarked at Barcelona, went over into Italy, enlisted in the Venetian service, and finally lost his life in the Morea, fighting against the Turks. In the mean time, a landed estate which constituted our whole revenue was confiscated, and I was left a widow with very little for my support. What was to be done in so pressing an emergency? There was nothing left to pay my travelling expenses back into the Asturias. And then what should I have done there? I should have got nothing from my family but a long string of condolences, which would have furnished me neither with food nor with raiment. On the other hand, I had been too well brought up to fall into those courses, into which too many poor young women are betrayed for the sake of a scandalous subsistence. There was but one thing remaining for me to determine on. I turned actress to preserve my morals.

So tingling a sense of ridicule came over me, when Laura wound up her romance with this pious

motive for turning actress, that I could scarcely refrain from relieving myself by a fit of laughter. But gravity was of too much consequence to be dispensed with; and I said to her with an air the counterpart of her own: My dear sister, I entirely approve of your conduct, and am heartily glad to meet with you at Grenada, and moreover settled on so respectable a footing.

The marquis de Marialva, who had not lost a word of all these fine speeches, swallowed down blindfold whatever don Antonio's widow thought fit to drench his credulity with. He took part in the conversation too: and asked me whether I had any fixed employment in Grenada or elsewhere. I paused for a moment to consider whether and after what manner I should lie; but as there seemed no need in this case to draw on my invention, I told the truth by way of variety. In a plain matter of fact manner did I rehearse my introduction to the archbishop's palace, and my discharge therefrom; to the infinite amusement of his Portuguese lordship. To be sure, in telling the truth, I did not keep my word; for I could not help launching out a little at the archbishop's expense, in spite of my solemn promise given to Melchior. But the best of the joke was, that Laura, taking my story for a fiction invented after her example, burst out into peals of laughter; whereas the whimsicality of the circumstance would have raised a soberer mirth, had she

known it to have been alloyed with the base ingredient of veracity.

After having come to the end of my tale, which closed with just mentioning the lodging I had taken, dinner was announced. I instantly motioned to withdraw, as if intending to take that frugal meal at home; but Laura would not hear of it. Do you mean to affront me, brother? said she. You must dine here. Indeed I cannot think of your staying any longer at a paltry inn. You must positively board and lodge in my house. Send your trunks hither this very evening; there is a spare bed for you.

His Portuguese lordship, possibly not altogether relishing this excess of hospitality even to a brother, then interfered between us, and said to Laura: No, Estella, you have not sufficient accommodation to give him a bed without inconvenience. Your brother seems to be a clever young fellow; and the circumstance of his being so nearly related to you, gives him a strong claim on my kindness. He shall be put at once upon my establishment. I am in want of a secretary, and shall delight in giving him the appointment: he shall be my right-hand man. Let him be sure to come and sleep at my house this very night; I will order a room to be got ready for him. I will fix his regular salary at four hundred ducats; and if on better acquaintance I have reason, as I trust I shall, to be satisfied with him, I will

place him in a situation to laugh at the consequences of having been a little too plain-spoken with his patron the archbishop.

My acknowledgments to the marquis for this high honour were followed by those of Laura, who far exceeded me in powers of panegyric. Let us drop the subject, interrupted he; it is a settled point. Settled as it was, he confirmed the contract on the lips of his green-room Dulcinea, and went his way. She immediately pulled me by the arm into a closet where, secure from interruption, she cried out, Cut my laces! I shall burst if I do not give way at once to the fit of laughter that is coming over me. And so she probably would; for she threw herself into an arm chair, and holding both her sides, shouted out her convulsive peal of mirth like a mad woman. It was impossible for me to refrain from following her example. When we had exhausted our risible propensities, Own, Gil Blas, said she, that we have just been acting a very humourous farce. But I did not look for the concluding scene. My only thought was to secure you board and lodging under my own roof: and there was no other possibility of making the proposition in a modest way, but by passing you off for my brother. But I am heartily glad that the chapter of accidents has opened with so good a birth for you. The marquis de Marialva is a nobleman of liberal and honourable sentiments, who will be better than

his word in what he does for you. But confess now! There is scarcely a woman in existence except myself, would have given so coming-on a reception to a fellow who shirks his friends without saying with your leave or by your leave. I however am one of those simple-hearted girls who are glad to receive back again the base man they have once loved, though he should have offended and repented seven, or even seven thousand times.

The best way for me was to acknowledge the extreme ill-breeding of which I had been guilty, to blush and beg pardon once for all. After this explanation, she led the way to a very handsome dining-room. We placed ourselves at table, where having a chambermaid and a footboy for eye-witnesses, we kept within the bounds of brother and sister. When we had done dinner, we went back again into the same closet where we had been conversing before. Having our time to ourselves, my paragon of a Laura, giving herself up to her natural love of merriment, and to her no less natural curiosity, required from me a faithful and true narrative of all my pros and cons, my ins and outs, since that unmannerly separation of ours. I gave her a full and particular account; nothing extenuating on my own behalf, nor setting down aught in malice on the other side. When I had quenched her thirst after a story, she slaked mine, by communicating the particulars of her eventful life to the following effect.

CHAPTER VII.

Laura's story.

I SHALL just run over to you, as briefly as possible, the circumstances which led me to embrace the theatrical profession.

After you took French leave, so much to your credit, great events happened. My mistress Arsenia, more surfeited with a glut of pleasures, than scandalized at their immorality, renounced the stage, and took me with her to a fine estate which she had just purchased in the neighbourhood of Zamora, with the wages of her sinful life. We soon got acquainted in the town. Our visits there were very frequent; and sometimes for a day or two together. With the exception of these little excursions, we were as closely domesticated as probationers in a nunnery, and almost as piously employed.

On one of our high-days and holidays, don Felix Maldonado, the corregidor's only son, saw me by chance, and took a liking to me. He soon found an opportunity of speaking with me in private; and, as it is in vain to affect modesty before one who knows me so well, there was some little contrivance of my own to bring the interview about. The young gentleman was not twenty years of age; the very

picture of Venus's sweetheart, or Venus's sweetheart the very picture of him; with a form for a sculptor to work from; with an address so elegant, and with sentiments so generous, as to throw even his personal graces into the back ground. There was such a winning way with him, so pressing an earnestness to prevail, when he took a large diamond from his own finger, and slid it upon mine, that it would have been quite brutal not to have let it stay there. It was really something like sentiment that I began to entertain towards a swain of so interesting a character. But what an absurd thing it is for wenches of a certain sort to hook themselves upon young men of family, when their surly fathers hold official situations! The corregidor, who had scarcely his equal in the whole tribe of corregidors, got wind of our correspondence, and determined to close it in a summary manner. He sent a host of alguazils to take me into custody, who dragged me away, in spite of my cries and tears, to the house of correction for female penitents.

There, without bill of indictment or form of trial, the lady abbess ordered me to be stripped of my ring and my clothes, and to be dressed in the habit of the institution; a long gown of grey serge tied about the middle with a strap of black leather, whence depended a rosary with large beads swinging down to my heels. After this pleasant reception, they took me into a hall, where there was an old monk,

the deuce knows of what order, who set to work, preaching up repentance and resignation, pretty much in the same strain as dame Leonarda, when she exhorted you to patience in the subterraneous cavern. He told me that I was excessively obliged indeed to those good people who had so kindly shut me up, and could never thank them sufficiently for their good deed, in rescuing me from the harpy talons of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But I must frankly own that all my other sins were pressed down and heaped high with ingratitude: far from overflowing with the milk of human kindness towards those who had conferred such a favour upon me, I abused them in terms that would have put any dictionary to the blush.

Eight days thus passed in this wilderness of desolation; but on the ninth, for I had notched the hours and even the minutes on a stick, my fate seemed beginning to take another turn. Crossing a little court, I met the house steward, a personage whose will was absolute; yes, the lady abbess herself was obedient to his will. He rendered an account of his stewardship to none but the corregidor, on whom alone he was dependent, and whose confidence in him was unbounded. His name was Pedro Zendono; and the town of Salsedon in Biscay laid claim to the honour of his birth. Figure to yourself a tall man, with the complexion of a mummy and the bare anatomy of a dealer in morti-

fication; he might have sat for the penitent thief in a picture of the crucifixion. He scarcely ever cast a carnal glance towards us Magdalens. You never saw such a face of rank hypocrisy in all your life, though you have spent some part of it under the same roof with the archbishop, and are not unacquainted with the clergy of his diocese.

But to return from this digression; .... I met this signor Zendono, who said to me slily as he passed: Take comfort, my girl; I am sensibly affected with your wretched case. He said no more, and went on his way, leaving me to make my own comments on so concise and general a text. As he looked like a good man, and there was no positive evidence to set against his looks, I was simpleton enough to fancy that he had taken the trouble of enquiring why I was shut up; and meant, not finding me so atrocious a culprit as to deserve such shameful insults, to take my part with the corregidor. But I was not up to the tricks of the Biscayan; he had a much longer head. He was turning over in his mind the scheme of an elopement, and made the proposal to me in profound privacy some days afterwards. My dear Laura, said he, your sufferings have taken such deep possession of my mind, that I have determined to end them. I am perfectly aware that my own ruin is involved in the measure; but needs must when the tender passion drives. To-morrow morning do I intend to take you out of

prison, and conduct you in person in Madrid. No sacrifice is too great for the pleasure of being your deliverer.

I was very near fainting with surprise and joy at this promise of Zendono, who concluding from my acknowledgments that my very life depended on my rescue, had the effrontery to carry me off next day in the face of the whole town, by the following device. He told the lady abbess that he had orders to take me before the corregidor, who was at his country box a few miles off, and without betraying himself by a single change of countenance, packed me off with him for my companion, in a post-chaise drawn by two good mules which he had bought for the occasion. Our only attendant was the driver, a servant of his own, and entirely devoted to the steward by stronger ties than those of gratitude. We began bowling away, not in the direction of Madrid, as I had taken for granted, but towards the frontiers of Portugal, whither we got in less time than it took the corregidor of Zamora to receive the deposition of our flight, and uncouple his pack or set them barking at our heels.

Before we entered Braganza, the Biscayan made me put on man's clothes, with which he had taken the precaution of providing himself. Reckoning on me as being fairly launched in the same boat with him, he said to me in the inn where we put up: Lovely Laura, do not take it unkindly of me to have

brought you into Portugal. The corregidor of Zamora will make our own country too hot to hold us; for in his eyes we are two criminals, under the weight of whose enormities it is not for Spain to groan. But we may set his malice at defiance in this distant realm, though at the present conjuncture under the dominion of the Spanish monarchy. At least we shall stand a better chance for safety here than at home. League your fortunes with those of a man, who would follow you in prosperity or in adversity through the world. Let us fix our residence at Coimbra. There I will get employed as a spy for the inquisition; under the cover of that formidable tribunal, a refreshing shade for us, but Cimmerian darkness to its victims, our days will glide smoothly on in ease and pleasure, and we shall fatten on the spoil of religious delinquency.

A proposal so much to the point gave me to understand that I had to do with a knight, who had other motives for officiating as the guardian of distressed damsels, besides the honour of chivalry. I saw at once that he reckoned much on my gratitude, and still more on my distress. Nevertheless, though these two pleas were almost equally eloquent in his favour, I rejected his addresses with disdain. The reason was, that there were two advocates still more eloquent on the side of a refusal; a certainty that he was disagreeable, and a strong suspicion that he was poor. But when he returned to the charge,

and offered to say the grace of matrimony before he fell to, proving to me at the same time, by the undeniable evidence of cash in hand, that his stewardship had enabled him to live in clover for a long time to come, the truth must come out in spite of blushes! my heart was softened, and my ears unstopped. I was dazzled by the gold and jewels which he laid out in burning row before me, and became a living monument in my own person, that miraculous transformations are effected by the power of pelf, as well as by the wand of love. My Biscayan became, by little and little, quite another sort of man in my eyes. His tall body and bare bones were plumped up into a shapely and commanding figure; his cadaverous complexion was improved into a manly brown; even that look, as if butter would not melt in his mouth, was no longer hypocrisy, but a staid and decent aspect. Having made these discoveries, I accepted his hand without any material abhorrence, and he plighted the usual vows in all due form. After this, like a good wife, I kept the spirit of contradiction as much as possible under the hatches. We resumed our journey; and Coimbra soon received a new family within its walls.

My husband stocked my wardrobe as became my sex and station, making me a present of several diamonds, among which I fixed my eye on that of don Felix Maldonado. There were no further documents wanting, to give a shrewd guess whence came

all the precious stones I had seen, and to be morally certain that I had not married a troublesomely nice observer of the eighth article in the decalogue. Yet, considering myself as the main spring of all his little deviations from the strict law of propriety, it was not for me to judge harshly on that point. A woman can always find a palliation for the misdeeds which are set in motion by the power of her own beauty. But for that, he certainly would have ranked no higher than one of the wicked in my estimation.

I had no great reason to complain of him for two or three months. His attentions were always polite and kind, amounting apparently to a sincere and tender affection. But no such thing! These proofs of wedded love; this worshipping with the body, and endowing with the worldly goods, were all but a copy of his countenance; for the cheating fellow meant, as men serve a cucumber, to throw me away on the first opportunity. One morning, at my return from mass, I found nothing at home but the bare walls; the moveables, not excepting my own apparel, every stick and every thread had been carried off. Zendono and his faithful servant had taken their measures so adroitly, that in less than an hour the house had been completely gutted; so that with nothing but the gown upon my back, and don Felix's ring, as good luck would have it, on my finger, here stood I, like another Ariadne, abandoned by the ungrateful rifler of my effects as well as of my charms.

But you may take my word for it, I did not beguile the sense of my misfortunes in tragedy, elegy, scene individable, or poem unlimited. I rather fell upon my knees, and blessed my guardian angel, for having delivered me from a rascal who must sooner or later fall into the hands of justice. The time we had passed together I considered in the light of a dead loss, and my spirits were all on the alert to make up for it. If I had been inclined to stay in Portugal, as a hanger-on to some woman of fashion, I should have found no difficulty in suiting myself; but, whether it was patriotism, or some astrological conjunction, preparing a better fortune for me under the influence of the planets, my whole heart was bent on getting back into Spain. I applied to a jeweller, who valued my diamond and gave me cash for it, and then took my departure with an old Spanish lady who was going to Seville in a postchaise.

This lady, whose name was Dorothea, had been to see a relation settled at Coimbra, and was on her return to Seville, where she lived. There was such a sympathy between us, as made us fast friends on the very first day of our acquaintance; and the attachment grew so close while we travelled together, that the lady insisted, at our journey's end, on my making her house my home. I had no reason to repent having formed such a connection. Never was there a woman of a more charming character. One might still conclude from the turn of her coun-

tenance, and from the spirit not yet quenched in her eyes, that in her youth, the catgut of many a guitar must have been fretted under her window. As a proof of this, she had many trials what a state of widowhood was; her husbands had all been of noble birth, and her finances were flourishing on the accumulation of her several jointures.

Among other admirable qualities, she had that of not visiting severely the frailties of her own sex. When I let her into the secret of mine, she entered so warmly into my interests, as to speak of Zendono with more sincerity than good manners. What graceless fellows these men are! said she in a tone, from which one might infer that she had met with some light-fingered steward in the passing of her accounts. They would not be worth picking off a dunghill, if one could do without them! There is a large fraternity of sorry scoundrels in the world, who make it their sport to gain the hearts of women, and then desert them. There is, however, one consoling circumstance, my dear child. According to your account, you are by no means bound fast to that faithless Biscayan. If your marriage with him was sufficiently formal to save your credit with the world, on the other hand, it was contracted loosely enough to admit of your trying your luck at a better match, whenever an opportunity may fall in your way.

I went out every day with Dorothea, either to

church, or to visit among her friends; both likely occasions of picking up an adventure! so that I attracted the notice of several gentlemen. There were some of them who had a mind to feel how the land lay. They made their proposals to my venerable protectress; but these had not wherewithal to defray the expenses of an establishment, and those were mere unfledged boys under age; an insuperable objection, which left me very little merit in turning a deaf ear to them. One day a whim seized Dorothea and me, to go and see a play at Seville. The bills announced a favourite and standard piece: El Embaxador de Si-mismo, written by Lope de Vega.

Among the actresses who came upon the stage, I discovered one of my old cronies. It was impossible to have forgotten Phenicia, that bouncing good-humoured girl whom you have seen as Florimonde's waiting-maid, and have supped with more than once at Arsenia's. I was aware that Phenicia had left Madrid above two years ago, but had never heard of her turning actress. I longed so earnestly to embrace her, that the piece appeared quite tedious. Perhaps too there might be some fault in those who played it, as being neither good enough nor bad enough to afford me entertainment. For as to my own temper, which is that of seeking diversion wherever I can find it, I must confess that an actor supremely ridiculous answers my purpose just as well as the most finished performer of the age.

At last, the moment I had been waiting for being arrived, namely the dropping of the curtain on this favourite and standard piece, we went, for my widow would go with me, behind the scenes, where we caught a glimpse of Phenicia, who was playing off the amiable and unaffected simpleton, and listening with all the primness of studied simplicity to the soft chirping of a young stagefinch, who had evidently suffered himself to be caught in the birdlime of her professional or meretricious talents. No sooner did her eye meet mine, than she quitted him with a genteel apology, ran up to me with open arms, and lavished upon me all the demonstrations of strong attachment imaginable. Our expressions of joy at this unexpected meeting were indeed reciprocal; but neither time nor place admitting of any very copious indulgence in the privilege of asking questions, we adjourned till the following day, with a promise of renewing our mutual enquiries thick and threefold, under the shelter of her friendly roof.

The pleasure of talking is the inextinguishable passion of woman, coeval with the act of breathing. I could not get a wink of sleep all night, for the burning desire of having a grapple with Phenicia, and closing in upon her in the conflict of curiosity. Witness all the powers who preside over tattling, whether the love of lying in bed, another passion of woman, prevented me from getting up and flying to my appointment as early as good manners would

allow. She lived with the rest of the company in a large ready furnished lodging. A female attendant who met me at entrance, on being requested to shew me Phenicia's apartment, led the way up stairs to a gallery, along which were ranged ten or twelve small rooms, divided only by partitions of deal boards, and inhabited by this merry band. My conductress knocked at a door which Phenicia opened; for her tongue was cruelly on the fidget to be let loose, as well as my own. We allowed ourselves no time for the impertinent ceremonies which usually usher in a visit, but plunged at once into a most furious career of loquacity. It seemed as if we should have a tight bout together. There were so many interrogatories to be bandied backwards and forwards, that question and answer rebounded like tennis-balls, only with tenfold velocity.

After having related our adventures each to other, and enquired into the actual condition of affairs, Phenicia asked me how I meant to provide for myself. My reply was, that I purposed, while waiting for something better, to get a situation with some young lady of quality. For shame, exclaimed my other self, you shall not think of such a thing. Is it possible, my darling, that you should not yet be disgusted with menial service? Are you not heartily sick of knocking under to the good or ill pleasure of others, of being cap-in-hand to all their caprices, and after all to be entertained with that unchange-

able tune called a scolding, in a word, to be a downright slave? Why do not you follow my example, and turn your thoughts towards the stage? Nothing can be better suited to people of parts, when they happen not to be equally favoured in the articles of wealth and birth. It is a sphere of life which holds a middle rank between the nobility and mere tradespeople; a profession exempted from all troublesome restraint, and raised far above the common prejudices of humble and decent society. The public are our bankers, and we draw upon them at sight. We live in a continual round of ecstasy, and spend our money to the full as fast as we earn it.

The theatre, (for she went on at a great rate,) is favourable above all to women. When I lived with Florimonde, it is a misery to think of it, I was reduced to take up with the supernumeraries of the prince's company; not a single man of fashion paid the least attention to my figure. How came that about? Because they never got a glimpse of it. The finest picture in the world may escape the admiration of the connoisseurs, if it is not placed in a proper light. But since I have been suitably framed and varnished, which could only happen in consequence of a theatrical finish, what a revolution! The finest young fellows of all the towns we pass through are shuffling at my heels. An actress therefore has all her little comforts about her, without deviating from the line of her duty. If she is discreet, by

which we mean that she should not admit more than one lover into her good graces at a time, her exemplary conduct is cried up as without a parallel. She is called a very Niobe for her coldness; and when she changes her favourite, she is reprimanded as slightly by the world, as a lawful widow who marries a few weeks too soon after the death of her first husband. If, however, the widow should look for luck in odd numbers, and take to herself a third, the contempt of all mankind is poured down on her devoted head; she is considered as a monster of indelicacy; whereas we happier women are so much the more in vogue, as we add to the list of our favourites. After having been served up to a hundred different lovers, some battered nobleman finds us a dainty dish for himself.

Do you mean that by way of news? interrupted I as she uttered the last sentiment. Do you imagine me to be ignorant of these advantages? I have often conned them over in my mind, and they are but too alluring to a girl of my character. The attractions of the stage would be irresistible, were inclination all. But some little talent is indispensable; and I have not a spark. I have sometimes attempted to rehearse passages from plays before Arsenia. She was never satisfied with my performance; and that disgusted me with the profession. You are easily put out of conceit with yourself, replied Phenicia. Do not you know that these great actresses are very apt to be

jealous? With all their vanity, they are afraid lest some newer face should put them out of countenance. In short, I would not be guided by Arsenia on that subject; she did not give her real opinion. In my judgment, and without meaning to flatter you, the theatre is your natural element. You have admirable powers, free and graceful action, a fine-toned voice, volubility of declamation, and such a turn of countenance! Ah! you little rogue! you will bring all the young fellows behind the scenes, if once you take to the boards!

She plied me with many flattering compliments besides; and made me recite some lines, only by way of enabling me to form my own judgment as to my theatrical genius. Now that she was my censor, it seemed quite another thing. She praised me up to the skies, and held all the actresses in Madrid as mere makeweights in the scale. After such a testimony, it would have been inexcusable to hesitate about my own merit. Arsenia stood attainted, nay convicted of jealousy and treachery. There could be no question about my being every thing that was delightful. Two players happened to drop in by accident, and Phenicia prevailed on me to repeat the lines I had already spouted; they fell into a sort of enthusiastic trance, whence they were roused only to launch out fervently in admiration of me. Literally, had they all three been flattering me up for a wager, they could not have adopted a more extra-

vagant scale of panegyric. My modesty was not proof against such praise from those who were themselves praised. I began to think myself really worth something; and now was my whole heart and soul turned towards a theatrical life.

Since this is the case, said I to Phenicia, the affair is determined. I will follow your advice and engage in your company, if they will accept me. My friend, transported with joy at this proposal, clasped me in her arms; and her two companions seemed no less delighted than herself at finding me in that humour. It was settled that I should attend the theatre on the following day in the morning, and exhibit before the collected body the same sample of my talent as I had just displayed. If I had bought golden opinions from Phenicia and her friends, the actors in general were still more complimentary in their judgment, after I had recited but twenty lines before them. They gave me an engagement with the utmost willingness. Then there was nothing thought of but my first appearance. To make it as striking as possible, I laid out all the money remaining from the sale of my ring; and though my funds would not allow of being splendid in my dress, I discovered the art of substituting taste for glitter, and converting my poverty into a new grace.

At length I came out. What clapping of hands! what general admiration! It would be speaking faintly, my friend, to tell you downright that the

spectators were all in an ectasy. You must have heard with your own ears what a noise I made at Seville, to believe it. The whole talk of the town was about me, and the house was crowded for three weeks successively; so that this novelty restored the theatre to its popularity, when it was evidently beginning to decline. Thus did I come upon the stage, and stèp into public favour at once. But to come upon the stage with such distinction, is generally a prelude to coming upon the town; or at least to putting one's self up at auction to the best bidder. Twenty sparks of all ages, from seventeen to seventy, were on the list of candidates, and would have worn me in my newest gloss. Had I followed my own inclination, I should have chosen the youngest, and the most of a lady's man; but in our profession, interest and ambition must bear the sway, till we have feathered our nest; that is as invariable a rule as any in the prompt-book. On this principle, don Ambrosio de Nisana, a man in whom age and ugliness had done their worst, but rich, generous, and one of the most powerful noblemen in Andalusia, had the refusal of the bargain. It is true that he paid handsomely for it. He took a fine house for me, furnished it in the extreme of magnificence, allowed me a man cook of the first eminence, two footmen, a lady's maid, and a thousand ducats a month for my personal expenses. Add to

all this a rich wardrobe, and an elegant assortment of jewels.

What a revolution in my affairs! My poor brain was completely turned. I could not believe myself to be the same person. No wonder if girls soon forget the meanness and misery whence some man of quality has rescued them in a fit of caprice. My confession shall be without reserve: public applause, flattering speeches buzzed about on every side, and don Ambrosio's passion kindled such a flame of self-conceit, as kept me in a continual ferment of extravagance. I considered my talents as a patent of nobility. I put on the woman of fashion; and becoming as chary as I had hitherto been lavish of my amorous challenges, determined to look no lower than dukes, counts, or marquises.

My lord of Nisana brought some of his friends to sup with me every evening. It was my care to invite the best companions among our actresses, and we wore away a good part of the night in laughing and drinking. I fell in very kindly with so delicious a life; but it lasted only six months. Men of rank are apt to be whimsical; but for that fault, they would be too heavenly. Don Ambrosio deserted me for a young coquette from Grenada, who had just brought a pretty person to the Seville market, and knew how to set off her wares to the best advantage. But I did not fret after him more than four-and-

twenty hours. His place was supplied by a young fellow of two-and-twenty, don Lewis d'Alcacer, with whom few Spaniards could vie in point of face and figure.

You will ask me doubtless, and it is natural to do so, why I selected so green a sprig of nobility for my paramour, when my own experience so strongly dissuaded from such a choice. But, besides that don Lewis had neither father nor mother, and was already in possession of his fortune, you are to know that there is no danger of disagreeable consequences attaching to any but girls in a servile condition of life, or those unfortunate loose fish who are game for every sportsman. Ladies of our profession are privileged persons; we let off our charms like a rocket, and are not answerable for the damage where they fall; so much the worse for those families whose heirs we set in a blaze.

As for Alcacer and myself, we were so strongly attached to one another, that I verily believe, love never yet did such execution, as when he took aim at us two. Our passion was of such a violent nature, that we seemed to be under the influence of some spell. Those who knew how well we were together, thought us the happiest pair in the world; but we who knew best, found ourselves the most miserable. Though don Lewis had as fine an outside as ever fell to the lot of man, he was at the same time so jealous, that there was no living for

vexation at his unfounded surmises. It was of no use, knowing his weakness and humouring it, to lay an embargo on my looks, if ever a male creature peeped into harbour; his suspicious temper, seldom at a loss for some crime to impute, rendered my armed neutrality of no avail. Our most tender moments had always a spice of wrangling. There was no standing the brunt of it; patience could hold out no longer on either side, and we quarrelled more peaceably than we had loved. Could you believe that the last day of our being together was the happiest? Both equally wearied out by the perpetual recurrence of unpleasant circumstances, we gave a loose to our transports when we embraced for the last time. We were like two wretched captives, breathing the fresh air of liberty after all the horrors of our prison-house.

Since that adventure, I have worn a breastplate against the little archer. No more amorous nonsense for me, at least to a troublesome excess! It is quite out of our line, to sigh and complain like Arcadian shepherdesses. Those should never give way to a passion in private, who hold it up to ridicule before the public.

While these events were passing in my domestic establishment, Fame had not hung her trumpet breathless on the willows; she spread it about universally that I was an inimitable actress. That celestial tattler, though bankrupt times out of number,

still contrives to revive her credit; the comedians of Grenada therefore wrote to offer me an engagement in their company; and by way of evidence that the proposal was not to be scorned, they sent me a statement of their daily receipts and disbursements, with their terms, which seemed to be advantageous. That being the case I closed, though grieved in my heart to part with Phenicia, and Dorothea, whom I loved as well as woman is capable of loving woman. I left the first laudably employed in melting the plate of a little haggling goldsmith, whose vanity so far got the better of his avarice that he must needs have a theatrical heroine for his mistress. I forgot to tell you that on my translation to the stage, from mere whim, I changed the name of Laura to that of Estella; and it was under the latter name that I took this engagement at Grenada.

My first appearance was no less successful here than at Seville; and I soon felt myself wafted along by the sighs of my admirers. But resolving not to favour any except on honourable terms, I kept a guard of modesty in my intercourse with them, which threw dust in their eyes. Nevertheless, not to be the dupe of virtues which pay very indifferently, and were not exactly at home in their new mansion, I was balancing whether or not to take up with a young fellow of mean extraction, who had a place under government, and assumed the style of a gentleman in virtue of his office, with a good table and

handsome equipage, when I saw the marquis de Marialva for the first time. This Portuguese nobleman, travelling over Spain from mere curiosity, stopped at Grenada as he passed through it. He came to the play. I did not perform that evening. His examination of the actresses was very particular, and he found one to his liking. Their acquaintance commenced on the very next day; and the definitive treaty was very nearly concluded when I appeared upon the stage. What with some personal graces, and no little affectation in setting them off, the weathercock veered about all on a sudden; my Portuguese was mine and mine only till death do us part. Yet since the truth must be told, I knew perfectly well that my sister of the sock and buskin had entrapped this nobleman, and spared no pains to chouse her out of her prize; to my success you are yourself a witness. She bears me no small grudge on that account; but the thing could not be avoided. She ought to reflect that it is the way of all female flesh; that the dearest friends play off the same trick upon one another, and put a good face upon it into the bargain.

CHAPTER VIII.

The reception of Gil Blas among the players at Grenada; and another old acquaintance picked up in the green-room.

JUST as Laura was finishing her story, there came in an old actress who lived in her neighbourhood, and was come to take her to the theatre as she passed by. This venerable tutelary of the stage was admirably fitted to play some superannuated strumpet among the heathen goddesses in a pantomime. My sister was not remiss in introducing her brother to that stale old harridan, whereupon a profusion of compliments were bandied about on both sides.

I left them together, telling the steward's relict that I would join her again at the playhouse, as soon as I had sent my baggage to the marquis de Marialva's, to whose residence she directed me. First I went to the room I had hired, whence, after having settled with my landlady, I repaired with a porter who carried my luggage to a large ready furnished house, where my new master was quartered. At the door I met his steward, who asked me if I was not the lady Estella's brother. I answered in the affirmative. Then you are welcome, signor cavalier, re-

plied he. The marquis de Marialva, whose steward I have the honour to be, has commissioned me to receive you properly. There is a room got ready for you; I will shew you the way to it, if you please, that you may be quite at home. He took me up to the top of the house, and thrust me into so small a room, that a very narrow bed, a chest of drawers, and two chairs completely filled it. This was my apartment. You will not have much spare room, said my conductor, but as a set-off, I promise you that you shall be superbly lodged at Lisbon. I locked up my portmanteau in the wardrobe and put the key in my pocket, asking at the same time, what was the hour of supper. The answer was, that his lordship seldom supped at home, but allowed each servant a monthly sum for board wages. I put several other questions, and learnt that the marquis's people were a happy set of idle fellows. After a conversation short and sweet, I left the steward to go and look for Laura, reflecting much to my own satisfaction on the happy omens I drew from the opening of my new situation.

As soon as I got to the playhouse door, and mentioned my name as Estella's brother, there was free admission at once. You might have observed the forwardness of the guards to make way for me, just as if I had been one of the most considerable noblemen in Grenada. All the supernumeraries, doorkeepers, and receivers of checks whom I encoun-

tered in my progress, made me their very best bows. But what I should like best to give the reader an idea of, is the serious reception which the merry vagrants gave me in the green-room, where I found the whole dramatis personæ ready dressed, and on the point of drawing up the curtain. The actors and actresses, to whom Laura introduced me, fell upon me without mercy. The men were quite troublesome with their greetings; and the women not to be outdone, laid their plastered faces alongside of mine, till they covered it with a villainous compound of red and white. No one choosing to be the last in making me welcome, they all paid their compliments in a breath. Æolus himself, answering from all the points of the compass at once, would not have been a match for them: but my sister was; for the loan of her tongue was always at the service of a friend, and she brought me completely out of debt.

But I did not get clear off with the squeezes of the principal performers. The civilities of the scene-painters, the band, the prompter, the candle-snuffer, and the call-boy were to be endured with patience; all the understrappers in the theatre came to see me run the gauntlet. One would have supposed one's self in a foundling hospital, and that they had none of them ever known what sort of animals brothers and sisters were.

In the mean time the play began. Some gentlemen who were behind the scenes, then ran to get

seats in the front of the house; for my part, feeling myself quite at home, I continued in conversation with those of the actors who were waiting to go on. Among the number there was one whom they called Melchior. The name struck me. I looked hard at the person who answered to it, and thought I had seen him somewhere. At last I recollected that it was Melchior Zapata, a poor strolling player, who has been described in the first volume of this true history, as soaking his crusts in the pure element.

I immediately took him aside, and said: I am much mistaken if you are not that signor Melchior with whom I had the honour of breakfasting one day by the margin of a clear fountain, between Valladolid and Segovia. I was with a journeyman barber. We had some provisions with us which we clubbed with yours, and all three partook of a little rural feast, to which wit and anecdote gave additional relish. Zapata bethought him for a minute or two, and then answered: You tell me of a circumstance which often since came across my mind. I had then just been trying my fortune at Madrid, and was returning to Zamora. I recollect perfectly that my affairs were a little out at elbows. I recollect it too, replied I, by the token of a doublet which you wore, lined with play-bills. Neither have I forgotten that you complained of having a wife cursed with incorruptible chastity. Oh! that misfortune has found its remedy long ago, said Zapata, shaking his ears. By

all the powers of womanhood, the jade has effectually reformed that virtue, and given me a warmer lining to my doublet.

I was going to congratulate him on his wife's having shewn so much sense, when he was obliged to leave me and go on the stage. Being curious to know what sort of an animal his wife was, I went up to an actor and desired him to point her out. He did so, saying at the same time: There she is, it is Narcissa; the prettiest of all our women except your sister. I concluded that this must be the actress in whose favour the marquis de Marialva had declared before meeting with his Estella; and my conjecture was but too correct. After the play I attended Laura home, where I saw several cooks preparing a handsome entertainment. You may sup here, said she. I will do no such thing, answered I: the marquis perhaps will like to be alone with you. Not at all, replied she; he is coming with two of his own friends and one of our gentlemen; you will just make the sixth. You know that in our free and easy way there is no impropriety in secretaries sitting down at table with their masters. Very true, said I; but it is rather too soon to assume the privilege of a favourite. I must first get employed in some confidential commission, and then lay in my claim to that honourable distinction. Judging it to be so best, I went out of Laura's house, and got back to my inn, whither I reckoned on repairing every day, since my master had no regular establishment.

CHAPTER IX.

An extraordinary companion at supper; and an account of their conversation.

I REMARKED in the coffee-room a sort of an old monk, habited in coarse grey cloth, at supper quite alone in a corner. I went and sat opposite to him out of curiosity; we exchanged a civil bow, and he shewed himself to be quite as well bred as I was, notwithstanding my lay education. My commons were brought me, and I fell to with a very catholic appetite. While I was eating, my tongue was mute, but my eyes glanced by snatches towards this singular character, and always caught his at the same employment. Liking better to stare than be stared at, I addressed my speech to him thus: Pray, father, have we ever by any chance met any where but here? You peer at me as if you scarcely knew whether I was an acquaintance or a stranger. He answered gravely: If I look at you with fixed attention, it is only to admire the prodigious variety of adventures which are chronicled in the features of your face. It should seem, said I in a joking tone, as if your reverence was something of a physiognomist. Far more deeply imbued in science than a mere physiognomist, answered the monk, I found prophe-

cies on my observations which have never been belied by the event. My skill in palmistry is no less, and I will set my oracles against the surest of antiquity, after comparing the inspection of the hand with that of the face.

Though this old man had all the appearance of profound wisdom, his talk was so like that of a madman, that I could not help laughing at him outright. So far from being offended at my want of manners, he smiled at it, and went on to the following effect, after running his eye round the coffee-room, to be assured that there were no listeners: I am not surprised at finding you so prejudiced against two sciences which pass at this time of day for mere frivolity; the long and painful study they require disheartens the learned, who turn their backs upon them, and then swear that they are fables out of disgust at having missed their attainment. For my part, I am not to be frightened by the darkness which envelopes them, any more than by the difficulties which are perpetual stumbling-blocks in the pursuit of chymical discoveries, and in the marvellous art of transmuting baser metals into gold.

But I do flatter myself, pursued he, looking steadfastly at me, that I am addressing a young gentleman of good sense, to whom my systems will not appear altogether in the light of idle dreams. A sample of my skill will dispose you better than the most subtle arguments to pass a favourable judgment on my

pretensions. After talking in this manner he drew from his pocket a phial full of a lively-looking red liquor, on which he expatiated thus: Here is an elixir which I have distilled this morning from the juices of certain plants; for I have employed almost my whole life, like Democritus, in finding out the properties of simples and minerals. You shall make trial of its virtue. The wine we are drinking with our supper is very bad; henceforth it will become excellent. At the same time he put two drops of his elixir into my bottle, which made my wine more delicious than the choicest vintages of Spain.

The marvellous strikes the imagination; and when once that faculty is enlisted, judgment is turned adrift. Delighted with so glorious a secret, and persuaded that he must have out-deviled the devil before he could have got at it, I cried out in a paroxysm of admiration: O reverend father! prythee forgive your servant, if he took you at first for an old blockhead. I now abjure my error. There is no need to look further to be assured that it depends only on your own will, to turn an iron bar into a wedge of gold in the twinkling of an eye. How happy should I be were I master of that admirable science! Heaven preserve you from ever acquiring it, interrupted the old man with a deep sigh. You know not, my son, what a fatal possession you covet. Instead of envying, rather pity me, for having taken such infinite pains to be made un-

happy. I am always disturbed in mind. I fear a discovery; and then perpetual imprisonment would be the reward of all my labours. In this apprehension, I lead a vagabond life, sometimes disguised as a priest or monk, sometimes as a gentleman or a peasant. Where is the benefit of knowing how to manufacture gold on such terms? Are not the goods of this world downright misery to those who cannot enjoy them in tranquillity?

What you say appears to me very sensible, said I to the philosopher. There is nothing like living at one's ease. You have rid me of all hankering after the philosopher's stone. I will rest satisfied with learning from you my future destiny. With all my heart, my good lad, answered he. I have already made my remarks upon your features; now let me see your hand. I gave it him with a confidence which will do my penetration but little credit in the esteem of some readers. He examined it very attentively, and then pronounced, as in a rapture of inspiration: Ah! what transitions from pain to pleasure, and from pleasure to pain! What a whimsical alternation of good and evil chances! But you have already experienced the largest share of your allotted reverses. You have but few more tides of misfortune to stem, and then a great lord will contrive for you an eligible fate, which shall not be subject to change.

After having assured me that I might depend on

his prediction, he bad me farewell and went out of the inn, leaving me in deep meditation on the things I had just heard. There could be no doubt of the marquis de Marialva being the great lord in question; and consequently nothing appeared more within the verge of possibility than the accomplishment of the oracle. But though there had not been the slightest likelihood, that would have been no hindrance to giving the impostor monk unbounded credit, since his elixir had transmuted my sour incredulity into the most tractable digestion of his falsehoods. That nothing might be wanting on my side, to play into the hands of my foreboded luck, I determined to attach myself more closely to the marquis than I had ever done to any of my masters. Having taken this resolution, I went home in unusually high spirits; never did foolish woman descend in better humour from the garret of another foolish woman who had told her fortune.

CHAPTER X.

The marquis de Marialva gives a commission to Gil Blas. That faithful secretary acquits himself of it as shall be related.

THE marquis was not yet returned from his theatrical party, and I found his upper servants playing at cards in his apartment while they were waiting for his arrival. I got to be sociable with them; and we amused ourselves with jocular conversation till two o'clock in the morning, when our master arrived. He was a little surprised at seeing me, and said with an air of kindness which made me conclude that he came home very well satisfied with his evening: How is this, Gil Blas? Are you not gone to bed yet? I answered that I wished to know first whether he had any commands for me. Probably, replied he, I may have a commission to give you tomorrow morning; but it will be time enough then to acquaint you with my wishes. Go to your own room; and henceforward remember that I dispense with your attendance at bed time; my other servants are sufficient for that occasion.

After this hint, which was much to my satisfaction in the main, since it spared me a slavery which I should have felt very unpleasantly at times, I left

the marquis in his apartment, and withdrew to my garret. I went to bed. Not being able to sleep, it seemed good to follow the counsel of Pythagoras, and to examine all the actions of the day by the test of reason; to reprimand severely what had been done amiss, and if any thing had been done well, to rejoice in it.

On looking into the day-book of my conscience, the balance was not sufficiently in my favour to keep me in good humour with myself. I felt remorse at having lent myself to Laura's imposition. It was in vain to urge, in self-defence, that I could not with any decency give the lie to a girl who had no object in view but to do me a pleasure, and that I was in some sort under the necessity of becoming an accomplice in the fraud. This was a paltry excuse in the darkness of the night, for I pleaded against myself that at all events the matter should be pushed no further, and that it was the summit of impudence to remain upon the establishment of a nobleman whose confidence I so ill repaid. In short, after a severe trial, it was agreed in my own breast, that I was very little short of an arrant knave.

But to have done with the morality of the act, and pass on to the probable issue, it was evidently playing a desperate game, to cozen a man of consequence who might be enabled, as an instrument for the visitation of my sins perhaps, to detect the imposture in its very infancy. A reflection at once so

prudent and so virtuous acted as a refrigerator on my spirits; but visions of pleasure and of interest soon raised them again above the freezing point. Besides, the prophecy of the man with the elixir would have been enough to put me in heart once more. I therefore gave myself up to the indulgence of the most agreeable fancies. All the rules of arithmetic from simple addition to compound interest were set in array, to cast up what sum my salary would amount to at the end of ten years service. Then there was a large allowance for presents and gratuities from my master, whose liberal disposition according admirably with my liberal desires, my imagination grew quite fantastical, and extended the landmarks of my fortune over innumerable acres of unsubstantial territory. Sleep overtook me in the calculation, and raised a magnificent aërial mansion on the estate, where a new race of grandees was to originate.

I got up the next morning about eight o'clock to go and receive my patron's orders; but as I was opening my door to go out, what was my surprise at meeting him in his wrapping-gown and night-cap. He was quite alone. Gil Blas, said he, on parting with your sister last night, I promised to pass this morning with her; but an affair of consequence will not admit of my keeping my word. Go and assure her from me that I am deeply mortified at the disappointment, but that I shall certainly sup with her

to-night. That is not all, added he, putting a purse into my hands and a little shagreen case set round with diamonds; carry her my portrait, and keep this purse of fifty pistoles, which I give you as a mark of my early-conceived friendship. I took the picture in one hand, and in the other the purse to which I was so little entitled. I put my best leg foremost in my way to Laura, muttering to myself in the transports of excessive joy: Good! the prophecy is accomplished in the twinkling of an eye. What a windfall to be the brother of a girl so full of beauty and attraction! It is a pity the credit attached to the relationship is not commensurate with the lucre and the comfort.

Laura, unlike most women in her profession, had a habit of early rising. I caught her at her toilette, where, while waiting for her illustrious foreigner, she was engrafting on her natural beauty all the adventitious charms which the cosmetic art could supply. Lovely Estella, said I on accosting her, thou absolute loadstone of the tramontanes, I may now sit down at table with my master, since he has honoured me with a commission which gives me that prerogative, and which I am just come to fulfil. He cannot have the pleasure of waiting on you this morning, as he had purposed; but to make you amends for the disappointment, he will sup here this evening, and sends you his picture; which to all appearance is enclosed in something more valuable than itself.

I put the box into her hand at once; and the lively sparkling of the brilliants which encompassed it made her eyes sparkle and her mouth water. She opened it out of mere curiosity, looked carelessly at the painting as people perform a duty for which they have little relish; then shut it, and once more fell greedily on the jewellery. Their beauty made her eloquent; and she said to me with the smile of a satirist: These are copies which those mercenary things called actresses value much more highly than originals.

I next acquainted her that the generous Portuguese, when giving me charge of the portrait, recommended it to my care by a purse of fifty pistoles. I beg you will accept of my congratulations, said she; this nobleman begins where it is even uncommon for others to leave off. It is to you, my divine creature, answered I, that this present is owing; the marquis only made it on the score of natural affection. I could be well pleased, replied she, that he were to make you a score such presents every day. I cannot express in what extravagance you are dear to me. From the first moment of our meeting, I became attached to you by so strong a tie, as time has not been able to dissolve. When I lost you at Madrid, I did not despair of finding you again; and yesterday on your sudden appearance, I received you like a deodand. In a word, my friend, heaven has created us for one another. You shall

be my husband, but we must get plenty of money in the first instance. I shall just lend myself out to three or four silly fellows more, and then you may live like a gentleman on your means.

I thanked her in the most appropriate terms for such an instance of extreme condescension on my behalf, and we got insensibly into a conversation which lasted till noon. At that hour I withdrew, to go and give my master an account of the manner in which his present was received. Though Laura had given me no instruction thereupon, I was not remiss in composing a fine compliment on my way, with which I meant to launch out on her part; but it was just so much flash in the pan. For, when I got home, the marquis was gone out; and the fates had decreed that I should never see him more, for reasons which will be methodically stated in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

A thunderbolt to Gil Blas.

I REPAIRED to my inn, where meeting with two men of companionable talents, I dined and sat at table with them till the play began. We parted;

they, as their business and desire pointed them: and, for my own poor part, my bent was towards the theatre. It may be proper to observe by the way, that I had all possible reason to be in a good humour. The conversation with my chance companions had been joyous in the extreme; the colour of my fortune was gay and animating; yet for all that I could not help giving way to melancholy, without either knowing why, or being able to reason myself out of it. It was doubtless a prophetic warning of the misfortune which threatened me.

As I entered the green-room, Melchior Zapata came up, and told me in a low voice to follow him. He led me to an unfrequented part of the house, and opened his business thus: Worthy sir, I make it a point of conscience to give you a very serious warning. You are aware that the marquis de Marialva had at first taken a fancy to Narcissa, my wife; he had even gone so far as to fix a day for trying the relish of my rib, when that cockatrice Estella contrived to flyblow the bill of fare, and transfer the banquet to her own untainted charms. Judge then, whether an actress can be gulled instead of gulling, and preserve the sweetness of her temper. My wife has taken it deeply to heart, and there is no species of revenge to which she would not have recourse. A fine opportunity has offered. Yesterday, if you recollect, all our supernumeraries were crowding together to see you. The

deputy candle-snuffer told some of the inferior comedians that he recollected you perfectly well, and that you might be any thing but Estella's brother.

This report, added Melchior, came to Narcissa's ears to-day: she lost no time in questioning the author; and that grub of the interior stood to the whole story. He says that he knew you as Arsenia's servant, when Estella waited on her at Madrid under the name of Laura. My wife, full of glee at this discovery, means to acquaint the marquis de Marialva with it, when he comes to the play this evening; so take your measures accordingly. If you are not Estella's brother in good earnest, I would advise you as a friend, and on the score of old acquaintance, to make your escape while your skin is whole. Narcissa, satisfied in her tender mercy with only one victim, and that of her own sex, has allowed me to give you this notice, that you may outrun your ill-luck.

It would have been waste of words to press the subject farther. I returned thanks for the caution to this fretter of his hour, who saw by my terrified aspect, that I was not the man to give the deputy candle-snuffer the lie. I did not feel the least temptation to carry my dangerous valour such a length. I had not even the heart to go and bid farewel to Laura, for fear she should insist on my keeping up the farce. I could easily conceive that

so excellent an actress might get out of the scrape with flying colours; but there seemed to be nothing for me short of a swinging castigation; and I was not so far gone in love as to stand by my sweetheart at the risk of my own person. I thought of nothing but a precipitate retreat with my household gods, or rather goods, if such a trumpery collection of individual property might be called so. I disappeared from the playhouse in the twinkling of an eye; and in less time than it would have taken to confess my sins, was my portmanteau carried off and safely lodged with a muleteer who was to set out for Toledo at three o'clock next morning. I could have wished myself already with the count de Polan, whose hospitable roof seemed my only safe asylum. But I was not there yet; and it was impossible to think without dread of the time remaining to be passed in a town where I was afraid they would hunt me out without giving me a night's law.

The smell of supper drew me to my inn notwithstanding; though I was as uneasy as a debtor who knows that a writ is out against him. My stomach, I believe, was not sufficiently well knit that evening, for my supper to play its part as it should do. The miserable sport of fear, I watched all the people who came into the coffee-room; and whenever by chance they carried a gallows in their physiognomy, which is no uncommon ensign in such places of

resort, I shuddered with horrid forebodings. After having supped the supper of the damned, I got up from table, and returned to my carrier's house, where I threw myself on some clean straw till it was time to set out.

My patience was well tried during that interval; for a thousand unpleasant thoughts attacked me in all directions. If I dozed now and then, the enraged marquis stood before me, pounding Laura's fair face to a jelly with his fist, and turning her whole house out at window; or to come nearer home, I heard him giving directions for my death under the operation of a cudgel. At such a vision, I started out of my sleep; and waking, which is usually so pleasant after a frightful dream, inspired me with more horror than even the fictions of my entranced fancy.

Happily the muleteer delivered me from so dire a purgatory, by coming to acquaint me that his mules were ready. I was immediately on my legs, and set out radically cured, for which heaven has my best thanks, of Laura and the occult sciences. As we got farther from Grenada, my mind recovered its tone. I began chatting with the muleteer, laughed at his droll stories, and insensibly lost all my apprehensions. I slept undisturbed at Ubeda, where we lay the first night; and on the fourth day we got to Toledo. My first care was to inform myself of the count de Polan's residence, whither I repaired under the full persuasion that he would not suffer

me to lodge elsewhere. But I reckoned without my host. There was no one at home but a person to take care of the house, who told me that his master was just gone to the castle of Leyva, having been sent for on account of Seraphina's dangerous illness.

The count's absence was altogether unexpected: here was no longer any inducement to stay at Toledo, and all my plans were changed at once. Finding myself so near Madrid, I resolved to go thither. It came into my head that I might make my way at court, where talents of the first order, as I had heard, were not absolutely necessary to fill situations of the first consequence. On the very next morning I took advantage of back carriage, to be set down in the renowned capital of Spain. Fortune took me kindly by the hand, and introduced me to a higher cast of parts than those I had hitherto filled.

CHAPTER XII.

Gil Blas takes lodgings in a ready-furnished house. He gets acquainted with captain Chinchilla. That officer's character and business at Madrid.

On my first arrival at Madrid, I fixed my head-quarters in a lodging-house, where resided, among

other persons, an old captain, who was come from the distant part of New Castille, to solicit a pension at court, and he thought his claims but too well founded. His name was don Annibal de Chinchilla. It was not without much staring that I saw him for the first time. He was a man about sixty, of gigantic stature, and of anatomical leanness. His whiskers were like brushwood, fencing off the two sides of his face as high as his temples. Besides that he was short in his reckoning by an arm and a leg, there was a vacancy for an eye, which Polypheme would have supplied as he did, had patches of green silk been then in fashion; and his features were hacked sufficiently, to illustrate a treatise of geometry. With these exceptions, his configuration was much like that of another man. As to his mental qualities, he was not altogether without understanding; and what he wanted in quickness he made up by gravity. His principles were rigid in the extreme; and it was his particular boast to be delicate on the point of honour.

After two or three interviews, he distinguished me by his confidence. I soon got into all his personal history: he related on what occasions he had left an eye at Naples, an arm in Lombardy, and a leg in the Low Countries. The most admirable circumstance in all his narratives of battles and sieges, was, that not a single feature of the swaggerer peeped out; not a word escaped him to his own

honour and glory; though one could readily have forgiven him for making some little display of the half which was still extant of himself, as a set-off against the dilapidations which had deducted so largely from the usual contexture of a man. Officers who return from their campaigns without a scratch upon their skin or a love-lock out of place, are not always so humble in their pretensions.

But he told me that what gave him most uneasiness was, the having wasted a considerable portion of his private fortune on military objects, so that he had not more than a hundred ducats a year left; a poor establishment for such a pair of whiskers, a gentleman's lodging, and an amanuensis to multiply memorials by wholesale. For in point of fact, my worthy friend, added he shrugging his shoulders, I present one, with a blessing on my endeavours, every day, and the last meets with the same attention as the first. You would say that it was an even bet between the prime minister and me, which of us two shall be tired first; the memorialist or the receiver of the memorials. I have often had the honour too of addressing the king on the same subject; but the rector and his curate say grace in the same key; and in the mean time my castle of Chinchilla is falling to ruin for want of necessary repairs.

Faint heart never won fair lady, said I most wisely to the captain; you are perhaps on the eve

of finding all your marches and countermarches repaid with usury. I must not flatter myself with that pleasing expectation, answered don Annibal. It is but three days since I spoke to one of the minister's secretaries; and if I am to trust his representations, I have only to hold up my head and look big. What then did he say to you? replied I. Had those poor dumb mouths your wounds no eloquence, to wring a hireling pittance for their profuse expense of blood? You shall judge for yourself, resumed Chinchilla. This secretary told me in good plain terms: My honest friend, you need not boast so much of your zeal and your fidelity; you have only done your duty in exposing yourself to danger for your country. Naked glory is the true and honourable recompense of gallant actions, and as such is the prize at which a Spaniard aims. You therefore argue on false principles, if you consider the bounty you solicit as a debt. In case it should be granted, you will owe that favour exclusively to the royal goodness, which in its extreme condescension, requites those of its subjects who have served the state valiantly. Thus you see, pursued the captain, that if I had a hundred lives, they are all pledged, and that I am likely to go back as hungry as I came.

A brave man in distress is the most touching object in this world. I exhorted him to stick close, and offered to write his memorials out fair for

nothing. I even went so far as to open my purse to him, and to beg it as a favour that he would draw upon me for whatever he wanted. But he was not one of those folks who never wait to be asked twice on such occasions. So much the reverse, that with a very commendable delicacy on the subject, he thanked me for my kindness, but refused it peremptorily. He afterwards told me that for fear of spunging upon any one, he had accustomed himself by little and little to live with such sobriety, that the smallest quantity of food was sufficient for his subsistence; which was but too true. His daily fare was confined to vegetables, by dint whereof his component parts were confined to skin and bone. That he might have no witnesses how ill he dined, he usually shut himself up in his chamber at that meal. I prevailed so far with him however, by repeated entreaties, as to obtain that we should dine and sup together: then, undermining his pride by little indirect artifices of compassion, I ordered more provision and wine than I could consume to my own share. I pressed him to eat and drink. At first he made difficulties about it; but in the end there was no resisting my hospitality. After a time, his modesty becoming fainter as his diet was more flush, he helped me off with my dinner and lightened my bottle almost without asking.

One day after four or five glasses, when his stomach had renewed its intimacy with a more

generous system of feeding, he said to me with an air of gaiety: Upon my word, signor Gil Blas, you have very winning ways with you; you make me do just whatever you please. There is something so hearty in your welcome as to relieve me from all fear of trespassing on your generous temper. My captain seemed at that moment so entirely to have got rid of his bashfulness, that if I had been in the humour to have seized the lucky moment, and to have pressed my purse once more on his acceptance, I am much mistaken if he would have refused it. I did not put him to the trial; but rested satisfied with having made him my messmate, and taking the trouble not only to copy out his memorials, but to assist him in their composition. By dint of having written homilies out fair, I had learnt the knack of phraseology, and was become a sort of author. The old officer on his side had some little vanity about writing well. Both of us thus contending for the prize, the bursts of eloquence would have done honour to the most celebrated professors of Salamanca. But it was in vain that we sat on opposite sides of the table, and drained our genius to the very dregs, to nourish the flowers of rhetoric in these memorials; you might as well have planted an orange-grove on the sea-beach. In whatever new light we placed don Annibal's services, it was all the same at court, the connoisseurs were decided about their merit; so that the battered veteran had

no reason to sing the praises of that spirit which leads officers on to spend their family estates in the service. In the virulence of his spleen, he cursed the planet under which he was born, and sent Naples, Lombardy, and the Low Countries to the devil.

That his mortification might be pressed down and running over, it happened to his face one day that a poet, introduced by the duke of Alva, having recited a sonnet before the king on the birth of an infanta, was gratified with a pension of five hundred ducats. I believe the lop-limbed captain would have gone raving mad at it, if I had not taken some pains to recompose his spirit. What is the matter with you? said I, seeing him quite beside himself. There is nothing in all this which ought to go so terribly against the grain. Ever since mount Parnassus swelled above the subject plain, have not poets pleaded the privilege of laying princes under contribution to their muse? There is not a crowned head in Christendom that has not substituted a pensioned laureat for the household fool of less refined times. And between ourselves, this species of patronage, for the most part, galloping down full drive to posterity on the saddle of Pegasus, raises a hue and cry in honour of royal munificence; but bounty to persons who are lost in a crowd, however deserving, adds nothing to the bulk or stature of posthumous renown. Augustus must have drained

his treasury by gratuities, and yet how few of the names on his pension-list have come down to us! But distant ages shall be informed, as we are, in all the hyperbole of poetic diction, that his benefits descended on Virgil like the rain from heaven, whose drops arithmetic has no combinations to count, no principles by which to reason on their number.

But let me talk ever so classically to don Annibal, there was a confounded acidity in that sonnet, which curdled all the milky ingredients of his moral composition; it was impossible to chew, swallow, and digest such food with human organs; and he was fully determined to give the matter up at once. It seemed right nevertheless, by way of playing for his last stake, to present one more memorial to the duke of Lerma, and if that failed, there was an end of the game. For this purpose we went together to the prime minister's. There we met a young man who, after saluting the captain, said to him in a tone of affection: My old and dear master, is it your own self that I see? What business brings you to this mart of favour? If you have occasion for any one to speak a good word for you, do not spare my lungs; they are entirely at your service. How is this, Pedrillo? answered the officer; to hear you talk it should seem as if you held some important post in this house. At least, replied the young man, I have influence enough here, to put an honest

rustic like you into the right train. That being the case, resumed the captain with a smile, I place myself under your protection. I accept the pledge, rejoined Pedrillo. You have only to acquaint me with your particular taste, and I engage to give you a savoury slice out of the ministerial pasty.

We had no sooner opened our minds to this young fellow, so full of kind assurances, than he enquired where don Annibal resided; then, promising that we should hear from him on the following day, he vanished without informing us what he meant to do, or even telling us whether he belonged to the duke of Lerma's household. I was curious to know what this Pedrillo was, whose turn of mind appeared to be so brisk and active. He is a brave lad, said the captain, who waited on me some years ago, but finding me out at elbows, went away in search of a better service. There was no offence to me in all that; it is very natural to change when one cannot be worse off. The creature is pleasant enough, not deficient in parts, and happy in a spirit of intrigue which would wheedle with the devil. But, notwithstanding all his fine pretence, I am not sanguine in my reckoning on the zeal he has just testified for me. Perhaps, said I, there may be some plausibility in his designs. Should he be a retainer, for example, to any of the duke's principal officers, it will be in his power to serve you. You have lived too long in the world not to know that in great houses every

thing is done by party and cabal; that the masters are governed by two or three upper servants about their persons, who, in their turn, are governed by that multitude of menials attendant upon them.

On the next morning we saw Pedrillo at our breakfast table. Gentlemen, said he, if I did not explain myself yesterday as to my means of serving captain Chinchilla, it was because we were not in a place where such a communication could be made with safety. Besides, I was disposed to ascertain whether the thing was feasible, before you were made parties in it. Understand then that I am the confidential servant of signor don Rodrigo de Calderona, the duke of Lerma's first secretary. My master, who is much addicted to women, goes almost every evening to sup with a little Arragonian nightingale, whom he keeps in a cage near the purlieus of the court. She is quite a young girl from Albarazin, a most lovely creature. She has some wit as well as beauty, and sings enchantingly; they call her the Spanish Siren. I am the bearer of some tender enquiries every morning, and am just come from her. I have proposed to her to pass off signor don Annibal for her uncle, and the object of the forgery is to engage her lover in his interests. She is very willing to lend her aid in the business. Besides some little commission to which she looks forward on the profits, it will tickle her vanity to be taken for the niece of a military man.

Signor de Chinchilla looked very grim at this suggestion. He declared his extreme abhorrence of becoming a party concerned in a mere swindling trick, and still more of adopting a female adventurer, no better than she should be, into his family, and thus casting a stain upon its immaculate purity. It was not only for himself that he felt all this soreness; there was a recoil of ignominy on his ancestors, which would lay their honours level with the dust. This morbid delicacy seemed out of season to Pedrillo, who could not help expressing his contempt of it thus. You must surely be out of your wits to take the matter up on that footing. A fine market you bring your morals to, you dictators from the plough, with your ridiculous squeamishness! Now you seem a good sensible man, appealing to me as he spoke these last words. Can you believe your ears when you hear such scruples advanced? Heaven defend us! At court, of all the places in the world, to look at morals through a microscope! Let fortune come under what haggard form she may, they hug her in their arms, and swear she is a beauty.

My way of thinking was precisely with Pedrillo; and we dinned it so stoutly into both the captain's ears, as to make him the Spanish Siren's uncle against nature and inclination. When we had so far prevailed over his pride, we all three set about drawing up a new memorial for the minister, which was revised, with a copious interlacing of additions

and corrections. I then wrote it out fair, and Pedrillo carried it to the Arragonian chauntress, who that very evening put it into the hands of signor don Rodrigo, telling her story so artlessly that the secretary, really supposing her the captain's niece, promised to take up his case. A few days afterwards we reaped the fruits of our little project. Pedrillo came back to our house with the lofty air of a benefactor. Good news! said he to Chinchilla. The king is going to make a new grant of offices, places, and pensions; nor will your name be forgotten in the list. But I am specially commissioned to enquire what present you purpose making to the Spanish Siren; for the piper must be paid. As to myself, I vow and protest that I will not take a farthing; the pleasure of having contributed to patch up my old master's broken fortunes, is more to me than all the ingots of the Indies. But it is not precisely so with our nympth of Albarazin: she has a little Jewish blood to plead, when the Christian precept of loving her neighbour as herself is preached up to her. She would pick her own natural father's pocket; so judge you whether she would be above making a bargain with a travelling uncle.

She has only to name her own terms, answered don Annibal. Whatever my pension may be, she shall have the third of it annually if she pleases; I will pledge my word for it; and that proportion ought to satisfy her craving, if his catholic majesty

had settled his whole exchequer on me. I would as soon take your word as your bond, for my own part, replied the nimble-footed messenger of don Rodrigo; I know that it will stand the assay; but you have to deal with a little creature who knows herself, and naturally supposes that she knows all the rest of the world by the same token. Besides, she would like better to take it in the lump; two-thirds to be paid down now in ready money. Why how the devil does she mean that I should get the wherewithal? bawled the captain in a quandary. Does she take me for an auditor of public accounts, or treasurer to a charity? You cannot have made her acquainted with my circumstances. Yes but I have, replied Pedrillo; she knows very well that you are poorer than Job; after what she has heard from me, she could think no otherwise. But do not make yourself uneasy, my brain is never at a loss for an expedient. I know an old scoundrel of an usurer, who will take ten per cent if he can get no more. You must assign your first year's pension to him, in acknowledgment for a like valuable consideration from him, which you will in point of fact receive, only deducting the above-mentioned interest. As to security, the lender will take your castle of Chinchilla, for want of better; there will be no dispute about that.

The captain declared his readiness to accept the terms, in case of his being so fortunate as to possess

any beneficial interest in the good things to be given away the next morning. It happened accordingly. He got a government with a pension of three hundred pistoles. As soon as the news came, he signed and sealed as required, settled his little concerns in town, and went off again for New Castille with a balance of some few pistoles in his favour.

CHAPTER XIII.

Gil Blas comes across his dear friend Fabricio at court. Great ecstacy on both sides. They adjourn together, and compare notes; but their conversation is too curious to be anticipated.

I HAD contracted a habit of going to the royal palace every morning, where I lounged away two or three good hours in seeing the great people pass to and fro; but their aspect was less imposing there than in other places, as the lesser stars turn pale in the presence of the sun.

One day as I was walking back and fore, and strutting about the apartments, making about as wise a figure there as my neighbours, I spied out Fabricio, whom I had left at Valladolid in the service

of a hospital director. It surprised me not a little that he was chatting familiarly with the duke of Medina Sidonia and the marquis of Santa Cruz. Those two noblemen, if my senses did not deceive me, were listening with admiration to his prattle. To crown the whole, he was as handsomely dressed as a grandee.

Surely I must be mistaken! thought I. Can this possibly be the son of Nunez the barber? More likely it is some young courtier who bears a strong resemblance to him. But my suspense was of no long duration. The party broke up, and I accosted Fabricio. He knew me at once; took me by the hand, and after pressing through the crowd to get out of the precincts, said with a hearty greeting, My dear Gil Blas, I am delighted to see you again. What are you doing at Madrid? Are you still at service? Some place about the court perhaps! How do matters stand with you? Let me into the history of all that has happened to you since your precipitate flight from Valladolid. You ask a great many questions in a breath, replied I; and we are not in a fit place for story-telling. You are in the right, answered he; we shall be better at home. Come, I will shew you the way; it is not far hence. I am quite my own master, with all my comforts about me; perfectly easy as to the main chance, with a light heart and a happy temper; because I am determined to see every thing on the bright side.

I accepted the proposal, and Fabricio escorted me. We stopped at a house of magnificent appearance, where he told me that he lived. There was a court to cross; on one side it had a grand staircase leading to a suite of state apartments, and on the other a small flight, dark and narrow, whither we betook ourselves to a residence elevated in a different sense from what he had boasted. It consisted of a single room, which my contriving friend had divided into four by deal partitions. The first served as an antichamber to the second, where he lay: of the third he made his closet, of the last his kitchen. The chamber and antichamber were papered with maps, and many a sheet of philosophical discussion; nor was the furniture by any means unsuitable to the hangings. There was a large brocade bed much the worse for wear; tawdry old chairs with coarse yellow coverings, fringed with Grenada silk of the same colour, a table with gilt feet, and a cloth over it that once aspired to be red, bordered with tinsel and embroidery tarnished by that old corroder, time; with an ebony cabinet, ornamented with figures in a clumsy taste of sculpture. Instead of a convenient desk, he had a small table in his closet; and his library was made up with some few books, and a great many bundles of paper arranged on shelves one above the other the whole length of the wall. His kitchen, too modest to put the rest of the establishment out of countenance, exhibited a frugal

assortment of earthenware and other necessary implements of cookery.

Fabricio, when he had allowed me leisure to philosophize on his domestic arrangements, begged to know my opinion of his apartments and his housekeeping, and whether I was not enchanted with them: Yes, beyond all manner of doubt, answered I with a roguish smile. You must have plied your wits to a good purpose at Madrid, to have got so well accoutred. Of course you have some post. Heaven preserve me from any thing of the sort! replied he. My line of life is far above all political situations. A man of rank, to whom this house belongs, has given me a room in it, whence I have contrived to piece out a suite of four, fitted up in such taste as you may see. I devote my time to no employments but what are just to my fancy, and never feel what it is to want. Explain yourself more intelligibly, said I, interrupting him. You set me all agog to be let into your little arrangements. Well then! said he, I will rid you of that devil curiosity at once. I have commenced author, have plunged headlong into the ocean of literature; verse and prose run equally glib; in short, I am a jack of all trades to the muses.

What! you bound in solemn league and covenant to Apollo? exclaimed I with most intolerable laughter. Nothing under a prophet could ever have anticipated this. I should have been less surprised at

any other transformation. What possible delights have you had the ingenuity to detect in the rugged landscape of Parnassus? It should seem as if the labourers there have a very poor taking in civil life, and feed on a coarse diet without sauce. Out upon you! cried he, in dudgeon at the hint. You are talking of those paltry authors, whose works and even their persons are under the thumb of booksellers and players. Is it any wonder that writers under such circumstances should be held cheap? But the good ones, my friend, are on a better footing in the world; and I think it may be affirmed, vanity apart, that my name is to be found in their list. Questionless, said I, talents like yours are convertible to every purpose; compositions from such a pen are not likely to be insipid. But I am on the rack to know how this rage for fencing with inky weapons could have seized thee.

Your wonder and alarm has mind in it, replied Nunez. I was so well pleased with my situation in the service of signor Manuel Ordonnez, that I had no hankering after any other. But my genius, like that of Plautus, being too high-minded to contract itself within the sphere of menial occupations, I wrote a play and got it acted by a company then performing at Valladolid. Though it was not worth the paper it was scrawled upon, it had more success than many better pieces. Hence concluded I that the public was a silly bird, and would hatch any

eggs that were put under it. That modest discovery, with the consequent madness of incessant composition, alienated my affections from the hospital. The love of poetry being stronger than the desire of accumulation, I determined on repairing to Madrid, as the centre of every thing distinguished, to form my taste in that school. The first thing was to give the governor warning, who parted with me to his own great sorrow, from a sort of affection the result of similar propensities. Fabricio, said he, what possible ground can you have for discontent? None at all, sir, I replied; you are the best of all possible masters, and I am deeply impressed with your kind treatment; but you know one must follow whithersoever the stars ordain. I feel the sacred fire within me, on whose aspiring element my name is to be wafted to posterity. What confounded nonsense! rejoined the old fellow, whose ideas were all pecuniary. You are already become a fixture in the hospital, and are made of a metal which may easily be manufactured into a steward, or by good-luck, even into a governor. You are going to give up the great object of life, and to flutter about its frippery. So much the worse for you, honest friend!

The governor, seeing how fruitless it was to struggle with my fixed resolve, paid me my wages, and made me a present of fifty ducats as an acknowledgment of my services. Thus, between this supply and what I had been able to scrape together out of

some little commissions, which were assigned to me from an opinion of my disinterestedness, I was in circumstances to make a very pretty appearance on my arrival at Madrid; which I was not negligent in doing, though the literary tribe in our country are not over punctilious about decency or cleanliness. I soon got acquainted with Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and the whole set of them; but though they were fine fellows, and thought so by the public, I chose for my model in preference, don Lewis de Gongora the incomparable, a young bachelor of Cordova, decidedly the first genius that ever Spain produced. He will not suffer his works to be printed during his lifetime; but confines himself to a private communication among his friends. What is very remarkable, nature has gifted him with the uncommon talent of succeeding in every department of poetry. His principal excellence is in satire; there he outshines himself. He does not resemble, like Lucilius, a muddy stream with a slimy bottom; but is rather like the Tagus, rolling its transparent waters over a golden sand.

You give a fine description of this bachelor, said I to Fabricio; and questionless a character of such merit must have attracted an infinite deal of envy. The whole gang of authors, answered he, good and bad equally, are open-mouthed against him. He deals in bombast, says one; aims at double meanings, luxuriates in metaphor, and affects transposi-

tion. His verses, says another, have all the obscurity of those which the Salian priests used to chaunt in their processions, and which nobody was the wiser for hearing. There are others who impute it to him as a fault, to have exercised his genius at one time in sonnets or ballads, at another in playwriting, in heroic stanzas, and in minor efforts of wit alternately, as if he had madly taken upon himself to eclipse the best writers each in their own favourite walk. But all these thrusts of jealousy are successfully parried, where the muse, which is their mark, becomes the idol of the great and of the multitude at once.

Under so able a master did I serve my apprenticeship; and, vanity apart, the preceptor was reflected in the disciple. So happily did I catch his spirit, that by this time he would not be ashamed to own some of my detached pieces. After his example, I carry my goods to market at great houses where the bidding is eager, and the sagacity of the bidders not difficult to match. It is true that I have a very insinuating talent at recitation; which places my compositions in no disadvantageous light. In short, I am the dear delight of the nobility, and live in the most particular intimacy with the duke of Medina Sidonia, just as Horace used to live with his jolly companion Mecenas. By such conjuration and mighty magic have I won the name of author. You see the method lies within a narrow compass. Now, Gil Blas, it is

your turn to deliver a round unvarnished tale of your exploits.

On this hint I spake; and unlike most narrators, gave all the important particulars, passing lightly over minute and tiresome circumstances. The action of talking, long continued, puts one in mind of dining. His ebony cabinet, which served for larder, pantry, and all possible uses, was ransacked for napkins, bread, a shoulder of mutton far gone in a decline, with its last and best contents, a bottle of excellent wine; so that we sat down to table in high spirits, as friends are wont to do after a long separation. You observe, said he, this free and independent manner of life. I might find a plate laid for me every day, if I chose it, in the very first houses; but, besides that the muse often pays me a visit and detains me within doors, I have a little of Aristippus in my nature. I can pass with equal relish from the great and busy world to my retreat, from all the researches of luxury to the simplicity of my own frugal board.

The wine was so good, that we encroached upon a second bottle. As a relish to our fruit and cheese, I begged to be favoured with the sight of something, the offspring of his inspired moments. He immediately rummaged among his papers, and read me a sonnet with much energy of tone. Yet with all the advantage of accent and expression, there was something so uncouth in the arrangement, as to baffle all

conjecture about the meaning. He saw how it puzzled me. This sonnet then, said he, is not quite level to your comprehension! Is not that the fact? I owned that I should have preferred a construction somewhat less forced. He began laughing at my rusticity. Well then! replied he; we will say that this sonnet would confuse clearer heads than thine: it is all the better for that. Sonnets, odes, in short all compositions which partake of the sublime, are of coarse the reverse of the simple and natural: they are enveloped in clouds, and their darkness constitutes their grandeur. Let the poet only fancy that he understands himself, no matter whether his readers understand him or not. You are laughing at me, my friend, said I, interrupting him. Let poetry be of what species it may, good sense and intelligible diction are essential to its powers of pleasing. If your peerless Gongora is not a little more lucid than yourself, I protest that his merit will never pass current with me. Such poets may entrap their own age into applause, but will never live beyond it. Now let me have a taste of your prose.

Nunez shewed me a preface which he meant to prefix to a dramatic miscellany then in the press. He insisted on having my opinion. I like not your prose one atom better than your verse, said I. Your sonnet is a roaring deluge of emptiness; and as for your preface, it is disfigured by a phraseology stolen from languages yet in embryo, by words not stamped

in the mint of general use, by all the perplexity of a style that does not know what to make of itself. In a word, the composition is altogether a thing of your own. Our classical and standard books are written in a very different manner. Poor tasteless wretch! exclaimed Fabricio. You are not aware that every prose writer who aspires to the reputation of sentiment and delicacy in these days, affects this style of his own, these perplexities and innovations which are a stumbling-block to you. There are five or six of us, determined reformers of our language, who have undertaken to turn the Spanish idiom topsy-turvy; and with a blessing on our endeavours, we will pull it down and build it up again, in defiance of Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and all the host of wits who cavil at our new modes of speech. Our party is strongly supported in the fashionable world, and we have laid violent hands upon the pulpit.

After all, continued he, our project is commendable; for, to speak without prejudice, we have ten times the merit of those natural writers, who express themselves just like the mob. I cannot conceive why so many sensible men are taken with them. It was all very well at Athens and at Rome, in a wild and undistinguishing democracy; and on that principle only could Socrates tell Alcibiades, that the last appeal was to the people in all disputes about language. But at Madrid there is a polite and a vulgar usage; so that our courtiers talk in a differ-

ent tongue from their tradesmen. You may assure yourself that it is so; in fine, this newly invented style is carrying every thing before it, and turning old nature out of doors. Now I will explain to you by a single instance the difference between the elegance of our diction and the flatness of theirs. They would say, for example, in plain terms, "Ballets incidental to the piece are an ornament to a play;" but in our mode of expression, we say more exquisitely, "Ballets incidental to the piece are the very life and soul of a play." Now observe that phrase; *life and soul.* Are you sensible how glowing it is, at the same time how descriptive, setting before you all the motions of the dancers, as on an intellectual stage?

I broke in upon my reformer of language with a burst of laughter. Get along with you, Fabricio, said I, you are a coxcomb of your own manufacture, with your affected finery of phrase. And you, answered he, are a blockhead of nature's clumsy moulding, with your starch simplicity. He then went on taunting me with the archbishop of Grenada's angry banter on my dismission. "Get about your business! Go and tell my treasurer to pay you a hundred ducats, and take my blessing in addition to that sum. God speed you, good master Gil Blas! I heartily pray that you may do well in the world! There is nothing to stand in your way, but a little better taste." I roared out in a still louder explo-

sion of laughter at this lucky hit; and Fabricio, easily appeased on the score of impiety, as manifested in the opinion expressed concerning his writings, lost nothing of his pleasant and propitious temper. We got to the bottom of our second bottle; and then rose from table in fine order for an adventure. Our first intention was to see what was to be seen upon the Prado; but passing in front of a liquor-shop, it came into our heads that we might as well go in.

The company was in general tolerably select at this house of call. There were two distinct apartments; and the pastime in each was of a very opposite nature. One was devoted to games of chance or skill; the other to literary and scientific discussion: and there were at that moment two clever men by profession handling an argument most pertinaciously, before ten or twelve auditors deeply interested in the discussion. There was no occasion to join the circle, because the metaphysical thunder of their logic made itself heard at a more respectful distance: the heat and passion with which this abstract controversy was managed made the two philosophers look little better than madmen. A certain Eleazar used to cast out devils, by tying a ring to the nose of the possessed; had these learned swine been ringed in the same manner, how many little imps would have taken wing out of their nostrils! Angels and ministers of grace defend us, said I to my com-

panion: what contortions of gesture, what extravagance of elocution! One might as well argue with the town crier. How little do we know our natural calling in society! Very true indeed, answered he: you have read of Novius, the Roman pawnbroker, whose lungs went as far beyond the rattle of chariot wheels, as his conscience beyond the rate of legal interest; the Novii must certainly have been transplanted into Spain, and these fellows are lineal descendants. But the hopeless part of the case is, that though our organs of sense are deafened, our understandings are not invigorated at their expense. We thought it best to make our escape from these braying metaphysicians, and by that prudent motion to avoid a headache which was just beginning to annoy us. We went and seated ourselves in a corner of the other room, whence, as we sipped our refreshing beverage, all comers and goers were obnoxious to our criticism. Nunez was acquainted with almost the whole set. Heaven and earth! exclaimed he, the clash of philosophy is as yet but in its beginning; fresh reinforcements are coming in on both sides. Those three men, just on the threshold, mean to let slip the dogs of war. But do you see those two queer fellows going out? That little swarthy, leather-complexioned Adonis, with long lank hair parted in the middle with mathematical exactness, is don Juliano de Villanuno. He is a young barrister, with more of the prig than the lawyer about him. A party

of us went to dine with him the other day. The occupation we caught him in was singular enough. He was amusing himself in his office with making a tall grey-hound fetch and carry the briefs in the causes which were so unfortunate as to have him retained; and of course the canine *amicus curiæ* set his fangs indifferently into the flesh of plaintiff or defendant, tearing law, equity, precedent, and principle into shreds That licentiate at his elbow, with jolly, pimple-spangled nose and cheeks, goes by the name of don Cherubino Tonto. He is a canon of Toledo, and the greatest fool that was ever suffered to walk the earth without a keeper. And yet, he arrays his features in that sort of not quite unmeaning smile, that you would give him credit for good sense as well as good humour. His eye has the look of cunning if not of wisdom, and his laugh too much of sarcasm for an absolute ideot. One would conclude that he had a turn for mischief, but kept it down from principle and feeling. If you wish to take his opinion upon a work of genius, he will hear it read with so grave and wrapt a silence, as nothing but deep thought and acute mental criticism could justify; but the truth is, that he comprehends not one word, and therefore can have nothing to say. He was of the barrister party. There were a thousand good things said, as there always must be in a professional company. Don Cherubino added nothing to the mass of merriment; but looked such per-

fect approbation at those who did, was so tractable and complimentary a listener, that every man at table placed him second in the comparative estimate of merit.

Do you know, said I to Nunez, who those two fellows are with dirty clothes and matted hair, their elbows on that table in the corner, and their cheeks upon their hands, whiffing foul breath into each others nostrils as they lay their heads together? He told me that by their faces they were strangers to him; but that by physical and moral tokens they could only be coffee-house politicians, venting their spleen against the measures of government. But do look at that spruce spark, whistling as he paces up and down the other room, and balancing himself alternately on one toe and on the other. That is don Augustino Moreto, a young poet sufficiently of nature's mint and coinage to pass current, if flatterers and sciolists had not debased him into a mere coxcomb by their misplaced admiration. The man to whom he is going up with that familiar shake by the hand, is one of the set who write verses and then call themselves poets; who claim a speaking acquaintance with the muses, but never were of their private parties.

Authors upon authors, nothing but authors! exclaimed he, pointing out two dashing blades. One would think they had made an appointment on purpose to pass in review before you. Don Bernardo

Deslenguado and don Sebastian of Villa Viciosa! The first is a vinegar-flavoured vintage of Parnassus, a satirist by trade and company; he hates all the world, and is not liked the better for his taste. As for don Sebastian, he is the milk and honey of criticism; he would not have the guilt of ill-nature on his conscience for the universe. He has just brought out a comedy without a single idea, which has succeeded with an audience of tantamount ideas; and he has just now published it to vindicate his innocence.

Gongora's candid pupil was running on in his career of benevolent explanation, when one of the duke de Medina Sidonia's household came up and said: Signor don Fabricio, my lord duke wishes to speak with you. You will find him at home. Nunez, who knew that the wishes of a great lord could not be too soon gratified, left me without ceremony; but he left me in the utmost consternation, to hear him called don, and thus ennobled, in spite of master Chrysostom the barber's escutcheon, who had the honour to call him father.

CHAPTER XIV.

Fabricio finds a situation for Gil Blas in the establishment of count Galiano, a Sicilian nobleman.

I WAS too happy in Fabricio's society, not to hunt him out again early the next morning. Good day to you, signor don Fabricio, said I on my first approach; it seems you are the picked and chosen flower, or rather, saving your presence, the nondescript excrescence of the Austrian nobility. This sarcasm had no other effect than to set him laughing heartily. Then the title of don was not lost upon you! exclaimed he. No, indeed, my noble lord, answered I; and you will give me leave to tell you that when you were recounting your transformations to me yesterday, you forgot the most extraordinary. Exactly so, replied he; but to speak sincerely, if I have taken up that prefix of dignity, it is less to tickle my own vanity, than in tenderness to that of others. You know what stuff the Spaniards are made of; an honest man is no honest man to them, if his honour is not bolstered up with escutcheons, pedigree, and patrimony. I may tell you moreover that there are so many gentry, and very queer sort of gentry too, dubbed don Francisco, don Pedro.

don What-do-you-call-him, or don Devil, that if they owe their coats of arms to any herald but their own impudence, modern nobility is a mere drug in the market, so that a plebeian of nature's ennobling confers infinite honour on the upstarts of an artificial creation, by herding with their order.

But let us change the subject, added he. Last night, supping at the duke de Medina Sidonia's, where among other company we had count Galiano, a great Sicilian nobleman, the conversation turned upon the ridiculous effects of self-love. Delighted at having a case in point by way of illustration, I treated them with the story of the homilies. You may well suppose that there was a hearty laugh, and that the archbishop's dignity was not saved in the concussion; but the effect was not amiss for you, since the company felt for your situation; and count Galiano, after a long string of questions, which of course I answered to your advantage, commissioned me to introduce you. I was just now going to look after you for that purpose. In all probability he means to offer you a situation as one of his secretaries. I advise you not to hang back. The count is rich, and lives away at Madrid on the scale of an ambassador. He is said to have come to court on a negotiation with the duke of Lerma respecting some crown lands which that minister thinks of alienating in Sicily. In one word, count Galiano, though a Sicilian, has every feature of generosity,

fair dealing, and gentlemanly conduct. You cannot do better than get upon that nobleman's establishment. In all probability, the flattering prophecy respecting you at Grenada is to be fulfilled in his person.

It was my full determination, said I to Nunez, to take my swing about town and look at men and manners a little, before the harness was buckled on my back again; but you paint your Sicilian nobleman in colours which fascinate my imagination and change my purpose. I should like to close with him at once. You will do so very soon, replied he, or I am much deceived. We sallied forth together immediately and went to the count's, who resided in the house of his friend, don Sancho d'Avila, the latter being then in the country.

The court-yard was overrun with pages and footmen in rich and elegant liveries, while the antichamber was blockaded by esquires, gentlemen, and various officers of the household. They were all as fine as possible, but with so whimsical an assortment of features, that you might have taken them for a cluster of monkeys dressed up to satirize the Spanish fashions. Do what you will, there is a certain class of men and women in nature, whom no art can trick out into any thing human.

At the very name of don Fabricio, a lane was formed for my patron, and I followed in the rear. The count was in his dressing-gown, sitting on a

sofa and taking his chocolate. We made our obeisance in the most respectful manner; while an inclination of the head on his part, accompanied with a condescending smile, won my heart at once. It is very wonderful, and yet very common, how the most trifling notice from the great penetrates the very soul of those who are not accustomed to it! They must have behaved like fiends, before their behaviour will be complained of.

After taking his chocolate, he recreated himself with the humours of a large ape, which underwent the name of Cupid: why the ape was made a god, or the god likened to an ape, the parties concerned can best answer; the only point of resemblance seemed to be mischief. At all events, this hairy brat of the sylvan Venus had so gamboled himself into his master's good graces, had established such a character for wit and humour, that the life of society was extinguished in his absence. As for Nunez and myself, though we had a better turn for drollery, we were cunning enough to chime in with the prevailing taste. The Sicilian was highly delighted with this, and tore himself away for a moment from his favourite pastime, just to tell me: My friend, you have only to say whether you choose to be one of my secretaries. If the situation suits you, the salary is two hundred pistoles a year. If don Fabricio gives you a character, that is enough. Yes, my lord, cried Nunez, I am not such a cowardly fellow as

Plato, who introduced one of his friends to Dionysius the tyrant, and then was afraid to back his own recommendation. But I have no anxiety about being reproached on that head.

I thanked the poet of the Asturias with a low bow, for having so much better an opinion of me than Plato had of his friend. Then addressing my patron, I assured him of my zeal and fidelity. No sooner did this good nobleman perceive his proposal to be acceptable, than he rang for his steward, and after talking to him apart, said to me: Gil Blas, I will explain the nature of your post hereafter. Meanwhile, you have only to follow that right hand man of mine; he has his orders how to bestow you. I immediately retreated, leaving Fabricio behind with the count and Cupid.

The steward, who came from Messina, and proved by all his actions that he came thence, led the way to his own room, overwhelming me all the while with the kindness of his reception. He sent for the tailor who lived upon the skirts of the household, and ordered him to make me out of hand, a suit of equal magnificence with those of the principal officers. The tailor took my measure and withdrew. As to lodging, said the native of Messina, I know a room which will just suit you. But stay! Have you breakfasted? I answered in the negative. Oh! poor shamefaced youth, replied he, why did not you say

so? Come this way: I will introduce you where, thank heaven, you have only to ask and have.

So saying, he let me down into the buttery, where we found the clerk of the kitchen, who was a Neapolitan, and of course a complete match for his neighbour on the other side of the water. It might be said of this pair that they were formed to meet by nature. This honest clerk of the kitchen was doing justice to his trade by cramming himself and five or six hangers-on with ham, tongue, sausages, and other savoury compositions, which, besides their own relish, possess the merit of engendering thirst: we made common cause with these jolly fellows, and helped them to toss off some of my lord the count's best wines. While these things were going on in the buttery, kindred exploits were performing in the kitchen. The cook too was regaling three or four tradesmen of his acquaintance, who liked good wine as well as ourselves, nor disdained to stuff their craws with meat pasties and game: the very scullions were at free quarters, and filched whatever they pleased. I fancied myself in a house given up to plunder; and yet what I saw was comparatively fair and honest. These little festivities were laughing matters; but the private transactions of the family were very serious.

CHAPTER XV.

The employment of Gil Blas in don Galiano's household.

I WENT away to fetch my moveables to my new residence. On my return the count was at table with several noblemen and the poet Nunez, who called about him as if perfectly at home, and took a principal share in the conversation. Indeed, he never opened his lips without applause. So much for wit! with that commodity at market, a man may pay his way in any company.

It was my lot to dine with the gentlemen of the household, who were served nearly as well as their employer. After meal-time I withdrew to ruminate on my lot. So far so good, Gil Blas! said I to myself: here you are in the family of a Sicilian count, of whose character you know nothing. To judge by appearances, you will be as much in your element as a duck upon the water. But do not make too sure! you ought to look askew at your horoscope, whose unkindly position you have too often experienced with a vengeance. Independent of that, it is not easy to conjecture what he means you to do. There are secretaries and a steward already: where can your post be? In all likelihood you are intend-

ed to manage his little private affairs. Well and good! There is no better luck about the house of a great nobleman, if you would travel post haste to make your fortune. In the performance of more honourable services, a man gets on only step by step, and even at that pace often sticks by the way.

While these philosophical reflections were revolving in my mind, a servant came to tell me that all the company was gone home, and that my lord the count was enquiring for me. I flew immediately to his apartment, where I found him lolling on the sofa, ready to take his afternoon's nap with his monkey by his side.

Come nearer, Gil Blas, said he; take a chair, and hear me attentively. I placed myself in an attitude of profound listening, when he addressed me as follows. Don Fabricio has informed me that among other good qualities, you have that of sincere attachment to your masters, and incorruptible integrity. These are my inducements for proposing to take you into my service. I stand in need of a friend in a domestic, to espouse my interests and apply his whole heart and soul to the reform of my establishment. My fortune is large, it must be confessed, but my expenditure far exceeds my income every year. And how happens that? Because they rob, ransack, and devour me. I might as well be in a forest infested by banditti, as an inhabitant of my own house. I suspect the clerk of the kitchen and

my steward of playing into one another's hands; and unless my thoughts are unjust as well as uncharitable, they are pushing forward as fast as they can to ruin me beyond redemption. You will ask me what I have to do but send them packing, if I think them scoundrels. But then where are others to be got of a better breed? It will be sufficient to place them under the eye of a man who shall be invested with the right of controul over their conduct; and you have I chosen to execute this commission. If you discharge it well, be assured that your services will not be repaid with ingratitude. I shall take care to provide you with a very comfortable settlement in Sicily.

With this he dismissed me; and that very evening, in presence of the whole household, I was proclaimed principal manager and surveyor-general of the family. Our gentlemen of Messina and Naples expressed no particular chagrin at first, because they considered me as a spark of mettle like their own, and took it for granted, that though the loaf was to be shared with a third, there would always be cut and come again for the triumvirate. But they looked inexpressibly foolish the next day, when I declared myself in serious terms a decided enemy to all peculation and underhand dealing. From the clerk of the kitchen I required the buttery accounts without varnish or concealment. I went down into the cellar. The furniture of the butler's pantry un-

derwent a strict examination, particularly in the articles of plate and linen. Next I read them a serious lecture on the duty of acting for their employer as they would for themselves; exhorted them to adopt a system of economy in their expenditure; and wound up my harangue with a protestation, that his lordship should be acquainted with the very first instance of any unfair tricks that I should discover in the exercise of my office.

But I had not yet got to the length of my tether. There was still wanting a scout to ascertain whether they had any private understanding. I fixed upon a scullion who, won over by my promises, told me that I could not have applied to a better person to be informed of all that was passing in the family; that the clerk of the kitchen and the steward were one as good as the other, and agreed to burn the candle at both ends; that half the provisions bought for the table were made perquisites by these gentlemen; that the Neapolitan kept a lady who lives opposite St. Thomas's college, and his colleague, not to be outdone, provided for another next door to the Sungate; that these two nymphs had their larder regularly supplied every morning, while the cook, following a good example, sent a few little nice things to a widow of his acquaintance in the neighbourhood: but as he winked at the table arrangements of his dear and confidential friends, it was but fair that he should draw whenever he pleased

upon the wine-cellar: in short, by the practices of these three blood-suckers, a most horrible system of extravagance had found its way into my lord the count's establishment. If you doubt my veracity, added the scullion, only take the trouble of going to-morrow morning about seven o'clock into the neighbourhood of St. Thomas's college, and you will see me with a load upon my back, which will convert your suspicions into certainty. Then you, said I, are in the confidence of these honest purveyors? I am factor to the clerk of the kitchen, answered he; and one of my comrades runs on errands for the steward.

I had the curiosity the next day to loiter about St. Thomas's college at the appointed hour. My informer was punctual to time and place. He brought with him a large tray full of butcher's meat, poultry, and game. I took an account of every article; and drew out the bill of fare in my memorandum book, for the purpose of showing it to my master: at the same time telling my little turnspit to execute his commission as usual.

His Sicilian lordship, naturally warm in his temper, would have turned his countryman and the Italian out of doors together, in the first fury of his anger; but after cooling upon it, he got rid of the former only, and gave me his vacant place. Thus my office of supervisor was suppressed very shortly after its creation; nor did I relinquish it with any

reluctance. To define it strictly and properly, it was nothing better than that of a spy with a sounding title; there was nothing substantial in the nature of the appointment: whereas to the stewardship was tied the key of the strong box, and with that goes the mastery of the whole family. There are so many little perquisites, and so much patronage attached to that department of administration, that a man must inevitably get rich, almost in spite of his own honesty.

But our Neapolitan was not so easily to be driven from his strong holds. Observing to what a pitch of savage zeal I carried my integrity, and that I was up every morning time enough to enter in my books the exact quantity of meat that came from market, he abandoned the practice of sending it off by wholesale: yet the plunderer did not therefore contract the scale of his demands on the animal creation. He was cunning enough to make it as broad as it was long, by arranging the services with so much the more profusion. Thus, what was sent down again untouched being his property by culinary common law, he had nothing to do but to pamper up his pet with victuals ready dressed, instead of giving her the trouble of cooking for herself. The devil will levy his dues out of every transaction; so that the count was very little the better for his paragon of a steward. The unbounded prodigality in our style of setting out a table, even to a surfeiting

degree, was a plain hint to me of what was going forward: I therefore took upon myself to retrench the superfluities of every course. This, however, was done with so judicious a hand, that there was nothing like parsimony to be discovered. No one would ever have missed what was taken away; and yet the expense was reduced very considerably by a well-regulated economy. That was just what my employer wanted; good housewifery, but a magnificent establishment. There was a love of saving at the bottom; but a taste for grandeur was the ostensible passion.

Abuses seldom exist alone. The wine flowed too freely. If, for instance, there were a dozen gentlemen at his lordship's table, the consumption was seldom less than fifty, sometimes sixty bottles. This was strange; and looked as if there was more in it than met the lips of the guests. Hereupon I consulted my oracle of the scullery, whence I derived most of my wisdom: for he brought me a faithful account of all that was said and done in the kitchen, where they had not the least suspicion of him. It seemed that the havoc of which I complained proceeded from a new confederacy between the clerk of the kitchen, the cook, and the under butler. The latter carried off the bottles half full, and shared their contents with his allies. I spoke to him on the subject, threatening to turn him and all the footmen under him out of doors at a minute's warning, if

ever they did the like again. The hint was understood, and the evil remedied. I took especial care lest the slightest of my services should be lost upon my master, who overwhelmed me with commendations, and took a greater liking to me every day. On my part, as a reward to the scullion, he was promoted to the situation next under the cook.

The Neapolitan was furious at encountering me in every direction. The most aggravating circumstance of the whole was the overhauling of his accounts; for, to pare his nails the closer, I had gone into the market, and informed myself of the prices. I followed him through all his doublings, and always took off the market penny which he wanted to add. He must have cursed me a hundred times a day; but the curses of the wicked fall in blessings on the good. I wonder how he could stay in his place under such discipline; but probably something still stuck by the fingers.

Fabricio, whom I saw occasionally, rather blamed my conduct than otherwise. Heaven grant, said he one day, that all this virtue may meet with its reward! But between ourselves, you might as well be a little more practicable with the clerk of the kitchen. What! answered I, shall this freebooter put a bold face upon the matter, and charge a fish at ten pistoles in his bill, which cost only four, and would you have me pass the article in my accounts? Why not? replied he coolly. He has only to let you

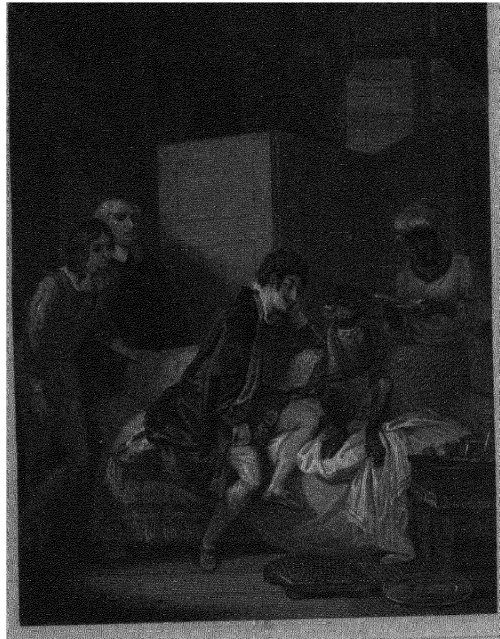
go snacks in the commission, and the books will be balanced in your favour by the customary rule of stewardship arithmetic. Upon my word, my friend, you are enough to overturn all regular systems of housekeeping; and you are likely to end your days in a livery, if you let the eel slip through your fingers without skinning it. You are to learn that fortune is a very woman; ready and eager to surrender, but expecting the formality of a summons.

I only laughed at this doctrine; and Nunez laughed at it too, when he found that bad advice was thrown away upon an incorrigibly honest subject. He then wished to make me believe it was all a mere joke. At all events, nothing could shake my resolution to act for my employer as for myself. Indeed my actions corresponded with my words on that subject; for I may venture to say that in four months my master saved at least three thousand ducats by my thrift.

CHAPTER XVI.

An accident happens to the count de Galiano's monkey; his lordship's affliction on that occasion. The illness of Gil Blas, and its consequences.

At the expiration of the before-mentioned time the repose of the family was marvellously troubled by an accident, which will appear but a trifle to the reader; and yet it was a very serious matter to the household, especially to me. Cupid, the monkey of whom I was speaking, that animal, so much the idol of our lord and master, attempting to leap from one window to another performed so ill as to fall into the court and put his leg out of joint. No sooner were the fatal tidings carried to the count, than he sung a dirge which pealed through all the neighbourhood. In the extremity of his sufferings, every inmate without exception was taken to task, and we were all within an inch of being packed off about our business. But the storm only rumbled without falling; he gave us and our negligence to the devil, without being by any means select in the terms of the bequest. The most notorious of the faculty in the line of fractures and dislocations were sent for. They examined the poor dear leg, set, and bound it up. But though they all gave it as their



Painted by R. Smirke R.A. Engraved by A.W. Warren.

GIL BLAS.

COUNT GALIANO AND THE SICK MONKEY.

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opinion, that there was no danger, my master could not be satisfied without retaining the most eminent about the person of the animal, till he could be pronounced to be in a state of convalescence.

It would be a manifest injustice to the family affections of his Sicilian lordship, not to commemorate all the agonizing sensations of his soul during this period of painful suspense. Would it be thought possible that this tender nurse did not stir from his darling Cupid's bedside all the livelong day? The bandages were never altered or adjusted but in his presence, and he got up two or three times in the night to enquire after his patient. The most provoking part of the business was, that all the servants, and myself in particular, were required to be eternally on the alert, to anticipate the slightest wishes of this ridiculous baboon. In short, there was no peace in the house, till the cursed beast, having recovered from the effects of its fall, got back again to his old tricks and whirligigs. After this shall we be mealy-mouthed about believing Suetonius, when he tells us that Caligula cared more for his horse than for all the world besides, that he gave him more than the establishment and attendance of a senator, and that he even wanted to make him consul? Our wise master stopped little short of the emperor in his partiality to the monkey; and had serious thoughts of purchasing for him the place of corregidor.

Mine was the worst luck of any in the family; for I had so topped my part above all the other servants, by way of paying my court to his lordship, and had nursed poor dear Cupid with such assiduity, as to throw myself into a fit of illness. A violent fever seized me, so that I was almost at death's door. They did what they pleased with me for a whole fortnight, without my consciousness; for the physicians and the fates were both conspiring against me. But my youth was more than a match for the fever and the prescriptions united. When I recovered my senses, the first use I made of them was to observe myself removed to another room. I wanted to know why; and asked an old woman who nursed me: but she told me that I must not talk, as the physician had expressly forbidden it. When we are well, we turn up our noses at the doctors; but when we are sick, we are as much like old women as themselves.

It seemed best therefore to keep silence, though with an inveterate longing to hold converse with my attendant. I was debating the point in my own mind, when there came in two foppish-looking fellows, dressed in the very extreme of fashion. Nothing less than velvet would serve their turn, with linen and lace to correspond. They looked like men of rank; and I could have sworn that they were some of my master's friends, come to see me out of regard for him. Under that impression I

attempted to sit up, and flung away my nightcap to look genteel; but the nurse forced me under the bedclothes again, and tucked me up, announcing these gentlemen at the same time as my physician and apothecary.

The doctor came up to my bedside, felt my pulse, looked in my face; and discovering undeniable symptoms of approaching convalescence, assumed an air of triumph, as if it was all his handiwork; and said there was nothing wanting but to keep the bowels open, and then he flattered himself he might boast of having performed an extraordinary cure. Speaking after this manner, he dictated a prescription to the apothecary, looking in the glass all the time, adjusting the dress of his hair, and twisting his visage into shapes which set me laughing in spite of my debility. At length he took his leave with a slight inclination of the head, and went his way more taken with the contemplation of his own pretty person, than anxious about the success of his remedies.

After his departure, the apothecary, not to have the trouble of a visit for nothing, made ready to proceed as it is prescribed in certain cases. Whether he was afraid that the old woman's skill was not equal to the exigency, or whether he meant to enhance his own services by assiduity, he chose to operate in person; but in spite of practice and experience, accidents will happen. Haste to return

benefits is among the most amiable propensities of our nature; and such was my eagerness not to be behindhand with my benefactor, that his velvet dress bore immediate testimony to the profuseness of my gratitude. This he considered merely as one of those little occurrences which chequer the fortunes of the pharmaceutical profession. A napkin is a resource for every thing in a sick room, and least said was soonest mended; so he wiped himself quietly, vowing indemnity and vengeance to himself for the necessity under which he unquestionably laboured of sending his clothes to the scowerer.

On the following morning he returned to the attack more modestly equipped, though there was then no risk of my springing a countermine, as he had only to administer the potion which the doctor had prescribed the evening before. Besides that I felt myself getting better every moment, I had taken such a dislike, since the day before, to the pill-dispensing tribe, as to curse the very universities where these graduated cut-throats kept their exercises in the faculty of slaying. In this temper of mind, I declared with a round oath, that I would not accept of health through such a medium, but would willingly make over Hippocrates and his myrmidons to the devil. The apothecary, who did not care a doit what became of his compound, if it was but paid for, left the phial on the table, and stalked away in Telamonian silence.

I immediately ordered that bitch of a medicine to be thrown out of window, having set myself so doggedly against it, that I would as soon have swallowed arsenic. Having once drawn the sword, I threw away the scabbard; and erecting my tongue into an independent potentate, told my nurse in a determined tone, that she must absolutely inform me what was become of my master. The old lady, fearing lest the developement of the mystery might completely overset me, or thinking possibly that her prey might escape out of her clutches for want of a little irritating contradiction, was most provokingly mute; but I was so pressing in my demand to be obeyed, that she at length gave me a decisive answer: Worthy sir, you have no longer any master but your own will. Count Galiano is gone back into Sicily.

I could not believe my ears; and yet it was fatally the fact. That nobleman on the second day of my indisposition, being afraid of harbouring death under the same roof with him, had the benevolence to send me packing with my little effects to a ready-furnished room, where providence was left to cure, or a nurse to kill me, as it happened. While the alternative was tottering on the balance, he was ordered back into Sicily, and in the headlong haste of his obedience, never thought about me; whether it was that he numbered me already among the dead, or that great lords, like great wits, have short memories.

My nurse gave me these particulars, and informed me that it was she who had called in a physician and an apothecary, that I might not die without professional honours. I fell into profound musing at this fine story. Farewell my brilliant establishment in Sicily! Farewell my budding hopes and blushing honours! When any great misfortune shall have befallen you, says a certain pope, look well to your own conduct, and you will find that there is always something wrong at the bottom of it. With all reverent submission to his holiness, I cannot help thinking myself in this instance an exception to the infallibility of his maxim. How the deuce was I to blame for being visited by a fever? There was more reason for remorse in the monkey or his master than in me.

When I beheld the flattering chimeras with which my head was filled, all vanishing into air, into thin air, the first thing that worried my poor brain was my portmanteau, which I ordered to be laid upon my bed to examine it. I groaned heavily on discovering that it had been opened. Alas! my dear portmanteau, exclaimed I, my only hope, consolation, and refuge! You have been, to all appearance, a prisoner in an enemy's country. No, no, signor Gil Blas, said the old woman, make yourself easy on that head; you have not fallen among thieves. Your baggage is as immaculate as my honour.

I found the dress I had on at my first entrance

into the count's service; but it was in vain to look for that which my friend from Messina had ordered for me as a member of the household. My master had not thought fit to leave me in possession of it, or else some one had made free with it. All my other little matters were safe, and even a large leather purse with my coin in it, which I counted over twice, not being able to believe at first that there could be only fifty pistoles remaining out of two hundred and sixty which was the balance of the account before my illness. What is the meaning of all this, my good lady? said I to the nurse. Here is a leak in the vessel. No living soul but myself has touched a farthing, answered the old woman, and I have been as good an economist for you as possible. But illness is very expensive; one must always have one's money in one's hand. Here! added this excellent economist, taking a bundle of papers out of her pocket, this is a statement of debtor and creditor, as exact as a banker's book, and you will see that I have not laid out the veriest trifle in need-nots.

I ran over the account with a hasty glance; for it extended to fifteen or twenty pages. Mercy on us! The poulterers' shops must have been exhausted, while I was in too weak a state to take sustenance! There must have been at least twelve pistoles stewed down into broths. Other articles were much to the same tune. It was incredible what a sum had been

lavished in firing, candles, water, brooms, and innumerable articles of housekeeping and house-cleaning. After all, extortionate as the bill was, the utmost ingenuity could not raise it above thirty pistoles, and consequently there was a deficiency of a hundred and eighty to make the account even. I just ventured to point that out; but the old woman, with a shew of simplicity and candour, put all the saints in the calendar into requisition to attest that there were no more than eighty pistoles in the purse when the count's steward gave her charge of the wallet. What say you, my good woman, interrupted I with precipitation: was it the steward who placed my effects in your hands? To be sure it was, answered she; the very man; and with this piece of advice: Here, good mother, when signor Gil Blas shall be numbered with the dead, do not fail to treat him with a handsome funeral; there is in this wallet wherewithal to defray the expenses.

Ah! most pestiferous Neapolitan! exclaimed I in the bitterness of my heart. I am no longer at a loss to conjecture what is become of the deficiency. You have swept it off as an indemnity for a part of the plunder which I have prevented you from making free with. After relieving my mind by exclamations, I returned thanks to heaven that the scoundrel had been so modest as not to take the whole. Yet whatever reason I had for believing the action to be perfectly in character for the person to whom it was

imputed, the nurse had not altogether cleared herself from my suspicions. They hovered sometimes over one and sometimes over the other; but let them light where they would, it was all the same to me. I said nothing about the matter to the old woman; not even so much as to haggle about the items of her fine bill. I should not have been an atom the richer for doing so; and we must all live by our trades. The utmost of my malice was to pay her and send her packing three days afterwards.

I am inclined to think that at her departure she gave the apothecary notice of her quitting the premises, and having left me sufficiently in possession of myself to take French leave without acknowledging my obligations to him; for she had not been gone many minutes before he came in puffing and blowing, with his bill in his hand. There under names which had escaped my conscription, though as arrant a physician as the worst of them, he had set down all the hypothetical remedies which he insisted that I had taken during the time when I could take nothing. This bill might truly be called the epitome of an apothecary's conscience. Such being the case, we had a bustle about the payment. I pleaded for an abatement of one half. He swore that he would not take a doit less than his just demand. He kept his oath and yet relaxed; for considering that he had to do with a young man

who might run away from Madrid within four-and-twenty hours, he preferred my offer of three hundred per cent. on the prime cost of his drugs, though a pitiful profit for an apothecary, to the risk of losing all. I counted out the money with an aching heart, and he withdrew, chuckling over his revenge for the scurvy trick I had played him on the day of evacuation.

The physician made his appearance next; for beasts of prey inhabit the same latitudes. I fee'd him for his visits, which had been quite as frequent as necessary, and his object was answered. But he would not leave me without proving how hardly he had earned his money, for that he had not only expelled the enemy from the interior, but had defended the frontiers from the attack of all the disorders on the army list of the *materia medica*. He talked very learnedly, with good emphasis and discretion; so much so, that I did not comprehend one word he said. When I had got rid of him, I flattered myself that the destinies had now done their worst. But I was mistaken; for there came a surgeon whose face I had never seen in the whole course of my life. He accosted me very politely, and congratulated me on the imminent danger I had escaped; attributing the happy issue of my complaints to those which he had himself cut, with the profuse application of bleeding, cupping, blistering, and all sorts of torments, consequent and

inconsequent. Another feather out of my poor wing! I was obliged to pay toll to the surgeon also. After so many purgatives, my purse was brought to such a state of debility, that it might be considered as dead and gone; a mere skeleton, drained of all its vital juices.

My spirits began to flag, on the contemplation of my wretched case. In the service of my two last masters I had wedded myself to the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; and could no longer, as heretofore, look poverty in the face with the sternness of a cynic. It must be owned, however, that I was in the wrong to give way to melancholy, after experiencing so often that fortune had never cast me down, but for the purpose of raising me up again; so that my pitiful plight at the present moment, if rightly considered, was only to be hailed as the harbinger of approaching prosperity.

BOOK THE EIGHTH.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

Gil Blas scrapes an acquaintance of some value, and finds wherewithal to make him amends for the count de Galiano's ingratitude. Don Valerio de Luna's story.

IT seemed so strange to have heard not a syllable from Nunez during this long interval, that I concluded he must be in the country. I went to look after him as soon as I could walk, and found the fact to be that he had gone into Andalusia three weeks ago with the duke of Medina Sidonia.

One morning when rubbing my eyes after a sound sleep, Melchior de la Ronda started into my recollection; and that bringing to mind my promise at Grenada, of going to see his nephew, if ever I should return to Madrid, it seemed advisable not to defer fulfilling my promise for a single day. I enquired where don Balthazar de Zuniga lived, and went thither straightway. On asking if signor Joseph Navarro was at home, he made his appearance immediately. We exchanged bows with a

well-bred coolness on his part, though I had taken care to announce my name audibly. There was no reconciling such a frosty reception with the glowing portrait ascribed to this paragon of the buttery. I was just going to withdraw in the full determination of not coming again, when assuming all at once an open and smiling aspect, he said with considerable earnestness: Ah! signor Gil Blas de Santillane, pray forgive the formality of your welcome. My memory ill seconded the warmth of my disposition towards you. Your name had escaped me, and was not at the moment identified with the gentleman, of whom mention was made in a letter from Grenada more than four months ago.

How happy I am to see you! added he, shaking hands with me most cordially. My uncle Melchior, whom I love and honour like my natural father, charges me, if by chance I should have the honour of seeing you, to entertain you as his own son, and in case of need, to stretch my own credit and that of my friends to the utmost in your behalf. He extols the qualities of your heart and mind in terms sufficient of themselves to engage me in your service, though his recommendation had not been added to the other motives. Consider me therefore, I entreat you, as participating in all my uncle's sentiments. You may depend on my friendship; let me hope for an equal share in yours.

I replied to Joseph's polite assurances in suitable

terms of acknowledgment; so that being both of us warm-hearted and sincere, a close intimacy sprung up without waiting for common forms. I felt no embarrassment about laying open the state of my affairs. This I had no sooner done, than he said: I take upon myself the care of finding you a situation; meanwhile, there is a knife and fork for you here every day. You will live rather better than at an ordinary. This offer was sure to be well relished by an invalid just recovering with a fastidious palate and an empty pocket. It could not but be accepted; and I picked up my crumbs so fast that at the end of a fortnight I began to look like a rosy-gilled son of the church. It struck me that Melchior's nephew larded his lean sides to some purpose. But how could it be otherwise? he had three strings to his bow, as holding the undermentioned pluralities: the butler's place, the clerkship of the kitchen, and the stewardship. Furthermore, without meaning to question my friend's honesty, they do say that the comptroller of the household and he looked over each other's hands.

My recovery was entirely confirmed, when my friend Joseph, on my coming in to dinner as usual one day, said with an air of congratulation: Signor Gil Blas, I have a very tolerable situation in view for you. You must know that the duke of Lerma, first minister of the crown in Spain, giving himself

up entirely to state affairs, throws the burden of his own on two confidential persons. Don Diego de Monteser takes the charge of collecting his rents, and don Rodrigo de Calderona superintends the finances of his household. These two officers are paramount in their departments, having nothing to do with one another. Don Diego has generally two deputies to transact the business; and finding just now that one of them had been discharged, I have been canvassing for you. Signor Monteser having the greatest possible regard for me granted my request at once, on the strength of my testimony to your morals and capacity. We will pay our respects to him after dinner.

We did not miss our appointment. I was received with every mark of favour, and promoted in the room of the dismissed deputy. My business consisted in visiting the farms, in giving orders for the necessary repairs, in dunning the farmers, and keeping them to time in their payments; in a word, the tenants were all under my thumb, and don Diego checked my accounts every month with a minuteness which few receivers could have borne. But this was exactly what I wanted. Though my uprightness had been so ill requited by my late master, it was my only inheritance, and I was determined not to sell the reversion.

One day news came that the castle of Lerma had taken fire, and was more than half burnt down.

I immediately went thither to estimate the loss. Informing myself to a nicety, and on the spot, respecting all the particulars of the unlucky accident, I drew up a detailed narrative which Monteser shewed to the duke of Lerma. That minister, though vexed at the circumstance, was struck with the memorial, and enquired who was the author. Don Diego thought it not enough to answer the question, but spoke of me in such high terms, that his excellency recollected it six months afterwards, on occasion of an incident I shall now relate, had it not been for which I might never, perhaps, have been employed at court. It was as follows:—

There lived at that time in Princes Street an elderly lady, by name Inesilla de Cantarilla. Her birth was a matter of mystery. Some said she was the daughter of a musical instrument-maker, and others gave her a high military extraction. However that might be, she was a very extraordinary personage. Nature had gifted her with the singular talent of winning men's hearts in defiance of time, and in contradiction to her own laws; for she was now entering upon the fourth quarter of her century. She had been the reigning toast of the old court, and levied tribute on the passions of the new. Age, though at daggers drawn with beauty, was completely foiled in its assault upon her charms; they might be somewhat faded, but the touch of sympathy they excited in their decline was more

pleasing than the vivid glow of their meridian lustre. An air of dignity, a transporting wit and humour, an unborrowed grace in her deportment perpetuated the reign of passion, and silenced the suggestions of reason.

Don Valerio de Luna, one of the duke of Lerma's secretaries, a young fellow of five-and-twenty, meeting with Inesilla, fell violently in love with her. He made his sentiments known, enacted all the mummery of despair, and followed up the usual catastrophe of every amorous drama so much according to the unities and rules, that it was difficult in the very torrent and whirlwind of his passion, to beget a temperance that might give it smoothness. The lady, who had her reason for not choosing to fall in with his humour, was at a loss how to get out of the difficulty. One day, she was in hopes to have found the means, by calling the young man into her closet, and there pointing to a clock upon the table. Mark the precise hour, said she; just seventy-five years ago was I brought upon the stage of this fantastical world. In good earnest, would it sit well upon my time of life to be engaged in affairs of gallantry? Betake yourself to reflection, my good child; stifle sentiments so unsuitable to your own circumstances and mine. Sensible as this language was, the spark, no longer bowing to the authority of reason, answered the lady with all the impetuosity of a man racked by the most excruci-

ating torments: Cruel Inesilla, why have you recourse to such frivolous remonstrances? Do you think they can change your charms or my desires? Delude not yourself with so false a hope. As long as your loveliness or my delusion lasts, I shall never cease to adore you. Well then, rejoined she, since you are obstinate enough to persist in the resolution of wearying me with your importunities, my doors shall henceforth be shut against you. You are banished, and I must beg to be no longer troubled with your company.

It may be supposed, perhaps, that after this don Valerio, baffled, made good his retreat like a prudent general. Quite the reverse! He became more troublesome than ever. Love is to lovers, just what wine is to drunkards. The swain intreated, sighed, looked, and sighed again; when all at once, changing his note from childish treble to the big manly voice of bluster and ravishment, he swore that he would have by foul means what he could not obtain by fair. But the lady, repulsing him courageously, said with a piercing look of strong resentment, Hold, imprudent wretch! I shall put a curb on your mad career. Learn that you are my own son.

Don Valerio was thunderstruck at these words; the tempest of his rage subsided. But, conjecturing that Inesilla had only started this device to rid herself of his solicitations, he answered: That is a mere romance of the moment to steal away from my ar-

dent desires No, no, said she, interrupting him, I disclose a mystery which should have been for ever buried, had you not reduced me to so painful a necessity. It is six-and-twenty years since I was in love with your father, don Pedro de Luna, then governor of Segovia; you were the fruit of our mutual passion: he owned you, brought you up with care and tenderness, and having no children born in wedlock, he had nothing to hinder him from distinguishing your good qualities by the gifts of fortune. On my part, I have not forsaken you; as soon as you were of an age to be introduced into the world, I drew you into the circle of my acquaintance, to form your manners to that polish of good company, so necessary for a gentleman, which is only to be gained in female society. I have done more: I have employed all my credit to introduce you to the prime minister. In short, I have interested myself for you as I should have done for my own son. After this confession, take your measures accordingly. If you can purge your affections from their dross, and look on me as a mother, you are not banished from my presence, and I shall treat you with my accustomed tenderness. But if you are not equal to an effort, which nature and reason demand from you, fly instantly, and release me from the horror of beholding you.

Inesilla spoke to this effect. Meanwhile, don Valerio preserved a sullen silence: it might have

been interpreted into a virtuous struggle, a conquest over the weakness of his heart. But his purposes were far different; he had another scene to act before his mother. Unable to withstand the total overthrow of all his wild projects, he basely yielded to despair. Drawing his sword, he plunged it in his own bosom. His fate resembled that of Œdipus, with this distinction; that the Theban put out his own eyes, from remorse for the crime he had perpetrated, while the Castilian, on the contrary, committed suicide, from disappointment at the frustration of his purposes.

The unhappy don Valerio was not released from his sufferings immediately. He had leisure left for recollection, and for making his peace with heaven, before he rushed into the presence of his maker. As his death vacated one of the secretaryships on the duke of Lerma's establishment, that minister, not having forgotten my memoir on the subject of the fire, nor the high character he had heard of me, nominated me to succeed to the post in question.

CHAPTER II.

Gil Blas is introduced to the duke of Lerma, who admits him among the number of his secretaries, and requires a specimen of his talents, with which he is well satisfied.

MONTESER was the person to inform me of this agreeable circumstance, which he did in the following terms: My friend Gil Blas, though I do not lose you without regret, I am too much your well-wisher not to be delighted at your promotion in the room of don Valerio. You cannot fail to make a princely fortune, provided you act upon two hints which I have to give you: the first, to affect so total a devotion to his excellency's good pleasure, as to leave no room to conceive it possible that you have any other object or interest in life: the second, to pay your court assiduously to signor don Rodrigo de Calderona; for that personage models and remodels, fashions and touches upon the mind of his master, just as if it was clay under the hands of the designer. If you are fortunate enough to chime in with that favourite secretary, you will travel post to wealth and honour, and find relays upon the road.

Sir, said I to don Diego, returning him thanks at the same time for his good advice, be pleased to give

some little opening to don Rodrigo's character. I have heard a few anecdotes of him. One would suppose him, from some accounts, not to be the best creature in the world; but the people at large are inveterate caricaturists when they draw courtiers at full length; though after all, the likeness will strike, in spite of the aggravation. Tell me therefore, I beseech you, what is your own sincere opinion of signor Calderona. That is rather an awkward question, answered my principal with an ironical smile. I should tell any one but yourself, without flinching, that he was a gentleman of the strictest honour, upon whose fair fame the breath of calumny had never dared to blow; but I really cannot put off such a copy of my countenance upon you. Relying as I do on your discretion, it becomes a duty to deal candidly in the delineation of don Rodrigo; for without that, it would be playing fast and loose with you to recommend the cultivation of his good-will.

You are to know then, that when his excellency was no more than plain don Francisco de Sandoval, this man had the humility to serve him as his lackey; since which time he has risen by degrees to the post of principal secretary. A prouder excrescence of the dunghill never sprung into vegetation on a summer's day. He considers himself as the duke of Lerma's colleague; and in point of fact, he may truly be said to parcel out the loaves and fishes of administration, since he gives away offices and govern-

ments at the suggestions of his own caprice. The public grumbles and growls upon occasion; but who cares for the grumbling and growling of the public? Let him steal a pair of gloves from the prostitution of political honour, and the bronze upon his forehead will be proof against the peltings of scandal. What I have said will decide your dealings towards so supercilious a compound of dust and ashes. Yes, to be sure, said I; leave me alone for that. It will be strange indeed if I cannot wriggle myself into his good graces. If one can but get on the blind side of a man who is to be made a property, it must be want of skill in the player if the game is lost. Exactly so, replied Monteser; and now I will introduce you to the duke of Lerma.

We went at once to the minister, whom we found in his audience-chamber. His levee was more crowded than the king's. There were commanders and knights of St. James and of Calatrava, making interest for governments and viceroyalties; bishops, who labouring under oppression of the breath and tightness of the chest in their own dioceses, had been recommended the air of an archbishopric by their physicians; while the sounder lungs of lower dignitaries were strong enough to inhale the Theban atmosphere of a suffragan see. I observed besides some reduced officers dancing attendance to captain Chinchilla's tune, and catching cold in fishing for a pension, which was never likely to pay the doctor for

their cure. If the duke did not satisfy their wants, he put a pleasant face upon their importunities; and it struck me that he returned a civil answer to all applicants.

We waited patiently till the routine of ceremony was dispatched. Then said don Diego: My lord, this is Gil Blas de Santillane, the young man appointed by your excellency to succeed don Valerio. The duke now took more particular notice of me, saying obligingly, that I had already earned my promotion by my services. He then took me to a private conference in his closet, or rather to an examination. My birth, parentage, and course of life were the objects of his enquiry; nor would he be satisfied without the particulars, and those in the spirit of sincerity. What a career to run over before a patron! Yet it was impossible to lie, in the presence of a prime minister. On the other hand, my vanity was concerned in suppressing so many circumstances, that there was no venturing on an unqualified confession. What cunning scene had Roscius then to act? A little painting and tattooing might decently be employed, to disguise the nakedness of truth, and spare her unsophisticated blushes. But he had studied her complexion, as well as the beauties of her natural form. Monsieur de Santillane, said he with a smile on the close of my narrative, I perceive that hitherto you have had your principles to choose. My lord, answered I, colouring

up to the eyes, your excellency enjoined me to deal sincerely; and I have complied with your orders. I take your doing so in good part, replied he. It is all very well, my good fellow: you have escaped from the snares of this wicked world more by luck than management: it is wonderful that bad example should not have corrupted you irreparably. There are many men of strict virtue and exemplary piety, who would have turned out the greatest rogues in existence, if their destinies had exposed them to but half your trials.

Friend Santillane, continued the minister, ponder no longer on the past; consider yourself as to the very bone and marrow the king's; live henceforth but for his service. Come this way; I will instruct you in the nature of your business. He carried me into a little closet adjoining his own, which contained a score of thick folio registers. This is your workshop, said he. All these registers compose an alphabetical peerage, giving the heraldry and history of all the nobility and gentry in the several kingdoms and principalities of the Spanish monarchy. In these volumes are recorded the services rendered to the state by the present possessors and their ancestors, descending even to the personal animosities and rencounters of the individuals and their houses. Their fortunes, their manners, in a word, all the pros and cons of their character, are set down according to the letter of ministerial scrutiny: so that they no

sooner enter on the list of court candidates, than my eye catches up the very chapter and verse of their pretensions. To furnish this necessary information, I have pensioned scouts every where on the look out, who send me private notices of their discoveries: but, as these documents are for the most part drawn up in a gossiping and provincial style, they require to be translated into gentlemanly language, or the king would not be able to support the perusal of the registers. This task demands the pen of a polite and perspicuous writer; I doubt not but you will justify your claim to the appointment.

After this introduction, he put a memorial into my hand, taken from a large portfolio full of papers; and then withdrew from my closet, that my first specimen might be manufactured in all the freedom of solitude. I read the memorial, which was not only stuffed with a most uncouth jargon, but breathed a brimstone spirit of rancour and personal revenge. This was most foul, strange, and unnatural! for the homily was written by a monk. He hacked and hewed a Catalan family of some note most unmercifully; with what reason or truth, it must be reserved for a more penetrating enquirer to decide. It read for all the world like an infamous libel, and I had some scruples about becoming the publisher of the calumny: nevertheless, young as I was at court, I plunged head foremost, at the risk of sinking and destroying his reverence's soul. The wickedness,

if there was any, would be put down to his running account with the recording angel; I therefore had nothing to do, but to vilify in the purest Spanish phraseology, some two or three generations of honest men and loyal subjects.

I had already blackened four or five pages, when the duke, impatient to know how I got on, came back and said: Santillane, shew me what you have done; I am curious to see it. At the same time, casting his eye over the transcript, he read the beginning with much attention. It seemed to please him; strange that he could be so pleased! Prepossessed as I have been in your favour, observed he, I must own that you have surpassed my expectations. It is not merely the elegance and distinctness of the handwriting! There is something animated and glowing in the composition. You will do ample credit to my choice, and fully make up for the loss of your predecessor. He would not have cut my panegyric so short, if his nephew the count de Lemos had not interrupted him in the middle of it. By the warmth and frequency of his excellency's welcome, it was evident that they were the best friends in the world. They were immediately closeted together on some family business, of which I shall speak in the sequel. The king's affairs at this time were obliged to play second to those of the minister.

While they were caballing it struck twelve. As

I knew that the secretaries and their clerks quitted office at that hour, to go and dine wherever their business and desire should point them, I left my prize performance behind me, and went to the gayest tavern at the court end of the town; for I had nothing further to do with Monteser, who had paid my salary, and taken his leave of me. But a common eating-house would have been a very improper place for me to be seen in. "Consider yourself as to the very bone and marrow the king's." This metaphorical expression of the duke had given birth to a real and tangible ambition in my soul, which put forth shoots like a plantation in a fat and unvexed soil.

CHAPTER III.

All is not gold that glitters. Some uneasiness resulting from the discovery of that principle in philosophy, and its practical application to existing circumstances.

I TOOK especial care, on my first entrance, to instil into the tavern-keeper's conception that I was secretary to the prime minister; nor was it easy, in that view of my rank and consequence, to order any

thing sufficiently sumptuous for dinner. To have selected from the bill of fare, might have looked as if I descended to the meanness of calculation; I therefore told him to send up the best the house afforded. My orders were punctually obeyed; and the anxious assiduity of the attendance pampered my fancy as much as the dishes did my palate. As to the bill, I had nothing to do with it but to pay it. Down went a pistole upon the table, and the waiters pocketed the difference, which was somewhat more than a quarter. After this display of grandeur, I strutted out, practising those obstreperous clearings of the throat, which announce, by empty sound, the approach of a substantial coxcomb.

There was at the distance of twenty yards a large house with lodgings to let, principally frequented by foreign nobility. I rented at once a suite of apartments, consisting of five or six rooms elegantly furnished. From my style of living, any one would have thought I had two or three thousand ducats of yearly income. The first month was paid in advance. Afterwards I returned to business, and employed the whole afternoon in going on with what I had begun in the morning. In a closet adjoining mine there were two other secretaries; but their office was only to copy out fair. I got acquainted with them as we were shutting up for the evening; and, by way of smoothing the first overtures towards friendship, invited them home with me to my tavern, where I or-

dered the choicest delicacies of the season, with a profusion of the most exquisite wines.

We sat down to table, and began bandying about more merriment than wit: for with all due deference to my guests, it was but too visible that they owed their official situations to any circumstance rather than to their abilities. They were adepts, it must be confessed, in all the history and mystery of scrivening and clerkship; but as for polite literature and university education, there was not even a suspicion of it in all their talk.

To make amends for that defect, they had a keen eye to the main chance; and though sensible how high an honour it was to be on the prime minister's establishment, there were some dashes of acid in the cup of good fortune. It is now full five months, said one of them, that we have been serving at our own cost. We do not touch one farthing of salary; and, what is worst of all, our very board wages are shamefully in arrear. There is no knowing what footing we are upon. As for me, said the other, I would willingly be tied up to the halbert, and receive a per centage in lashes, for the liberty of changing my birth; but I dare not either take myself off or petition for my discharge, after having transcribed such state secrets as have passed under my inspection. I might chance to become too well acquainted with the tower of Segovia or the castle of Alicant.

How do you manage for a subsistence then? said

I. You must of course have means of your own. These they represented as very slender; but that, fortunately for them, they lodged with a kind-hearted widow, who boarded them on tick, at the rate of a hundred pistoles a year for each. These anecdotes of a court life, not one of which escaped me, completely ventilated all the rising fumes of pride. It could not be supposed that more consideration would be shewn to me than to others, and consequently there was nothing to be so puffed up with in my post; there seemed to be much cry and little wool; a discovery which rendered it expedient to husband my finances with a narrower economy. A picture like this was enough to cure my taste for treating. I repented not having left these secretaries to find their own supper; for they played a most cruel knife and fork at mine! and, when the bill was brought, I squabbled with the landlord about the charges.

We parted at midnight; and the early breaking up was to be laid at my door; for I did not propose another bottle. They went home to their widow, and I withdrew to my magnificent lodgings, which I was now mad with myself for having taken, and was fully determined to give up at the month's end. My bed of down was now converted into a couch of thorns; sleep had abandoned his narcotic tenement, and sold the fee-simple of my repose to the demon of eternal wakefulness. The remainder of the night was passed in contriving not to serve the state too

patriotically. For that purpose I bethought me of Monteser's good counsel. I got up with the intention of making my bow to don Rodrigo de Calderona. My present temper was just pat to the purpose of ingratiating myself with so high and mighty a gentleman; whose patronage was indispensable to my existence. I therefore presented my person in that secretary's antichamber.

His apartments communicated with the duke's, and rivalled them in the lustre of their decorations. The field officer could scarcely be distinguished from the subaltern by any outward distinction in his paraphernalia. I sent in my name as don Valerio's successor; but that did not hinder me from being kept kicking my heels for a good hour. Trusty, but novice officer of the king, said I, while ruminating on court manners, learn a lesson of patience, if so please you. You must begin with shewing paces yourself, and afterwards make others bite the bridle.

At length the door of the inner room opened. I went in, and advanced towards don Rodrigo, who had just been writing an amorous epistle to his charming Siren, and was giving it to Pedrillo at that very moment. I had never manufactured my face and air into such a counterfeit of reverence before the archbishop of Grenada, nor on my introduction to the count de Galiano, nor even in presence of the prime minister himself: the crisis of my fawning was reserved for signor de Calderona. I paid my res-

pects to him with my body bent down to the very ground, as if crouching under the ken of a superior intelligence; and solicited his protection in strains of humble hypocrisy, at which my cheek now burns with shame, to think that man can so debase himself before his fellow man. My servility would have recoiled to my own undoing, had it been practised towards a compound of any manly and independent ingredients. As for this fellow, he swallowed flattery by the lump without mastication; and assured me just as if he meant what he said, that he would leave no stone unturned to do me service.

Hereupon, thanking him with unlimited expressions of attachment for his kind and generous sentiments, I sold my very soul, and all my little stock of conscience to his free disposal. But as this farce might be tiresome if prolonged, I took my leave, apologizing for having broken in upon his more serious avocations. As soon as I had finished this abominable scene, I slunk back to my desk, where I finished my prescribed task. The duke was at my elbow the next morning. The end of my performance was not less to his mind than the beginning; and he praised it accordingly: This is extremely well indeed! Copy this abridgment in your best hand into the register of Catalonia. You shall not want employment of this kind. I had a very long conversation with his excellency, and was delighted at his mild and familiar deportment. What a con-

trast to Calderona! They might have sat to a painter for Pan and Apollo.

To-day I dined at a cheap ordinary, and sunk the secretary upon my messmates, till I should ascertain what solid profit might accrue from all my bows and scrapes. I had funds for three months, or thereabouts. That interval I allowed myself for casting my bread upon the waters. But as the shortest speculations are the safest, if my salary was not paid by that time, a long farewell to the court, its frippery and its falsehood! Thus were my plans arranged. For two months I laboured hard and fast to stand well with Calderona: but his senses were so callous to all my assiduity, that it seemed labour in vain to build on so hopeless a foundation. This idea produced a change in my conduct. I left some greener fool to fumigate the nostrils of this idol; and placed all my own dependence on making my ground sure with the duke, by the benefit of our frequent conferences.

CHAPTER IV.

Gil Blas becomes a favourite with the duke of Lerma, and the confident of an important secret.

THOUGH his grace's interviews with me were short as the fleeting visions of supernatural communication, my turn and character won its way gradually into his excellency's good-liking. One day after dinner he said: Attend to me, Gil Blas. I really like you very much. You are a zealous, confidential lad, full of understanding and discretion. My trust cannot be misplaced in such hands. I threw myself at his feet, at the music of these words; and kissing his outstretched hand, answered thus: Is it possible that your excellency can think so favourably of your servant? What a host of enemies will such a preference conjure up against me! But don Rodrigo is the only man whose privy grudge is formidable enough to alarm me.

You have nothing to fear from that quarter, replied the duke. I know Calderona. He has loved me from his cradle. Every movement of his heart is in unison with mine. He cherishes whatever I love, and hates in exact proportion to my dislike. So far from being alarmed at his ill-will, you ought, on the

contrary, to hug yourself on his peculiar partiality. This let me at once into the abysses of don Rodrigo's character. He shuffled and cut the cards to his own deal, and paid his debts of honour out of his excellency's pool. One could not be too wary with this gentleman.

To begin, pursued the duke, with a proof of my thorough reliance on your faith, I will open to you a long projected design. It is necessary for you to be informed of it, to qualify you for the commissions with which I shall hereafter have occasion to entrust you. For a great length of time have I beheld my authority universally respected, my decisions implicitly adopted, places, pensions, governments, viceroyalties, and church preferments all awaiting my disposal. Without umbrage to my royal master, I may be said to be absolute in Spain. My individual fortunes can be pushed no higher. But I would willingly fix firm the structure I have raised; for the storms are already beginning to beat about the citadel of my peace. My only safety must consist in nominating my nephew, the count de Lemos, as my successor in the ministry.

This profound courtier, observing my astonishment, went on thus. I see plainly, Santillane, I see plainly what surprises you. It seems strange and unaccountable that I should prefer my nephew to my own son, the duke d'Uzeda. But you are to learn that this last has too narrow a genius to fill up my

space in politics; and there are other reasons why I set my face against him. He has found out the secret of making himself agreeable to the king, who wants him for his interior cabinet; and back stairs influence is what I cannot bear. Royal favour is a sort of political mistress; exclusive possession is its only charm. The very existence of the passion is identified with inextinguishable jealousy; nor can we the better endure to share the bliss, because our rival has been nursed in our own bosom.

Thus do I lay bare the very recesses of my soul. I have already tried to ruin the duke d'Uzeda with the king; but having failed, am pointing my artillery towards another object. I am determined that the count de Lemos shall stand first with the prince of Spain. Being gentleman of his bedchamber, he has opportunities of talking with him continually; and, besides that he has a winning manner with him, I know a sure method of enabling him to succeed in his enterprise. By this device, my nephew will be pitted against my son. The cousins harbouring unfavourable suspicions of each other, will both be forced to place themselves under my protection; and the necessity of the case will render them submissive to my will. This is my project; nor will your assistance be of slender avail to its success. It is you whom I shall make the private channel of communication between the count de Lemos and myself.

After this confidence, which sounded for all the world like the clink of current coin, my mind was easy about the future. At length, said I, behold me taking shelter under Plutus's gutter; the golden shower may drench me to the skin, before I shall cry hold, enough! It is impossible that the bosom friend of a man, by whom the whole music of the political machine is tempered, should be left to thrum upon the discord of poverty. Full of these harmonious visions, my fifths and octaves were but little untuned by the sensible declension of my purse.

CHAPTER V.

The joys, the honours, and the miseries of a court life, in the person of Gil Blas.

THE minister's growing partiality towards me was soon noticed. He displayed it ostentatiously, by committing his port-folio to my custody, which it was his habit to carry in his own hand when he went to council. This novelty causing me to be looked upon as a rising favourite, excited the envy of certain persons, so that I was preciously sprinkled with the hellish dew of court malevolence. My two neigh-

bours the secretaries were not the last to compliment me on my budding honours, and invited me to supper at the widow's, not so much by way of returning my hospitality, as with an eye to business in the cultivation of my acquaintance. Parties were made for me every where. Even the haughty don Rodrigo was cap-in-hand to me. He now called me nothing less than signor de Santillane, though the moon had scarcely changed her face since he *thee'd* and *thou'd* me, without ever bethinking him that he was talking to something above a pauper. He heaped me up and pressed me down with civilities, especially within eyeshot of our common patron. But the fool was wiser than to be caught with chaff. The good breeding of my returns was nicely proportioned to my thorough detestation of my humble servant: a rascal who had lived in court all his life could not have played the rascal better than I did.

I likewise accompanied my lord duke when he had an audience of the king, which was usually three times a day. In the morning he went into his majesty's chamber as soon as he was awake. There he dropped down on his marrow-bones by the bedside, talked over what was to be done in the course of the day, and put into the royal mouth the speeches the royal tongue was to make. He then withdrew. After dinner he came back again; not for state affairs, but for *what, what?* and a little gossip. He was well instructed in all the tittle-tattle of Madrid,

which was sold to him at the earliest of the season. Lastly, in the evening he saw the king again for the third time, put whatever colour he pleased on the transactions of the day, and, as a matter of course, requested his instructions for the morrow. While he was with the king, I kept in the antichamber, where people of the first quality, sinking that they might rise, threw themselves in the way of my observation, and thought the day not lost if I had deigned to exchange a few words of common civility with them. Was it to be wondered at, if my self-importance fattened upon such food? There are many folks at court, who stalk about on stilts of much frailer materials.

One day my vanity was still more highly pampered. The king, to whom the duke had puffed off my style, was curious to see a sample of it. His excellency made me bring the register of Catalonia, and myself into the royal presence; telling me to read the first memorial I had digested. If so catholic a critic overpowered my modesty at first, the minister's encouragement recalled my scattered spirits, and I read with good tone and emphasis what his majesty deigned to hear with some symptoms of approbation. He spoke handsomely of my performance, and recommended my fortunes to the especial care of his minister. My humility was not the greater for the augmentation of my consequence; and a particular conversation some days afterwards

with the count de Lemos swelled high the spring tide of all my ambitious anticipations.

I waited on that nobleman from his uncle at the prince of Spain's court; and presented credentials from the duke, directing him to deal unreservedly with me, as with a man who was embarked in their design and selected by himself exclusively as their go-between. The count then took me to a room, where he locked the door, and then spoke as follows: Since you are confidential with the duke of Lerma, I doubt not you deserve to be so, and shall unbosom myself to you without hesitation. You are to know that matters go on just as we could wish. The prince of Spain distinguishes me above the most assiduous of his courtiers. I had a private conversation with him this morning, wherein he expressed some disgust at being restrained by the king's avarice from following the inclinations of his liberal heart, and living on a scale befitting his august rank. On this head I chimed in with his regrets; and taking advantage of the opportunity, promised to carry him a thousand pistoles early to-morrow morning, as an earnest of larger sums with which I have engaged to feed his necessities forthwith. He was in ectasy at my promises; and I am certain of securing his grace and favour in tail, if I can but fulfil my engagement. Acquaint my uncle with these particulars, and come back in the evening with his sentiments on the subject.

I left the count de Lemos with the last words still quivering on his lips, and went back to the duke of Lerma, who, on my report, sent to ask Calderona for a thousand pistoles which he charged me to carry to the count in the evening. Away went I on my errand, muttering to myself: So, so! now I have discovered the minister's infallible receipt for the cure of all evils. Faith and troth, he is in the right; and to all appearance, he may draw as copiously as he pleases from the spring, without exhausting the source. I can easily guess what bag these pistoles come from; but after all, is it not the order of nature that the parent should nurture and maintain the child? The count de Lemos, at our parting, said to me in a low voice; Farewell, my good and worthy friend. The prince of Spain has a little hankering after the women; we must have a little conversation on that subject one of these days; I foresee that your agency will be very applicable on that head. I returned with my head full of this last hint, which it was impossible to misinterpret. Neither did I wish to do so; for it suited my talents to a nicety. What the devil is to happen next? said I. Behold me on the point of becoming pimp to the heir of the monarchy. Whether pimping was a virtue or a vice, I did not stop to enquire: the coarse surtout of morality would have worn but shabbily, while the passions of so exalted a gallant were in the glare and glow of all their newest gloss. What a promo-

tion, for me to be the provider of pleasure to a great prince! Fair and softly, master Gil Blas, some one may say: after all you will be but second minister. May be so; but at bottom the honour of both these posts is equal; the difference lies in the profit only.

While executing these honourable commissions, and getting forward daily in the good graces of the prime minister, what a happy being should I have been, if statesmen were born with a set of intestines to turn the cameleon's diet into chyle! It was more than two months since I had got rid of my grand lodging, and had taken up my quarters in a little room scarcely good enough for a banker's clerk. Though this was not quite as it should be, yet since I went out betimes in the morning, and never returned at night before bed-time, there was not much to quarrel about on that score. All day I was the hero of my own stage, or rather of the duke's. It was a principal part that I was playing. But when I retired from this brilliant theatre to my own cockloft, the great lord vanished, and poor Gil Blas was left behind, without a royal image in his pocket, and what was worse, without the means of conjuring up his glorious resemblance. Besides that it would have wounded my pride to have divulged my necessities, there was not a creature of my acquaintance who could have assisted me but Navarro, and him I had too palpably neglected since my introduction at court, to venture on soliciting his benevolence.

I had been obliged to sell my wardrobe article by article. There was nothing more left than was absolutely necessary to make a decent appearance. I no longer went to the ordinary, because I had no longer wherewithal to pay my score. How then did I make shift to keep body and soul together? There was every morning, in our offices, a scanty breakfast set out, consisting of a little bread and wine; this was the whole of our commons on the minister's establishment. I never knew what it was to exceed this stint during the day, and at night I most frequently went supperless to bed.

Such was the fare of a man who made a splendid figure at court; but his illustrious fortunes, like those of other courtiers, were more a subject of pity than of grudge. I could no longer resist the pressure of my circumstances, and ultimately resolved on their disclosure at a seasonable opportunity. By good luck such an occasion offered at the Escurial, whither the king and the prince of Spain removed some days afterwards.

CHAPTER VI.

Gil Blas gives the duke of Lerma a hint of his wretched condition. That minister deals with him accordingly.

When the king kept his court at the Escurial, all the world was at free quarters: under such easy circumstances I did not feel where the saddle galled. My bed was in a wardrobe near the duke's chamber. One morning that minister, having got up according to his cursed custom at daybreak, made me take my writing apparatus, and follow him into the palace gardens. We went and sat down under an avenue of trees; myself, as he would have it, in the posture of a man writing on the crown of his hat: his attitude was with a paper in his hand; and any one would have supposed he had been reading. At some distance, we must have looked as if the scale of Europe was to turn upon our decision; but between ourselves, who partook of it, the talk was miserably trifling.

For more than an hour had I been tickling his excellency's fancy with all the conceits, engendered by a merry nature and an eccentric course of life, when two magpies perched on the trees above us. Their clack and clatter was so obstreperous, as to

force our attention whether we would or no. These birds, said the duke, seem to be in dudgeon with one another. I should like to learn the cause of their quarrel. My lord, said I, your curiosity reminds me of an Indian story in Pilpay or some other fabulist. The minister insisted on the particulars, and I related them in the following terms:

There reigned in Persia a good monarch, who not being blessed with capacities of sufficient compass to govern his dominions in his own person, left the care of them to his grand vizier. That minister, whose name was Atalmuc, was possessed of first-rate talents. He supported the weight of that unwieldy monarchy, without sinking under the burden. He preserved it in profound peace. His art consisted in uniting the love of the royal authority with the reverence of it; while the people at large looked up to the vizier as to an affectionate father, though a devoted servant of his prince. Atalmuc had a young Cachemirian among his secretaries, by name Zeangir, to whom he was particularly attached. He took pleasure in his conversation, invited him frequently to the chace, and opened to him his most secret thoughts. One day as they were hunting together in a wood, the vizier, at the croaking of two ravens on a tree, said to his secretary: I should like to know what those birds are talking about in their jargon. My lord, answered the Cachemirian, your wishes may be fulfilled. Indeed! How so?

replied Atalmuc. Because, rejoined Zeangir, a dervise read in many mysteries has taught me the language of birds. If you wish it, I will lay my ear close to these, and will repeat to you word for word whatever they may happen to say.

The vizier agreed to the proposal. The Cachemirian got near the ravens, and affected to suck in their discourse. Then, returning to his master, My lord, said he, would you believe it? We are ourselves the topic of their talk. Impossible! exclaimed the Persian minister. Prithee now, what do they say of us? One of the two, replied the secretary, spoke thus: Here he is, the very man; the grand vizier Atalmuc, the guardian eagle of Persia, hovering over her like the parent bird over its nest, watching without intermission for the safety of its brood. For the purpose of unbending from his wearisome toils, he is hunting in this wood with his faithful Zeangir. How happy must that secretary be, to serve so partial and indulgent a master! Fair and softly observed the other raven shrewdly, fair and softly! Make not too much parade about that Cachemirian's happiness. Atalmuc, it is true, talks and jokes familiarly with him, honours him with his confidence, and may very possibly intend to signalize his friendship by a lucrative post; but between the cup and the lip Zeangir may perish with thirst. The poor devil lodges in a ready-furnished apartment, where there is not an article of furniture for

his use. In a word, he leads a starving life, with all the paraphernalia of a plump-fed courtier. The grand vizier never troubles his head about enquiring into the right or wrong of his affairs; but satisfied with empty good wishes towards him, leaves his favourite within the ruthless gripe of poverty.

I stopped here, to see how the duke of Lerma would take it; and he asked me with a smile what effect the fable had produced on the mind of Atalmuc; and whether the grand vizier had not felt a little offended at this secretary's presumption. No, my noble lord, answered I, with some little embarrassment at the question; historians say that his ingenuity was amply rewarded. He was more lucky than discreet, replied the duke with a serious air; there are some ministers who would esteem it no joke to be lectured at that rate. But the king will not be long before he is getting up; my duty demands my attendance. After this hint he walked off with hasty strides towards the palace without throwing away a word more upon me, and to all appearance in high dudgeon at my Indian parable.

I followed him up to the very door of his majesty's chamber, and went thence to arrange my papers in the places whence they had been taken. Then I entered a closet where our two copying secretaries were at work; for they also were of the migratory party. What is the matter with you, signor de Santillane? said they at the sight of me. You are

quite down in the mouth! Has any thing untoward happened?

I was too much mortified at the ill success of my narrative, to be cautious in the expression of my grief. On the recital of what had passed with the duke, they sympathised in my disappointment. You have some reason to fret, said one of them. Heaven grant you may be better treated than a secretary of cardinal Spinosa. This unlucky secretary, tired of working for fifteen months without pay, took the liberty of representing his necessities to his eminence one afternoon, and of asking for a little money towards his subsistence. It is very proper, said the minister, that you should be paid. Here, pursued he, putting into his hands an order on the royal treasury for a thousand ducats; go and receive that sum; but take notice at the same time that it balances accounts between us. The secretary would have pocketed his thousand ducats without remorse, had the thousand ducats been tangible, and the liberty of changing services secure; but just as he stepped down from the cardinal's threshold, he was tapped on the shoulder by an alguazil, and carried away to the tower of Segovia, where he has been a prisoner for a length of time.

This little historical anecdote set my teeth chattering. All was lost and gone! There was no comfort from within nor from without! My own impatience had been my ruin! just as if I had not

borne starving, till patience could avail no longer. Alas! said I, wherefore must I have blurted out that ill-starred fable, which went so much against the grain of the minister? He might have been just on the point of extricating me from all my miseries; it might have been the moment of that tide in the affairs of men, which sets in for sudden and enormous elevation. What wealth, what honours have slipped through the fingers by my blunder! I ought to have been aware that great folks do not love to be forestalled, but require the common privileges of elementary subsistence to be received as favours at their hands. It would have been more prudent to have kept my lenten entertainment longer without bothering the duke about it, and even to have died with hunger, that he might be blamed for letting me.

Supposing any hope to have remained, my master, when I saw him after dinner, put an extinguisher over it at once. He was very serious with me, contrary to his usual custom, and spoke scarcely at all; an omen of dire dismay for the remainder of the evening. The night did not pass more tranquilly: the chagrin of seeing my agreeable illusions vanish, and the fear of swelling the calendar of state prisoners, left no room but for sighs and lamentations.

The following was the critical day. The duke sent for me in the morning. I went into his chamber, with the ague fit of a criminal before his judge.

Santillane, said he, shewing me a paper in his hand, take this order..... I shuddered at the word order, and said within myself: Oh heaven! here is the cardinal Spinosa over again; the carriage is ordered out for Segovia. Such was my alarm at this moment, that I interrupted the minister, and throwing myself at his feet, May it please your lordship, said I, bathed in tears, I most humbly beseech your excellency to forgive me for my boldness; necessity alone impelled me to acquaint you with my wretched circumstances.

The duke could not help laughing at my distress. Be comforted, Gil Blas, answered he, and hearken attentively. Though by betraying your necessities a reproach lights upon me for not having prevented them, I do not take it ill, my friend. I rather ought to be angry with myself for not having enquired how you were going on. But to begin making amends for my want of attention, there is an order on the royal treasury for fifteen hundred ducats, payable at sight. This is not all; I promise you the same sum annually; and moreover, when people of rank and substance shall solicit your interest, I have no objection to your addressing me on their behalf.

In the excess of joy occasioned by such tidings, I kissed the feet of the minister, who, having commanded me to rise, continued in familiar conversation. I endeavoured to rally my free and easy humour; but the transition from sorrow to rapture

was too instantaneous to be natural. I felt as comical as a culprit, with a pardon singing in his ears, just when he was on the point of being launched into eternity. My master attributed all my flurry to the sole dread of having offended him; though the fear of perpetual imprisonment had its share of influence on my nerves. He owned that he had affected to look cool, to see whether I should be hurt at the alteration; that thereby he formed his opinion with respect to the liveliness of my attachment to his person, and that his own regard for me would always be proportionate.

CHAPTER VII.

A good use made of the fifteen hundred ducats. A first introduction to the trade of office, and an account of the profit accruing therefrom.

The king, as if on purpose to play into the hands of my impatience, returned to Madrid the very next day. I flew like a harpy to the royal treasury, where they paid me down upon the nail the sum drawn for in my order. Ambition and vanity now obtained complete empire over my soul. My paltry lodging was fit only for secretaries of an inferior cast, un-

practised in the mysterious language of birds; for which reason, my grand suite of apartments fortunately being vacant, I engaged them for the second time. My next business was to send for an eminent tailor, who arrayed the pretty persons of all the fine gentlemen in town. He took my measure, and then introduced me to a draper, who sold me five ells of cloth, the exact quantity, as he said, to make a suit for a man of my size. Five ells for a light Spanish dress! Whither did this draper and tailor expect to go? .... But we must not be uncharitable. Tailors who have a reputation to support require more materials for the exercise of their genius, than the vulgar snippers of the shopboard. I then bought some linen, of which I was very bare; an assortment of silk stockings, and a laced hat.

With such an equipage, there was no doing without a footman; so that I desired Vincent Ferrero my landlord to look out for one. Most of the foreigners who were recommended to his lodgings, on their arrival at Madrid, were wont to hire Spanish servants; and this was the means of turning his house into a register office. The first who offered was a lad of so mortified and devotional an aspect, that I would have nothing to say to him; he put me in mind of Ambrose de Lamela. I am quite out of conceit, said I to Ferrero, with these pious coat-brushers; I have been taken in by them already.

I had scarcely turned virtue in a livery out of

doors, when another came up stairs. This seemed to be a good sprightly fellow, with as little mock modesty as if he had been bred at court, and a certain something about him which indicated that he did not carry principle to any dangerous excess. He was just to my mind. His answers to my questions were pat and to the purpose: he evinced a talent for intrigue beyond my most sanguine hopes. This was exactly the subject for my purpose; so I fixed him at once. Neither had I any reason to repent of my bargain; for it was very soon evident that further off I must have fared worse. As the duke had allowed me to solicit on behalf of my friends, and it was my design to push that permission to the utmost, a staunch hound was necessary to put up the game; or in phrase familiar to dull capacities, an active chap, with a turn for routing out and bringing to my market all palm-tickling petitioners for the loaves and fishes of the prime minister. This was just where Scipio shone most; for my servant's name was Scipio. He had lived last with donna Anna de Guevara, the prince of Spain's nurse, where he had ample scope for the exercise of that accomplishment.

As soon as he became acquainted with my credit at court, and the use to which I meant to put it, he took the field like his great ancestors, and began the campaign without the loss of a day. Master, said he, a young gentleman of Grenada is just come

to Madrid; his name is don Roger de Rada. He has been engaged in an affair of honour which compels him to throw himself on the duke of Lerma's protection, and he is well disposed to come down handsomely for any grace and favour he may obtain. I have talked with him on the subject. He had a mind to have made friends with don Rodrigo de Calderona, whose influence had been represented to him in magnificent terms: but I dissuaded him, by pointing out that secretary's method of selling his good offices for more than their weight in gold; whereas, on the contrary, you would be satisfied with any decent expression of gratitude for yours, and would even do the business for the mere pleasure of doing it, if you were in circumstances to follow the bent of your own generous and disinterested temper. In short, I talked to him in such a strain, that you will see the gentlemen early to-morrow morning. How is all this, master Scipio? said I. You must have transacted a great deal of business in a short time. You are no novice in back-stairs influence. It is very strange that you have not feathered your own nest. That ought not to surprise you at all, answered he. I love to make money circulate; not to hoard it up.

Don Roger de Rada came according to his appointment. I received him with a mixture of courtly plausibility and ministerial pride. My worthy sir, said I, before I engage in your interests, I wish

to know the nature of the affair which brings you to court; because it may be such as to preclude me from speaking to the minister in your favour. Give me therefore, if you please, the particulars faithfully, and rest assured that I shall enter warmly into your interests, if they are proper to be espoused by a man who moves in my sphere. My young client promised to be sincere in his representation, and began his narrative in the following words.

CHAPTER VIII.

History of don Roger de Rada.

Don Anastasio de Rada, a gentleman of Grenada, was living happily in the town of Antequera, with donna Estephania his wife, who united every charm of person and mind with the most unquestionable virtue. If her affection was lively towards her husband, his love for her was violent beyond all bounds. He was naturally prone to jealousy; and though wantonness could never assume such a semblance as his wife's, his thoughts were not quite at rest upon the subject. He was apprehensive lest some secret enemy to his repose might make some attempt upon his honour. His eye was turned askance upon all his friends, except don Huberto de Hor-

dales, who frequented the house without suspicion in quality of Estephania's cousin, and was the only man in whom he ought not to have confided.

Don Huberto did actually fall in love with his cousin, and ventured to make his sentiments known, in contempt of consanguinity and the ties of friendship. The lady, who was considerate, instead of making an outcry which might have led to fatal consequences, reproved her kinsman gently, represented to him the extreme criminality of attempting to seduce her, and dishonour her husband, and told him very seriously that he must not flatter himself with the most distant hope.

This moderation only inflamed the seducer's appetite the more. Taking it for granted that as a woman who had been accustomed to save appearances, she only wanted to be more strongly urged, he began to adopt little freedoms of more warmth than delicacy; and had the assurance one day to put the question home to her. She repulsed him with unbridled indignation, and threatened to refer the punishment of his offence to don Anastasio. Her suitor, alarmed at such an intimation, promised to drop the subject; and Estephania in the candour of her soul forgave him for the past.

Don Huberto, a man totally devoid of principle, could not feel his passion to be foiled, without entertaining a mean spirit of revenge. He knew

the weak side of don Anastasio's temper. This was enough to engender the blackest design that ever scoundrel plotted. One evening as he was walking alone with this misguided husband, he said with an air of extreme uneasiness: My dear friend, I can no longer live without unburdening my mind; and yet I would be for ever silent, but that you value honour far above a treacherous repose. Your acute feelings and my own, on points which concern domestic injuries, forbid me to conceal what is passing in your family. Prepare to hear what will occasion you as much grief as astonishment. I am going to wound you in the tenderest part.

I know what you mean, interrupted don Anastasio in the first burst of agony; your cousin is unfaithful. I no longer acknowledge her for my cousin, replied Hordales with impassioned vehemence; I disown her, as unworthy to share my friend's embraces. This is keeping me too long upon the rack, exclaimed don Anastasio: say on, what has Estephania done? She has betrayed you, replied don Huberto. You have a rival to whom she listens in private, but I cannot give you his name; for the adulterer, under favour of impenetrable darkness, has escaped the ken of those who watched him. All I know is, that you are duped: of that fact I am well assured. My own share in the disgrace is a sufficient pledge of my veracity

Her infidelity must be palpable indeed, when I turn Estephania's accuser.

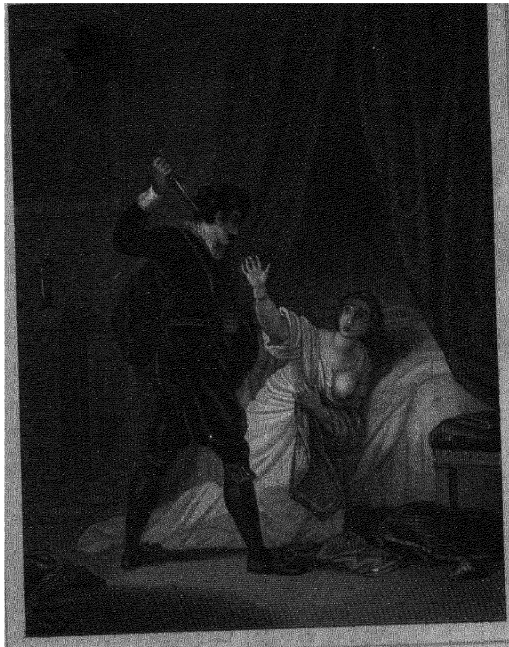
It is to no purpose, continued he, watching the successful impression of his discourse, it is to no purpose to discuss the subject further. I perceive your indignation at the treacherous requital of your love, and your thoughts all aiming at a just revenge. Take your own course. Heed not in what relation to you your victim may stand; but convince the whole city that there is no earthly being whom you would not sacrifice to your honour.

Thus did the traitor exasperate a too credulous husband against an innocent wife; depicting in such glowing colours the infamy in which he would be plunged, if he left the insult unpunished, as to heighten his anger into madness. Behold don Anastasio, with his mind completely overturned; as if goaded by the furies. He returned homewards with the frantic design of murdering his ill-fated wife. She was just going to bed when he came in. He kept his passion under for a time, and waited till the attendants had withdrawn. Then, unrestrained by the fear of vengeance from above, by the vulgar scorn which must recoil upon an honourable family, by natural affection for his unborn child, since his wife was near her time, he approached his victim, and said to her in a furious tone of voice: Now is your hour to die, wretch as you are! One moment only is your own,

which my relenting pity leaves you to make your peace with heaven. I would not that your soul should perish eternally, though your earthly honour is for ever lost.

At these words he drew his dagger. Estephania, just speechless with terror, throwing herself at his feet, besought him with uplifted hands and inarticulate agony, to tell her why he raised his arm against her life. If he suspected her fidelity, she called heaven to attest her innocence.

In vain, in vain, replied the infuriated murderer; your treason is but too well proved. My information is not to be discredited: don Huberto . . . . Ah! my lord, interrupted she with eager haste, you must hold your trust aloof from don Huberto. He is less your friend than you imagine. If he has said aught against my virtue, believe him not. Restrain that infamous tongue, replied don Anastasio. By appealing against Hordales, you condemn yourself. You would ruin your relation in my esteem, because he is acquainted with your misconduct. You would invalidate his evidence against you; but the artifice is palpable, and only whets my appetite for vengeance. My dear husband, rejoined the innocent Estephania, while her tears flowed in torrents, beware of this blind rage. If you follow its instigation, you will perpetrate a deed for which you will hate yourself, when convinced of its injustice. In the name of heaven, compose your disordered



Drawn by R. Smirke R.A.

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GIL BLAS.

THE JEALOUSY OF DON ANASTASIO DE RADA.

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spirits. At least give me time to clear up your suspicions; you will then deal candidly by a wife who has nothing to reproach herself with.

Any other than don Anastasio would have been touched by her pleadings, and still more by her agonizing affliction; but the barbarian, far from being softened, ordered the lady once again to recommend herself briefly to mercy, and lifted his arm to strike the blow. Hold, inhuman as you are! cried she. If your love for me is as if it had never been, if my lavish fondness in return is all blotted from your memory, if my tears have no eloquence to disarm your hellish purpose, have some pity on your own blood. Launch not your frantic hand against an innocent, who has not yet breathed this vital air. You cannot be its executioner, without the curse of heaven and earth. As for myself, I can forgive my murderer; but the butcher of his own child, think deeply of it, must pay the dreadful forfeit of so detestable a deed.

Determined as don Anastasio was to pay no attention to any thing Estephania could say, he could not help being affected by the frightful images these last words presented to his soul. Wherefore, as if apprehensive lest nature should play the traitress to revenge, he hastened to make sure of his staggering resolves, and plunged his dagger into her bosom. She fell motionless on the ground. He thought her dead; and on that supposition left

his house immediately, to be no more seen at Antequera.

In the mean time, the unhappy victim of groundless suspicion was so stunned with the blow she had received, as to remain for a short interval on the ground without any signs of life. Afterwards, coming to herself, she brought an old female servant to her assistance by her plaints and lamentations. That good old woman, beholding her mistress in so deplorable a state, waked the whole household and even the neighbourhood by her cries. The room was soon filled with spectators. Surgical assistance was sent for. The wound was probed, and pronounced not to be mortal. Their opinion turned out to be correct; for Estephania soon recovered, and was in due time delivered of a son, notwithstanding the cruel circumstances in which she had been placed. That son, signor Gil Blas, you behold in me: I am the fruit of that dreadful pregnancy.

Women, when chaste as ice, when pure as snow, seldom escape calumny: this plague, however, though virtue's dowry, did not alight upon my mother. The bloody scene passed in common fame for the transport of a jealous husband. My father, it is true, bore the character of a passionate man, prone to kindle into fury on the slightest occasion. Hordales could not but suppose that his kinswoman must suspect him of having sown wild fancies in the mind of don Anastasio; so that he satisfied himself

with this imperfect relish of revenge, and ceased to importune her. But not to be tedious, I shall pass over the detail of my education. Suffice it to say that my principal exercise was fencing, which I practised regularly in the most famous schools of Grenada and Seville. My mother waited with impatience till I was of age to measure swords with don Huberto, that she might instruct me in the grounds of her complaint against him. In my eighteenth year, she submitted her cause to my arbitrement, not without floods of tears, and every symptom of the deepest anguish. What must not a son feel, if he has the spirit and the heart of a son, at the sight of a mother in such distressing circumstances? I went immediately and called out Hordales; our place of meeting was private as it should be; we fought long and furiously; three of my thrusts took place, and I threw him to the ground, like a dead dog despised.

Don Huberto, feeling his wound to be mortal, fixed his last looks upon me, and declared that he met his death at my hands as a just punishment for his treason against my mother's honour. He owned that in revenge for the pangs of despised love, he had resolved on her ruin. Thus did he breathe his last, imploring pardon from heaven, from don Anastasio, from Estephania, and from myself. I deemed it imprudent to return home and acquaint my mother of the issue; fame was sure to perform that office for

me. I passed the mountains, and repaired to Malaga, where I embarked on board a privateer. My outside not altogether indicating cowardice, the captain consented at once to enrol me among his crew.

We were not long before we went into action. Near the island of Alboutan, a corsair of Millila fell in with us, on his return towards the African coast with a Spanish vessel richly laden, taken off Carthagena. We attacked the African briskly, and made ourselves masters of both ships, with eighty Christians on board, going as slaves to Barbary. Afterwards, availing ourselves of a wind direct for the coast of Grenada, we shortly arrived at Punta de Helena.

While we were enquiring into the birth-place and condition of our rescued captives, a man about fifty, of prepossessing aspect, fell under my examination. He stated himself, with a sigh, to belong to Antequera. My heart palpitated, without my knowing why; and my emotion, too strong to pass unnoticed, excited a visible sympathy in him. I avowed myself his townsman, and asked his family name. Alas! answered he, your curiosity makes my sorrows flow afresh. Eighteen years ago did I leave my home, where my remembrance is coupled with scenes of blood and horror. You must yourself have heard but too much of my story. My name is don Anastasio de Rada. Merciful heaven! exclaimed I, may

I believe my senses? And can this be? Don Anastasio? Father! What is it you say, young man? exclaimed he in his turn, with surprise and agitation equal to my own. Are you that ill-fated infant, still in its mother's womb, when I sacrificed her to my fury? Yes, said I; none other did the virtuous Estephania bring into the world, after the fatal night when you left her weltering in her own blood.

Don Anastasio stifled my words in his embraces. For a quarter of an hour, we could only mingle our inarticulate sighs and exclamations. After exhausting our tender recollections, and indulging in the wild expression of our feelings, my father lifted his eyes to heaven, in gratitude for Estephania saved; but the next moment, as if doubtful of his bliss, he demanded by what evidence his wife's innocence had been cleared. Sir, answered I, none but yourself ever doubted it. Her conduct had been uniformly spotless. You must be undeceived. Know that don Huberto was a traitor. In proof of this I unfolded all his perfidy, the vengeance I had taken, and his own confession before he expired.

My father was less delighted at his liberty restored, than at these happy tidings. In the forgetfulness of ecstacy, he repeated all his former transports. His approbation of me was ardent and entire. Come, my son, said he, let us set out for Antequera. I burn with impatience to throw myself at the feet of a wife, whom I have treated so unworthily. Since

you have brought me acquainted with my own injustice, my heart has been torn by remorse.

I was too eager to bring together a couple so near and dear to me, not to expedite our journey as much as possible. I quitted the privateer; and with my share of prize money bought two mules at Adra, my father not choosing again to incur the hazard of a voyage. He found leisure on the road to relate his adventures, which I inclined to hear as seriously, as did the prince of Ithaca the various recitals of the king his father. At length, after several days we halted at the foot of a mountain near Antequera. Wishing to reach home privately, we went not into the town till midnight.

You may guess my mother's astonishment, at beholding a husband whom she had thought for ever lost; and the almost miraculous circumstances of his restoration were a second source of wonder. He entreated forgiveness for his barbarity with marks of repentance so lively, that she could not but be moved. Instead of looking on him as a murderer, she only saw the man, to whose will high heaven had subjected her; such religion is there in the name of husband to a virtuous wife! Estephania had been so alarmed about me, that my return filled her with rapture. But her joy on this account was not without alleviation. A sister of Hordales had instituted a criminal prosecution against her brother's antagonist. The search for me was hot; so that my

mother, considering home as insecure, was painfully anxious about me. It was therefore necessary to set out that very night for court, whither I come to solicit my pardon, and hope to obtain it by your generous intercession with the prime minister.

The gallant son of don Anastasio thus closed his narrative; after which I observed with a self-sufficient physiognomy: It is well, signor don Roger; the offence seems to me to be venial. I will undertake to lay the case before his excellency, and may venture to promise you his protection. The thanks my client lavished would have passed in at one ear and out at the other, if they had not been backed by assurances of more substantial gratitude. But when once that string was touched, every nerve and fibre of my frame vibrated in unison. On the very same day did I relate the whole story to the duke, who allowed me to present the gentleman, and addressed him thus: Don Roger, I have been informed of the duel which has brought you to court; Santillane has laid all the particulars before me. Make yourself perfectly easy: you have done nothing but what the circumstances of the case might almost warrant; and it is especially on the ground of wounded honour, that his majesty is best pleased to extend his grace and favour. You must be committed for mere form's sake; but you may depend on it, your confinement shall be of short duration. In Santillane

you have a zealous friend, who will watch over your interests, and hasten your release.

Don Roger paid his respectful acknowledgments to the minister, on whose pledge he went and surrendered himself. His pardon was soon made out, owing to my activity. In less than ten days, I sent this modern Telemachus home, to say "how do you do" to his Ulysses and Penelope; had he stood upon the merits of his case without a protector, he might have whined out a year's imprisonment, and scarcely have got off at last. My commission was but a poor hundred pistoles. It was no very magnificent haul; but I was not as yet a Calderona, to turn up my nose at the small fry.

CHAPTER IX.

Gil Blas makes a large fortune in a short time, and behaves like other wealthy upstarts.

THIS affair gave me a relish for my trade; and ten pistoles to Scipio by way of brokerage, whetted his eagerness to start more game of the same sort. I have already done justice to his talents that way; he

might as modestly have appended "the great" to the tail of his name, as the most noted scoundrel of antiquity. The second customer he brought me was a printer, who manufactured books of chivalry, and had made his fortune by waging war against common sense. This printer had pirated a work belonging to a brother printer, and his edition had been seized. For three hundred ducats I rescued his copies out of jeopardy, and saved him from a heavy fine. Though this was a transaction beneath the prime minister's notice, his excellency condescended at my request to interpose his authority. After the printer, a merchant passed through my hands; the occasion was thus: A Portuguese vessel had been taken by a Barbary corsair, and retaken by a privateer from Cadiz. Two-thirds of the cargo belonged to a merchant at Lisbon, who, having claimed his due to no purpose, came to the court of Spain in search of a protector, with sufficient credit to procure him restitution. I took up his cause, and he recovered his property, deducting the sum of four hundred pistoles, paid to me in consideration of my disinterested zeal for justice.

And now most surely the reader will call out to me at this place: Well said, good master Santillane! Make hay while the sun shines. You are on the high road to fortune; push forward, and outstrip your rivals. Oh! let me alone for that. I spy, or my eyes deceive me, my servant coming in with a new

gull that he has just caught. Even so! It is my very Scipio. Let us hear what he has to say. Sir, quoth he, give me leave to introduce this eminent practitioner. He wants a licence to sell his drugs during the term of ten years in all the towns of the Spanish monarchy, to the exclusion of all other quacks; in short, a monopoly of poisons. In gratitude for this patent to thin mankind, he will present the donor with a gratuity of two hundred pistoles. I looked superciliously, like a patron, at the mountebank, and told him that his business should be done. As lameness and leprosy would have it, in the course of a few days, I sent him on his progress through Spain, invested with full powers to make the world his oyster, and leave nothing but the shell to his unpatented competitors.

Besides that my avarice outran my accumulating wealth, I had obtained the four boons just specified so easily from his grace, as not to be mealy-mouthed about asking for a fifth. The town of Vera, on the coast of Grenada, wanted a governor; and a knight of Calatrava wanted the government, for which he was willing to pay me one thousand pistoles. The minister was ready to burst with laughing, to see me so eager after the scut. By all the powers! my friend Gil Blas, said he, you go to work tooth and nail! You have a most inveterate itch to do as you would be done by. But mark me! When mere trifles stand between us, I shall not stand upon

trifles; but when governments or other places of real value are in question, you will have the modesty to be content with half the fee for yourself, and will account to me for the other half. It is inconceivable at what expense I stand; and how it presses on my finances to support the dignity of my station: for though disinterestedness looks vastly well in the eyes of the world, you are to understand between ourselves that I have made a solemn vow against dipping into my private fortune. On this hint, arrange your future plans.

My master, by this discourse, relieving me from the fear of being troublesome, or rather egging me on to run at the ring for every prize, made me still more worldly-minded than ever I had been before. I should not have objected to circulating hand-bills, with an invitation to all candidates for places, to apply on certain terms at the secretary's office. My functions were here, Scipio's were there; and we met at the receipt of custom. My client got the government of Vera for his thousand pistoles; and as our price was fixed, a knight of St. James met his brother of Calatrava in the market on an equal footing. But mere governors were paltry fish to fry; I distributed orders of knighthood, and converted some good stupid burgesses into most insufferable gentry by one stroke of the pen, and a lacing across the shoulders with a broad-sword. The clergy too were not forgotten in my charities. Lesser prefer-

ments were in my gift; every thing up to prebendal stalls and collegiate dignities. With regard to bishoprics and archbishoprics, don Rodrigo de Calderona had the charge of our holy religion. As church and state must always go together, supreme magistracies, commanderies, and vice royalties were all in his gift; whence the reader will naturally infer, that the upper offices were little better tenanted than the lower ones; since the subjects on whom our election fell, establishing their pretensions on a certain palpable criterion, were not necessarily and unavoidably either the cleverest or the best principled people in the world. We knew very well, that the wits and lampooners of Madrid made themselves merry at our expense; but we borrowed our philosophy from misers, who hug themselves under the hootings of the people, when they count over the accumulation of their pelf.

Isocrates was in the right to insinuate, in his elegant Greek expression, that what is got over the devil's back is spent under his belly. When I saw myself master of thirty thousand ducats, and in a fair way to gain perhaps ten times as much, it seemed to be a necessary of office to make such a figure as became the right-hand of a prime minister. I took a house to myself, and furnished it in the immediate taste. I bought an attorney's carriage at second hand; he had set it up at the suggestion of vanity, and laid it down at the suggestion of his

baker. I hired a coachman and three footmen. Justice demands that old and faithful servants should be promoted; I therefore invested Scipio with the threefold honour of valet-de-chambre, private secretary, and steward. But the minister raised my pride to its highest pitch; for he was pleased to allow my people to wear his livery. My poor little wits were now completely turned. I was little more in my senses than the disciples of Porcius Latro, who, by dint of drinking cummin, having made themselves as pale as their master, thought themselves every whit as learned; so I could scarcely refrain from fancying myself next of kin and presumptive heir to the duke of Lerma himself. The populace might take me for his cousin, and people who knew better, for one of his bastards; a suspicion most flattering to my pride of blood.

Add to this, that after the example of his excellency, who kept a public table, I determined to give parties of my own. Pursuant thereunto, I commissioned Scipio to find me out a professed cook; and he stumbled upon one who might have dished up a dinner for Nomentanus, of dripping-pan notoriety. My cellar was well stored with the choicest wines. My establishment being now complete, I gave my house-warming. Every evening some of the clerks in the public offices came to sup with me, and affected a sort of political high life below stairs. I did the honours hospitably, and always sent them home

half seas over. Like master like man! Scipio too had his parties in the servants' hall, where he treated all his chums at my expense. But besides that I felt a real kindness for that lad, he contributed to grease the wheels of my establishment, and was entitled to have a finger in the dissipation. As a young man, some little licence was allowable; and the ruinous consequences did not strike me at the time. Another reason too prevented me from taking notice of it; incessant vacancies, ecclesiastical and secular, paid me amply in meal and in malt. My surplus was increasing every day. Fortune's curricle seemed to have driven to my door, there to have broken down, and the driver to have taken shelter with me.

One thing more was wanting to my complete intoxication; that Fabricio might be witness to my pomp. He was most probably come back from Andalusia. For the fun of surprising him, I sent an anonymous note, importing that a Sicilian nobleman of his acquaintance would be glad of his company to supper; with the day, hour, and place of appointment, which was at my house. Nunez came and was most inordinately astonished to recognize me in the Sicilian nobleman. Yes, my friend, said I, behold the master of this family. I have a retinue, a good table, and a strong box besides. Is it possible, exclaimed he with vivacity, that all this opulence should be yours? It was well done in me to have placed you with count Galiano. I told you

beforehand that he was a generous nobleman, and would not be long before he set you at your ease. Of course you followed my wise advice, in giving the rein a little more freely to your fellow servants; you find the benefit of it. It is only by a little mutual accommodation, that the principal officers in great houses feather their nests so comfortably.

I suffered Fabricio to go on as long as he liked, complimenting himself for having introduced me to count Galiano. When he had done, to chastise his ecstasies at having procured me so good a post, I stated at full length the returns of gratitude with which that nobleman had recompensed my services. But, perceiving how ready my poet was to string his lyre to satire at my recital, I said to him: The Sicilian's contemptible conduct I readily forgive. Between ourselves, it is more a subject of congratulation than of regret. If the count had dealt honourably by me, I should have followed him into Sicily, where I should still be in a subordinate capacity, waiting for dead men's shoes. In a word, I should not now have been hand in glove with the duke of Lerma.

Nunez felt so strange a sensation at these last words, that he was tongue-tied for some seconds. Then gulping up his stammering accents like harlequin, Did I hear aright? said he. What! you hand in glove with the prime minister? I on one side,

and don Rodrigo de Calderona on the other, answered I; and according to all appearance, my fortunes will move higher. Truly, replied he, this is admirable. You are cut out for every occasion. What an universal genius! To borrow an expression from the tennis-court, you have a racket for every ball; nothing comes amiss to you. At all events, my lord, I am sincerely rejoiced at your lordship's prosperity. The deuce and all, master Nunez! interrupted I; good now, dispense with your lords and lordships. Let us banish such formalities, and live on equal terms together. You are in the right, replied he: altered circumstances should not make strange faces. I will own my weakness; when you announced your elevation, you took away my breath; but the chill and the shudder are over, and I see only my old friend Gil Blas.

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of four or five clerks. Gentlemen, said I, introducing Nunez, you are to sup with signor don Fabricio, who writes verses of impenetrable sublimity, and such prose as would not know itself in the glass. Unluckily I was talking to gentry who would have had more fellow-feeling with an Oran Outang than with a poet. They scarcely condescended to look at him. In vain did he pun, parody, rally, or rail to hit their fancies; for they had none. He was so nettled at their indifference, that he assumed the poetic

licence, and made his escape. Our clerks never missed him, but forgot at once that he had been there.

Just as I was going out the next morning, the poet of the Asturias came into my room. I beg pardon, said he, for having cut your clerks so abruptly last night; but, to deal freely, I was so much out of my element, that I should soon have played old chaos with them. Proud puppies, with their starch and self-important air! I cannot conceive how a clever fellow like you can sit it out with such loutish guests. To-day I will bring you some of more life and spirit. I shall be very much obliged to you, answered I: your introduction is sufficient. Exactly so, replied he. You shall have the feast of reason and the flow of soul. I will go forthwith and invite them, for fear they should engage themselves elsewhere; for happy man be his dole who can get them to dinner or supper; they are such excellent company!

Away went he; and in the evening, at supper-time, returned with six authors in his train, whom he presented one after another with a set speech in their praise. According to his account, the wits of Greece and Italy were nothing in comparison of these, whose works ought to be printed in letters of gold. I received this deputation from the tuneful sisters very politely. My behaviour was even in the extravagance of good-breeding; for the republic of au-

thors is a little monarchical in its demands upon our flattery. Though I had given Scipio no express direction respecting the number of covers at this entertainment, yet knowing what a hungry and voluptuous race were to be crammed, he had mustered the courses in more than their full compliment.

At length, supper was announced, and we fell to merrily. My poets began talking of their poems and themselves. One fellow, with the most lyrical assurance, numbered up whole hosts of first-rate nobility and high flying dames, who were quite enraptured with his muse. Another, though it was not for him to arraign the choice which a learned society had lately made of two new members, could not help saying that it was strange they should not have elected him. All the rest were much in the same story. Amid the clatter of knives and forks, my ears were more discordantly dinned with verses and harangues. They each took it by turns to give me a specimen of their composition. One languishes out a sonnet; another mouths a scene in a tragedy; and a third reads a melancholy criticism on the province of comedy. The next in turn spouts an ode of Anacreon, translated into most un-anacreontic Spanish verse. One of his brethren interrupts him, to point out the unclassical use of a particular phrase. The author of the version by no means acquiesces in the remark; hence arises an argument, in which all the literati take one side or the other.

Opinions are nearly balanced; the disputants are nearly in a passion; as argument weakens, invective grows stronger; they get from bad to worse; over goes the table, and up jump they to fisty-cuffs. Fabricio, Scipio, my coachman, my footman, and myself, have scarcely lungs or strength to bring them to their senses. The moment the battle was over, off scampered they as if my house had been a tavern, without the slightest apology for their ill behaviour.

Nunez, on whose word I had anticipated a very pleasant party, looked rather blue at this conclusion. Well, my friend, said I, what do you think of your literary acquaintance now? As sure as Apollo is on Parnassus, you brought me a most blackguard set. I will stick to my clerks; so talk no more to me about authors. I shall take care, answered he, not to invite any of them to a gentleman's house again; for these are the most select and well-mannered of the tribe.

CHAPTER X.

The morals of Gil Blas become at court, much as if they had never been at all. A commission from the count de Lemos, which, like most court commissions, implies an intrigue.

When once my name was up, for a man after the duke of Lerma's own heart, I had very soon my court about me. Every morning was my antichamber crowded with company, and my levees were all the fashion. Two sorts of customers came to my shop; one set, to engage my interposition with the minister, on fair commercial principles; the other set, to excite my compassion by pathetic statement of their cases, and give me a lift to heaven on the packhorse of charity. The first were sure of being heard patiently and served diligently; with regard to the second order, I got rid of them at once by plausible evasions, or kept them dangling till they wore their patience threadbare, and went off in a huff. Before I was about the court, my nature was compassionate and charitable; but tenderness of heart is an unfashionable frailty there, and mine became harder than any flint. Here was an admirable school to correct the romantic sensibilities of friend-

ship: nor was my philosophy any longer assailable in that quarter. My manner of dealing with Joseph Navarro, under the following circumstances, will prove more than volumes on that head.

This Navarro, the founder of my fortune, to whom my obligations were thick and threefold, paid me a visit one day. With the warmest expressions of regard, such as he was in the habit of lavishing, he begged me to ask the duke of Lerma for a certain situation for one of his friends, a young man of excellent qualities and undoubted merit, but incumbered with an inability of getting on in the world. I am well assured, added Joseph, that with your good and obliging disposition, you will be enraptured to confer a favour on a worthy man with a very slender purse; I am sure you will feel obliged to me for giving you an opportunity of carrying your benevolent inclinations into effect. This was just as good as telling me, that the business was to be done for nothing. Though such doctrine was not quite level to my capacity, I still affected a wish to do as he desired. It gives me infinite pleasure, answered I to Navarro, to have it in my power to evince my lively sense of all your former kindness to me. It is enough for you to take any man living by the hand: from that moment he becomes the object of my unwearied care. Your friend shall have the situation you want for him; nay, he has it already: it is no longer any concern of yours; leave it entirely to me.

On this assurance Joseph went away in high glee; nevertheless, the person he recommended had not the post in question. It was given to another man, and my strong box was the stronger by a thousand ducats. This sum was infinitely preferable to all the thanks in the world; so that I looked pitifully blank when next we met, saying; Ah! my dear Navarro, you should have thought of speaking to me sooner. That Calderona got the start of me; he has given away a certain thing that shall be nameless. I am vexed to the soul not to meet you with better tidings.

Joseph was fool enough to give me credit, and we parted better friends than ever; but I suspect that he soon found out the truth; for he never came near me again. This was just what I wanted. Besides that the memory of benefits received grated harshly, it would not have been at all the thing for a person in my then sphere to keep company with a certain description of people.

The count de Lemos has been long in the back ground, let us bring him a little forwarder on the canvas. We met occasionally. I had carried him a thousand pistoles, as the reader will recollect; and I now carried him a thousand more, by order of his uncle the duke, out of his excellency's funds lying in my hands. On this occasion the count de Lemos honoured me with a long conference. He informed me that at length he had completely gained his end,

and was in unrivalled possession of the prince of Spain's good graces, whose sole confident he was. His next concern was to invest me with a right honourable commission, of which he had already given me a hint. Friend Santillane, said he, now is the time to strike while the iron is hot. Spare no pains to find out some young beauty, worthy to while away the prince's amorous hours. You have your wits about you; and a word to the wise is sufficient. Go; run about the town; pry into every hole and corner; and when you have pounced upon any thing likely to suit, you will come and let me know. I promised the count to leave no stone unturned in the due discharge of my employment, which seemed to require no great force of genius, since the professors of the science are so numerous.

I had not hitherto been much practised in such delicate investigations; but it was more than probable that Scipio had, and that his talent lay peculiarly that way. On my return home I called him in, and spoke thus to him in private: My good fellow, I have a very important secret to impart. Do you know that in the midst of fortune's favours, there is something still wanting to crown all my wishes? I can easily guess what that is, interrupted he, without giving me time to finish what I was going to say: you want a snug little bit of contraband amusement, to keep you awake of evenings, and rub off the rust of business. And, in fact, it is a marvel-

lous thing that you should have played the Joseph in the hey-day of your blood, when so many grey-beards around you are playing the Elder. I admire the quickness of your apprehension, replied I with a smile. Yes, my friend, a mistress is that something still wanting; and you shall choose for me. But I forewarn you that I am nice-hungry; and must have a pretty person with more than passable manners. The sort of thing that you require, returned Scipio, is not always to be met with in the market. Yet, as luck will have it, we are in á town, where every thing is to be got for money; and I am in hopes that your commission will not hang long on hand.

Accordingly within three days he pulled me by the sleeve: I have discovered a treasure! A young lady whose name is Catalina, of good family and matchless beauty, living with her aunt in a small house, where they make both ends meet by clubbing their little matters, and set the slanderous world at defiance. Their waiting-maid, a girl of my acquaintance, has given me to understand that their door, though barred against all impertinent intruders, would turn upon its hinges to a rich and generous suitor, if he would only consent, for fear of prying neighbours, not to pay his visits till after night-fall, and then in the most private manner possible. Hereupon I magnified you as the properest gentleman in the world; and intreated piety in pattens to offer your humble services to the ladies. She pro-

mised to do so; and to bring me back my answer to-morrow morning at an appointed place. That is all very well, answered I; but I am afraid your goddess of bed-making has been running her rig upon you. No, no, replied he, old birds are not to be caught with chaff: I have already made enquiry in the neighbourhood; and by the general report of her, signora Catalina is a second Danae, on whom you will have the happiness of coming down,

> Like Jove descending from his tower,
> To court her in a silver shower.

Out of conceit as I was with the intrinsic value of ladies' favours, this was not to be scoffed at; and as our Mercury in petticoats came the next day to tell Scipio that it only depended on me to be introduced that very evening, I dropped in between eleven and twelve o'clock. The knowing one received me without bringing a candle, and led me by the hand into a very neat apartment, where the two ladies were sitting on a satin sofa, dressed in the most elegant taste. As soon as they saw me enter, they got up and welcomed me in a style of such superior breeding, as would not have disgraced the highest rank. The aunt, whose name was signora Mencia, though with the remains of beauty, had no attractions for me. But the niece had a million; for she was a goddess in mortal form. And yet to examine her

critically, she could not have been admitted for a perfect beauty; but then there was a charm above all rules of symmetry, with a tingling and luxurious warmth about her, that seized on men's hearts through their eyes, and prevented their brains from being too busy.

Neither were my senses proof against so dazzling a display. I forgot my errand as proxy; and spoke on my own private individual account, with the enthusiasm of a raw recruit in the tender passion. The dear little creature, whose wit sounded in my ears with three times its actual acuteness, under favour of her natural endowments, made a complete conquest of me by her prattle. I began to launch out into foolish raptures, when the aunt, to bring me to my bearings, led the conversation to the point in hand: Signor de Santillane, I shall deal very explicitly with you. On the high encomiums I have heard of your character, you have been admitted here, without the affectation of making much ado about trifles: but do not imagine that your views are the nearer their termination for that. Hitherto I have brought my niece up in retirement, and you are, as it were, the very first male creature on whom she has ever set eyes. If you deem her worthy of being your wife, I shall feel myself highly honoured by the alliance: it is for you to consider whether those terms suit you; but you cannot have her on cheaper.

This was proceeding to business with a vengeance! It put little Cupid to flight at once: or else he was just going to try one of his sharpest arrows upon me. But a truce with the Pantheon! A marriage so bluntly proposed dispelled the fairy vision: I sunk back at once into the count's plodding agent; and changing my tone, answered signora Mencia thus: Madam, your frankness delights me, and I will meet it half-way. Whatever rank I may hold at court, lower than the highest is too low for the peerless Catalina. A far more brilliant offer waits her acceptance; the prince of Spain shall be thrown into her toils. Surely it was enough to have refused my niece, replied the aunt sarcastically; such compliments are sufficiently unpleasing to our sex; it could not be necessary to make us your unfeeling sport. I really am not in so merry a mood, madam! exclaimed I: it is a plain matter of fact; I am commissioned to look out for a young lady, of merit sufficient to engage the prince's heart, and receive his private visits; the object of my search is in your house, and here his royal highness shall fix his quarters.

Signora Mencia could scarcely believe her ears; neither were they grievously offended. Nevertheless, thinking it decent to be startled at the immorality of the proceeding, she replied to the following effect: Though I should give implicit credit to what you tell me, you must understand that I am not of

a character to take pleasure in the infamous distinction of seeing my niece a prince's concubine. Every feeling of virtue and of honour revolts at the idea. . . . . What a simpleton you are with your virtue and honour! interrupted I. You have not a notion above the level of a tradesman's wife. Was there ever any thing so stupid as to consider affairs of this kind with a view to their moral tendency? It is stripping them of all their beauty and excellence. In the magic lanthorn of plenty, pleasure, and preferment, they appear with all their brightest gloss. Figure to yourself the heir to the monarchy at the happy Catalina's feet; fancy him all rapture and lavish bounty; nor doubt but that from her shall spring a hero, who shall immortalize his mother's name, by enrolling his own in the unperishable records of eternal fame.

Though the aunt desired no better sport than to take me at my word, she affected not to know what she had best do; and Catalina, who longed to have a grapple with the prince of Spain, affected not to care about the matter; which made it necessary for me to press the siege closer; till at length signora Mencia, finding me chop-fallen and ready to withdraw my forces, sounded a parley, and agreed to a convention, containing the two following articles. *Imprimis*, if the prince of Spain, on the fame of Catalina's charms, should take fire, and determine to pay her a nightly visit, it should be my care to

let the ladies know when they might expect him. *Secundo*, that the prince should be introduced to the said ladies as a private gentleman, accompanied only by myself and his principal purveyor.

After this capitulation, the aunt and niece were upon the best terms possible with me; they behaved as if we had known one another from our cradles; on the strength of which I ventured on some little familiarities, which were not taken at all unkindly; and when we parted, they embraced me of their own accord, and slabbered me over with inexpressible fondness. It is marvellous to think with what facility a tender connection is formed between persons in the same line of trade, but of opposite sexes. It might have been suspected by an eye-witness of my departure, in all the plenitude of warm and repeated salutation, that my visit had been more successful than it was.

The count de Lemos was highly delighted when I announced the long expected discovery. I spoke of Catalina in terms which made him long to see her. The following night I took him to her house, and he owned that I had beat the bush to some purpose. He told the ladies, he had no doubt but the prince of Spain would be fully satisfied with my choice of a mistress, who, on her part, would have reason to be well pleased with such a lover; that the young prince was generous, good-tempered, and amiable; in short, he promised in a few days to

bring him in the mode they enjoined, without retinue or publicity. That nobleman then took leave of them, and I withdrew with him. We got into his carriage, in which we had both driven thither, and which was waiting at the end of the street. He set me down at my own door, with a special charge to inform his uncle next day of this new game started, not forgetting to impress strongly how conducive a good bag of pistoles would be to the successful accomplishment of the adventure.

I did not fail on the following morning to go and give the duke of Lerma an exact account of all that had passed. There was but one thing kept back. I did not mention Scipio's name, but took credit to myself for the discovery of Catalina. One makes a merit of any dirty work in the service of the great.

Abundant were the compliments paid me on this occasion. My good friend Gil Blas, said the minister with a bantering air, I am delighted that with all your talents, you have that besides of discovering kind-hearted beauties; whenever I have occasion for such an article, you will have the goodness to supply me. My lord, answered I with mock gravity like his own, you are very obliging to give me the preference; but it may not be unseasonable to observe that there would be an indelicacy in my administering to your excellency's pleasures of this description. Signor don Rodrigo has been so long in possession of that post about your person, that it

would be manifest injustice to rob him of it. The duke smiled at my answer; and then changing the subject, asked whether his nephew did not want money for this new speculation. Excuse my negligence! said I; he will thank you to send him a thousand pistoles. Well and good! replied the minister; you will furnish him accordingly, with my strict injunction not to be niggardly, but to encourage the prince in whatever pleasurable expenses his heart may prompt him to indulge.

CHAPTER XI.

The prince of Spain's secret visit, and presents to Catalina.

I WENT to the count de Lemos on the spur of the occasion, with five hundred double pistoles in my hand. You could not have come at a better time, said that nobleman. I have been talking with the prince; he has taken the bait, and burns with impatience to see Catalina. This very night he intends to slip privately out of the palace, and pay her a visit; it is a measure determined on, and our arrangements are already made. Give notice to the ladies, through the medium of the cash you have

just brought; it is proper to let them know, they have no ordinary lover to receive; and a matter of course that generosity in princes should be the herald of their partialities. As you will be of our party, take care to be in the way at bed-time: and as your carriage will be wanted, let it wait near the palace about midnight.

I immediately repaired to the ladies. Catalina was not visible, having just gone to lie down. I could only speak with signora Mencia. Madam, said I, forgive my appearance here in the daytime, but there was no avoiding it; you must know that the prince of Spain will be with you to-night; and here, added I, putting my pecuniary credentials into her hand, here is an offering which he lays on the Cytherean shrine, to propitiate the divinities of the temple. You may perceive, I have not entangled you in a sleeveless concern. You have been excessively kind indeed, answered she; but tell me, signor de Santillane, does the prince love music? To distraction, replied I. There is nothing he so much delights in as a fine voice, with a delicate lute accompaniment. So much the better, exclaimed she in a transport of joy; you give me great pleasure by saying so; for my niece has the pipe of a nightingale, and plays exquisitely on the lute: then her dancing is in the finest style! Heavens and earth! exclaimed I in my turn, here are accomplishments by wholesale, aunt; more than enough

to make any girl's fortune! Any one of those talents would have been a sufficient dowry.

Having thus smoothed his reception, I waited for the prince's bedtime. When it was near at hand, I gave my coachman his orders, and went to the count de Lemos, who told me that the prince, the sooner to get rid of the people about him, meant to feign a slight indisposition, and even to go to bed, the better to cajole his attendants; but that he would get up an hour afterwards, and go through a private door to a back staircase leading into the court-yard.

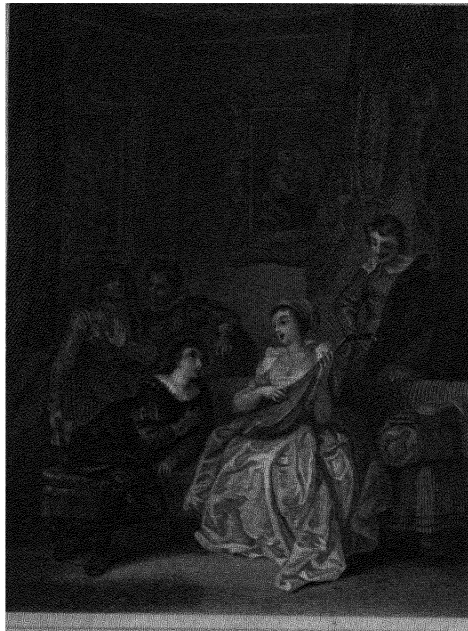
Conformably with their previous arrangements, he fixed my station. There had I to beat the hoof so long, that I began to suspect our forward sprig of royalty had gone another way, or else had changed his mind about Catalina; just as if princes ever began to be fickle, till the goad of novelty and curiosity began to be blunted. In short, I thought they had forgotten me, when two men came up. Finding them to be my party, I led the way to my carriage, into which they both got, and I upon the coach-box to direct the driver, whom I stopped fifty yards from the house, whither we walked. The door opened at our approach, and shut again as soon as we got in.

At first we were in absolute darkness, as on my former visit, though a small lamp was fixed to the wall on the present occasion. But the light which

it shed was so faint, as only to render itself visible without assisting us. All this served only to heighten the romance in the fancy of its hero, fixed as he was in steadfast gaze at the sight of the ladies as they received him in a saloon whose brilliant illumination was more dazzling, when contrasted with the gloom of the avenue. The aunt and niece were in a tempting undress, where the science of coquetry was displayed in all its luxury and absolute sway. Our prince could have been happy with signora Mencia, had the dear charmer Catalina been away; but as there was a choice, the younger, according to the rules of precedency in the court of Cupid, had the preference.

Well! prince, said the count de Lemos, could you have desired a better specimen of beauty? They are both enchanting, answered the prince, and my heart may as well surrender at once; for the aunt would arrest it in its flight, if it attempted to sound a retreat from the niece's all-subduing charms.

After such compliments, as do not fall by wholesale to the share of aunts, he addressed his choicest terms of flattery to Catalina, who answered him in kind. As convenient personages of my stamp are allowed to mingle in the conversation of lovers, for the purpose of making fire hotter, I introduced the subject of singing and playing on the lute. This was the signal of fresh rapture! and the nymph, the muse, the any thing but mortal, was supplicated to



Painted by R. Smirke, R.A. Engraved by Thos Ranson.

GIL BLAS.

THE PRINCE OF SPAIN ENAMOURED OF CATALINA.

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outtune the jingle of the spheres. She complied like a good-humoured goddess; played some tender airs, and sung so deliciously, that the prince flopped down on his knees in a tumult of love and pleasure. But scenes like these are vapid in description: suffice it to say that hours glided away like moments in this sweet delirium, till the approach of day warned the sober plotters of the lunacy to provide for their patient's safety, and their own. When the parties were all snugly housed, we gave ourselves as much credit for the negotiation, as if we had patched up a marriage with a princess.

The next morning, the duke of Lerma desired to know all the particulars. Just as I had finished relating them, the count de Lemos came in and said: The prince of Spain is so engrossed by Catalina; he has taken so decided a fancy to her, that he actually proposes to be constant. He wanted to have sent her jewels to the amount of two thousand pistoles to-day; but his finances were aground. My dear Lemos, said he, addressing himself to me, you must absolutely get me that sum. I know it is very inconvenient; you have pawned your credit for me already; but my heart owns itself your debtor; and if ever I have the means of returning your kindness by more than empty words, your fortunes shall not suffer by your complaisance. In answer, I assured him that I had friends and credit, and promised to bring him what he wanted.

There is no difficulty about that, said the duke to his nephew. Santillane will bring you the money; or, to save trouble, he may purchase the jewels; for he is an admirable judge, especially of rubies. Are you not, Gil Blas? This stroke of satire was of course designed to entertain the count at my expense; and it was successful; for his curiosity could not but be excited to know the meaning of the mystery. No mystery at all, replied his uncle with a broad laugh. Only Santillane took it into his head one day to exchange a diamond for a ruby; and the barter operated equally to the advantage of his pocket and his penetration.

Had the minister stopped there, I should have come off cheaply; but he took the trouble of dressing out in aggravated colours the trick that Camilla and don Raphael played me, with a most provoking enlargement of the circumstances most to the disadvantage of my sagacity. His excellency having enjoyed his joke, ordered me to attend the count de Lemos to a jeweller's, where we selected trinkets for the prince of Spain's inspection; and they were entrusted to my care to be delivered to Catalina.

There can be little doubt of my kind reception on the following night, when I displayed a fine pair of drop ear-rings, as the presents of my embassy. The two ladies, out of their wits at these costly tokens of the prince's love, suffered their tongues to run into a gossiping strain, while they were thanking me

for introducing them into such worshipful society. In the excess of their joy, they forgot themselves a little. There escaped now and then certain peculiar idioms of speech, which made me suspect that the party in question was no such dainty morsel for royalty to feed upon. To ascertain precisely what degree of obligation I had conferred on the heir-apparent, I took my leave with the intention of coming to a right understanding with Scipio.

CHAPTER XII.

Catalina's real condition, a worry and alarm to Gil Blas. His precautions for his own ease and quiet.

On coming home, I heard a devil of a noise, and enquired what was the meaning of it. They told me that Scipio was giving a supper to half a dozen of his friends. They were singing as loud as their lungs could roar, and threatening the stability of the house with their protracted peals of laughter. This meal was not in all respects the banquet of the seven wise men.

The founder of the feast, informed of my arrival, said to his company: Sit still, gentlemen; it is only

the master of the house come home; but that need not disturb you. Go on with your merry-making; I will but just whisper a word in his ear, and be back again in a moment. He came to me accordingly. What an infernal din! said I. What sort of company do you keep below? Have you too got in among the poets? Thank you for nothing! answered he. Your wine is too good to be given to such gentry: I turn it to better account. There is a young man of large property in my party, who wishes to lay out your credit and his own money in the purchase of a place. This little festivity is all for him. For every glass he fills, I put on ten pistoles, in addition to the regular fee. He shall drink till he is under the table. If that is the case, replied I, go to your presidentship, and do not spare the cellar.

Then was no proper time to talk about Catalina; but the next morning I opened the business thus: Friend Scipio, the terms we are upon entitle me to fair dealing. I have treated you more like an equal than a servant: consequently you would be much to blame to cheat me on the footing of a master. Let us therefore have no secrets towards each other. I am going to tell you what will surprise you; and you on your part shall give me your sincere opinion about the two women with whom you have brought me acquainted. Between ourselves, I suspect them to be no better than they should be; with so much

the more of the knave in their composition, because they affect the simpleton. If my conjecture be right, the prince of Spain has no great reason to be delighted with my activity; for I will own to you frankly, that it was for him I spoke to you about a mistress. I brought him to see Catalina, and he is over head and ears in love with her. Sir, answered Scipio, you have dealt so handsomely by me, that I shall act upon the square with you. I had yesterday a private interview with the abigail; and she gave me a most entertaining history of the family. You shall have it briefly, though it did not come briefly to me.

Catalina was daughter to a sort of a gentleman in Arragon. An orphan at fifteen, with no fortune but a pretty face, she lent a complying ear to an officer who carried her off to Toledo, where he died in six months, having been more like a father than a husband to her. She collected his effects together, consisting of their joint wardrobe and three hundred pistoles in ready money; and then went to housekeeping with signora Mencia, who was still in fashion, though a little on the wane. These sisters, every way but in blood, began at length to attract the attention of the police. The ladies took umbrage at this; and decamped in dudgeon for Madrid, where they have been living for these two years, without making any acquaintance in the neighbour-

hood. But now comes the best of the joke: they have taken two small houses adjoining each other, with a passage of communication through the cellars. Signora Mencia lives with a servant girl in one of these houses, and the officer's widow inhabits the other, with an old duenna, whom she passes off for her grandmother; so that our versatile child of nature is sometimes a niece brought up by her aunt, and sometimes an orphan under her grandam's fostering wing. When she enacts the niece, her name is Catalina; and when she personates the granddaughter, she calls herself Sirena.

At the grating sound of Sirena, I turned pale, and interrupted Scipio, saying, What do you tell me? Alas! it must be so! This cursed imp of Arragon is Calderona's charming Siren. To be sure she is, answered he, the very same! I thought you would be delighted at the news. Quite the reverse, replied I. It portends more sorrow than laughter: do not you anticipate the consequences? None of any ill omen, rejoined Scipio. What is there to be afraid of? It is not certain that don Rodrigo will rub his forehead; and in case any good-natured friend should shew it him in the glass, you had better let the minister into the secret beforehand. Tell him all the circumstances straight forward as they happened: he will see that there has been no trick on your part; and if after that

Calderona should attempt to do you an ill office with his excellency, it will be as clear as daylight that he is only actuated by a spirit of revenge.

Scipio removed all my apprehensions by this advice, which I followed, in acquainting the duke of Lerma at once with this unlucky discovery. My aspect, while telling my tale, was sorrowful, and my tone faltering, in evidence of my contrition for having unadvisedly brought the prince and don Rodrigo into such close quarters; but the minister was more disposed to roast his favourite than to pity him. Indeed he ordered me to let the matter take its own course; considering it as a feather in Calderona's cap, to dispute the empire of love with so illustrious a rival, and not to be worse used than his lawful prince. The count de Lemos too was informed how things stood, and promised me his protection, if the first secretary should come at the knowledge of the intrigue, and attempt to undermine me with the duke.

Trusting to have secured the frail bark of my fortunes, by this notable contrivance from the rocks and quicksands that threatened it, my mind was once more at rest. I continued attending the prince on his visits to Catalina, siren-like in nature as in nickname, who was fertile in quaint devices to keep don Rodrigo away from next door, whenever the course of business required her to devote her nights to his royal competitor.

CHAPTER XIII.

Gil Blas goes on personating the great man. He hears news of his family: a touch of nature on the occasion. A grand quarrel with Fabricio.

I MENTIONED some time ago, that in the morning there was usually a crowd of people in my anti-chamber, coming to negotiate little private concerns in the way of politics; but I would never suffer them to open their business by word of mouth; but adopting court precedent, or rather giving myself the airs of a jack in office, my language to every suitor was: Send in a memorial on the subject. My tongue ran so glibly to that tune, that one day I gave my landlord the official answer, when he came to put me in mind of a twelvemonth's rent in arrear. As for my butcher and baker, they spared me the trouble of asking for their memorials, by never giving me time to run up a bill. Scipio, who mimicked me so exactly, that only those behind the scenes could distinguish the double from the principal performer, held his head just as high with the poor devils who curried favour with him, as a step of the ladder to my ministerial patronage.

There was another foolish trick of mine, of which I do not by any means pretend to make a merit;

neither more nor less than the extreme assurance of talking about the first nobility, just as if I had been one of their kidney. Suppose, for example, the duke of Alva, the duke of Ossuna, or the duke of Medina Sidonia were mentioned in conversation, I called them without ceremony, my friend Alva, that good-natured fellow Ossuna, or that comical dog Medina Sidonia. In a word, my pride and vanity had swelled to such a height, that my father and mother were no longer among the number of my honoured relatives. Alas! poor understrappers, I never thought of asking whether you had sunk or were swimming in the Asturias. A thought about you never came into my head. The court has all the soporific virtues of Lethe, in the case of poor relations.

My family was completely obliterated from the tablets of my memory, when one morning a young man knocked at my door, and begged to speak with me for a moment in private. He was shown into my closet, where, without asking him to take a chair, as he seemed to be quite a common fellow, I desired to know abruptly what he wanted. How! signor Gil Blas? said he, do you not remember me? It was in vain that I perused the lines of his face over and over again; I was obliged to tell him fairly that he had the advantage of me. Why I am one of your old schoolfellows! replied he; bred and born in Oviedo; Bertrand Muscada the grocer's son, next

door neighbour to your uncle the canon. I recollect you as well as if it was but yesterday. We have played a thousand times together at blind man's buff and prison bars.

My youthful recollections, answered I, are very transient and confused. Blind man's buff and prison bars are but childish amusement! The burden of state affairs leaves me little time to ruminate on the trifles of my younger days. I am come to Madrid, said he, to settle accounts with my father's correspondent. I heard talk of you! Folks say that you have a good birth at court, and are already almost as well off as a Jew broker. I thought I would just call in and say, how d'ye do? On my return into the country, your family will jump out of their skins for joy, when they hear how famously you are getting on.

It was impossible in decency to avoid asking how my father, my mother, and my uncle stood in the world; but that duty was performed in so gingerly a manner, as to leave the grocer little room to compliment dame nature on her liberal provision of instinct. He seemed quite shocked at my indifference for such near kindred; and told me bluntly, with his coarse shopman's familiarity, Methinks you might have shewn more heartiness and natural feeling for your kinsfolk! Why you ask after them just as if they were vermin! Your father and mother are still at service: take that in your dish! And the

good canon, Gil Perez, eat up with gout, rheumatism, and old age, has one foot in the grave. People should feel as people ought; and seeing that you are in a birth to be a blessing to your poor parents, take a friend's advice, and allow them two hundred pistoles a year. That will be doing a handsome thing, and making them comfortable, and then you may spend the rest upon yourself with a good conscience. Instead of being softened by this family picture, I only resented the officiousness of unasked advice. A more delicate and covert remonstrance might perhaps have made its impression; but so bold a rebuke only hardened my heart. My sulky silence was not lost upon him; so that while he moralized himself out of charity into downright abuse, my choler began to overflow. Nay then! this is too much, answered I in a devil of a passion. Get about your business, master Muscada, and mind your own shop. You are a pretty fellow to preach to me! As if I was to be taught my duty by you. Without further parley, I handed the grocer out of my closet by the shoulder, and sent him off to weigh figs and nutmegs at Oviedo.

The home strokes he had laid on were not lost to my sober recollection. My neglect of filial piety struck home to my heart, and melted me into tears. When I recollected how much my childhood was indebted to my parents, what pains they had taken in my education, these affecting thoughts gave lan-

guage for the moment to the still small voice of nature and gratitude; but the language was never translated into solid sense and service. An habitual callousness succeeded this transient sensation, and peremptorily cancelled every obligation of humanity. There are many fathers besides mine, who will acknowledge this portrait of their sons.

Avarice and ambition, dividing me between them, annihilated every trace of my former temper. I lost all my gaiety; became absent and moping, in short, a most unsociable animal. Fabricio seeing me so furiously bent on accumulation, and so perfectly indifferent to him, very rarely came to see me. He could not help saying one day: In truth, Gil Blas, you are quite an altered man. Before you were about the court, you were always pleasant and easy. Now you are all agitation and turmoil. You form project after project to make a fortune, and the more you realize, the wider your views of aggrandizement extend. But this is not the worst! You have no longer that expansion of heart, those open manners which form the charm of friendship. On the contrary, you wrap yourself round, and shut the avenues of your heart even to me. In your very civilities, I detect the violence you impose upon yourself. In short, Gil Blas is no longer the same Gil Blas whom I once knew.

You really have a most happy talent for bantering, answered I with repulsive jocularity. But this

metamorphose into the shag of a savage is not perceptible to myself. Your own eyes, replied he, are insensible to the change, because they are fascinated. But the fact remains the same. Now, my friend, tell me fairly and honestly: shall we live together as heretofore? When I used to knock at your door in the morning, you came and opened it yourself between asleep and awake, and I walked in without ceremony. Now, what a difference! You have an establishment of servants. They keep me cooling my heels in your antichamber; my name must be sent in before I can speak to you. When this is got over, what is my reception? A cold inclination of the head, and the insolent strut of office. Any one would suppose that my visits were growing troublesome! Can you suppose this to be treatment for a man who was once on equal terms with you? No, Santillane, it can never be, nor will I bear it longer. Farewell! Let us part without ill blood. We shall both be better asunder; you will get rid of a troublesome censor, and I of a purse-proud upstart who does not know himself.

I felt myself more exasperated than reformed by his reproaches; and suffered him to take his departure without the slightest effort to overcome his resolution. In the present temper of my mind, the friendship of a poet did not seem a catch of sufficient importance to break one's heart about its loss. I found ample amends in the intimacy of some su-

baltern attendants about the king's person, with whom a similarity of humour had lately connected me closely. These new acquaintance of mine were for the most part men from no one knows where, pushed up to their appointments more by luck than merit. They had all got into warm births; and, wretches as they were, measuring their own consequence by the excess of royal bounty, forgot their origin as scandalously as I forgot mine. We gave ourselves infinite credit for what told so much and bitterly to our disgrace. O fortune! what a jade you are, to distribute your favours at hap-hazard as you do! Epictetus was perfectly in the right, when he likened you to a jilt of fashion, prowling about in masquerade, and tipping the wink to every blackguard who parades the street.

BOOK THE NINTH.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

Scipio's scheme of marriage for Gil Blas. The match, a rich goldsmith's daughter. Circumstances connected with this speculation.

ONE evening, on the departure of my supper company, finding myself alone with Scipio, I asked him what he had been doing that day. Striking a master-stroke, answered he. I intend that you should marry. A goldsmith of my acquaintance has an only daughter, and I mean to make up a match between you.

A goldsmith's daughter! exclaimed I with a disdainful air: are you out of your senses? Can you think of tying me up to a trinket-maker? People of a certain character in society, and on a certain footing at court, ought to have much higher views of things. Pardon me, sir! rejoined Scipio, do not take the subject up in that light. Recollect that nobility accrues by the male side, and do not ride a higher horse than a thousand jockeys of quality

whom I could name. Do you know that the heiress in question will bring an hundred thousand ducats in her pocket? Is not that a pretty little sprig of jewellery? To the resounding echo of so large a sum, my ears were instantly symphonious. The day is your own, said I to my secretary; the fortune determines the case in the lady's favour. When do you mean to put me in possession? Fair and softly, sir, answered he, the more haste the worse speed. It will be necessary for me first to communicate the affair to the father, and instil the advantage of it into his capacity. Good! rejoined I with a burst of laughter; is it thereabouts you are? The match is far advanced in its progress towards consummation. Much nearer than you suppose, replied he. But one hour's conversation with the goldsmith, and I pledge myself for his consent. But, before we go any further, let us come to an agreement, if you please. Supposing that I should transfer a hundred thousand ducats to you, what would my commission be? Twenty thousand! was my answer. Heaven be praised therefore! said he. I guessed your gratitude at ten thousand; so that it doubles mine in a similar case. Come on then! I will set this negociation on foot to-morrow morning; and you may count upon its success, or I am little better than one of the foolish ones.

In fact, he said to me two days afterwards: I have spoken to signor Gabriel Salero, my friend the gold-

smith. On the loud report of your high desert and credit, he has lent a favourable ear to my offer of you for a son-in-law. You are to have his daughter with a hundred thousand ducats, provided you can make it appear clearly that you are in possession of the minister's good graces. Since that is the case, said I confidently to Scipio, I shall soon be married. But not entirely to forget the girl, have you seen her? is she pretty? Not quite so pretty as her fortune, answered he. Between ourselves, this heiress's looks are as hard as her cash. Luckily, you are perfectly indifferent about that. Stone blind, by the light of the sun, my good fellow! replied I. As for us whimsical fellows about court, we marry merely for the sake of marrying. When we want beauty, we look for it in our friend's wives; and if, by fates and destinies, the sweets are wasted on our own, their flavour is so maukish to our palate, that there is some merit in their not carrying the commodity to a foreign market.

This is not all, resumed Scipio: signor Gabriel hopes for the pleasure of your company to supper this evening. By agreement, there is to be no mention of marriage. He has invited several of his mercantile friends to this entertainment, where you will take your chance with the rest, and to-morrow he means to sup with you on the same terms. By this you will perceive his drift of looking before he leaps. You will do well to be a little on your guard before

him. Oh! for the matter of that, interrupted I with an air of confidence, let him scrutinize me as closely as he pleases, the result cannot fail to be in my favour.

All this happened as it was foretold. I was introduced at the goldsmith's, who received me with the familiarity of an old acquaintance. A vulgar dog, but warm! and as troublesome with his civility, as a prude with her virtue. He presented me to signora Eugenia his wife, and the youthful Gabriela his daughter. I opened wide my budget of compliments, without infringing the treaty, and prattled soft nothings to them, in all the vacuity of courtly dialogue.

Gabriela, with submission to my secretary's better taste, was not altogether so repulsive; whether by dint of being outrageously bedizened, or because I looked at her in the raree-shew box of her fortune. A charming house this of signor Gabriel! There is less silver, I verily believe, in the Peruvian mines, than under his roof. That metal presented itself to the view in all directions, under a thousand different forms. Every room, and especially that where we were entertained, was a fairy palace. What a bird's eye view for a son-in-law! The old codger, to do the thing genteelly, had collected five or six merchants about him, all plodding spirit-wearing personages. Their tongues could only talk of what their hearts were set upon: it was high change all

supper-time; but unfortunately wit was at a discount.

Next night, it was my turn to treat the goldsmith. Not being able to dazzle him with my sideboard, I had recourse to another artifice. I invited to supper such of my friends as made the finest figure at court; hangers-on of state, noted for the unwieldiness of their ambition. These fellows could not talk on common topics: the brilliant and lucrative posts at which they aimed were all canvassed in detail; this too made its way. Poor counting-house Gabriel, in amazement at the loftiness of their ideas, shrunk into insignificance, in spite of all his hoards, on a comparison with these wonderful men. As for me, in all the plausibility of moderation, I professed to wish for nothing more than a comfortable fortune; a snug box and a competence: whereupon these gluttons of the loaves and fishes cried out with one voice that I was wrong, absolutely criminal; for the prime minister would do any thing upon earth for me, and it was an act of duty to anoint my fingers with bird-lime. My honoured papa lost not a word of all this; and seemed, at going away, to take his leave with some complacency.

Scipio went of course the next morning, to ask him how he liked me. Extremely well indeed, answered the knight of the ledger; the lad has won my very heart. But, good master Scipio, I conjure you by our long acquaintance to deal with me as a

true friend. We have all our weak side, as you well know. Tell me where signor de Santillane is fallible. Is he fond of play? does he wench? On what lay are his snug little vices? Do not fight shy, I beseech you. It is very unkind, signor Gabriel, to put such a question, retorted the go-between. Your interest is more to me than my master's. If he had any slippery propensities, likely to make your daughter unhappy, would I ever have proposed him as a son-in-law? The deuce a bit! I am too much at your service. But, between ourselves, he has but one fault; that of being faultless. He is too wise for a young man. So much the better, replied the goldsmith; he is the more like me. You may go, my friend, and tell him he shall have my daughter, and should have her, though he knew no more of the minister than I do.

As soon as my secretary had reported this conversation, I flew to thank Salero for his partiality. He had already told his mind to his wife and daughter, who gave me to understand by their reception, that they yielded without disgust. I carried my father-in-law to the duke of Lerma, whom I had informed the evening before, and presented him with due ceremony. His excellency gave him a most gracious reception, and congratulated him on having chosen a man for his son-in-law, for whom he himself had so great a regard, and meant to do such great things. Then did he expatiate on my good

qualities, and, in short, said so much to my honour, that honest Gabriel thought he had met with the best match in Spain. His joy oozed out at his eyes. On parting, he pressed me in his arms, and said: My son, I am so impatient to see you Gabriela's husband, that the affair shall be finally settled within a week at latest.

CHAPTER II.

In the progress of political vacancies, Gil Blas recollects that there is such a man in the world as don Alphonso de Leyva; and renders him a service from motives of vanity.

LET us leave my marriage to take care of itself for a season. The order of events requires me to recount a service rendered to my old master don Alphonso. I had entirely forgotten that gentleman's existence; but a circumstance recalled it to my recollection.

The government of Valencia became vacant at this time; and put me in mind of don Alphonso de Leyva. I considered within myself that the employment would suit him to a nicety; and determined to

apply for it on his behalf, not so much out of friendship as ostentation. If I could but procure it for him, it would do me infinite honour. I told the duke of Lerma that I had been steward to don Cæsar de Leyva and his son; and that having every reason in the world to feel myself obliged to them, I should take it as a favour if he would give the government of Valencia to one or other of them. The minister answered: Most willingly, Gil Blas. I love to see you grateful and generous. Besides, the family stands very high in my esteem. The Leyvas are loyal subjects; so that the place cannot be better bestowed. You may take it as a wedding present, and do what you like with it.

Delighted at the success of my application, I went to Calderona in a prodigious hurry, to get the patent made out for don Alphonso. There was a great crowd, waiting in respectful silence, till don Rodrigo should come and give audience. I made my way through, and the closet door opened as if by sympathy. There were no one knows how many military and civil officers, with other people of consequence, among whom Calderona was dividing his attentions. His different reception of different people was curious. A slight inclination of the head was enough for some; others he honoured with a profusion of courtly grimace, and bowed them out of the closet. The proportions of civility were weighed to a scruple. On the other hand, there

were some suitors who, shocked at his cold indifference, cursed in their secret soul the necessity for their cringing before such a monkey of an idol. Others, on the contrary, were laughing in their sleeve at his gross and self-sufficient air. But the scene was thrown away upon me; nor was I likely to profit by such a lesson. It was exactly the counterpart of my own behaviour: and I never thought of ascertaining whether my deportment was popular or offensive, so long as there was no violation of outward respect.

Don Rodrigo accidentally casting a look towards me, left a gentleman, to whom he was speaking, without ceremony, and came to pay his respects with the most unaccountable tokens of high consideration. Ah! my dear colleague, exclaimed he, what occasion procures me the pleasure of seeing you here? Is there any thing we can do for you? I told him my business; whereupon he assured me, in the most obliging terms, that the affair should be expedited within four-and-twenty hours. Not satisfied with these overwhelming condescensions, he conducted me to the door of his antichamber, whither he never attended any but the nobility of first rank. His farewell was as flattering as his reception.

What is the meaning of all this palaver? said I while retreating: has any raven croaked my entrance, and prophesied promotion to Calderona by my overthrow? Does he really languish for my friendship?

or does he feel the ground giving way under his feet, and wish to save himself by clinging to the branches of my favour and protection? It seemed a moot point, which of these conjectures might be the right. The following day, on my return, his behaviour was of the same stamp; caresses and civilities poured in upon me in torrents. It is true that other people, who attempted to speak to him, were rumped in exact proportion with the blandishments of his face towards me. He snarled at some, petrified others, and made the whole circle run the gauntlet of his displeasure. But they were all amply avenged by an occurrence, the relation of which may give a gentle hint to all the clerks and secretaries on the list of my readers.

A man very plainly dressed, and certainly not looking at all like what he was, came up to Calderona, and spoke to him about a memorial, stated to have been presented by himself to the duke of Lerma. Don Rodrigo, without looking from his clothes up to his face, said in a sharp ungracious tone: Who may you happen to be, honest man? They called me Francillo in my childhood, answered the stranger unabashed; my next style and title was that of don Francillo de Zuniga; and my present name is the count de Pedrosa. Calderona was all in a twitter at this discovery, and attempted to stammer out an excuse, when he found that he had to do with a man of the first quality. Sir, said he

to the count, I have to beg you ten thousand pardons; but not knowing whom I had the honour to ..... I want none of your apologies, interrupted Francillo with proud indignation; they are as nauseous as your rudeness was unbecoming. Recollect henceforth, that a minister's secretary ought to receive all descriptions of people with good manners. You may be vain enough to affect the representative of your master; but the public know you for his menial servant.

The haughty don Rodrigo blushed blue at this rebuke. Yet it did not mend his manners one whit. On me, it made a salutary impression. I determined to take care and ascertain the rank of my petitioners, before I gave a loose to the insolence of office; and to inflict torture only upon mutes. As don Alphonso's patent was made out, I sent it by a purpose messenger, with a letter from the duke of Lerma, announcing the royal favour. But I took no notice of my own share in the appointment, nor even accompanied it with a line, in the fond hope of announcing it by word of mouth, and surprising him agreeably, when he came to court on occasion of taking the customary oaths.

CHAPTER III.

Preparations for the marriage of Gil Blas. A spoke in the wheel of Hymen.

And now once more for my lovely Gabriela! We were to be married in a week. Preparations were making on both sides for the ceremony. Salero ordered a rich wardrobe for the bride, and I hired a waiting-woman for her, a footman, and a gentleman usher of decent aspect and advanced years. The whole establishment was provided by Scipio, who longed more longingly than myself for the hour when we were to be fingering the fortune.

On the evening before the happy day, I was supping with my father-in-law, the rest of the company being made up of uncles, aunts, and cousins of either sex and every degree. The part of a supple-visaged son-in-law sat upon me to perfection. Nothing could exceed my profound respect for the goldsmith and his wife; or the transports of my passion at Gabriela's feet: while I smoothed my way into the graces of the family, by listening with impregnable patience to their witless repartees, and irrational ratiocinations. Thus did I gain the great end of all my forbearance, the pleasure of pleasing

my new relations. Every individual of the clan felt himself a foot taller for the honour of my alliance.

The repast ended, the company moved into a large room, where we were entertained with a concert of vocal and instrumental music, not the worst that was ever heard, though the performers were not selected from the choicest bands at Madrid. Some lively airs put us in mind of dancing. Heaven knows what sort of performers we must have been, when they took me for the coryphæus of the opera, though I never had but two or three lessons from a petty dancing-master, who taught the pages on the establishment of the marchioness de Chaves. After we had tired our tendons, it was time to think of going home. There was no end of my bows and God-bless-you's. Farewell, my dear son-in-law, said Salero as he squeezed my hand; I shall be at your house in the morning, with the portion in ready money. You will be welcome, come when you list, my dear father-in-law, answered I. Afterwards, wishing the family good night, I jumped into my carriage, and ordered it to drive home.

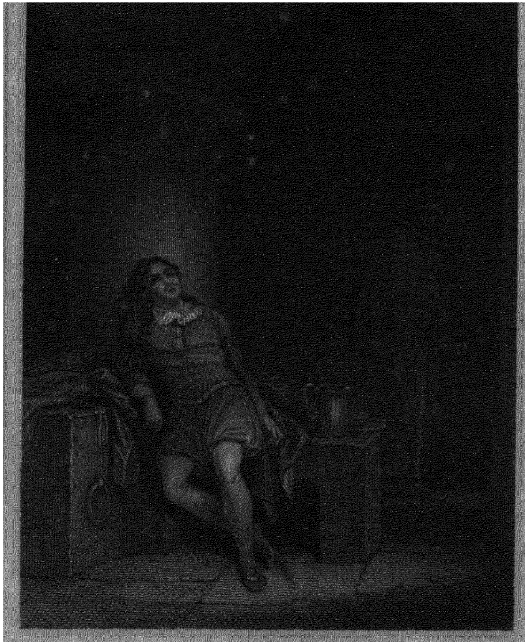
Scarcely had I got two hundred yards from signor Gabriel's house, when fifteen or twenty men, some on foot and some on horseback, all with swords and fire-arms, surrounded and stopped the coach, crying out: *In the name of our sovereign lord the king.* They dragged me out by main force, and thrust me into a hack chaise, when the leader of the

party got in with me, and ordered the driver to go for Segovia. There could be no doubt but the honest gentleman by my side was an alguazil. I wanted to know something about the cause of my arrest; but he answered in the language of those gentry, which is very bad language, that he had other things to do than to satisfy my impertinent curiosity. I suggested that he might have mistaken his man. No, no, retorted he, the fool is wiser than that. You are signor de Santillane; and in that case, you are to go along with me. Not being able to deny that fact, it became an act of prudence to hold my tongue. For the remainder of the night, we traversed Mancanarez in sulky silence; changed horses at Colmenar, and arrived the next evening at Segovia, where the lodging provided for me was in the tower.

CHAPTER IV.

The treatment of Gil Blas in the tower of Segovia. The cause of his imprisonment.

THEIR first favour was to clap me up in a cell, where they left me on the straw like a criminal, whose only earthly portion was to con over his dying



Painted by R. Smirke, R.A. Engraved by I. Romney

GIL BLAS.

GIL BLAS IMPRISONED IN THE TOWER OF SEGOVIA.
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speech in solitude. I passed the night, not in bewailing my fate, for it had not yet presented itself in all its aggravation, but in endeavouring to divine its cause. Doubtless it must have been Calderona's handywork. And yet though his branching honours might have pressed thick upon his senses, I could not conceive how the duke of Lerma could have been induced to treat me so inhumanly. Sometimes I apprehended my arrest to have been without his excellency's knowledge: at other times I thought him the contriver of it, for some political reasons, such as weigh with ministers when they sacrifice their accomplices at the shrine of state policy.

My mind was vibrating to and fro with these various conjectures, when the dawn peeping in at my little grated window, presented to my sight all the horror of the place where I was confined. Then did I vent my sorrows without ceasing, and my eyes became two springs of tears, flowing inexhaustibly at the remembrance of my prosperous state. Pending this paroxysm of grief, a turnkey brought my day's allowance of bread and water. He looked at me, and on the contemplation of my tear-besprinkled visage, gaoler as he was, there came over him a sentiment of pity: Do not despair, said he. This life is full of crosses; but mind them not. You are young; after these days, you will live to see better. In the mean time, eat at the king's mess with what appetite you may.

My comforter withdrew with this quaint invita-

tion, answered by my groans and tears. The rest of the day was spent in cursing my wayward destiny, without thinking of my empty stomach. As for the royal morsel, it seemed more like the message of wrath than the boon of benevolence; the tantalizing protraction of pain, rather than the solace of affliction.

Night came; and with it the rattle of a key in my key-hole. My dungeon door opened, and in came a man with a wax-light in his hand. He advanced towards me, saying: Signor Gil Blas, behold in me one of your old friends. I am don Andrew de Tordesillas, in the archbishop of Grenada's service while you enjoyed that prelate's favour. You may recollect engaging his interest in my behalf, and thereby procuring me a post in Mexico; but instead of embarking for the Indies, I stopped in the town of Alicant. There I married the governor's daughter, and by a series of adventures of which you shall hereafter have the particulars, I am now warden of this tower. It is expressly forbidden me to let you speak to any living soul, to give you any better bed than straw, or any other sustenance than bread and water. But, besides that your misfortunes interest my humanity, you have done me service, and gratitude countervails the harshness of my orders. They think to make me the instrument of their cruelty; but it is my better purpose to soften the rigour of your captivity. Get up and follow me.

Though my humane keeper was entitled to some

acknowledgment, my spirits were so affected as to interdict my speech. All I could do was to attend him. We crossed a court, and mounted a narrow staircase to a little room at the top of the tower. It was no small surprise, on entering, to find a table with lights on it, neatly set out with covers for two. They will serve up immediately, said Tordesillas. We are going to sup together. This snug retreat is appointed for your lodging; it will agree better with you than your cell. From your window, you will look down on the flowery banks of the Erêma, and the delicious vale of Coca, bounded by the mountains which divide the two Castiles. At first you will care little for prospects; but when time shall have softened your keener sensations into a composed melancholy, it will be a pleasure to feast your eyes on such engaging scenes. Then, as for linen, and other necessaries befitting a man accustomed to the comforts of life, they shall be always at your service. Your bed and board shall be such as you could wish, with a plentiful supply of books. In a word, you shall have every thing but your liberty.

My spirits were a little tranquillized by these obliging offers. I took courage, and returned my best thanks; assuring him that his generous conduct restored me to life, and that I hoped at some time or other to find an opportunity of testifying my gratitude. To be sure! and why should you not? answered he. Did you fancy yourself a prisoner for

life? Nothing less likely! and I would lay a wager that you will be released in a very few months. What say you, signor don Andrew? exclaimed I. Then surely you are acquainted with the occasion of my misfortune. You guess right, replied he. The alguazil who brought you hither told me the whole story in confidence. The king, hearing that the count de Lemos and you were in the habit of escorting the prince of Spain by night to a house of suspicious character, as a punishment for your loose morals, has banished the count, and sent you hither, to be treated in the style of which you have had a specimen. And how, said I, did that circumstance come to the king's knowledge? That is what I am most curious to ascertain. And that, answered he, is precisely what the alguazil did not tell, apparently because he did not know.

At this epoch of our conversation, the servants brought in supper. When every thing was set in order, Tordesillas sent away the attendants, not wishing our conversation to be overheard. He shut the door, and we took our seats opposite to each other. Let us say grace and fall to, said he. Your appetite ought to be good after two days of fasting. Under this impression, he loaded my plate as if he had been cramming the craw of a starveling. In fact, nothing was more likely than that I should play the devil among the ragouts: but what is likely does not always happen. Though my intestines were

yearning for support, their staple stuck in my throat: for my heart loathed all pleasurable indulgence in the present state of my affairs. In vain did my warden, to drive away the blue devils, pledge me continually, and expatiate on the excellence of his wine; imperishable nectar would have been pricked according to the fastidious report of my palate. This being the case, he went another way to work, and told me the story of his marriage, with as much humour as such a subject would admit. Here he was still less successful. So wandering was my attention, that before the end, I had forgotten the beginning and the middle. At length he was convinced that there was no diverting my gloomy thoughts for that evening. After finishing his solitary supper, he rose from table, saying: Signor de Santillane, I shall leave you to your repose, or rather to the free indulgence of your own reveries. But, take my word for it, your misfortune will not be of long continuance. The king is naturally good. When his anger shall have passed away, and your deplorable estate shall occur to his milder thoughts, your punishment will appear sufficient in his eyes. With these words, my kind-hearted gaoler went down stairs, and sent the servants to take away. Not even the brass candlesticks were left behind; and I went to bed by the palpable darkness of a glimmering lamp, suspended against the wall.

CHAPTER V.

His reflections before he went to sleep that night, and the noise that waked him.

Two hours at least were my thoughts employed on what Tordesillas had told me. Here then am I, for having lent myself to the pleasures of the heir apparent! It was certainly not having my wits about me, to pander for so young a prince. Therein consists my crime; had he been arrived at a more knowing age, the king perhaps might only have laughed at what has now made him so angry. But who can have given such counsel to the monarch, without dreading the prince's resentment or the duke of Lerma's? That minister will doubtless take ample vengeance for his nephew the count de Lemos. How can the king have made the discovery? That is above my comprehension.

This last was the eternal burden of my song. But the idea most afflictive to my mind, what drove me to despair, and laid fiend-like hold upon my fancy, was the unquestioned plunder of my effects. My strong box, exclaimed I, my dear wealth, what is become of you? Into what hands have you fallen? Alas! you are lost in less time than you

were gained! The ruinous confusion of my household was the perpetual death's-head of my imagination. Yet this wilderness of melancholy ideas sheltered me from absolute distraction: sleep, which had shunned my wretched straw, now paid his readier visit to my soft and gentlemanly couch. Watching and wine too imparted a stronger narcotic to his poppies. My slumbers were profound; and to all appearance, the day might have peeped in upon my repose, if I had not been awakened all at once by such sounds as rarely perforate a prison wall. I heard the thrum of a guitar, accompanying a man's voice. My whole attention was absorbed; but the invisible musician paused, and left the fleeting impression of a dream. An instant afterwards, my ear was soothed with the sound of the same instrument, and the same voice.

Wisely the ant against poor winter hoards
The stock which summer's wealth affords;
In grasshoppers, that must at autumn die,
How vain were such an industry?

Of love or fortune the deceitful light
Might half excuse our cheated sight,
If it of life the whole small time would stay,
And be our sunshine all the day. *

* To have substituted, with a slight variation, these two stanzas from Cowley for a translation of the common-place couplet in the original, will probably not be thought to require any apology. They necessarily involve a change in the consequent reflections of our hero. TRANSLATOR.

These verses, which sounded as if they had been sung expressly for the dirge of my departed happiness, were only an aggravation of my feelings. The truth of the sentiment, said I, is but too well exemplified in me. The meteor of court favour has but plunged me in substantial darkness; the summer sunshine of ambition is quenched in these autumnal glooms. Now did I sink again into cold and comfortless meditation: my miseries began to flow afresh, as if they fed and grew upon their own vital stream. Yet my wailings ended with the night; and the first rays which played upon my chamber wall, amused my mind into composure. I got up to open my window, and let the vivid air of morning into my room. Then I glanced over the country, so attractively depicted in the description of my keeper. It did not seem to justify his panegyric. The Erêma, a second Tagus in my magnifying fancy, was little better than a brook. Its flowery banks were fringed with nettles, and arrayed in all the majesty of thistles; the delicious vale in this fairy prospect was a barren wilderness, untamed by human labour. It therefore was very evident, that my keener sensations were not yet softened into such a composed melancholy, as could give any but a jaundiced colouring to the landscape.

I began dressing, and had already half finished my toilet, when Tordesillas ushered in an old chambermaid, laden with shirts and towels. Signor Gil

Blas, said he, here is your linen. Do not be saving of it; there shall always be as many changes as you can possibly want. Well now! and how have you passed the night? Has the drowsy god administered his anodyne? I could have slept till this time, answered I, if I had not been awakened by a voice singing to a guitar. The cavalier who has disturbed your repose, resumed he, is a state prisoner; and his chamber is contiguous to yours. He is a knight of the military order of Calatrava, and is a very accomplished person. His name is don Gaston de Cogollos. You may meet as often as you like, and take your meals together. It will afford reciprocal consolation to compare your fortunes. There can be no doubt of your being agreeable to one another. I assured don Andrew how sensible I was of his indulgence in allowing me to blend my sorrows with those of my fellow-sufferer; and, as I betrayed some impatience to be acquainted with him, our accommodating warden met my wishes on the very same day. He fixed me to dine with don Gaston, whose prepossessing physiognomy and symmetry of feature struck me sensibly. Judge what it must have been, to make so strong an impression on eyes accustomed to encounter the dazzling exterior of the court. Figure to yourself a man fashioned in the mould of pleasure; one of those heroes in romance, who has only to shew his

face, and banish the sweet sleep from the eyelids of princesses. Add to this, that nature, who is generally bountiful with one hand and niggardly with the other, had crowned the perfections of Cogollos with wit and valour. He was a man, whose like, take him for all in all, we might not soon look upon again.

If this fine fellow was mightily to my taste, it was my good luck not to be altogether offensive to him. He no longer sang at night for fear of annoying me, though I begged him by no means to restrain his inclinations on my account. A bond of union is soon formed between brethren in misfortune. A close friendship succeeded to mere acquaintance, and strengthened from day to day. The liberty of uninterrupted intercourse contributed greatly to our mutual support; our burden became lighter by division.

One day after dinner, I went into his room, just as he was tuning his guitar. To hear him more at my ease, I sat down on the only stool; while he, reclining on his bed, played a pathetic air, and sang to it a ditty, expressing the despair of a lover and the cruelty of his mistress. When he had finished, I said to him with a smile: Sir knight, such strains as these could never be applicable to your own successes with the fair. You were not made to cope with female repulse. You think too well of me,

answered he. The verses you have just heard were composed to fit my own case; to soften a heart of adamant. You must hear my story, and in my story, my distresses.

CHAPTER VI.

History of don Gaston de Cogollos, and Donna Helena de Galisteo.

It will very soon be four years since I left Madrid to go and see my aunt donna Eleonora de Laxarilla at Coria: she is one of the richest dowagers in Old Castile, with myself for her only heir. Scarcely had I got within her doors, when love invaded my repose. The windows of my room faced the lattice of a lady living opposite: but the street was narrow, and her blinds pervious to the eye. It was an opportunity too delicious to be lost; and I found my neighbour so lovely, that my heart was captivated. The subject of my sentry-watch could not be mistaken. She marked it well; but she was not a girl to glory in the detection, still less to encourage my fooleries.

It was natural to enquire the name of this mighty

conqueror. I learnt it to be donna Helena; only daughter of don George de Galisteo, lord of a large domain near Coria. She had innumerable offers of marriage; but her father repulsed them all, because he meant to bestow her hand on his nephew don Austin de Olighera, who had uninterrupted access to his cousin while the settlements were preparing. This was no bar to my hopes: on the contrary, it whetted my eagerness: and the insolent pleasure of supplanting a favoured rival was, perhaps, at bottom equally my motive, with a more noble passion. My visual artillery was obstinately planted against my unyielding fair. Her attendant Felicia was not without the incense of a glance, to soften her rigid constancy in my favour; while nods and becks stood for the current coin of language. But all these efforts of gallantry were in vain: the maid was impregnable like her mistress: never was there such a pair of cold and cruel ones.

The commerce of the eyes being so unthrifty, I had recourse to different agents. My scouts were on the watch to hunt out what acquaintance Felicia might have in town. They discovered an old lady, by name Theodora, to be her most intimate friend, and that they often met. Delighted at the intelligence, I went point blank to Theodora, and engaged her by presents in my interest. She took my cause up heartily, promised to contrive an interview

for me with her friend, and kept her engagement the very next day.

I am no longer the wretch of yesterday, said I to Felicia, since my sufferings have melted you to pity. How deep is my debt to your friend, for her kind interference in my behalf! Sir, answered she, Theodora can do what she pleases with me. She has brought me over to your side of the question; and if I can do you a kindness, you shall soon be at the summit of your wishes: but, with all my partiality in your favour, I know not how far my efforts may be successful. It would be cruel to mislead you: the prize will not be gained without a severe conflict. The object of your passion is betrothed to another gentleman, and her character most inauspicious to your designs. Such is her pride, and so closely locked are her secrets within her own breast, that if, by constancy and assiduities, you could extort from her a few sighs, fancy not that her haughty spirit would indulge your ears with their music. Ah! my dear Felicia, exclaimed I in an agony, why will you thus magnify the obstacles in my way? To set them in array, will kill me. Lead me on with false hopes, if you will; but do not drive me to despair. With these words, I took one of her hands, pressed it between mine, and slid a diamond on her finger value three hundred pistoles, with such a moving compliment, as made her weep again.

Such speeches and corresponding actions deserved some scanty comfort. She smoothed a little the rugged path of love. Sir, said she, what I have just been telling you need not quite quench your hope. Your rival, it is true, is in possession of the ground. He comes back and fore as he pleases. He toys with her as often as he likes; but all that is in your favour. The habit of constant intercourse sheds a languor over their meetings. They part without pain, and come together without emotion. One would take them for man and wife. In a word, my mistress has no marks of violent love for don Austin. Besides, in point of person, there is such a difference between you and him, as cannot fail to catch the eye of a nice observer like donna Helena. Therefore do not be cast down. Continue your particular attentions. You shall have a second in me. I shall let no opportunity escape of pointing out to my mistress the merit of all your exertions to please her. In vain shall she entrench herself behind reserve; in spite of guard and garrison, I will ransack the muster-roll of her sentiments.

Now were my open attacks and secret ambuscades more fiercely pointed against the daughter of don George. Among the rest, I entertained her with a serenade. After the concert, Felicia, to sound her mistress, begged to know how she had been entertained. The singer had a good voice, said donna Helena. But how did you like the

words? replied the abigail. I scarcely noted them, returned the lady; the music engrossed my whole attention. The poetry excited as little curiosity as its author. If that is the case, exclaimed the chambermaid, poor don Gaston de Cogollos is reckoning without his host; and a miserable spendthrift of his glances, to be always ogling at our lattice-work. Perhaps it may not be he, said the mistress with petrifying indifference; but some other spark, announcing his passion by this concert. Excuse me, answered Felicia, it is don Gaston himself, who accosted me this morning in the street, and implored me to assure you how he adored, in defiance of your rigorous repulses: but that he should esteem himself the most blest of mortals, if you would allow him to soothe his desponding thoughts by all the most delicate and impassioned attentions. Judge now if I can be mistaken, after so open an avowal.

Don George's daughter changed countenance at once, and said to her servant with a severe frown, You might well have dispensed with the relation of this impertinent discourse. Bring me no more such idle tales; and tell this young madman, when next he accosts you, to play off his shallow artifices on some more accommodating fool; but, at all events, let him choose a more gentlemanly recreation, than that of lounging all day at his window, and prying into the privacy of my apartment.

This message was faithfully delivered at my next

interview with Felicia, who assured me that her mistress's modes of speech were not to be taken in their literal construction, but that my affairs were in the best possible train. For my part, being little read in the science of coquetry, and finding no favourable sense on the face of the author's original words, I was half out of humour with the wire-drawn comments of the critic. She laughed at my misgiving, and asked her friend for pen, ink, and paper, saying: Sir knight of the doleful countenance, write immediately to donna Helena as dolefully as you look. Make echo ring with your sufferings; outsigh the river's murmur; and, above all, let rocks and woods resound with the prohibition of appearing at your window. Then pawn your existence on obeying her, though without the possibility ever to redeem the pledge. Turn all that nonsense into pretty sentences, as you gay deceivers so well know how to do, and leave the rest to me. The event, I flatter myself, will redound more than you are aware to the honour of my penetration.

He must have been a strange lover, who would not have profited by so opportune an occasion of writing to his mistress. My letter was couched in the most pathetic terms. Felicia smiled at its contents; and said, that if the women knew the art of infatuating men, the men in return had borrowed their influence over women from the arch wheedler himself. My privy counsellor took the note, and

went back to don George's, with a special injunction that my windows should be fast shut for some days.

Madam, said she, going up to donna Helena, I met don Gaston. He must needs endeavour to come round me with his flattering speeches. In tremulous accents, like a culprit pleading against his sentence, he begged to know whether I had spoken to you on his behalf. Then, in prompt and faithful compliance with your orders, I snapped up the words out of his mouth. To be sure, my tongue did run at a fine rate against him. I called him all manner of names, and left him in the street like a stock, staring at my termagent loquacity. I am delighted, answered donna Helena, that you have disengaged me from that troublesome person. But there was no occasion to have snubbed him so unmercifully. A creature of your degree should always keep a good tongue in its mouth. Madam, replied the domestic, one cannot get rid of a determined lover, by mincing one's words. Though it comes to much the same thing when one flies into a passion. Don Gaston, for instance, was not to be bullied out of his senses. After having given it him on both sides of his ears, as I told you, I went on that errand of yours to the house of your relation. The lady, as ill-luck would have it, kept me longer than she ought. I say longer than she ought, because my plague and torment met me on my return. Who the deuce would have thought of seeing him? It

put me all in a twitter; but then my tongue, which at other times is apt to be in a twitter, stuck motionless in my mouth. While my tongue stuck motionless in my mouth, what did he do? He slid a paper into my hand without giving me time to consider whether I should take it or no, and made off in a moment.

After this introduction, she drew my letter from under her stays, and gave it with a half banter to her mistress, who affected to read it in humorous scorn, but digested the contents most greedily, and then put on the starch, offended prude. In good earnest, Felicia, said she with all the gravity she could assume, you were extremely off your guard, quite bewildered and fascinated, to have taken the charge of such an epistle. What construction would don Gaston put upon it? What must I think of it myself? You give me reason, by this strange behaviour, to mistrust your fidelity, while he must suspect me of encouraging his odious suit. Alas! he may, perhaps, lay that flattering unction to his soul, that my love is legible in these characters, and not his trespass. Only consider how low you lay my towering pride. Oh! quite the reverse, madam, answered the petticoated pleader; it is impossible for him to think that; and if he did, he would soon be convinced with a flea in his ear. I shall tell him, when next we meet, that I have delivered his letter, that you glanced at the superscription with petrify-

ing indifference, and then, without reading a word, tore it into ten thousand pieces. You may swear that I did not read it with a safe conscience, replied donna Helena. I should be puzzled to retrace a single sentiment. Don George's daughter, not contented with these words, suited the action to them, tore my letter, and imposed silence on my advocate.

As I had promised no longer to play the lover at my window, the farce of obedience was kept up for several days. Ogling being interdicted, my courtship was doomed to enter in at my Helena's obdurate ears. One night I attended under her balcony with musicians; the first bars of the serenade were already playing, when a swaggering blade, sword in hand, rushed in upon our harmony, laying about him to the right and left, to the utter discomfiture of the troop. Such mad warfare fired my tilting propensities to equal fury. The affray became serious. Donna Helena and her maid were disturbed by the clash of swords. They looked out at their lattice, and saw two men engaged. Their cries roused don George and his servants. The whole neighbourhood was assembled, to part the combatants. But they came too late: on the field of battle, bathed in its own blood and almost lifeless, lay my unfortunate body. They carried me to my aunt's, and sent for the best surgical assistance in the place.

All the world was merciful, and wished me well, especially donna Helena, whose heart was now unmasked. Her forced severity yielded to her natural feelings. Would you believe it? The cold, relentless insensible was kindled into the warmest of love's votaries. She wore out the remainder of the night in weeping with her faithful confidante, and giving her cousin, don Austin de Olighera, to perdition: for him they taxed with the plotted massacre, and the bill was a true one. He could hide his heart, as well as his cousin: he therefore watched my motions, without seeming to suspect them; and fancying them not to be without a corresponding impulse, he resolved not to be sacrificed with impunity. The accident was an awkward one to me; but it ended in overpowering rapture. Dangerous as my wound was, the surgeons soon brought me about. I was still confined to my chamber, when my aunt, donna Eleonora, went over to don George, and made proposals for donna Helena. He consented the more readily to the marriage, as he never expected to see don Austin again. The good old man was afraid of his daughter's not liking me, because cousin Olighera had kept her company; but she was so tractable to the parental behest, as to furnish grounds for believing that in Spain, as in other countries, the species, not the individual, is the object with the sex.

Felicia, at our first private meeting, communicated

the emotions of her mistress on my misfortune. Now, like another Paris, I thought Troy well lost for my Helen, and blessed the happy consequences of my wound. Don George allowed me to speak with his daughter in presence of her attendant. What a heavenly interview! I begged and prayed the lady so earnestly to tell me, whether her sufferance of my vows was forced upon her by her father, that she at length confessed her obedience to be in unison with her inclinations. After so delicious a declaration, my whole soul was given up to love and pleasurable gratifications. Our nuptials were to be graced by a magnificent procession of all the principal people in Coria and the neighbourhood.

I gave a splendid party at my aunt's country-house, in the suburbs on the side of Manroi. Don George, his daughter, the family, and friends on both sides were present. There was a concert of vocal and instrumental music, with a company of strolling players, to represent a comedy. In the middle of the festivities, some one whispered me that a man wanted to speak with me in the hall. I got up from table to go and see who it was. The stranger looked like a gentleman's servant. He put a letter into my hand, containing these words: "If you have any sense of honour, as a knight of your order ought to have, you will not fail to attend to-morrow morning in the plain of Manroi. There you will find an antagonist, ready to give you your

revenge for his former attack upon your person, or, what he rather hopes and meditates, to spoil your connubial transports with donna Helena.

DON AUSTIN DE OLIGHERA."

If love is a Spanish passion, revenge is the Spanish lunacy. Such a note as this was not to be read with composure. At the mere subscription of don Austin, there kindled in my veins a fire, which almost made me forget the claims of hospitality. I was tempted to steal away from my company, and seek my antagonist on the instant. For fear of disturbing the merriment, however, I bridled in my rage, and said to the messenger: My friend, you may tell your employer that I shall meet him on the appointed spot at sun-rise, and resume the contest with obstinacy equal to his own.

After sending this answer, I resumed my seat at table with so composed a mien, that no creature had the least suspicion of what had occurred. During the rest of the day, I gave myself up to the pleasures of the festival, which ended not till midnight. The guests then returned to town; but I staid behind, under pretext of taking the air on the following morning. Instead of going to bed, I watched for the dawn with maddening impatience. With the first ray I got on horseback, and rode alone towards Manroi. On the plain was a horseman, riding up to me at full speed. I pushed forward, and we met half-way. It was my rival. Knight, said he,

superciliously, it is against my will that I meet you a second time on the same occasion; but you have brought your fate on yourself. After the adventure of the serenade, you ought to have waived your pretensions to don George's daughter, or at least to have been assured that the support of them must cost you dearer than a single encounter. You are too much elated, answered I, with an advantage which is less owing perhaps to your superior skill, than to the darkness of the night. Remember, that victory is of the same blind family with fortune. It shall be my lot to teach you, replied he with insulting scorn, that I have unsealed the eyes of both.

At this proud defiance, we both dismounted, tied our horses to a tree, and engaged with equal fury. I must candidly acknowledge the prowess of my antagonist, who was a consummate master of fencing. My life was exposed to the greatest possible danger. Nevertheless, as the strong is often vanquished by the weak, my rival, in spite of all his science, received a thrust through his heart, and fell a lifeless corpse.

I immediately returned, and told a confidential servant what had happened, requesting him to take horse and acquaint my aunt, before the officers of justice could get intelligence of the event. He was also to obtain from her a supply of money and jewels, and then join me at the first inn as you enter Plazencia.

All this was performed within three hours. Donna Eleonora rather triumphed than mourned over a catastrophe, which restored my injured honour; and sent me large remittances for my travels abroad, till the affair had blown over.

Not to dwell on indifferent circumstances, suffice it to say, that I embarked for Italy, and equipped myself so as to make a respectable figure at the several courts.

While I was endeavouring to beguile the weary hours of absence, Helena was weeping at home from the same cause. Instead of joining in the family resentment, her heart was panting for a compromise, and for my speedy return. Six months had already elapsed, and I firmly believe that her constancy would have been proof against the attack of time, had time been seconded by no more powerful ally. Don Blas de Combados, a gentleman from the western coast of Galicia, came to Coria, to take possession of a rich inheritance unsuccessfully contested by a near relation. He liked that country so much better than his own, that he made it his principal residence. Combados was a personable man. His manners were gentle and well-bred, his conversation most insinuating. With such a passport, he soon got into the best company, and knew all the family concerns of the place.

It was not long before he heard of don George's daughter, and of her extraordinary beauty. This

touched his curiosity nearly: he was eager to behold so formidable a lady. For this purpose, he endeavoured to worm himself into the good graces of her father, and succeeded so well, that the old gentleman already looking on him as a son-in-law, gave him free admission to the house, and the liberty of conversing with donna Helena in his presence. The Galician soon became deeply enamoured of her: indeed it was the common fate of all who had ever beheld her charms. He opened his heart to don George, who consented to his paying his addresses, but told him that so far from offering violence to her inclination, he should never interfere in her choice. Hereupon don Blas pressed every device that impassioned ingenuity could suggest into his service, to melt and warm the icicles of reserve; but the lady was impenetrable to his arts, fast bound in the fetters of an earlier love. Felicia, however, was in the new suitor's interest, convinced of his merit by the universal argument. All the faculties of her soul were called forth in his cause. On the other hand, the father urged his wishes and intreaties. Thus was donna Helena tormented for a whole year with their importunities, and yet her faith continued unshaken.

Combados finding that don George and Felicia took up his cause with very little success, proposed an expedient for conquering prejudice to the following effect. We will suppose a merchant of Coria to

have received a letter from his Italian correspondent, in which, among the news of the day, there shall be the following paragraph: "A Spanish gentleman, don Gaston de Cogollos, has lately arrived at the court of Parma. He is said to be nephew and sole heir to a rich widow of Coria. He is paying his addresses to a nobleman's daughter; but the family wishes to ascertain the validity of his pretensions. Send me word, therefore, whether you know this don Gaston, together with the amount of his aunt's fortune. On your answer the marriage will depend. Parma, ... day of, &c."

The old gentleman considered this trick as a mere ebullition of humour, a lawful stratagem of amorous warfare; and the jade of a go-between, with conscience still more callous than her master's, was delighted with the probability of the manœuvre. It seemed to be so much the more happily imagined, as they knew Helena to be a proud girl, capable of taking decisive measures, in the moment of surprise and indignation. Don George undertook to be the herald of my fickleness, and by way of colouring the contrivance more naturally, to confront the pretended correspondent with her. This project was executed as soon as formed. The father, with counterfeit emotions of displeasure, said to donna Helena: Daughter, it is not enough now to tell you that our relations inveigh against an alliance with don Austin's murderer; a still stronger reason

henceforward presses, to detach you from don Gaston. It may well overwhelm you with shame, to have been his dupe so long. Here is an undeniable proof of his inconstancy. Only read this letter just received by a merchant of Coria from Italy. The trembling Helena caught at this forged paper; glanced over the writing; then weighed every expression, and stood aghast at the import of the whole. A keen pang of tender disappointment wrung from her a few reluctant tears; but pride came to her assistance; she wiped away the falling drops of weakness, and said to her father in a determined tone: Sir, you have just been witness of my folly; now bear testimony to my triumph over myself. The delusion is past; don Gaston is the object of my utter contempt. I am ready to meet don Blas at the altar, and be beforehand with the traitor in the pledge of our transferred affections. Don George, transported with joy at this change, embraced his daughter, extolled her spirit to the skies, and hastened the necessary preparations, with all the self-complacency of a successful plotter.

Thus was donna Helena snatched from me. She threw herself into the arms of Combados in a pet, not listening to the secret whispers of love within her breast, nor suspecting a story which ought to have seemed so improbable in the annals of true passion. The haughty are always the victims of

their own rash conclusions. Resentment of insulted beauty triumphed wholly over the suggestions of tenderness. And yet, a few days after marriage, there came over her some feelings of remorse for her precipitation: it struck her that the letter might have been a forgery; and the very possibility disturbed her peace. But the enamoured don Blas left his wife no time to nurse up thoughts injurious to their new-found joys; a succession of gaiety and pleasure kept her in a thoughtless whirl, and shielded her from the pangs of unavailing repentance.

She appeared to be in high good humour with so spirit-stirring a husband; so that they were living together in perfect unanimity, when my aunt adjusted my affair with don Austin's relations. Of this she wrote me word to Italy. I returned on the wings of love. Donna Eleonora, not having announced the marriage, informed me of it on my arrival; and remarking what pain it gave me, said: You are in the wrong, nephew, to shew so much feeling for a faithless fair. Banish from your memory a person, so unworthy to share in its tender recollections.

As my aunt did not know how donna Helena had been played upon, she had reason to talk as she did; nor could she have given me better advice. To affect indifference, if not to conquer my passion, was my bounden duty. Yet there could be no harm in just enquiring by what means this union had been

brought to bear. To get at the truth, I determined on applying to Felicia's friend, Theodora. There I met with Felicia herself, who was confounded at my unwelcome presence, and would have escaped from the necessity of explanation. But I stopped her. Why do you avoid me? said I. Has your perjured mistress forbidden you to give ear to my complaints? or would you make a merit with the ungrateful woman, of your voluntary refusal?

Sir, answered the plotting abigail, I confess my fault, and throw myself on your mercy. Your appearance here has filled me with remorse. My mistress has been betrayed; and unhappily, in part by my agency. The particulars of their infernal device followed this avowal, with an endeavour to make me amends for its lamentable consequence. To this effect, she offered me her services with her mistress, and promised to undeceive her; in a word, to work night and day, that she might soften the rigour of my sufferings, and open the career of hope.

I pass over the numberless contradictions she experienced, before she could accomplish the projected interview. It was at length arranged to admit me privately, while don Blas was at his hunting-seat. The plot did not linger. The husband went into the country; and they sent for me to his lady's apartment.

My onset was reproachful in the extreme; but my mouth was soon shut upon the subject. It is useless

to look back upon the past, said the lady. It can be no part of our present intention to work upon each other's feelings; and you are grievously mistaken if you fancy me inclined to flatter your aspiring hopes. My sole inducement for receiving you here was to tell you personally, that you have only henceforth to forget me. Perhaps I might have been better satisfied with my lot, had it been united with yours; but, since heaven has ordered it otherwise, we must submit to its decrees.

What! madam, answered I, is it not enough to have lost you, to see my successful rival in quiet possession of all my soul holds dear, but I must also banish you from my thoughts? You would tear from me even my passion, my only remaining blessing! And think you that a man, whom you have once enchanted, can recover his self-possession? Know yourself better; and cease to enforce impracticable behests. Well then! if so, rejoined she with hurried importunity, do you cease to flatter yourself with interesting my gratitude or my pity. In one short word, the wife of don Blas shall never be the mistress of don Gaston. Let us at once end a conversation, at which delicacy revolts in spite of virtue, and peremptorily forbids its longer continuance.

I now threw myself at the lady's feet in despair. All the powers of language and of tears were called forth to soften her. But even this served only to excite some inbred sentiments of compassion, stifled

as soon as born, and sacrificed at the shrine of duty. After having fruitlessly exhausted all my stores of tender persuasion, rage took possession of my breast. I drew my sword, and would have fallen on its point before the inexorable Helena; but she saw my design, and prevented it. Stay your rash hand, Cogollos, said she. Is it thus that you consult my reputation? In dying thus and here, you will brand me with dishonour, and my husband with the imputation of murder.

In the agony of my despair, far from yielding to these suggestions, I only struggled against the preventive efforts of the two women, and should have struggled too successfully, if don Blas had not appeared to second them. He had been apprized of our assignation; and instead of going into the country, had concealed himself behind the hangings, to overhear our conference. Don Gaston, cried he, as he arrested my uplifted arm, recal your scattered senses, and no longer give a loose to these mad transports.

Here I could hold no longer. Is it for you, said I, to turn me from my resolution? You ought rather yourself to plunge a dagger in my bosom. My love, with all its train of miseries, is an insult to you. Have you not surprised me in your wife's apartment at this unseasonable hour? what greater provocation can you want for your revenge? Stab me, and rid yourself of a man, who can only give up the adora-

tion of donna Helena with his life. It is in vain, answered don Blas, that you endeavour to interest my honour in your destruction. You are sufficiently punished for your rashness; and my wife's imprudence, in giving you this opportunity of indulging it, is sanctified by the purity of her sentiments. Take my advice, Cogollos: shrink not effeminately from your wayward destiny, but bear up against it with the patient courage of a hero.

The prudent Galician, by such language, gradually composed the ferment of my mind, and waked me once more to virtue. I withdrew in the determination of removing far from the scene of my folly, and went for Madrid two days afterwards. There, pursuing the career of fortune and preferment, I appeared at court, and laid myself out for connections. But it was my ill-luck to attach myself particularly to the marquis of Villareal, a Portuguese grandee, who lying under a suspicion of intending to emancipate his country from the Spanish yoke, is now in the castle of Alicant. As the duke of Lerma knew me to be closely connected with this nobleman, he gave orders for my arrest and detention here. That minister thought me capable of engaging in such a project; he could not have offered a more outrageous affront to a man of noble birth and a Castilian.

Don Gaston thus ended his story. By way of consolation, I said to him: Illustrious Sir, your honour can receive no taint from this temporary de-

tainer, and your interest will probably be promoted by it in the end. When the duke of Lerma shall be convinced of your innocence, he will not fail to give you a considerable post, and thus retrieve the character of a gentleman unjustly accused of treason.

CHAPTER VII.

Scipio finds Gil Blas out in the tower of Segovia, and brings him a budget of news.

Our conversation was interrupted by Tordesillas, who came into the room, and addressed me thus: Signor Gil Blas, I have just been speaking with a young man at the prison gate. He enquired if you were not here; and looked much mortified at my refusal to satisfy his curiosity. Noble governor, said he, with tears in his eyes, do not reject my most humble petition. I am signor de Santillane's principal domestic, and you will do an act of charity by allowing me to see him. You pass for a kind-hearted gentleman in Segovia; I hope you will not deny me the favour of conversing for a few minutes with my dear master, who is unfortunate rather than criminal. In short, continued don Andrew, the lad

was so importunate, that I promised to comply with his wishes this evening.

I assured Tordesillas that he could not have pleased me better than by bringing this young man to me, who could probably communicate tidings of the last importance. I waited with impatience for the entrance of my faithful Scipio; since I could not doubt him to be the man, nor was I mistaken in my conjecture. He was introduced at the time appointed; and his joy, which only mine could equal, broke forth into the most whimsical demonstrations. On my side, in the ecstacy of delight, I stretched out my arms to him, and he rushed into them with no courtly measured embrace. All distinctions of master and dependent were levelled in the sympathetic rapture of our meeting.

When our transports had subsided a little, I enquired into the state of my household. You have neither household nor house, answered he: to spare you a long string of questions, I will sum up your worldly concerns in two words. Your property has been pillaged at both ends; both by the banditti of the law, and by your own retainers, who regarding you as a ruined man, paid themselves their own wages out of whatever they found that was portable. Luckily for you, I had the dexterity to save from their harpy clutches two large bags of double pistoles. Salero, in whose custody I deposited them, will make restitution on your release, which cannot

be far distant, as you were put upon his majesty's pension list of prisoners without the duke of Lerma's knowledge or consent.

I asked Scipio how he knew his excellency to have had no share in my arrest. You may depend on it, answered he: my information is undeniable. One of my friends in the duke of Uzeda's confidence acquainted me with all the circumstances of your imprisonment. Calderona, having discovered by a spy, that signora Sirena, with the handle of an alias to her name, was receiving night visits from the prince of Spain, and that the count de Lemos managed that intrigue by the pandarism of signor de Santillane, determined to be revenged on the whole knot. To this end, he waited on the duke of Uzeda, and discovered the whole affair. The duke, overjoyed at such a fine opportunity of ruining his enemy, did not fail to bestir himself. He laid his information before the king, and painted the prince's danger in the most lively colours. His majesty was much angered, and shewed that he was so, by sending Sirena to the nunnery provided for such frail sisters, banishing the count de Lemos, and condemning Gil Blas to perpetual imprisonment.

This, pursued Scipio, is what my friend told me. Hence, you gather your misfortune to be the duke of Uzeda's handywork, or rather Calderona's.

Thus it seemed probable that my affairs might be reinstated in time; that the duke of Lerma, cha-

grined at his nephew's banishment, would move heaven and earth for that nobleman's recal; and it might not be too much to expect that his excellency would not forget me. What a delicate gipsy is hope! She wheedled me out of all anxiety about my shattered fortunes, and made me as light-hearted as if I had good reason to be so. My prison looked, not like the dungeon of perpetual misery, but like the vestibule to a more distinguished station. For thus ran the train of my reasoning: Don Fernando Borgia, father Jerome of Florence, and more than all, friar Louis of Aliaga, who may thank him for his place about the king's person, are the prime minister's partisans. With the aid of such powerful friends, his excellency will bear down all opposition, even supposing no change to take place in the political barometer. But his majesty's health is very precarious. The first act of a new reign would be to recal the count de Lemos; he would not feel himself at home in the young monarch's presence, till he had introduced me at court; and the young monarch would not sit easy on his throne, till he had showered benefits on my head. Thus, feasting by anticipation on the pleasures of futurity, I became callous to existing evils. The two bags, snug in the goldsmith's custody, were no bad doubles to the part which hope acted in this shifting pantomime.

It was impossible not to express my gratitude to Scipio for his zeal and honesty. I offered him half

the salvage; but he rejected it. I expect, said he, a very different acknowledgment. Astonished as much at his mysterious claim as at his refusal, I asked what more I could do for him. Let us never part, answered he. Allow me to link my fate with yours. I feel for you what I never felt for any other master. And on my part, my good fellow, said I, you may rest assured that your attachment is not thrown away. You caught my fancy at first sight. We must have been born under Libra or Gemini, where friendship is lord of the ascendant. I willingly accept your proffered partnership; and will commence business by prevailing with the warden to immure you along with me in this tower. That is the very thing, exclaimed he. You were beforehand with me; for I was just going to beg that favour. Your company is dearer to me than liberty itself. I shall only just go to Madrid now and then, to snuff the gale of the ministerial atmosphere, and try whether any scent lies which may be favourable for your pursuit. Thus will you combine in me a bosom friend, a trusty messenger, and an unsuspected spy.

These advantages were too important for me to forego them. I therefore kept so useful a person about me, with leave of the obliging warden, who would not stand in the way of so soothing a relief to the weariness of solitude.

CHAPTER VIII.

Scipio's first journey to Madrid: its object and success. Gil Blas falls sick. The consequence of his illness.

If it is a common proverb that our direst enemies are those of our own household, the converse ought equally to be admitted among the saws of a more candid experience. After such incontestible proofs of Scipio's zeal, he became to me like another self. All distinction of place was confounded between Gil Blas and his secretary; all insolence was dropped on the one hand, all cringing on the other. Their lodging, bed, and board were in common.

Scipio's conversation was of a very lively turn: he might have been dubbed the Spanish Momus, without any derogation to the Punch of the Pantheon. But he had a long head, as well as a fanciful brain; combining the characters of counsellor and jester. My friend, said I one day, what do you think of writing to the duke of Lerma? It could, methinks, do no harm. Why as to that, answered he, the great are such cameleons, that there is no knowing where to have them. At all events, you may risk it; though I would not lay the postage of your

letter on its success. The minister loves you, it is true; but then political love lacks memory, as much as personal love lacks visual discrimination. Out of sight, out of mind! is at once the motto and the stigma of these gentry.

True as this may be in the general, replied I, my patron is a glorious exception. His kindness lives in my recollection. I am persuaded that he suffers for my sufferings, and that they are incessantly preying on his spirits. We must give him credit for only waiting till the king's anger shall pass away. Be it so, resumed he; I wish you may not reckon without your host. Assail his excellency then with an epistle to stir the waters. I will engage to deliver it into his own hands. Pen, ink, and paper being brought, I composed a specimen of eloquence which Scipio declared to be a paragon of pathos, and Tordesillas preferred, for the cant of sermonizing prolixity, to the old archbishop's homilies.

I flattered myself that there would be tears in the duke of Lerma's eyes, and distraction in his aspect, at the detail of miseries which existed only on paper. In that assurance, I dispatched my messenger, who no sooner got to Madrid, than he went to the minister's. Meeting with an old domestic of my acquaintance, he had no difficulty in gaining access to the duke. My lord, said Scipio to his excellency, as he delivered the packet, one of your most devoted servants, lying at his length on straw, in a damp and

dreary dungeon at Segovia, most humbly supplicates for the perusal of this letter, which a tender-hearted turnkey has furnished him with the means of writing. The minister opened the letter, and glanced over the contents. But though he found there a motive and a cue for passion, enough to amaze all his faculties at once, far from drowning the floor with briny secretions, he cleaved the ear of his household, and smote the heart of my courier with horrid speech: Friend, tell Santillane that he has a great deal of impudence to address me, after so rank an offence, worthily confronted by the severe sentence of the king. Under that sentence let the wretch drag out his days, nor look to my mediation for a respite.

Scipio, though neither dull nor muddy-mettled, began to be unpregnant of this defeated cause. Yet he was not so pigeon-livered, as to retire without an effort in my favour. My lord, replied he, this poor prisoner will give up the ghost with grief, at the recital of your excellency's displeasure. The duke answered like a prime minister, with a supercilious corrugation of features, and a decisive revolution of his front to some more prosperous suitor. This he did, to cover his own share in the shame of pimping; and such treatment must all those hireling scavengers expect, who rake in the filth and ordure of rotten statesmen, courtiers, and politicians.

My secretary came back to Segovia, and delivered the result of his mission. And now behold me,

sunk deeper than on the first day of my imprisonment, in the gulph of affliction and despair! The duke of Lerma's turning king's evidence gave a hanging posture to my affairs. My courage was run out; and though they did all they could to keep up my spirits, the agitation and distress of my mind threw me into a fever.

The warden, who took a lively interest in my recovery, fancying in his unmedical head that physicians cured fevers, brought me a double dose of death in two of that doleful deity's most practised executioners. Signor Gil Blas, said he, as he ushered in their grisly forms, here are two godsons of Hippocrates, who are come to feel your pulse, and to augment the number of their trophies in your person. I was so prejudiced against the whole faculty, that I should certainly have given them a very discouraging reception, had life retained its usual charms in my estimation: but being bent on my departure from this vale of tears, I felt obliged to Tordesillas for hastening my journey, by a safer conveyance than the crime of suicide.

My good sir, said one of the pair, your recovery will, under providence, depend on your entire confidence in our skill. Implicit confidence! answered I: with your assistance, I am fully persuaded that a few days will place me beyond the reach of fever, and all the shocks that flesh is heir to. Yes! with the blessing of heaven, rejoined he, it is a consummation devoutly to be wished, and easily to be effec-

ted. At all events, our best endeavours shall not be wanting. And indeed it was no joke: for they got me into such fine training for the other world, that few of my material particles were left in this. Already had don Andrew, observing me fumble with the sheets, and smile upon my finger's ends, and thinking there was but one way, sent for a Franciscan to shew it me: already had the good father, having mumbled over the salvation of my soul, retired to the refection of his own body: and my own opinion leaned to the immediate necessity of making a good end. I beckoned Scipio to my bedside. My dear friend, said I, in the faint accents of a tortured and evacuated patient, I give and bequeath to you one of the bags in Gabriel's possession; the other you must carry to my father and mother in the Asturias, who, if still living, must be in narrow circumstances. But, alas! I fear, they have not been able to bear up against my ingratitude. Muscada's report of my unnatural behaviour must have brought their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Should heaven have fortified their tender hearts against my indifference, you will give them the bag of doubloons, with assurances of my dying remorse: and, if they are no more, I charge you to lay out the money in masses for the repose of their souls and of mine. Then did I stretch out my hand, which he bathed in silent tears. It is not always true, that the mourning of an heir is mirth in masquerade.

For some hours, I fancied myself outward-bound,

and on the point of sailing; but the wind changed. My pilots having quitted the helm, and left the vessel to the steerage of nature, the danger of shipwreck disappeared. The fever, mutinying against its commanding officers, gave all their prognostics the lie, and acted contrary to general orders. I got better by degrees, in mind as well as in body. My consolation was all derived from within. I looked at wealth and honours with the eye of a dying anchorite; and blessed the malady which restored my soul. I abjured courts, politics, and the duke of Lerma. If ever my prison doors were opened, it was my fixed resolve to buy a cottage, and live like a philosopher.

My bosom friend applauded my design, and to further its execution, undertook a second journey to solicit my release, by the intervention of a clever girl about the person of the prince's nurse. He contended that a prison was a prison still, in spite of kind indulgence and good cheer. In this I agreed, and gave him leave to depart, with a fervent prayer to heaven that we might soon take possession of our hermitage.

CHAPTER IX.

Scipio's second journey to Madrid. Gil Blas is set at liberty on certain conditions. Their departure from the tower of Segovia, and conversation on their journey.

WHILE waiting for Scipio's return from Madrid, I began a course of study. Tordesillas furnished me with more books than I wanted. He borrowed them from an old officer who could not read, but had fitted up a magnificent library, that he might pass for a man of learning. Above all, I delighted in moral essays and treatises, because they abounded in common places, according with my antipathy to courts, and philosophic relish of solitude.

Three weeks elapsed before I heard a syllable from my negotiator, who returned at length with a cheerful countenance, and news to the following effect: By the intercession of a hundred pistoles with the chambermaid, and her intercession with her mistress, the prince of Spain has been prevailed with to plead for your enlargement with his royal father. I hastened hither to announce these happy tidings, and must return immediately to put the last hand to my work. With these words, he left me, and went back to court.

At the week's end my expeditious agent returned, with the intelligence that the prince had procured my liberty, not without some difficulty. On the same day, my generous keeper confirmed the assurance in person, with the kindest congratulations, and the following notice:—Your prison doors are open; but on two conditions, which I am sorry that my duty obliges me to announce, because they will probably be disagreeable to you. His majesty expressly forbids you to shew your face at court, or to be found within the limits of the two Castiles on this day month. I am extremely sorry that you are interdicted from court. And I am delighted at it, answered I. Witness all the powers above! I asked the king for only one favour; he has granted me two.

With my liberty thus confirmed, I hired a couple of mules, on which we mounted the next day, after taking leave of Cogollos, and thanking Tordesillas a thousand times for all his instances of friendship. We set forward cheerfully on the road to Madrid, to draw our deposit out of signor Gabriel's hands, amounting to a thousand doubloons. On the road my fellow-traveller observed: If we are not rich enough to purchase a splendid property, we can at least secure ease and competency to ourselves. A cabin, answered I, would be large enough for my most ambitious thoughts. Though scarcely at the middle period of life, the world has lost its charms

for me; its hopes, its fears, its cares, its duties, are all absorbed in the selfishness of philosophical retirement. Independently of these principles, I can assure you, I have painted for myself a rural landscape, with a foreground of innocent pleasures, and pastoral simplicity in the perspective. Already does the enamel of the meadows glitter under my eyes: already does the river's murmur accord with the winged chorus of the grove: hunting exasperates the manly virtues, and fishing preaches patience. Only figure to yourself, my friend, what a continual round of amusement solitude may furnish, and you will pant to be admitted of her crew. Then for the economy of our table, the simplest will be the cheapest, and of course the best. Unadulterated Ceres shall be our official caterer: when hunger shall have tamed our fastidious appetites into sobriety, a mumbled crust will relish like an ortolan. The supreme delight of eating is not in the thing eat, but in the palate of him who eats; a proposition in culinary philosophy, proved by the frequent loathing of my own stomach, through a long series of ministerial dinners. Abstemiousness is a luxury of the most exquisite refinement; and the best recipe in the materia medica.

With your good leave, signor Gil Blas, interrupted my secretary, I am not altogether of your mind respecting the luscious treat of abstemiousness. Why should we mess like the bankrupt sages of an-

tiquity? Surely we may indulge the carnal man a little, without any reasonable offence to the spiritual. Since we have, by the blessing of providence and my forecast, wherewithal to keep the spit and the spigot in exercise, do not let us take up our abode with famine and wretchedness. As soon as we get settled, we must stock our cellar, and establish a respectable larder, like people who know what is what, and do not separate themselves from the vulgar crowd to renounce the good things of this life, but to taste them with a more exquisite relish. As Hesiod says,

> Enjoy thy riches with a liberal soul;
> Plenteous the feast, and smiling be the bowl.

And again,

> To stint the wine a frugal husband shows,
> When from the middle of the cask it flows.

What the devil, master Scipio, interrupted I in my turn, you can cap verses out of the Greek poets! And pray where did you get acquainted with Hesiod? In very learned company, answered he. I lived some time with a walking dictionary at Salamanca; a fellow up to the elbows in quotation and commentary. He could put a large volume together like a house of cards. His library furnished him with a hodge-podge of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin common places, which he translated into buckram

Castilian. As I was his transcriber, some tags of verses, stings of epigrams, and sage truisms stuck by the way. With such an apparatus, replied I, your memory must be most philosophically stocked. But, not to lose sight of our future prospects, whereabouts in Spain had we best fix our Socratic abode? My voice is for Arragon, resumed my counsellor. We shall there enjoy all the beauties of nature, and lead the life of Paradise. Well then, for Arragon! said I. May it teem with all the dear delights that youthful poets fancy when they dream!

CHAPTER X.

Their doings at Madrid. The rencounter of Gil Blas in the street, and its consequences.

On our arrival in Madrid, we alighted at a little public-house where Scipio had been accustomed to put up; whence our first visit was to my banker, Salero. He received us very cordially, and expressed the highest satisfaction at my release. Indeed, added he, your untoward fate touched me so nearly as to change my views of a political alliance. The fortunes of courtiers are like castles in the air:

so I have married my daughter, Gabriela, to a wealthy trader. You have acted very wisely, answered I; for besides that a bird in the hand is worth two in a bush, when a plodding citizen aspires to the honour of bringing a man of fashion into his family, he very often has an impertinent puppy for his son-in-law.

Then changing the topic, and coming to the point: Signor Gabriel, pursued I, we came to talk a little about the two thousand pistoles which..... Your money is all ready, said the goldsmith interrupting me. He then took us into his closet, and delivered the two bags, carefully labelled with my name on them.

I thanked Salero for his exactness, and heaven in my sleeve for my escape from his daughter. At our inn, we counted over the money, and found it right, deducting fifty doubloons for the expenses of my enlargement. Our thoughts were now wholly bent upon Arragon. My secretary undertook to buy a carriage and two mules. It was my office to provide household and body linen. During my peregrinations for that purpose, I met baron Steinbach, the officer in the German guards with whom don Alphonso had been brought up.

I touched my hat to him: he knew me again, and returned my greeting warmly. My joy is extreme, said I, at seeing your lordship in such fine health, to say nothing of my wish to enquire after don

Cæsar and don Alphonso de Leyva. They are both in Madrid, answered he, and staying at my house. They came to town about three months ago, to be presented on occasion of don Alphonso's promotion. He has been appointed governor of Valencia, on the score of old family claims, without having in any shape pushed his interest at court. Nothing could be more grateful to his feelings, or prove more strongly our royal master's goodness, who delights to recognize the merits of ancestry in the persons of their descendants.

Though I knew more of this matter than Steinbach, I kept my knowledge in the back ground. Yet so lively was my impatience to hail my old masters, that he would not damp my ardour by delay. I had a mind to try don Alphonso; whether he still retained his regard for me. He was playing at chess with baroness Steinbach. On my entrance, he started up from his game, ran towards me, and squeezing me tight in his embrace: Santillane, said he, with demonstrations of the sincerest joy, at length then you are restored to my heart. I am delighted at it! It was not my fault that we ever parted. You may remember how strongly I urged you not to withdraw from the castle of Leyva. You were deaf to my entreaties. But I must not chide your obstinacy, because its motive was the peace of the family. Yet you ought to have let me hear from you, and to have spared my fruitless enquiries at

Grenada, where my brother-in-law, don Ferdinand, sent me word that you were.

And now tell me what you are doing at Madrid. Of course you have some situation here. Be assured that I shall always take a lively interest in your concerns. Sir, answered I, it is but four months since I occupied a considerable post at court. I had the honour of being the duke of Lerma's confidential secretary. Can it be possible! exclaimed don Alphonso, as if he could scarcely believe his ears. What, were you so near the person of the prime minister? I then related how I had gained and lost his favour, and ended with avowing my determination to buy a cottage and garden with the wreck of my shattered fortunes.

The son of don Cæsar heard me attentively, and made this answer: My dear Gil Blas, you know how I have always loved you; nor shall you longer be fortune's puppet. I will set you above her vagaries, by securing you an independence. Since you declare for a country life, a little estate of ours near Lirias, about four leagues from Valencia, shall be settled on you. You are acquainted with the spot. Such a present we can make, without putting ourselves to the least inconvenience. I can answer for my father's joining in the act, and for Seraphina's entire approbation.

I threw myself at don Alphonso's feet, who raised me immediately. More penetrated by his affection

than by his bounty, I pressed his hand and said, Sir, your conduct charms me. Your noble gift is the more welcome, as it precedes the knowledge of a service, it has been in my power to render you; and I had rather owe it to your generosity, than to your gratitude. This governor of my making did not know what to understand by the hint, and pressed for an explanation. I gave it in full, to his utter astonishment. Neither he nor baron Steinbach could ever have the slightest suspicion, that the government of Valencia was owing to my interest at court. Yet having no reason to doubt the fact, my friend proposed to grant me an annuity of two thousand ducats, in addition to the little farm at Lirias.

Hold your hand, signor don Alphonso! exclaimed I at this offer. You must not set my avarice afloat again. I am myself a living witness, that fortune may give superfluities to her favourites, but has no competence to bestow. With pleasure will I accept of the estate at Lirias, where my present property will be sufficient for all my wants. Rather than increase my cares with my possessions, I would build a hospital out of my existing funds. Riches are a burden; and it must be a foolish animal that would bear fardels in the manger or the field.

While we were talking after this fashion, don Cæsar came in. His joy was not less than his son's at the sight of me; and being informed of the family obligations, he again pressed me to accept of the

annuity, which I again refused. When the writings were drawn, the father and son made the assignment their joint act and deed, transferring to me the fee simple, and putting me in immediate possession. My secretary half stared the eyes out of his head, when I told him that we had a landed estate of our own, and how we came by it. What is the value of this little freehold? said he. Five hundred ducats per annum, answered I, and the farm in high cultivation, within a ring fence. I have often been there during my stewardship. There is a small house on the banks of the Guadalaviar, in a little hamlet, surrounded by a charming country.

What pleases me better than all, cried Scipio, is, that we shall have plenty of sporting, rare living, and excellent wine. Come, master, let us leave this crowded city, and hasten to our hermitage. I long to be there as much as you can do, answered I; but I must first go to the Asturias. My father and mother are not in comfortable circumstances. They shall therefore end their days with me at Lirias. Heaven, perhaps, has thrown this windfall in my way to try my filial duty, and would punish me for the neglect of it. Scipio approved my purpose, and urged its speedy execution. Yes, my friend, said I, we will set out as soon as possible. I shall consider it as my dear delight, to share the gifts of fortune with the authors of my existence. We shall soon be settled in our country retreat; and then will I

write these two Latin verses over the door of my farm-house, in letters of gold, for the pious edification of my rustic neighbours:

Inveni portum. Spes et fortuna, valete.
Sat me lusistis; ludite nunc alios.

END OF VOL. III.

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