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The adventures of Gil
of Santillana

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THE
ADVENTURES
OF
G I L B L A S
OF
SANTILLANE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OR
LESAGE.

A NEW EDITION:

WITH ENGRAVINGS FROM PAINTINGS

BY ROBERT SMIRKE, ESQ. R.A.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION.

THERE are some people in the world so mischievous as not to read a work without applying- the vicious or ridiculous characters it may happen to contain to eminent or popular individuals. I protest publicly against the pretended discovery of any such likenesses. My purpose was to represent human life historically as it exists: God forbid I should hold myself out as a portrait-painter. Let not the reader then take to himself public property; for if he does, he may chance to throw an unlucky light on his own character: as Pheedrus expresses it, *Stulte nudabrt animi conscenttam*.

Certain physicians of Castille as well as of France, are sometimes a little too fond of trying the bleeding and lowering system on their patients. Vices, their patrons, and their dupes, are of every day's occur-

rence. To be sure, I have not always adopted Spanish manners with scrupulous exactness; and in the instance of the players at Madrid, those who know their disorderly modes of living may reproach me with softening down their coarser traits: but this I have been induced to do from a sense of delicacy, and in conformity with the manners of my own country.

GIL BLAS TO THE READER.

READER! hark you, my friend! Do not begin the story of my life till I have told you a short tale.

Two students travelled together from Penafiel to Salamanca. Finding themselves tired and thirsty, they stopped by the side of a spring on the road. While they were resting there, after having quenched their thirst, by chance they espied on a stone near them, even with the ground, part of an inscription, in some degree effaced by time, and by the tread of flocks in the habit of watering at that spring. Having washed the stone, they were able to trace these words in the dialect of Castille; *Aqui estd encerrada el alma del hceiuiado Pedro Garctas*. "Here lies interred the soul of the licentiate Peter Garcias."

Hey-day! roars out the younger, a lively, heedless fellow, who could not get on with his deciphering for laughter: This is a good joke indeed! "Here lies interred the 80111/"— A soul interred!.... I should **like** to know the whimsical author of this ludicrous epitaph. With this sneer he got up to go away. **His** companion, who had more sense, said within himself: Underneath this stone lies some mystery; I will stay

and see the end of it. Accordingly, he let his comrade depart, and without loss of time began digging round about the stone with his knife till he got it up. Under it he found a purse of leather, containing an hundred ducats, with a card on which was written these words in Latin: "Whoever thou art who hast wit enough to discover the meaning of the inscription, I appoint thee my heir, in the hope thou wilt make a better use of my fortune than I have done!" The student, out of his wits at the discovery, replaced the stone in its former position, and set out again on the Salamanca road with the soul of the licentiate in his pocket.

Now, my good friend and reader, no matter who you are, you must be like one or the other of these two students. If you cast your eye over my adventures without fixing it on the moral concealed under them, you will derive very little benefit from the perusal: but if you read with attention you will find that mixture of the useful with the agreeable, so successfully prescribed by Horace.

HISTORY
OF
GIL BLAS
OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

The birth and education of Gil Blas.

MY father, Blas of Santillane, after having borne arms for a long time in the Spanish service, retired to his native place. There he married a chambermaid who was not exactly in her teens, and I made my debut on this stage ten months after marriage. They afterwards went to live at Oviedo, where my mother got into service, and my father obtained a situation equally adapted to his capacities as a squire. As their wages were their fortune, I might have got my education as I could, had it not been for an uncle of mine in the town, a canon, by name Gil Perez. He was my mother's eldest brother, and my godfather. Figure to yourself a little fellow, three feet

and a half high, as fat as you can conceive, with a head sunk deep between his shoulders, and you have my uncle to the life. For the rest of his qualities, he was an ecclesiastic, and of course thought of nothing but good living, I mean in the flesh as well as in the spirit, with the means of which good living his stall, no lean one, provided him.

He took me home to his own house from my infancy, and ran the risk of my bringing up. I struck him as so brisk a lad, that he resolved to cultivate my talents. He bought me a primmer, and undertook my tuition as far as reading went: which was not amiss for himself as well as for me; since by teaching me my letters he brushed up his own learning, which had not been pursued in a very scholastic manner; and, by dint of application, he got at last to read his breviary out of hand, which he had never been able to do before. He would have been very glad to have taught me Latin, to save expense, but, alas! poor Gil Perez! he had never skimmed the first principles of it in the whole course of his life. I should not wonder if he was the most ignorant member of the chapter; though on a subject involving as many possibilities as there were canons, I presume not to pledge myself for any thing like certainty. To be sure, I have heard it suggested, that he did not gain his preferment altogether by his learning: but that he owed it exclusively to the gratitude of some good nuns whose discreet factor he had been, and

who had credit enough to procure him the order of priesthood without the troublesome ceremony of an examination.

He was obliged therefore to place me under the correction of a master, so that I was sent to doctor Godinez, who had the reputation of being the most accomplished pedant of Oviedo. I profited so well under his instructions, that by the end of five or six years I could read a Greek author or two, and had no very inadequate conception of the Latin poets. Besides my classical studies, I applied to logic, which enabled me to become an expert arguer. I now fell in love with discussions of all kinds to such excess, that I stopped his majesty's subjects on the high road, acquaintance or strangers, no matter! and proposed some knotty point of controversy. Sometimes I fell in with a clan of Irish, and an altercation never comes amiss to them! That was your time, if you are fond of a battle. Such gestures! such grimaces! such contortions! Our eyes sparkling, and our mouths foaming! Those who did not take us for what we affected to be, philosophers, must have set us down for madmen.

But let that be as it will, I gained the reputation of no small learning in the town. My uncle was delighted, because he prudently considered that I should so much the sooner cease to be chargeable to him. Come here, Gil Blas, quoth he one day, you are got to be a fine fellow, You are past seventeen,

and a clever lad: you must bestir yourself, and get forward in the world. I think of sending you to the university of Salamanca: with your wit, you will easily get a good post. I will give you a few ducats for your journey, and my mule, which will fetch ten or twelve pistoles at Salamanca, and with such a sum at setting out, you will be enabled to **hold** up your head till you get a situation.

He could not have proposed to me any thing more agreeable: for I was dying to see a little of life. At the same time, I was not such a fool as to betray my satisfaction; and when it came to the hour of parting, by the sensibility I discovered at taking leave of my dear uncle, to whom I was so much obliged, and by calling in the stage effect of grief, I so softened the good soul, that he put his hand deeper **into** his pocket than he would have done, could he have pried into all that was passing in the interior of my hypocritical little heart. Before my departure I took a last leave of my papa and mamma, who loaded me with an ample inheritance of good advice. They enjoined me to pray to God for my uncle, to go honestly through the world, not to engage in any **ill**, and, above all, not to lay my hands on other people's property. After they had lectured me for a good while they made me a present of their blessing, which was all my patrimony and all my expectation. As soon as I had received it, I mounted my mule, and saw the outside of the town.

CHAPTER II.

Gil Blas' alarm on his road to Pegnaflor; his adventures on his arrival in that town; and the character of the men with whom he supped.

HERE I am, then, on the other side of Oviedo, on the road to Pegnaflor, with the world before me> as yet my own master, as well as master of a bad mule and forty good ducats, without reckoning on a little supplementary cash purloined from my much-honoured uncle. The first thing I did was to let my mule go as the beast liked, that is to say, very lazily. I dropped the rein, and taking out my ducats, began to count them backwards and forwards in my hat. I was out of my wits for joy, never having seen such a sum of money before, and could not help looking at it and sifting it through my fingers. I had counted it over about the twentieth time, when all at once my mule, with head raised and ears pricked up, stood stock still in the middle of the high road. I thought to be sure something was the matter; looked about for a cause, and perceiving a hat upon the ground, with a rosary of large beads, at the same time heard a lugubrious voice pronounce these words: Pray, honoured master, have pity on a poor

maimed soldier! Please to throw a few small pieces into this hat; you shall be rewarded for it in the other world. I looked immediately on the side whence the voice proceeded; and saw just by a thicket, twenty or thirty paces from me, a sort of a soldier, who had mounted the barrel of a confounded long carbine on two cross sticks, and seemed to be taking aim at me. At a sight which made me tremble for the patrimony of the church committed to my care, I stopped short, made sure of my ducats, and taking out a little small change, as I rode by the hat, placed to receive the charity of those quiet subjects who had not the courage to refuse it, dropped in my contribution in detail, to convince the soldier how nobly I dealt by him. He was satisfied with my liberality, and gave me a blessing for every kick I gave my mule in my impatience to get out of his way; but the infernal beast, without partaking in the slightest degree of my impatience, went at the old steady pace. A long custom of jogging on fair and softly under my uncle's weight had obliterated every idea of that motion called a gallop.

The prospect of my journey was not much improved by this adventure as a specimen. I considered within myself that I had yet some distance to Salamanca, and might, not improbably, meet with something worse. My uncle seemed to have been very imprudent not to have consigned me to the care of a muleteer. That, to be sure, was what he ought

to have done; but his notion was, that by giving me his mule my journey would be cheaper; and that entered more into his calculation than the dangers in which I might be involved on the road. To retrieve his error, therefore, I resolved, if I had the good luck to arrive safe at Pegnaflor, to offer my mule for sale, and take the opportunity of a muleteer going to Astorga, whence I might get to Salamanca by a similar conveyance. Though I had never been out of Oviedo, I was acquainted with the names of the towns through which I was to pass; a species of information I took care to procure before my setting out.

I got safe and sound to Pegnaflor, and stopped at the door of a very decent-looking inn. My foot was scarcely out of the stirrup before the landlord was at my side, overwhelming me with public-house civility. He untied my cloak-bag, with his own hands, swung it across his shoulders, and ushered my honour into a room, while one of his men led my mule to the stable. This landlord, the most busy prattler of the Asturias, ready to bother you impertinently about his own concerns, and, at the same time with a sufficient portion of curiosity to worm himself into the knowledge of yours, was not long in telling me that his name was Andrew Corcuelo; that he had seen some service as a serjeant in the army, which he had quitted fifteen months ago, and married a girl pf Castropol, who, though a little tawney or

so, knew how to make both ends meet as well as the best of them. He told me a thousand things besides which he might just as well have kept private. Thinking himself entitled, after this voluntary confidence, to an equal share of mine, he asked me in a breath, and without further preface, whence I came, whither I was going, and who I was. To all this I felt myself bound to answer, article by article, because though rather abrupt in asking them, he accompanied each question with so apologetic a bow,, beseeching me with so submissive a grimace not to be offended at his curiosity, that I was drawn in to gratify it whether I would or no. Thus by degrees did we get into a long conversation, in the course of which I took occasion to hint, that I had some reasons for wishing to get rid of my mule, and travel under convoy of a muleteer. He seemed on the whole to approve of my plan, though he could not prevail with himself to tell me so briefly; for he introduced his remarks by descanting on all the possible and probable mischances to which travellers are liable on the road, not omitting an awkward story now and then. I thought the fellow would never have done. But the conclusion of the argument was, that if I wanted to sell my mule, he knew an honest jockey who would take it off my hands. I begged he would do me the favour to fetch him, which was no sooner said than done.

On his return he introduced the purchaser, with a

high encomium on his integrity. We all three went into the yard, and the mule was brought out to show paces before the jockey, who set himself to examine the beast from head to foot. His report was bad enough. To be sure, it would not have been easy to make a good one; but if it had been the pope's mule, and this fellow was to cheapen the bargain, it would have been just the same : nay, to speak with all due reverence, if he had been asked to give an opinion of the pope's great toe, from that disparaging habit of his, he would have pronounced it no better than the toe of any ordinary man. He laid it down therefore, as a principle, that the mule had all the defects a mule could have: appealing to the landlord for a confirmation of his judgment, who, doubtless, had reasons of his own for not controverting his friend's assertion. Well! says the jockey, with an air of indifference, What price have you the conscience to ask for this devil of an animal? After such a panegyric, and master Corcuelo's certificate, whom I was fool enough to take for a fair-dealing man and a good judge of horseflesh, they might have had the mule for nothing. I therefore told the dealer that I threw myself on his mercy: he must fix his own sum, and I should expect no more. On this, he began to affect the gentleman, and answered that I had found out his weak side when I left it to his honour. He was right enough in that! His honour was his weak side! for instead of bidding up to my

uncle's estimate of ten or twelve pistoles, the rascal had the impudence to offer three ducats, which I accepted with as light a heart, as if I had got the best of the bargain.

Having disencumbered myself of my mule in so tradesman-like a manner, I went with my landlord to a carrier who was to set out early the next morning for Astorga, and engaged to call me up in time. When we had settled the hire of the mule, as well as the expenses on the road, I turned back towards the inn with Corcuelo, who, as we went along, got into the private history of this muleteer. When I had been pestered with all the tittle-tattle of the town about this fellow, the changes were just beginning to ring on some new subject; but, by good luck, a pretty-looking sort of a man very civilly interrupted my loquacious friend. I left them together, and sauntered on, without the slightest suspicion of being at all concerned in their discourse.

I ordered supper as soon as I got to the inn. It was a fish day: but I thought eggs were better suited to my finances. While they were getting ready I joined in conversation with the landlady, whom I had not seen before. She seemed a pretty piece of goods enough, and such a stirring body, that I should have concluded, if her husband had not told me so, her tavern must have plenty of custom. The moment the omelet was served up I sat down to table by myself, and had scarcely got the relish of it, when my

landlord walked in, followed by the man who had stopped him in the street. This pleasant gentleman wore a long rapier, and might, perhaps, be about thirty years of age. He came up to me in the most friendly manner possible. Mr. Professor, says he, I have just now heard that you are the renowned Gil Blas of Santillane, that ornament of Oviedo and luminary of philosophy. And do my eyes behold that very greatest of all great scholars and wits, whose reputation has run hither so fast before him? Little do you think, continues he, directing his discourse to the landlord and landlady, little do you imagine, I say, what good luck has befallen you. Why you have got hold of a treasure. In this young gentleman you behold the eighth wonder of the world. Then running up and throwing his arms about my neck, Excuse me, added he; but worlds would not bribe me to suppress the rapturous emotions your honoured presence has excited.

I could not answer him so glibly as I wished, not so much for want of words as of breath; for he hugged me so tight that I began to be alarmed for my wind-pipe. As soon, however, as I had got my head out of durance, I replied, signor cavalier, I had not the least conception that my name was known at Pegnaflor. Known? resumed he in the same pompous style; we keep a register of all great persons within a circuit of twenty leagues round us. You have the character of a prodigy here; and I have not

a shadow of doubt, but one day or other Spain will be as proud of numbering you among her rare productions, as Greece of having given birth to her seven wise men. This fine speech was followed as before ; and I really began to think that with all my classical honours I should at last be doomed to share the fate of Antseus. If I had been master of ever so little experience, I should not have been the dupe of his rhodomontade. I must have discovered him by his outrageous compliments, to be one of those parasites who swarm in every town, and get into a stranger's company on his arrival, to appease the wolf in their stomachs at his expense; but my youth and vanity tempted me to draw a quite opposite conclusion. My admirer was very clever in my eyes, and I asked him to supper on the strength of it. Oh! most willingly, cried he: with all my heart and soul. My fortunate star predominates, now that I have the honour of being in company with the illustrious Gil Blas of Santillane, and I shall certainly make the most of my good fortune as long as it lasts. My appetite is rather delicate, but I will just sit down with you by way of being sociable, and if I can swallow a bit! only just not to look sulky; for we philosophers are careless of the body.

These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than my panegyrist took his seat opposite to me. A cover was laid for him in due form and order. First he fell on the omelet with as much perseverance as if he

had not tasted food for three whole days. By the complacency with which he eyed it I was morally certain the poor pancake was at death's door. I therefore ordered its heir-apparent to succeed; and the business was dispatched with such speed, that the second made its appearance on the table, just as we;—no:—I beg pardon;—just as he had taken the last lick at its predecessor. He pressed forward the main business however with a diligence and activity proportioned to the importance of the object he had in view : so that he contrived to load me with panegyric on panegyric, without losing a single stroke in the progress of mastication. Now all this gave me no slender conceit of my pretty little self. When a man eats, he must drink. The first toast of course was my health. The second, in common civility, was my father and mother, whose happiness in having such an angel of a son, he could not sufficiently envy or admire. All this while he kept filling my glass, and challenging me to keep pace with him. It was impossible to be backward in doing justice to such excellent toasts and sentiments: the compliments with which they were seasoned did not come amiss; so that I got into such a convivial mood, at observing our second omelet to disappear not insensibly, as just to ask the landlord if he could not find us a little bit of fish. Master Corcuelo, who to all appearance played booty with the parasite, told me he had an excellent trout; but those who eat him

must pay for him. I am afraid he is meat for your masters. Meat for our masters ! exclaims my very humble servant in an angry tone of voice: that is more than you know, my friend. Are you yet to learn that the best of your larder is not too good for the renowned Gil Blas of Santillane ? Go where he will, he is fit to table with princes.

I was very glad that he took up the landlord's last expression; because if he had not, I should. I felt myself a little hurt at it, and said to Corcuelo with some degree of hauteur: Produce this trout of yours, and I will take the consequences. The landlord, who had got just what he wanted, set himself to work, and served it up in high order. At the first glance of this third course I saw such pleasure sparkling in the parasite's eyes, as proved him to be of a very complying temper; just as ready to do a kindness by the fish, as by those said eggs of which he had given so good an account. But at last he was obliged to lay down his arms, for fear of accidents ; as his magazine was crammed to the very throat. Having eaten and drank his fill, he bethought him of putting a finishing hand to the farce. Master Gil Blas, said he, as he rose from table, I am too well pleased with my princely entertainment, to leave you without a word of advice, of which you seem to stand in much need. From this time forward be on your guard against extravagant praise. Do not trust men **till** you know them. You may meet with many anQ-

ther man, who, like mo, may amuse himself at your expence, and perhaps carry the joke a little further. But do not you be taken in a second time, to believe yourself, on the word of such fellows, the eighth wonder of the world. With this sting in the tail of his farewell speech he very coolly took his leave.

I was as much alive to so ridiculous a circumstance, as I have ever been in after-life to the most severe mortifications. I did not know how to reconcile myself to the idea of having been so egregiously taken in, or, in fact, to the lowering of my pride. So, so! quoth I, this rascal has been putting his tricks upon travellers, has he? Then he only wanted to pump my landlord! or more likely they were both in a story. Ah! my poor Gil Blas, thou hadst better hide thy silly head! To have suffered such knaves as these to turn thee into ridicule! A pretty story they will make of this! It is sure to travel back to Oviedo: and will give our friends a hopeful prospect of thy success in life. The family will be quite delighted to think what a blessed harvest all their pious advice has produced. There was no occasion to preach up morals to thee; for verily thou hast more of the dupe than the sharper in thy composition. Ready to tear my eyes out or bite my fingers off from spite and vexation, I locked myself up in my chamber and went to bed, but not to sleep; of which I had not got a wink when the muleteer came to tell me, that he, only waited for me to set out on his journey. I got

up as expeditiously as I could; and while I was dressing Corcuelo put in his appearance, with a little bill in his hand;—a slight memorandum of the trout!— But paying through the nose was not the worst of it; for I had the vexation to perceive, that while I was counting over the cost, this hang-dog was chuckling at the recollection of the night befote. Having been fleeced most shamefully for a supper, which stuck in my stomach though I had scarcely come in for a morsel of it, I joined the muleteer with my baggage, giving to as many devils as there are saints in the calendar, the parasite, the landlord, and the inn.

CHAPTER III.

The muleteer's temptation on the road; its consequences, and the situation of Gil Blas between Scylla and Charybdis.

I WAS not the only passenger. There were two young gentlemen of Pegnaflor; a little chorister of Mondognedo, who was travelling about the country, and a young tradesman of Astorga, returning home from Verco with his new-married wife. We soon got acquainted, and exchanged the usual confidence of travellers, telling one another whence we came and whither we were going. The bride was young enough; but so dark complexioned, with so little of what a man likes to look at in a woman, that I did not think her worth the trouble. But she had youth and a good crummy person on her side, and the muleteer, being rather less nice in his taste, was resolved to try if he could not get into her good graces. This pretty project occupied his ingenuity during the whole day; but he deferred the execution till we should get to Cacabelos, the last place where we were to stop on the road. We alighted at an inn in the outskirts of the town, a quiet convenient place, with a landlord who never troubled himself about other people's concerns. We were ushered into a

private room, and got our supper very snugly: **but** just as the cloth was taken away in comes our carrier in a furious passion:—Death and the devil! I have been robbed. Here had I an hundred pistoles in my purse ! But I will have them back again. I am going for a magistrate;—and those gentry will not take a joke upon such serious subjects. You will all be put to the rack, unless you confess, and give back the money. The fellow played his part very naturally, and burst out of the room, leaving us in a terrible fright.

We had none of us the least suspicion of the trick, and, being all strangers, were afraid of one another. I looked askance at the little chorister, and he, perhaps, had no better opinion of me. Besides, we were all a pack of greenhorns, and were quite unacquainted with the routine of business on these occasions. We were fools enough to believe that the torture would be the very first stage of our examination. With this dread upon our spirits, we all made for the door. Some effected their escape into the street, others into the garden : but the whole party preferred the discretion of running away to the valour of standing their ground. The young tradesman of Astorga had as great an objection to bone-twisting as the rest of us : so he did as Eneas, and many another good husband has done before him;—ran away, and left his wife behind. At that critical moment the muleteer, as I was told afterwards, who had not half

so much sense of decency as his own mules, delighted at the success of his stratagem, began moving his motives to the citizen's wife: but this Lucrece of the Asturias, borrowing the chastity of a saint from the ugliness of the devil who tempted her, defended her sweet person tooth and nail; and showed she was in earnest about it by the noise she made. The patrol, who happened to be passing by the inn at the time, and knew that the neighbourhood required a little looking after, took the liberty of just asking the cause of the disturbance. The landlord, who was trying if he could not sing in the kitchen louder than she could scream in the parlour, and swore he heard no music but his own, was at last obliged to introduce the myrmidons of the police to the distressed lady, just in time to rescue her from the necessity of a surrender at discretion. The head officer, a coarse fellow, without an atom of feeling for the tender passion, no sooner saw the game that was playing, than he gave the amorous muleteer five or six blows with the butt end of his halberd, representing to him the indecency of his conduct in terms quite as offensive to modesty as the naughty propensity which had called forth his virtuous indignation. Neither did he stop here; but laid hold of the culprit, and carried plaintiff and defendant before the magistrate. The former with her charms all heightened by the discomposure of her dress, went eagerly to try their effect in obtaining justice for the outrage they had sustained. His

worship heard at least one party; and after solemn deliberation pronounced the offence to be of a most heinous nature. He ordered him to be stripped, and to receive a competent number of lashes in his presence. The conclusion of the sentence was, that if the Endymion of our Asturian Diana was not forthcoming the next day, a couple of guards should escort the disconsolate goddess to the town of Astorga, at the expense of this mule-driving Acteon.

For my part, being probably more terrified than the rest of the party, I got into the fields, scampering over hedge and ditch, through enclosures and across commons, till I found myself hard by a forest. I was just going for concealment to ensconce myself in the very heart of the thicket, when two men on horseback rode across me, crying, Who goes there? As my alarm prevented me from giving them an immediate answer, they came to close quarters, and holding each of them a pistol to my throat, required me to give an account of myself; who I was, whence I came, what business I had in that forest, and above all, *not* to tell a lie about it. Their rough interrogatives were, according to my notion, little better than the rack with which our friend the muleteer had offered to treat us. I represented myself however *m* a young man on my way from Oviedo to Salamanca; told the story of our late fright and faithfully attributed my ironmsr, away in such a hurry to the dread of a worte exercise under the tor-

ture. They burst into an immoderate fit of laughter at my simplicity; and one of them said : Take heart, my little friend; come along with us, and do not be afraid; we will put you in a place where the devil shall not find you. At these words, he took me up behind him, and we darted into the forest.

I did not know what to think of this odd meeting; yet on the whole I could not well be worse off than before. If these gentry, thought I to myself, had been thieves, they would have robbed, and perhaps murdered me. Depend on it, they are a couple of good honest country gentlemen in this neighbourhood, who, seeing me frightened, have taken compassion on me, and mean to carry me home with them and make me comfortable. But these visions did not last long. After turning and winding backward and forward in deep silence, we found ourselves: at the foot of a hill, where we dismounted. This it' our abode, said one of these sequestered gentlemen, I looked about in all directions, but the deuce a bit of either house or cottage: not a vestige of human habitation ! The two men in the mean time raised a great wooden trap, covered with earth and briars, to conceal the entrance of a long shelving passage underground, to which from habit the poor beasts took very kindly of their own accord. Their masters kept tight hold of me, and let the trap down after them. Thus was the worthy nephew of my uncle Peireat caught, just for all the world as you would catch a rat.

CHAPTER IV.

Description of the subterraneous dwelling and its contents,

I NOW knew into what company I had fallen ; and I leave it to any one to judge whether the discovery must not have rid me of my former fear. A dread more mighty and more just now seized my faculties. Money and life, all given up for lost! With the air of a victim on his passage to the altar, did I walk, more dead than alive, between my two conductors, **who** finding that I trembled, frightened me so much the more by telling me not to be afraid. When we **had** gone about two hundred paces, winding down a declivity all the way, we got into a stable lighted by two large iron lamps suspended from the vault **above**. There was good store of straw, and several **casks** of hay and corn with room enough for twenty **horses**: but at that time there were only the two **which** came with us. An old negro, who seemed for **his** years in pretty good case, was tying them to the **rack** where they were **to** feed.

We went out of **the** stable. By the **melancholy light** of some other lamps, which only served **to dress up horror in its native colours**, we arrived at a kitchen

where an old harridan was broiling some steaks on the coals, and getting supper ready. The kitchen furniture was better than might be expected, and the pantry provided in a very plentiful manner. The lady of the larder's picture is worth drawing. Considerably on the wrong side of sixty!—In her youth, her hair had been of a fiery red; though she would have called it auburn. Time had indeed given it the fairer tint of grey; but a lock of more youthful hue, interspersed at intervals, produced all the variegated effect of the admired autumnal shades. To say nothing of an olive complexion, she had an enormous chin turning up, an immense nose turning down, with a mouth in the middle, modestly retiring inwards, to make room for its encroaching neighbours. Red eyes are no beauty in any animal but a ferret;—hers were purple.

Here, dame Leonarda, said one of the horsemen as he presented me to this angelic imp of darkness, we have brought you a young lad. Then looking round, and observing me to be miserably pale, Pluck up your spirits, my friend; you shall come to no harm. We want a scullion, and have met with you. You are a lucky dog! We had a boy who died about a fortnight ago: you shall succeed to the preferment. He was rather too delicate for his place. You seem a good stout fellow, and may live a week or two longer. We find you in bed and board, coal and candle; but as for day-light, you will never see that

again. Your leisure hours will pass off very agreeably with Leonarda, who is really a very good creature, and tolerably tender hearted; you will have all your little comforts about you. I flatter myself you have not got among beggars. At this moment, the thief seized a flambeau ; and as I feared, " with zeal to destroy;" for he ordered me to follow him.

He took me into a cellar, where I saw a great number of bottles and earthen pots full of excellent wine. He then made me cross several rooms. In some were pieces of cloth piled up; in others, stuffs and silks. As we passed through I could not help casting a sheep's eye at the gold and silver plate peeping out of the different cupboards. After that, I followed him into a great hall illuminated by three copper lustres, and serving as a gallery between the other rooms. Here he put fresh questions to me; asking my name ;—why I left Oviedo;—and when I had satisfied his curiosity: Well, Gil Blas, said he, since your only motive for quitting your native place was to get into something snug and eligible, to be sure you must have been born to good luck, or you would not have fallen into our hands. I tell you once for all, you will live here on the fat of the land, and may souse over head and ears in ready money. Besides, you are in a place of perfect safety. The officers of the holy brotherhood might pass through the forest an hundred times without discovering our subterraneous abode* The entrance is only known

to myself and my comrades. You may perhaps ask how it came to be contrived, without being perceived by the inhabitants in the neighbourhood. But you are to understand, my friend, that it was made long ago, and is no work of ours. After the Moors had made themselves masters of Granada, of Arragon, and nearly the whole of Spain, the Christians, rather than submit to the tyranny of infidels, betook themselves to flight, and lay concealed in this country, in Biscay, and in the Asturias, whither the brave Don Pelagio had withdrawn himself. They lived in a state of exile, on the mountains, or in the woods, dispersed in little knots. Some took up their residence in natural caves, others in artificial dwellings under ground, like this we are in. In process of time, when by the blessing of Providence, they had driven their enemies out of Spain, they returned to the towns. From that time forth their retreats have served as a rendezvous for the gentlemen of our profession. It is true that several of them have been discovered and destroyed by the holy brotherhood : but there are some yet remaining; and, by great good luck, I have tenanted this without paying any rent for it almost these fifteen years: Captain Rolando, at your service! I am the leader of the band; and the man you saw with me is one of my troopers.

CHAPTER V.

The arrival of the banditti in the subterraneous retreat, with an account of their pleasant conversation.

JUST as Captain Rolando had finished his speech six new faces made their appearance in the hall; the lieutenant and five privates, returning home with their booty. They were hauling in two great baskets full of sugar, cinnamon, pepper, figs, almonds, and raisins. The lieutenant gave an account of their proceedings to the captain, and told him they had taken these articles, as well as the sumpter-mule, from a grocer of Benavento. An official report having thus been made to the prime-minister, the grocer's contribution was carried to account; and the next step was to regale after their labours. A large table was set out in the hall. They sent me back to the kitchen, where dame Leonarda told me what I had to do. I made the best of a bad bargain, finding the luck ran against me; and, swallowing my grievances, set myself to wait on my noble masters.

I cleaned my plate, set out my side-board, and brought up my wine. As soon as I announced dinner to be on table, consisting of two good black

peppery ragouts for the first course, this high and mighty company took their seats. They fell to most Toraciously. My place was to wait; and I handed about the glasses with so butler-like an air, as to be not a little complimented on my dexterity. The chief entertained them with a short sketch of my story, and praised my parts. But I had recovered from my mania by this time, and could listen to my own panegyric with the humility of an anchorite or the contempt of a philosopher. They all seemed to take a liking to me, and to think I had dropped from the clouds on purpose to be their cup-bearer. My predecessor was a fool to me. Since his death, the illustrious Leonarda had the honour of presenting nectar to these gods of the lower regions. But she was now degraded, and I had the felicity of being installed in her office. Thus, old Hebe being a little the worse for wear, young Ganymede tripped up her heels.

A substantial joint of meat after the ragouts at length blunted the edge of their appetites. Eating and drinking went together: so that they soon got into a merry pin, and made a roaring noise. Well done, my lads ! All talkers and no listeners. One begins a long story, another cuts a joke; here a fellow bawls, there a fellow sings; and they all seem to be at cross-purposes. At last Rolando, tired of a concert in which he could hardly hear the sound of his own voice, let them know that he was maestro

di capella, and brought them into better tune. Gentlemen, said he, I have a question to put. Instead of stunning one another with this infernal din, had we not better enjoy a little rational conversation? A thought is just come into my head. Since the happy day that united us we have never had the curiosity to inquire into each other's pedigrees, or by what chain of circumstances we were each of us led to embrace our present way of life. There would be no harm in knowing who and who are together. Let us, exchange confidence : we may find some amusement in it. The lieutenant and the rest, like true heroes of romance, accepted the challenge with the utmost courtesy, and the captain told the first story to the following effect:—

Gentlemen, you are to know that I am the only son of a rich citizen in Madrid. The day of my birth was celebrated in the family by rejoicings without end. My father, no chicken, thought it a considerable feat to have got an heir, and my mother was kind enough to suckle me herself. My maternal grandfather was still living: a good old man, who did not trouble himself about other people's concerns, but said his prayers, and fought his campaigns over and over again; for he had been in the army. Of course I was idolized by these three persons; never out of their arms. My early years were passed in the most childish amusements, for fear of hurting my health by application. It will not do, said *my*

Father, to hammer much learning into children till time has ripened their understanding. While he waited for this ripening, the season went by. I could neither read nor write: but I made up for that in other ways. My father taught me a thousand different games. I became perfectly acquainted with cards, was no stranger to dice, and my grandfather set me the example of drawing the long bow, while he entertained me with his military exploits. He sung the same songs repeatedly one after another every day; so that when, after saying ten or twelve lines after him for three months together, I got to boggle through them without missing, the whole family were in raptures at my memory. Neither was my wit thought to be at all less extraordinary; for I was suffered to talk at random, and took care to put in my oar in the most impertinent manner possible. O the pretty little dear ! exclaimed my father, as if he had been fascinated. My mother made it up with kisses, and my grandfather's old eyes overflowed. I played all sorts of dirty and indecent tricks before them with impunity; every thing was excusable in so fine a boy : an angel could not do wrong. Going on in this manner, I was already in my twelfth year without ever having a master. It was high time; but then he was to teach me by fair means: he might threaten, but must not flog me. This arrangement did me but little good; for sometimes I laughed when my tutor scolded : at others, I ran with tears in my

eyes to my mother or my grandfather, and complained that he had used me ill. The poor devil got nothing by denying it. My word was always taken before his, and he came off with the character of a cruel rascal. One day I scratched myself with my own nails, and set up a howl as if I had been flogged. My mother ran, and turned the master out of doors, though he vowed and protested he had never lifted a finger against me.

Thus did I get rid of all my tutors, till at last I met with one to my mind. He was a bachelor of Alcala. This was the master for a young man of fashion. Women, wine, and gaming, were his principal amusements. It was impossible to be in better hands. He hit the right nail on the head: for he let me do what I pleased, and thus got into the good graces of the family, who abandoned me to his conduct. They had no reason to repent. He perfected me betimes in the knowledge of the world. By dint of taking me about to all his haunts, he gave such a finish to my education, that, barring literature and science, I became an universal scholar. As soon as he saw that I could go alone in the high road to ruin he went to qualify others for the same journey.

During my childhood I had lived at home just as I liked, and did not sufficiently consider, that now I was beginning to be responsible for my own actions. My father and mother were a standing jest. Yet they were themselves thrown into convulsions at my

sallies; and the more ridiculous they were made by them, the more waggish they thought me. In the mean time I got into all manner of scrapes with some young fellows of my own kidney; and, as our relations kept us rather too short of cash for the exigencies of so loose a life, we each of us made free with whatever we could lay our hands on in our own families. Finding this would not raise the suppbes, we began to pick pockets in the streets at night. As ill luck would have it, our exploits came to the knowledge of the police. A warrant was out against us; but some good-natured friend, thinking it a pity we should be nipped in the bud, gave us a caution. We took to our heels, and rose in our vocation to the rank of highwaymen. From that time forth, gentlemen, with a blessing on my endeavours, I have gone on till I am almost the father of the profession, in spite of the dangers to which it is exposed.

Here the captain ended, and it came to the turn of the lieutenant. Gentlemen, extremes are said to meet;—and so it will appear from a comparison of our commander's education and mine. My father was a butcher at Toledo. He passed, with reason, for the greatest brute in the town, and my mother's sweet disposition was not mended by *the* example. -In my childhood, they whipped me in emulation of one another; I came in for a thousand lashes of a day! The slightest fault was followed up by the severest punishment. In vain did I beg for mercy with tears

in my eyes, and protest that I was sorry for what I had done. They never excused me, and nine times out of ten flogged me for nothing. When I was under my father's lash, my mother, not thinking his arm stout enough, lent her assistance, instead of begging me off. The favours I received at their hands gave me such a disgust, that I quitted their house before I had completed my fourteenth year, took the Arragon road, and begged my way to Saragossa. There I associated with vagrants, who led a merry life enough. They taught me to counterfeit blindness and lameness, to dress up an artificial wound in each of my legs, and to adopt many other methods of imposing on the credulity of the charitable and humane. In the morning, like actors at rehearsal, we cast our characters, and settled the business of the comedy. We had each our exits and our entrances; till in the evening the curtain dropped, and we regaled at the expense of the dupes we had deluded in the day. Wearied however with the company of these wretches, and wishing to live in more worshipful society, I entered into partnership with a gang of sharpers. These fellows taught me some good tricks: but Saragossa soon became too hot to hold us after we had fallen out with a limb of the law, Who had hitherto taken us under his protection. We each of us provided for ourselves, and left the devil to take the hindmost. For my part, I unlisted in a brave and veteran regiment, which had

seen abundance of service on the king's highway: and I found myself so comfortable in their quarters, that I had no desire to change my birth. So that you see gentlemen, I was very much obliged to my relations for their bad behaviour; for if they had treated me a little more kindly, I might have been a blackguard butcher at this moment, instead of having the honour to be your lieutenant.

Gentlemen,—interrupted a hopeful young freebooter who sat between the captain and the lieutenant,—the stories we have just heard are neither so complicated nor so curious as mine. I peeped into existence by means of a country-woman in the neighbourhood of Seville. Three weeks after she had set me down in this system, a nurse-child was offered her. You are to understand she was yet in her prime, comely in her person, and had a good breast of milk. The young suckling had noble blood in him, and was an only son. My mother accepted the proposal with all her heart, and went to fetch the child. It was entrusted to her care. She had no sooner brought it home, than, fancying a resemblance, she conceived the idea of substituting me for the brat of high birth, in the hope of drawing a handsome commission at some future time for this motherly office in behalf of her infant. My father, whose morals were on a level with those of clodhoppers in general, lent himself very willingly to the chitfat; so that with only a change of clouts, the son

of don Rodrigo de Herrera was packed off in my name to another nurse, and my mother suckled her own and her master's child at once in my little person.

They may say what they will of instinct and the force of blood ! The little gentleman's parents were very easily taken in, They had not the slightest suspicion of the trick; and were eternally dandling me till I was seven years old. As it was their intention to make me a finished gentleman, they gave me masters of all kinds; but I had very little taste for their lessons, and above all, I detested the sciences. I had at any time rather play with the servants or the stable boys, and was a complete kitchen genius. But tossing up for heads or tails was not my ruling passion. Before seventeen I had an itch for getting drunk. I played the devil among the chambermaids; but my prime favourite was a kitchen girl, who had infinite merit in my eyes. She was a great bloated horse-god-mother, whose good case and easy morals suited me exactly. I boarded her with so little circumspection that don Rodrigo took notice of it. He took me to task pretty sharply; twitted me with my low taste; and, for fear the presence of my charmer should counteract his sage counsels, showed the goddess of my devotions the outside of the door.

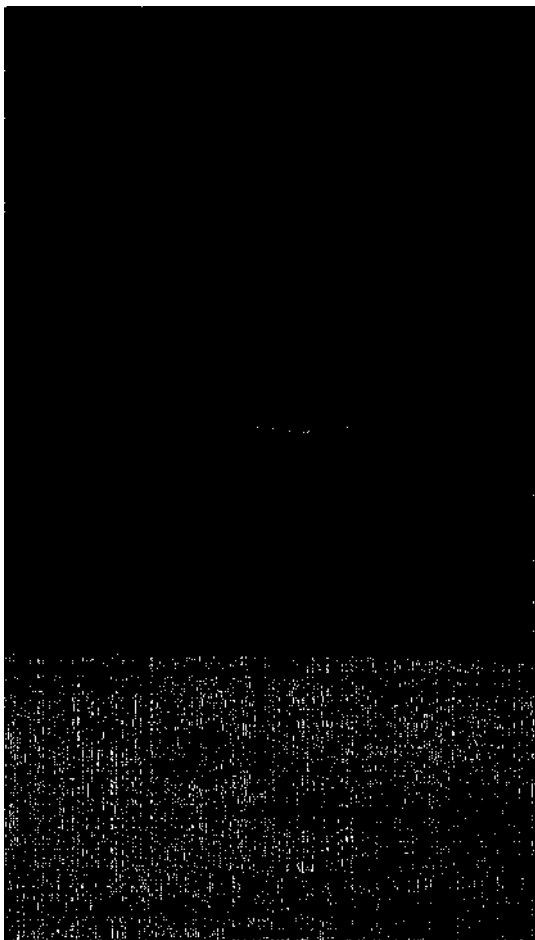
This proceeding was rather offensive; and I determined to be even with him. I stole his wife's jewels;

'and ravishing my Helen from a laundress of her acquaintance, went off with her in open day, that the transaction might lose nothing in point of notoriety. But this was not all. I earned her among her relations, where I married her according to the rites of the church, as much from the personal motive of mortifying Herrera, as from the patriotic enthusiasm -of encouraging our young nobility to mend the breed. Three months after marriage, I heard that don Rodrigo had gone the way of all flesh. The intelligence was not lost upon me. I was at Seville in a twmking, to administer in due form and order to his effects; but the tables were turned. My mother had paid the debt of nature, and in her last agonies had been so much off her guard as to confess the whole affair to the curate of the village and other competent witnesses. Don Rodngo's son had already taken my place, or rather his own, and his popularity was increased by the deficiency of mine; so that as the trumps were all out in that hand, and I had no particular wish for the present my wife was likely to make me, I joined issue with some desperate blades, with whom I began my trading ventures.

The young cut-purse having finished his story, another told us that he was the son of a merchant at Burgos; that, in his youth, prompted more by piety than wit, he had taken the religious habit and professed in a very strict order, and that a few years afterwards he had apostatized. In short, the eight

robbers told their tale one after another, and when I had heard them all, I did not wonder that the destinies had brought them together. The conversation now took a different turn. They brought several schemes upon the carpet for the next campaign ; and after having laid down their plan of operations, rose from table and went to bed. They lighted their night candles, and withdrew to their apartments. I attended captain Rolando to his. While I was fiddling about him as he undressed: Weil! Gil Blas, said he, you see how we live ! We are always merry; hatred and envy have no footing here; we have not the least difference, but hang together just like monks. You are sure, my good lad, to lead a pleasant life here; for I do not think you are fool enough to make any bones about consorting with gentlemen of the road. In what does ours differ from many a more reputable trade ? Depend on it, my friend, all men love two hands in their neighbour's purse, though only one in their own. Men's principles are all alike; the only difference lies in the mode of carrying them into effect. Conquerors, for instance, make free with the territories of their neighbours. People of fashion borrow, and do not pay. Bankers, treasurers, brokers, clerks, and traders of all kinds, wholesale and retail, give ample liberty to their wants to overdraw on their consciences. I shall not mention the hangers-on of the law; we all know how it

goes with them. At the same time it must be allowed that they have more humanity than we have; for as it is often our vocation to take away the life of the innocent for plunder, it is sometimes theirs for fee and reward to save the guilty.



I bore this prosing very quietly, because I should have got no good by putting myself in a passion about it. At length Domingo, after playing a good knife and fork, and getting gloriously muddled, took himself off to the stable. Leonarda, by the glimmering of a lamp, shewed me the way to a vault which served as a last home to those of the corps who died a natural death. Here I stumbled upon something more like a grave than a bed. This is your room, said she. Your predecessor lay here as long as he was among us, and here he lies to this day. He suffered himself to be hurried out of life in his prime: do not you be so foolish as to follow his example. With this kind advice, she left me with the lamp for my companion and returned to the kitchen. I threw myself on the little bed, not so much for rest as meditation. O heaven! exclaimed I, was there ever a fate so dreadful as mine? It is determined then that I am to take my leave of daylight! Beside this, as if it was not enough to be buried alive at eighteen, my misery is to be aggravated by being in the service of a banditti; by passing the day with highwaymen, and the night in a charnel-house. These reflections, which seemed to me very dismal, and were indeed no better than they seemed, set me crying most bitterly. I could not conceive what cursed maggot my uncle had got in his head, to send me to Salamanca; repented running away from Cacabelos, and would have compounded for the

torture. But, considering" how vain it was to shut the door when the steed was stolen, I determined, instead of lamenting the past, to hit upon some expedient for making my escape. What! thought I, is it impossible to get off? The cut-throats are asleep; cooky and the black will be snoring ere long. Why cannot I, by the help of this lamp, find the passage by which I descended into these infernal regions? I am afraid indeed my strength is not equal to lifting the trap at the entrance. However, let us see. Faint heart never won fair lady. Despair will lend me new force, and who knows but I may succeed⁷

Thus was the train laid for a grand attempt. I got up, as soon as Leonarda and Domingo were likely to be asleep. With the lamp in my hand, I stole out of the vault, putting up my prayers to all the spirits in paradise, and ten miles round. It was with no small difficulty that I threaded all the windings of this new labyrinth. At length I found myself at the stable door, and perceived the passage which was the object of my search. Pushing on I made my way towards the trap with a light pair of heels and a beating heart: but, alas! in the middle of my career I ran against a cursed iron grate locked fast, with bars so close as not to admit a hand between them. I looked rather foolish at the occurrence of this new difficulty, which I had not been aware of at my entrance, because the grate was then open. How*
Ever, I tried what I could do by fumbling at the bars*

Then for a peep at the lock; or whether it could not be forced! When all at once my poor shoulders were saluted with five or six good strokes of a bull's pizzle. I set up such a shrill alarum, that the den of Cacus rang with it; when looking round, who should it be but the old negro in his shirt, holding a dark lanthorn in one hand, and the instrument of my punishment in the other. Oh, ho ! quoth he, my merry little fellow, you will run away, will you ? No, no! you must not think to set your wits against mine. I heard you all the while. You thought you should find the grate open, did not you ? You may take it for granted, my friend, that henceforth it will always be shut. When we keep any one here against his will, he must be a cleverer fellow than you to make his escape.

In the mean time, at the howl I had set up, two or three of the robbers waked suddenly; and not knowing but the holy brotherhood might be falling upon them, they got up and called their comrades. Without the loss of a moment all were on the alert. Swords and carabines were put in requisition, and the whole posse advanced forward almost in a state of nature to the place where I was parleying with Domingo. But as soon as they learned the cause of the uproar, their alarm resolved itself into a peal of laughter. How now, Gil Blas, said the apostate son of the church, you have not been a good six hours with us, and are you tired of our company already ?

You must have a great objection to retirement. Why, what would you do if you were a Carthusian friar? Get along with you, and go to bed. This time you shall get off with Domingo's discipline; but if you are ever caught in a second attempt of the same kind, by Saint Bartholomew ! we will flay you alive. With this hint he retired, and the rest of the party went back to their rooms. The old negro, taking credit to himself for his vigilance, returned to his stable: and I found my way back to my charnel-house, where I passed the remainder of the night in weeping and wailing.

CHAPTER VII.

Gil Blas, not being able to do what he likes, does what he can.

FOR the first few days, I thought I should have given up the ghost for very spite and vexation. The lingering life I led was nearly akin to death itself; but in the end my good genius whispered me to play the hypocrite. I aimed at looking a little more cheerful; began to laugh and sing, though it was sometimes on the wrong side of my mouth : in a word, I put so good a face on the matter, that Leonarda and Domingo were completely taken in. They thought the bird was reconciled to his cage. The robbers entertained the same notion. I looked as brisk as the beverage I poured out, and put in my oar whenever I thought I could say a good thing. My freedom, far from offending, was taken in good part. Gil Blas, quoth the captain one evening, while I was playing the buffoon, you have done well, my friend, to banish melancholy: I am delighted with your wit and humour. Some people wear a mask at first acquaintance: I had no notion what a jovial fellow you were.

My praises now seemed to run from mouth to mouth. They were all so partial to me, that, not to

miss my opportunity;—Gentlemen, quoth I, allow me to tell you a piece of my mind. Since I have been your guest, a new light breaks in upon me. I have bid adieu to vulgar prejudices, and caught a ray at the fountain of your illumination. I feel that I was born to be your knight companion. I languish to make one among you, and will stand my chance of a halter with the best. All the company cried Hear!—I was considered as a promising member of the senate. It was then determined unanimously to give me a trial in some inferior department; afterwards to bespeak me a good desperate encounter in which I might show my prowess; and if I answered expectation, to give me a high and responsible employment in the commonwealth.

It was necessary therefore to go on exhibiting a copy of my countenance, and doing my best in my office of cup-bearer. I was impatient beyond measure; for I only aspired after the honours of the sitting, to obtain the liberty of going abroad with the rest; and I was in hopes that by running the risk of getting my neck into one noose I might get it out of another. This was my only chance. The time nevertheless seemed long to wait, and I kept my eye on Domingo, with the hope of outwitting him: but the thing was not feasible; he was always on the watch. Orpheus as leader of the band, with a complete orchestra of performers as good as himself, could not have soothed the savage breast of this

Cerberus. The truth is, by the by, that for fear of exciting his suspicion, I did not set my wits against him so much as I might have done. He was on the look-out, and I was obliged to play the prude, or my virtue might have come into disgrace. I therefore stopped proceedings till the time of my probation should expire, to which I looked forward with impatience, just as if I was waiting for a place under government.

Heaven be praised, in about six months I gained my end. The commandant Rolando addressing his regiment, said: Comrades, we must stand upon honour with Gil Blas. I have no bad opinion of our young candidate; we shall make something of him. If you will take my advice, let him go and reap his first harvest with us to-morrow on the king's highway. We will lead him on in the path of honour. The robbers applauded the sentiments of the captain with a thunder of acclamation; and to shew me how much I was considered as one of the gang, from that moment they dispensed with my attendance at the side-board. Dame Leonarda was reinstated in the office from which she had been discharged to make room for me. They made me change my dress, which consisted in a plain short cassock a good deal the worse for wear, and tricked me out in the spoils of a gentleman lately robbed. After this inauguration, I made my arrangements for my first campaign.

CHAPTER VIII.

Gil Blas goes out with the gang, and performs an exploit on the highway.

IT was past midnight in the month of September, when I issued from the subterraneous abode as one of the fraternity. I was armed, like them, with a carabine, two pistols, a sword and a bayonet, and was mounted on a very good horse, the property of the gentleman in whose costume I appeared. I had lived so long like a mole under ground, that the day-break could not fail of dazzling me : but my eyes got reconciled to it by degrees.

We passed close by Pontferrada, and were determined to lie in ambush behind a small wood skirting the road to Leon. There we were waiting for whatever fortune might please to throw in our way, when we espied a Dominican friar, mounted, contrary to the rubric of those pious fathers, on a shabby mule. God be praised, exclaimed the captain with a sneer, this is a noble beginning for Gil Blas. Let him go and trounce that monk : we will bear witness to his qualifications. The connoisseurs were all of opinion that this commission suited my talents to a hair, and exhorted me to do my best. Gentlemen, quoth I, you shall have no reason to complain. I will strip

this holy father to his birth-day suit, and give you complete right and title to his mule. No, no, said Rolando, the beast would not be worth its fodder: only bring us our reverend pastor's paise; that is all we require. Hereupon, I issued from the wood and pushed up to the man of God, doing penance all the time in my own breast for the sin I was committing. I could have liked to have turned my back upon my fellows at that moment; but most of them had the advantage of better horses than mine : had they seen me making off, they would have been at my heels, and would soon have caught me, or perhaps would have fired a volley, for which T was not sufficiently case-hardened. I could not therefore venture on so perilous an alternative; so that claiming acquaintance with the reverend father, I asked to look at his purse, and just put out the end of a pistol. He stopped short to gaze upon me; and, without seeming much frightened, said, My child, you are very young; this is an early apprenticeship to a bad trade. Father, replied I, bad as it is, I wish I had begun it sooner. What! my son, rejoined the good friar, who did not understand the real meaning of what I said, how say you ? What blindness ! give me leave to place before your eyes the unhappy condition. Come, come, father! interrupted I with impatience, a truce with your morality, if you please. My business on the high road is not to hear sermons. Money makes my mare to go. Money! said he, with a look of

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surprize; you have a poor opinion of Spanish charity, *if* you think that people of my stamp have any occasion for such trash upon their travels. Let me undeceive you. We are made welcome wherever we go, and pay for our board and lodging by our prayers. In short, we carry no cash with us on the road; but draw drafts upon Providence. That is all very well, replied I; yet for fear your drafts should be dishonoured, you take care to keep about you a little supply for present need. But come father, let us make an end: my comrades in the wood are in a hurry; so your money or your life. At these words, which I pronounced with a determined air, the friar began to think the business grew serious. Since needs must, said he, there is wherewithal to satisfy your craving. A word and a blow is the only rhetoric with you gentlemen. As he said this, he drew a large leathern purse from under his gown, and threw it on the ground. I then told him he might make the best of his way: and he did not wait for a second bidding, but stuck his heels into the mule, which, giving the lie to my opinion, for I thought it on a par with my uncle's, set off at a good round pace. While he was riding for his life, I dismounted. The purse was none of the lightest. I mounted again, and got back to the wood, where those nice observers were waiting with impatience to congratulate me on my success. I could hardly get my foot out of the stirrup, so eager were they to shake hands with me. Courage, Gil

Blas, said Rolando; you have done wonders. I have had my eyes on you during your whole performance, and have watched your countenance. I have no hesitation in predicting that you will become in time a very accomplished highwayman. The lieutenant and the rest chimed in with the prophecy, and assured me that I could not fail of fulfilling it hereafter. I thanked them for the elevated idea they had formed of my talents, and promised to do all in my power not to discredit their penetration.

After they had lavished praises, the effect rather of their candour than of my merit, they took it into their heads to examine the booty I had brought under my convoy. Let us see, said they, let us see how a friar's purse is lined. It should be fat and flourishing, continued one of them, for these good fathers do not mortify the flesh when they travel. The captain untied the purse, opened it, and took out two or three handfuls of little copper coins, an *Agnus-Dei* here and there, and some scapularies. At sight of so novel a prize, all the privates burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. God be praised! cried the lieutenant, we are very much obliged to Gil Blas; his first attack has produced a supply, very seasonable to our fraternity. One joke brought on another. These rascals, especially the fellow who had retired from the church to our subterraneous hermitage, began to make themselves merry on the subject.

They said a thousand good things, such as shewed at once the sharpness of their wits, and the proflicacy of their morals. They were all on the broad grin except myself. It was impossible to be butt and marksman too. They each of them shot their bolt at me, and the captain said: Faith, Gil Blas, I would advise you as a friend not to set your wit a second time against the church: the biter may be bit; for you must live some time longer among us, before you are a match for them.

R IX.

A more serious incident.

WE lounged about the wood for the greater part of the day, without lighting on any traveller to pay toll for the friar. At length we were beginning to wear our homeward way, as if confining the feats of the day to this laughable adventure, which furnished a plentiful fund of conversation, when we got intelligence of a carriage on the road drawn by four mules. They were coming at a hard gallop, with three outriders who seemed to be well armed. Rolando ordered the troop to halt, and hold a council, the result of whose deliberations was to attack the enemy. We were regularly drawn up in battle array, and marched to meet the caravan. In spite of the applause I had gained in the wood, I felt an oozing sort of a tremor come over me, with a chill in my veins and a chattering in my teeth that seemed to bode me no good. As it never rains but it pours, I was in the front of the battle, hemmed in between the captain and the lieutenant, who had given me that post of honour, that I might lose no time in learning to stand fire. Rolando, observing the low ebb of my animal spirits, looked askew at me, and

muttered in a tone more resolute than courtly: Hark ye ! Gil Blas, look sharp about you ! I give you fair notice, that if you play the recreant, I shall lodge a couple of bullets in your brain. I believed him as firmly as my catechism, and thought it high time not to neglect the hint; so that I was obliged to lay an embargo on the expression of my fears, and to think only of recommending my soul to God in silence.

While all this was going on, the carriage and horsemen drew near. They suspected what sort of gentry we were; and guessing our trade by our badge, stopped within gun-shot. They had carabines and pistols as well as ourselves. While they were preparing to give us a brisk reception, there jumped out of the coach a well-looking gentleman richly dressed. He mounted a led horse, and put himself at the head of his party. Though they were but four against nine, for the coachman kept his seat on the box, they advanced towards us with a confidence calculated to redouble my terror. Yet I did not forget, though trembling in every joint, to hold myself in readiness for a shot: but, to give a candid relation of the affair, I blinked and looked the other way in letting off my piece; so that from the harmlessness of my fire, I was sure not to have murder to answer for in another world.

I shall not give the particulars of the engagement; though present, I was no eye-witness; and my fear, while it laid hold of my imagination, drew a veil over

the anticipated horror of the sight. All I know about the matter is, that after a grand discharge of musquetry, I heard my companions hallooing Victory! Victory ! as if their lungs were made of leather. At this shout the terror which had made a forcible entry on my senses was ejected, and I beheld the four horsemen stretched lifeless on the field of battle. On our side, we had only one man killed. This was the renegade parson, who had now filled the measure of his apostasy, and paid for jesting with scapularies and such sacred things. The lieutenant received a slight wound in the arm; but the bullet did little more than graze the skin.

Master Rolando was the first at the coach-door. Within was a lady of from four to five-and-twenty, beautiful as an angel in his eyes, in spite of her sad condition. She had fainted during the conflict, and her swoon still continued. While he was fixed like a statue on her charms, the rest of us were in profound meditation on the plunder. We began by securing the horses of the defunct; for these animals, frightened at the report of our pieces, had got to a little distance, after the loss of their riders. For the mules, they had not wagged a hair, though the coachman had jumped from his box during the engagement to make his escape. We dismounted for the purpose of unharnessing and loading them with some trunks tied before and behind the carriage. This settled, the captain ordered the lady, who had

not yet recovered her faculties, to be set on horseback before the best mounted of the robbers; then, leaving the carriage and the uncased carcasses by the road side, we carried off with us the lady, the mules and the horses.

CHAPTER X.

The lady's treatment from the robbers. The event of the great design, conceived by Gil Blas,

THE night had another hour to run, when we arrived at our subterraneous mansion. The first thing we did was to lead our cavalry to the stable, where we were obliged to groom them ourselves, as the old negro had been confined to his bed for three days, with a violent fit of the gout, and an universal rheumatism. He had no member supple but his tongue; and that he employed in testifying his indignation by the most horrible impieties. Leaving this wretch to curse and swear by himself, we went to the kitchen to look after the lady. So successful were our attentions, that we succeeded in recovering her from her fit. But when she had once more the use of her senses, and saw herself encompassed by strangers, she knew the extent of her misfortune, and shuddered at the thought. All that grief and despair together could present, of images the most distressing, appeared depicted in her eyes, which she lifted up to heaven, as if in reproach for the indignities she was threatened with. Then, giving way at once to these dreadful apprehensions, she fell

again into a swoon, her eyelids closed once more, and the robbers thought that death was going to snatch from them their prey. The captain, therefore, judging it more to the purpose to leave her to herself than to torment her with any more of their assistance, ordered her to be laid on Leonarda's bed, and at all events to let nature take its course.

We went into the hall, where one of the robbers, who had been bred a surgeon, looked at the lieutenant's arm and put a plaister to it. After this scientific operation, it was thought expedient to examine the baggage. Some of the trunks were filled with laces and linen, others with various articles of wearing apparel: but the last contained some bags of coin; a circumstance highly approved by the receivers general of the estate. After this investigation, the cook set out the side-board, laid the cloth, and served up supper. Our conversation ran first on the great victory we had achieved. On this subject said Rolando, directing himself to me, Confess the truth, Gil Blas: you cannot deny that you were devilishly frightened. I candidly admitted the fact; but promised to fight like a crusader, after my second or third campaign. Hereupon all the company took my part, alleging the sharpness of the action in my excuse, and that it was very well for a novice, not yet accustomed to the smell of powder.

We next talked of the mules and horses just added to our subterraneous stud. It was determined to

set off the next morning before day-break, and sell them at Mansilla, before there was any chance of our expedition having got wind. This resolution taken, we finished our supper, and returned to the kitchen to pay our respects to the lady. We found her in the same condition. Nevertheless, though the dregs of life seemed almost exhausted, some of these poachers could not help casting a wicked leer at her, and giving visible signs of a motion within them, which would have broken out into overt act, had not Rolando put a spoke in their wheel, by representing that they ought at least to wait till the lady had got rid of her terrors and squeamishness, and could come in for her share of the amusement. Their respect for the captain operated as a check to the incontinence of their passions. Nothing else could have saved the lady; nor would death itself probably have secured her from violation.

Again therefore did we leave this unhappy female to her melancholy fate. Rolando contented himself with charging Leonarda to take care of her, and we all separated for the night. For my part, when I went to bed, instead of courting sleep, my thoughts were wholly taken up with the lady's misfortunes. I had no doubt of her being a woman of quality, and thought her lot on that account so much the more piteous. I could not paint to myself, without shuddering, the horrors which awaited her; and felt myself as sensibly affected by them, as if united to

her by the ties of blood or friendship. At length, after having sufficiently bewailed her destiny, I mused on the means of preserving her honour from its present danger, and myself from a longer abode in this dungeon. I considered that the old negro could not stir, and recollected that since his illness the cook had the key of the grate. That thought warmed my fancy, and gave birth to a project not to be hazarded lightly : the stages of its execution were the following.

I pretended to have the cholic. A lad in the cholic cannot help whining and groaning; but I went further, and cried out lustily, as loud as my lungs would let me. This roused my gentle friends, and brought them about me, to know what the deuce was the matter. I informed them that I had a swinging fit of the gripes, and to humour the idea, gnashed my teeth, made all manner of wry faces till I looked like a bedlamite, and twisted my limbs as if I had been going to be delivered of an heathen oracle. Then I became calm alt at once, as if my pains had abated. The next minute, I flounced up and down upon my bed, and threw my arms about at random. In a word, I played my part so well, that these more experienced performers, knowing as they were, suffered themselves to be thrown off their guard, and to believe that my malady was real. All at once did they busy themselves for my relief. One brought me a bottle of brandy, and forced me to gulp down

half of it; another, in spite of my remonstrances, applied oil of sweet almonds in a very offensive manner: a third went and made a napkin burning hot, to be clapped upon my stomach. In vain did I cry mercy; they attributed my noise to the violence of my disorder, and went on inflicting positive evil by way of remedy for that which was artificial. At last, able to bear it no longer, I was obliged to swear that I was better, and entreat them to give me quarter. They left off killing me with kindness, and I took care not to complain any more, for fear of experiencing their tender attentions a second time.

This scene lasted nearly three hours. After which the robbers, calculating it to be near day-break, prepared for their journey to Mansilla. I was for getting up, as if I had set my heart on being of the party; but that they would not allow. No, no, Gil Blas, said signor Rolando, stay here, my lad: your cholic may return. You shall go with us another time; to-day you are not in travelling condition. I did not think it prudent to urge my attendance too much, for fear of being taken at my word; but only affected great disappointment, with so natural an air, that they all went off without the slightest misgiving of my design. After their departure, for which I had prayed most fervently, I said to myself: No**w* is your time, Gil Blas, to be firm and resolved. Arm yourself with courage to go through with an enterprise

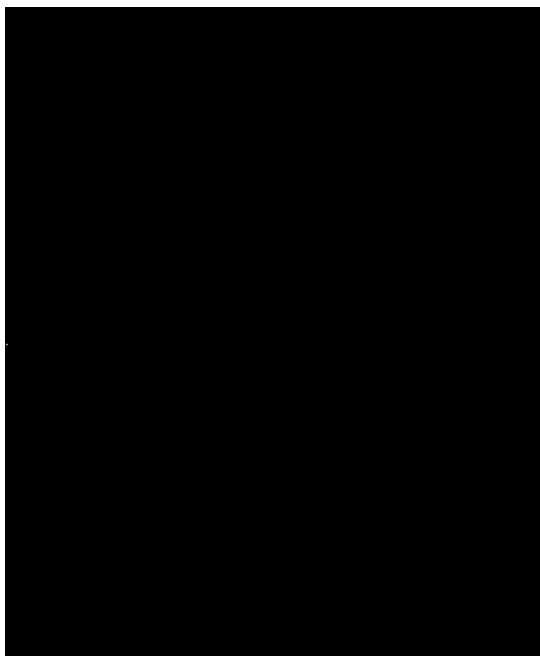
so propitiously begun. Domingo is tied by the leg, and Leonarda may shew her teeth, but she cannot bite. Pounce down upon opportunity while it offers; you may wait long enough for another. Thus did I spirit myself up in soliloquy. Having got out of bed, I laid hold of my sword and pistols; and away I went to the kitchen. But before I made my appearance, I stopped to hear what Leonarda was talking about to the fair incognita, who was come to her senses, and on a view of her misfortune in its extremity, took on most desperately. That is right, my girl, said the old hag, cry your eyes out, sob away plentifully, you know the good effect of women's tears. The sudden shock was too much for you: but the danger is over, now the engines can play. Your grief will abate by little and little, and you will get reconciled to living with our gentlemen, who are very good sort of people. You will be better off than a princess. You do not know how fond they will be of you. Not a day will pass without your being obliged to some of them. Many a woman would give one of her eyes to be in your place.

I did not allow Leonarda time to go on any longer with this babbling. In I went, and putting a pistol to her breast, insisted with a menacing air on her delivering up the key of the grate. She did not know what to make of my behaviour; and, though almost in the last stage of life, had such a propensity

to linger on the road, as not to venture on a refusal. With the key in my hand, I directed the following speech to the distressed object of my compassion: Madam, heaven sends you a deliverer in me; follow, and I will see you safe whithersoever you wish to be conducted. The lady was not deaf to my proposal, which made such an impression on her grateful heart, that she jumped up with all the strength she had left, threw herself at my feet, and conjured me to save her honour, I raised her from the ground, and assured her she might rely on me. I then took some ropes which were opportunely in the kitchen, and with her assistance tied Leonarda to the legs of a large table, protesting that I would kill her if she only breathed a murmur. After that, lighting a candle, I went with the incognita to the treasury, where I filled my pockets with pistoles, single and double, as full as they could hold. To encourage the lady not to be scrupulous, I begged she would think herself at home, and make free with her own. With our finances thus recruited, we went towards the stable, where I marched in with my pistols cocked. I was of opinion that the old blackamoor, for all his gout and rheumatism, would not let me saddle and bridle my horse peaceably, and my resolution was to put the finishing hand to all his ailments, if he took it into his head to play the churl: but, by good luck, he was at that moment in such

pain, that I stole the steed without his perceiving that the door was open. The lady in the mean time was waiting for me. We were not long in threading the passage leading to the outlet; but reached the grate, opened it, and at last got to the trap. Much ado there was to lift it, which we could not have done, but for the new strength we borrowed from the hopes of our escape.

Day was beginning to dawn, when we emerged from that abyss. Our first object was to get as far from it as possible. I jumped into the saddle: the lady got up behind me, and taking the first path that offered, we soon galloped out of the forest. Coming to some cross-roads, we took our chance. I trembled for fear of its leading to Mansilla, and our encountering Rolando and his comrades. Luckily my apprehensions were unfounded. We got to Astorga by two o'clock in the afternoon. The people looked at us as if they had never seen such a sight before, as a woman riding behind a man. We alighted at the first inn. I immediately ordered a partridge and a young rabbit to the spit. While my orders were in a train of execution, the lady was shewn to a room, where we began to "scrape acquaintance with one another; which we had not done on the road, on account of the speed we made. She expressed a high sense of my services, and told me that after so gentlemanly a conduct, she could not allow herself



to think me one of the gang from whom I had rescued her. I told her my story, to confirm her good opinion. By these means, I entitled myself to her confidence, and to the knowledge of her misfortunes, which she recounted to the following effect.

CHAPTER XL

The history of donna Mencia de Mosquera,

I WAS born at Valladolid, and am called donna Mencia de Mosquera. My father don Martin, after spending most of his family estate in the service, was killed in Portugal at the head of his regiment. He left me so little property, that I was a bad match, though an only daughter. I was not however without my admirers, notwithstanding the mediocrity of my fortune. Several of the most considerable cavaliers in Spain sought me in marriage. My favourite was don Alvar de Mello. It is true he had a prettier person than his rivals; but more solid qualities determined me in his favour. He had wit, discretion, valour, probity; and in addition to all these, an air of fashion. Was an entertainment to be given? His taste was sure to be displayed. If he appeared in the lists, he always fixed the eyes of the beholders on his strength and dexterity. I singled him out from among all the rest, and married him.

A few days after our nuptials, he met don Andrew de Baesa, who had been his rival, in a private place. They attacked one another sword in hand, and don Andrew fell. As he was nephew to the corregidor of Valladolid, a turbulent man, violently incensed

against the house of Mello, don Alvar thought he could not soon enough make his escape. He returned home speedily, and told me what had happened while his horse was getting ready. My dear Mencia, said he at length, we must part. You know the corregidor: let us not flatter ourselves; he will hunt me even to death. You are unacquainted with his influence; this empire will be too hot to hold me. He was so penetrated by his own grief and mine, as not to be able to articulate further. I made him take some cash, and jewels: then he folded me in his arms, and we did nothing but mingle our sighs and tears for a quarter of an hour. In a short time the horse was at the door. He tore himself from me, and left me in a condition not easily to be expressed. It had been well if the excess of my affliction had destroyed me! How much pain and trouble might I have escaped by death! Some hours after don Alvar was gone, the corregidor became acquainted with his flight. He set up an hue and cry after him, sparing no pains to get him into his power. My husband however eluded his pursuit, and got into safe quarters; so that the judge, finding himself reduced to confine his vengeance to the poor satisfaction of confiscating, where he meant to execute, laboured to good purpose in his vocation. Don Alvar's little property all went to the hammer.

I remained in a very comfortless situation, with scarcely the means of subsistence. A retired life

was best suited to my circumstances, with a single female servant. I passed my hours in lamenting, not an indigence, which I bore patiently, but the absence of a beloved husband, of whom I received *no* accounts. He had indeed pledged himself, in the melancholy moments of our parting, to be punctual in acquainting me with his destiny, to whatever part of the world his evil star might conduct him. And yet seven years rolled on without my hearing of him. My suspense respecting his fate afflicted me most deeply. At last I heard of his falling in battle, under the Portuguese banner, in the kingdom of Fez. A man newly returned from Africa brought me the account, with the assurance that he had been well acquainted with don Alvar de Mello; had served with him in the army, and had seen him drop in the action. To this narrative of facts he added several collateral circumstances, which left me no room to doubt of my husband's premature death.

About this time, don Ambrosio Mesia Carrillo, marquis de la Guardia, arrived at Valladolid. He was one of those elderly noblemen who, with that good breeding acquired by long experience in courts, throw their years into the back ground, and retain the faculty of making themselves agreeable to our sex. One day, he happened by accident to hear the story of don Alvar; and, from the part I bore in it and the description of my person, there arose a desire of being better acquainted. To satisfy his

curiosity, he made interest with one of my relations to invite me to her house. The gentleman was one of the party. This his interview made not the less impression on his heart, for the traces of sorrow which were too obvious on my countenance. He was touched by its melancholy and languishing expression, which gave him a favourable forecast of my constancy. Respect, rather than any warmer sentiment, might perhaps be the inspirer of his wishes. For he told me more than once what a miracle of good faith he considered me, and my husband's fate as enviable in this respect, however lamentable in others. In a word, he was struck with me at first sight, and did not wait for a review of my pretensions, but at once took the resolution of making me his wife.

The intervention of my kinswoman was adopted as the means of inducing me to accept his proposal. She paid me a visit; and in the course of conversation pleaded, that as my husband had submitted to the decree of providence in the kingdom of Fez, according to very credible accounts, it was no longer rational to coop up my charms. I had shed tears enough over a man to whom I had been united but for a few moments as it were, and I ought to avail myself of the present offer, and had nothing to do but to step into happiness at once. In furtherance of these arguments, she set forth the old marquis's pedigree, his wealth and high character: but in vain

did her eloquence expatiate on his endowments, for I was not to be moved. Not that my mind misgave me respecting Don Alvar's death; nor that the apprehension of his sudden and unwelcome appearance hereafter, checked my inclinations. My little liking, or rather my extreme repugnance to a second marriage, after the sad issue of the first, was the sole obstacle opposed to my relation's urgency. Neither was she disheartened: on the contrary, her zeal for don Ambrosio resorted to endless stratagems. All my family were pressed into the old lord's service. So beneficial a match was not to be trifled with! They were eternally besetting, dunning, and tormenting me. In fact, my despondency, which increased from day to day, contributed not a little to my yielding.

As there was no getting rid of him, I gave way to their eager suit, and was wedded to the marquis de la Guardia. The day after the nuptials, we went to a very fine castle of his near Burgos, between Grajal and Rodillas. He conceived a violent love for me: the desire of pleasing was visible in all his actions: the anticipation of my slenderest wishes was his earliest and his latest study. No husband ever regarded his wife more tenderly, no lover could pour forth more devotion to his mistress. Nor would it have been possible for me to steel my heart against a return of passion, though our ages were so disproportioned, had not every soft sentiment been buried in don Alvar's grave. But the avenues of a constant

heart are barred against a second inmate. The memory of my first husband threw a damp on all the kind efforts of the second. Mere gratitude was a cold retribution for such tenderness; but it was all I had to give.

Such was my temper of mind, when, taking the air one day at a window in my apartment, I perceived a peasant-looking man in the garden, viewing me with fixed attention. He appeared to be a common labourer. The circumstance soon passed out of my thoughts; but the next day, having again taken my station at the window, I saw him on the self-same spot, and again found myself the object of his eager gaze. This seemed strange! I looked at him in my turn; and, after an attentive scrutiny, thought I could trace the features of the unhappy don Alvar. This seeming visit from the tombs roused all the dormant agony of my soul, and extorted from me a piercing scream. Happily, I was then alone with Ines, who of all my women engaged the largest share of my confidence. I told her what surmise had so agitated my spirits. She only laughed at the idea, and took it for granted that a slight resemblance had imposed on my fancy. Take courage, madam, said she, and do not be afraid of seeing your first husband. What likelihood is there of his being here in the disguise of a peasant? Is it even within *the* reach of credibility that he is yet alive? However, I will go down into the garden, and talk with this rustic. I will

answer for finding out who he is, and will return in all possible haste with my intelligence. Ines ran on her errand like a lapwing; but soon returned to my apartment with a face of mingled astonishment and emotion: Madam, exclaimed she, your conjecture is but too well grounded.; it is indeed don Alvar whom you have seen; he made himself known at once, and pleads for a private interview.

As I had the means of admitting don Alvar instantaneously, by the absence of the marquis at Burgos, I commissioned my waiting-maid to introduce him into my closet by a private staircase. Well may you imagine the hurry and agitation of my spirits. How could I support the presence of a man, who was entitled to overwhelm me with reproaches? I fainted at his very foot-fall as he entered. They were about me in a moment;—he as well as Ines; and when they had recovered me from my swoon, don Alvar said: Madam, for heaven's sake, compose yourself. My presence shall never be the cause of pain to you; nor would I for the world expose you to the slightest anxiety. I am no savage husband, come to account with you for a sacred pledge; nor do I impute to criminal motives the second contract you have formed. I am well aware that it was owing to the importunity of your friends : your persecutions from that quarter are not unknown to me. Besides, the report of my death was current in Valladolid; and you had so much the more reason to give it credit, as no letter

from me gave you any assurance to the contrary. In short/ I am no stranger to your habits of life since our cruel separation; and know that necessity, not lightness of heart, has thrown you into the arms Ah! sir, interrupted I with sobs, why will you make excuses for your unworthy wife? She is guilty, since you survive. Why am I not still in the forlorn state, in which I languished before my marriage with don Ambrosio? Fatal nuptials!—alas! but for these, I should at least have had the consolation in my wretchedness of seeing the object of my first vows again without a blush.

My dear Mencia, replied don Alvar, with a look which marked how deeply he was penetrated by my contrition, I make no complaint of you; and far from upbraiding you with your present prosperity, as heaven is my witness, I return it thanks for the favours it has showered on you. Since the sad day of my departure from Valladolid, my own fate has ever been adverse. My life has been but a tissue of misfortune; and, as a surcharge of evil destiny, I had no means of letting you hear from me. Too secure in your affection, I could neither think nor even dream but of the condition, to which my fatal love might have reduced you. Donna Mencia in tears was the lovely, but killing spectre that haunted me: of all my miseries, your dear idea was the most acute. Sometimes, I own, I felt remorse for the transporting crime of having pleased you. I wished

you had lent an ear to the suit of some happier rival, since the preference with which you had honoured me was to fall so cruelly on your own head. To cut short my melancholy tale;—after seven years of suffering, more enamoured than ever, I determined to see you once again. The impulse was not to be resisted ; and the expiration of a long slavery having furnished me with the power of giving way to it, I have been at Valladolid under this disguise at the hazard of a discovery. There, I learned the whole story. I then came to this castle, and found the means of admission into the gardener's service, who hVs engaged me as a labourer. Such was my stratagem to obtain this private interview. But do not suppose me capable of blasting, by my continuance here, the happiness of your future days. I love you better than my own life: I have no consideration but for your repose; and it is my purpose, after thus unburdening my heart, to finish in exile the sacrifice of an existence, which has lost its value since no longer to be devoted to your service.

No, don Alvar, no, exclaimed I at these words; you shall never quit me a second time. I will be the companion of your wanderings; and death only shall divide us from this hour. Take my advice, replied he, live with don Ambrosio: unite not yourself with my miseries; but leave me to stand under their undivided weight. These and other such entreaties he used; but the more willing he seemed to sacrifice

himself to my welfare, the less did I feel disposed to take advantage of his generosity. When he saw me resolute in my determination to follow him, he all at once changed his tone; and assuming an aspect of more satisfaction: Madam, said he, since you still love don Alvar well enough, to prefer advxrsity with him before your present ease and affluence, let us then take up our abode at Betancos, in the interior of Galicia. There I have a safe retreat. Though my misfortunes may have stripped me of my effects, they have not alienated all my friends ; some are yet faithful, and have furnished me with the means of carrying you off. With their help I have hired a carriage at Zamora; have bought mules and horses, and am accompanied by perhaps the three boldest of the Galicians. They are armed with carabines and pistols, waiting my orders at the village of Rodillas. Let us avail ourselves of don Ambroses absence. I will send the carriage to the castle gate, and we will set out without loss of time. I consented. Don Alvar flew towards Rodillas, and shortly returned with his escort. My women, from the midst of whom I was carried off, not knowing what to think of this violent proceeding, made their escape in great terror. Ines only was in the secret; but she would not link her fate with mine, on account of a love affair with don Ambrosio's favourite man.

I got into the carriage therefore with don Alvar,

taking nothing with me but my clothes and some jewels of my own before my second marriage; for I could not think of appropriating any presents of the marquis. We travelled in the direction of Galicia, without knowing if we should be lucky enough to reach it. We had reason to fear don Ambrosio's pursuit on his return, and that we should be overtaken by superior numbers. We went forward for two days without any alarm, and in the hope of being equally fortunate the third, had got into a very quiet conversation. Don Alvar was relating the melancholy adventure which had occasioned the rumour of his death, and how he recovered his freedom, after five years of slavery, when yesterday we met upon the Leon road the banditti you were with. He it was whom they killed with all his attendants, and it is for him the tears flow, which you see me shedding at this moment.

CHAPTER XII.

A disagreeable interruption.

DONNA Mencia melted into tears as she finished this recital. I allowed her to give a free passage to her sighs: I even wept my self for company, so natural is it to be interested for the afflicted, and especially for a lovely female in distress. I was just going to ask her what she meant to do in the present conjuncture, and possibly she was going to consult me on the same subject, if our conversation had not been interrupted: but we heard a great noise in the inn, which drew our attention whether we would or no. It was no less than the arrival of the corregidor, attended by two alguazils and their marshalmen. They came into the room where we were. A young gentleman in their train came first up to me, and began taking to pieces the different articles of my dress. I had no occasion to examine them long. By saint James, exclaimed he, this is my identical doublet! It is the very thing; and as safely to be challenged as my horse. You may commit this spark on my recognizance; he is one of the gang who have an undiscovered retreat in this country.

At this discourse, which gave me to understand my accuser to be the gentleman robbed, whose spoils

to my confusion were exclusively my own, I was without a word to say for myself, looking one way and the other, and not knowing where to fix my eyes. The corregidor, whose office was suspicion, set me down for the culprit; and presuming on the lady for an accomplice, ordered us into separate custody. This magistrate was none of your stern gallows-preaching fellows : he had a jocular epigrammatic sort of countenance. God knows if his heart lay in the right place for all that! As soon as I was committed, in came he with his pack. They knew their trade, and began by searching me. What a forfeit to these lords of the manor! At every handful of pistoles, what little eyes did I see them make! The corregidor was absolutely out of his wits! It was the best stroke within the memory of justice! My pretty lad, said his worship with a softened tone we only do our duty: but do not you tremble for your bones before the time; you will not be broken on the wheel, if you do not deserve it. These blood-suckers were emptying my pockets all the time with their cursed palaver, and took from me what their betters of the shades below had the decency to leave, my uncle's forty ducats. They stuck at nothing ! Their staunch fingers, with slow but certain scent, routed me out from top to toe: they whisked me round and round, and stripped me even to the shame of modesty, for fear some sneaking portrait of the king should slink between my shirt and skin.

When they could sift me no further, the corregidor thought it time to begin his examination. I told a plain tale. My deposition was taken down; and the sequel was, that he carried in his train his bloodhounds, and my little property, leaving me to toss without a rag upon a beggarly whisp of straw.

Oh the miseries of human life! groaned I, when I found myself in this merciless and solitary condition. Our adventures here are whimsical, and out of all time and tune. From my first outset from Oviedo, I had got into a pleasant round of difficulties : hardly had I worked myself out of one danger, before I soused into another. Coming into town here, how could I expect the honour of the corregidor's acquaintance? While thus communing with my own thoughts, I got once more into the cursed doublet and the rest of the paraphernalia which had got me into such a scrape; then plucking up a little courage, Never mind, Gil Blas, thought I, do not be chicken-hearted. What is a prison above ground, after so brimstone a snuffle as thou hast had of the regions below? But, alas ! I hollow before I am out of the wood! I am in more experienced hands than those of Leonarda and Domingo. My key will not open this grate ! I might well say so : for a prisoner without money is like a bird with its wings dipt; one must be in full feather, to flutter out of distance from these gaol-birds.

But we left a partridge and a young rabbit on the

spit! How they got off I know not: but my suppa was a bit of sallow-complexioned bread, with a pitcher of water to render it amenable to mastication! and thus was I destined to bite the bridle in my dungeon. A fortnight was pretty well without seeing a soul but my keeper, who had orders that I should want for nothing in the bread and water way! Whenever he made his appearance, I was inclined to be sociable, and to parley a little to get rid of the blue devils: but this majestic minister was above reply; he was mum! he scarcely trusted his eyes, but to see that I did not slip by him. On the sixteenth day, the corregidor strutted in to this tune: You are a lucky fellow! I have news for you. The lady is packed off for Burgos. She came under my examination before her departure; and her answers went to your exculpation. You will be at large this very day, if your carrier from Pegnaflor to Cacabelos agrees in the same tale. He is now in Astorga. I have sent for him; and expect him here: if he confirms the story of the torture, you are your own master.

At these words I was ready to jump out of my skin for joy. The business was settled! I thanked the magistrate for the abridgment of justice with which he had deigned to favour me; and was getting to the fag end of my compliment, when the muleteer arrived, with an attendant before and behind. I knew the fellow's face: but he, having as a matter.

of course sold my cloak-bag with the contents, from a deep-rooted affection to the money which the sale had brought, swore lustily that he had no acquaintance with me, and had never seen me in the whole course of his life. Oh! you villain, exclaimed I, go down on your knees and own that you have sold my clothes. Prythee, have some regard to truth ! Look in my face: am not I one of those shallow young fellows, whom you had the wit to threaten with the sack in the corporate town of Cacabelos? The muleteer turned upon his toe, and protested he had not the honour of my acquaintance. As he persisted in his disavowal, I was recommitted for further examination. Patience once more ! It was only reducing feasts and fasts to the leval of bread and water, and regaling the only sense I had the means of using with the sight of my tongue-tied warden. But when I reflected how little innocence would avail to extricate me from the clutches of the law, the thought was death: I panted for my subterraneous paradise. Take, it for all in all, said I, there were fewer grievances than in this dungeon. I was hail fellow well met with the banditti *I* I bandied about my jokes with the best of them, and lived on the sweet hope of an escape; whereas my innocence here will only be a passport to the galleys.

CHAPTER XIII.

The lucky means by which Gil Blas escaped from prison, and his travels afterwards.

WHILE I passed the hours in tickling my fancy with my own gay thoughts, my adventures, word for word as I had set my hand to them, were current about the town. The people wanted to make a show of me! One after another, there they came, peeping in at a little window of my prison, not too capacious of day-light; and when they had looked about them, off they went I This raree-show was a novelty. Since my commitment, there had not been a living creature at that window, which looked into a court where silence and horror kept guard. This gave me to understand that I was become the town-talk, and I knew not whether to divine good or evil from the omen.

One of my first visitors was the little chorister of Mondognedo, who had a fellow-feeling with me for the rack, and an equally light pair of heels. I knew him at once, and he had no qualms about acknowledging me as an acquaintance. We exchanged a kind greeting; then compared notes since our separation. I was obliged to relate my adventures in due form and order. The chorister, on his part,

told me what had happened in the inn at Cacabelos, between the muleteer and the bride, after we had taken to our heels in a panic. Then, with a friendly assurance at parting, he promised to leave no stone unturned for my release. His companions of mere curiosity testified their pity for my misfortune; assuring me that they would lend a helping hand to the little chorister, and do their utmost to procure my freedom.

They were no worse than their word. The *corregidor* was applied to in my favour, who, no longer doubtful of my innocence, above all when he had heard the chorister's story, came three weeks afterwards into my cell. Gil Blas, said he, I never stand shilly-shally: begone, you are free; you may take yourself off whenever you please. But, tell me, if you were carried to the forest, could you not discover the subterraneous retreat? No, sir, replied I: as I only entered in the night, and made my escape before day-break, it would be impossible to fix upon the spot. Thereupon the magistrate withdrew, assuring me that the gaoler should be ordered to give me free egress. In fact, the very next moment the turnkey came into my dungeon, followed by one of his outriding establishment, with a bundle of clothes under his arm. They both of them stripped me with the utmost solemnity, and without uttering a single syllable, of my doublet and breeches, which had the honour to be made of a bettermost cloth almost new;

then, having rigged me in an old frock, they shoved me out of their hospitable mansion by the shoulders.

The taking I was in to see myself so ill equipped, acted as a cooler to the usual transport of prisoners at recovering their liberty. I was tempted to escape from the town without delay, that I might withdraw from the gaze of the people, whose prying eyes I could not encounter but with pain. My gratitude however got the better of my diffidence. I went to thank the little ehoriester, to whom I was so much obliged. He could not help chuckling when he saw me. That is your trim, is it? said he. As far as I see, you cannot complain that your case has not been sifted to the bottom. I have nothing to say against the laws of my country, replied I; they are as just as need be. I only wish their officers would take after them! They might have spared me my suit of clothes! I have paid for them over and over again. I am quite of your mind, rejoined he; but they would tell you that these are little formalities of old standing, which cannot be dispensed with. What! you are foolish enough to suppose, for instance, that your horse has been restored to its right owner? Not a word of it, if you please: the beast is at the present in the stables of the register, where it has been impounded as a witness to be brought into court: if the poor gentleman comes off with the crupper, he will be so much in pocket. But let us change the subject. What is your plan? What do

you mean to do with yourself? I have an inclination, said I, to take the road for Burgos. I may light on my rescued lady; she will give me a little ready cash: I shall then buy a new short cassock, and betake myself to Salamanca, where I shall see what I can make of my Latin. All my trouble is, how to get to Burgos: one must live on the road. I understand you, replied he. Take my purse: it is rather thinly lined, to be sure; but you know a chorister's-dividends are not like a bishop's. At the same time he drew it from his pouch, and inserted it between my hands with so good a grace, that I could not do otherwise than accept it, for want of a better. I thanked him as though he had made me a present of a gold mine, and tendered him a thousand promises of recompence, to be duly honoured and punctually paid at doom's-day. With this I left him, and sculked out of the town, not paying my respects, to my other benefactors; but giving them a thousand btesings from my heart.

The little chorister had reason for speaking modestly of his purse; it was not orthodox. By good luck, I had been used for these two months to a very slender diet, and had still a little small change left when I reached Ponte de Mula, not far from Burgos. I halted there to enquire after donna Mencia. The hostess of the inn I put up at was a little withered, spiteful, emaciated bit of mortality. I saw at a glance, by the mouths she made at me aside, that my

frock did not hit her fancy; and I thought it a proof of her taste. So I sat myself down at a table; eat bread and cheese, and drank a few glasses of execrable wine, such as innkeepers technically call *chasse-coquin*. During this meal, which was of a piece with the outward appearance of the guest, I did my utmost to come to closer quarters with my landlady. Did she know the marquis de la Guardia? Was his castle far out of town? Above all, what was become of my lady marchioness? You ask many questions in a breath, replied she, bridling with disdain. But I got out of her, though by hard pumping, that don Ambrosio's castle was but a short league from Ponte de Mula.

After I had done eating and drinking, as it was night, I thought it natural to go to bed, and asked for my room. A room for you! shrieked my landlady, darting at me a glance of contempt and pride; i have no rooms for fellows who make their supper on a bit of cheese. All my beds are bespoke. There are people of fashion expected, and our accommodations are all kept for them. But I will not be unchristian: you may lie in my bam: I suppose your soft skin will not be incommoded by the feel of straws. She spoke truth without knowing it. I took it all in silence, and slunk to my roosting-place, where I fell asleep like a man, the excess of whose labours are his ready passport to the blessings of repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

Donna Mcncids reception of him at Burgos.

I WAS no sluggard, but got up the next morning betimes. I paid my bill to the landlady, who was already stirring, and seemed a little less lofty and in better humour than the evening before; a circumstance I attributed to the endeavours of three kind guardsmen belonging to the holy brotherhood. These gentlemen had slept in the inn: they were evidently on a very intimate footing with the hostess; and doubtless it was for guests of such note that all the beds were bespoke.

. I enquired in the town my way to the castle where I wanted to present myself. By accident I made up to a man not unlike my landlord at Pegnaflor. He was not satisfied with answering my question to the point; but informed me that don Ambrosio had been dead these three weeks, and that the marchioness his, lady had taken the resolution of retiring to a convent at Burgos, which he named. I proceeded immediately towards that town, instead of taking the road to the castle, as I had first meant to do, and flew at once to the place of donna Mencia's retreat. I besought the attendant at the turning-box to tell (hat lady that a young man, just discharged from

prison at Astorga wanted to speak with her. The nun went on the message immediately. On her return, she shewed me into a parlour, where I did not wait long before don Ambrosio's widow appeared at the grate in deep mourning.

You are welcome, said the lady. Four days ago I wrote to a person at Astorga, to pay you a visit as from *me*, and to tell you to come and see me the moment you were released from prison. I had no doubt of your being discharged shortly: what I told the corregidor in your exculpation was enough for that. An answer was brought that you had been set at liberty, but that no one knew what was become of **you**. I was afraid of not seeing you any more, and losing the pleasure of expressing my gratitude. Never mind, added she, observing my confusion at making my appearance in so wretched a garb; your dress is of rare little consequence. After the important service you have rendered me, I should be the most ungrateful of my sex, if I were to do nothing for you in return. I undertake therefore to better your condition: it is my duty, and the means are in my power. My fortune is large enough to pay my debt of obligation to you, without putting myself to inconvenience.

You know, continued she, my story up to the time when we both were committed to prison. I will **now** tell you what has happened to me since. When the corregidor at Astorga had sent me to Burgos,

after having heard from my own lips a faithful recital of my adventures, I presented myself at the castle of Ambrosio. My return thither excited extreme surprise: but they told me that it was too late; the marquis, as if he had been thunderstruck at my flight, fell sick; and the physicians despaired of his recovery. There was a new incident in the melancholy tragedy of my fate. Yet I ordered my arrival to be announced. The next moment I ran into his chamber, and threw myself on my knees by his bedside, with a face running down with tears and an heart oppressed with the most lively sorrow. Who sent for you hither? said he as soon as he saw me; are you come to contemplate your own contrivance? Was it not enough to have deprived me of life? But was it necessary to satisfy your heart's desire, to be an eye-witness of my death? My lord, replied I, Ines must have told you that I fled with my first husband; and, had it not been for the sad accident which has taken him from me for ever, you never would have seen me more. At the same time, I acquainted him that don Alvar had been killed by a banditti, whose captive I had consequently been in a subterraneous dungeon. After relating the particulars of my story to the end, don Ambrosio held out to me his hand. It is enough, said he affectionately, I will make no more complaints. Alas! Have I in fact any right to reproach you? You were thrown once more in the way of a beloved husband;

and gave me up to follow his fortunes: can I blame such an instance of your affection? No, madam, it would have been vain to resist the will of fate. For that reason I gave orders not to pursue you. In my rival himself I could not but respect the sacred rights with which he was invested, and even the impulse of your flight seemed to have been communicated by some superior power. To close all with an act of justice, and in the spirit of reconciliation, your return hither has re-established you, completely in my affection. Yes, my dear Mencia, your presence fills me with joy: but, alas! I shall not long be sensible to it. I feel my last hour to be at hand. No sooner are you restored to me, than I must bid you an eternal farewell. At these touching expressions, my tears flowed in torrents. I felt and expressed as much affliction as the human heart is capable of containing. I question whether don Alvar's death, doting on him as I did, had cost me more bitter lamentations. Don Ambrosio had given way to no mistaken presage of his death, which happened on the following day; and I remained mistress of a considerable jointure, settled on me at our marriage. But I shall take care to make no unworthy use of it. The world shall not see me, young as I still am, wantoning in the arms of a third husband. Besides that such levity seems irreconcilable with the feelings of any but the profligate of our sex, I will frankly own the relish of life to be extinct in me; so that I mean to end my

days in this convent, and to become a benefactress to it.

Such was donna Mencia's discourse about her future plans. She then drew a purse from beneath her robe, and put it into my hands, with this address: Here are an hundred ducats simply to furnish out your wardrobe. That done, come and see me again. I mean not to confine my gratitude within such narrow bounds. I returned her a thousand thanks, and promised solemnly not to quit Burgos, without taking leave of her. Having given this pledge, which I had every inclination to redeem, I went to look out for some house of entertainment. Entering the first I met with, I asked for a room. To parry the ill opinion my frock might convey of my finances, I told the landlord that however appearances might be against me, I could pay for my night's lodging as well as a better dressed gentleman. At this speech, the landlord, whose name was Majuelo, a great banterer in a coarse way, running over me with his eyes from top to toe, answered with a cool, sarcastic grin, that there was no need of any such assurance: it was evident I should pay my way liberally, for he discovered something of nobility through my disguise, and had no doubt but I was a gentleman in very easy circumstances. I saw plainly that the rascal was laughing at me; and, to stop his humour before it became too convulsive, gave him a little insight into the state of my purse. I went so far as

to count over my ducats on a table before him, and perceived my coin to have inclined him to a more respectful judgment. I begged the favour of him to send for a tailor. A broker would be better, said he; he will bring all sorts of apparel, and you will be dressed up out of hand. I approved of this advice, and determined to follow it; but, as the day was on the point of closing, I put off my purchase till the morrow, and thought only of getting a good supper, to make me amends for the miserable fare I had taken up with since my escape from the forest.

CHAPTER XV.

Gil Blas dresses himself to more advantage, and receives a second present from the lady. His equipage on setting out from Burgos.

THEY served me up a plentiful fricassee of sheep's trotters, almost the whole of which I demolished. My drinking kept pace with my eating: and when I could stuff no longer, I went to bed. I lay comfortably enough, and was in hopes that a sound sleep would have the kindness without delay to commit a friendly invasion on my senses. But I could not close an eye, for ruminating on the dress I should choose. What shall I do, thought I? Shall I follow my first plan? Shall I buy a short cassock, and go to Salamanca to set up for a tutor? Why should I adopt the costume of a licentiate? For the purpose of going into orders? Do I feel an inward call? No! If I have any call, it is quite the contrary way. I had rather wear a sword than an apron; and push my fortune in this world, before I think of the next.

I made up my mind to take on myself the appearance of a gentleman. Waiting for the day with the greatest impatience, its first dawn no sooner greeted my eyes, than I got up. I made such an uproar in

the inn, as to wake the most inveterate sleeper, and called all the servants out of bed, who returned my salute with a volley of curses. But they found themselves under a necessity of stirring, and I let them have no rest, till they had sent for a broker. The gentleman soon made his appearance, followed by two lads, each lugging in a great bundle of green cloth. He accosted me very civilly, to the following effect: Honoured sir, you are an happy man to have been recommended to me rather than any one else* I do not mean to givB my brethren an ill word: God forbid I should offer the slightest injury to their reputation! They have none to spare. But, between ourselves, there is not one of them that has any bowels; they are more extortionate than the Israelites. There is not a broker but myself, that has any moral sense. I keep within the bounds of a reasonable profit. I am satisfied with a pound in the penny;—no, no!—that is wrong:—with a penny in the pound. Thanks to heaven, I get forward fair and softly in the world.

The broker, after this preface, which I like a fool took for chapter and verse, told his journeymen to undo their bundles. They shewed me suits of every colour in the rain-bow, and exposed to sale a great choice of plain cloths. These I threw aside with contempt, as thinking them too undrest; but they made me try on one which fitted me as well as if I had been measured for it, and just hit my fancy,

though it was a little the worse for wear. It was a doublet with slashed sleeves, with breeches and a cloak, the whole of blue velvet with gold embroidery. I felt a little hankering after this particular article, and attempted to beat down the price. The broker, who saw my inclination, told me I had a very correct taste. By all that is sacred ! exclaimed he, it is plain you are no younkei. Take this with you! That dress was made for one of the first nobility in the kingdom, and has not been on his back three times. Look at the velvet; feel it: nothing can be richer or of a better colour; and for the embroidery, come now! tell truth: did you ever see better workmanship? What is the price of it? said I. Only sixty ducats, replied he. I have refused the money, or else I am a liar. The alternative could not fail in one proposition or the other. I bid five and forty: two or three and twenty would have been nearer the mark. My worthy master, said the broker coolly, I never ask too much. I have but one price. But here, added he, holding up the suits I had thrown aside; take these: I can afford to sell them a better bargain. All this only inflamed my eagerness to buy what I was cheapening; and as I had no idea that he would have made any abatement, I paid him down sixty ducats. When he saw how easily a fool and his money were parted, I verily believe that, in spite of the moral sense, he heartily repented not having taken a hint from the extortionate Israelite. But reconciling himself as

well as he could to the small profit, to which he professed to confine himself, of a pound upon a penny, he retreated with his journeymen. I was not suffered to forget that they must have something for their trouble.

I had now a cloak, a doublet, and a very decent pair of breeches. The rest of my ward robe was to be thought of: and this took up the whole morning. I bought some linen, a hat, silk stockings, shoes, and a sword; and concluded by putting on my purchases. What pleasure was it to see myself so well accoutered! My eyes were never cloyed, as it were, with the richness of my attire. Never did peacock look at his own plumage with less philosophy. On that very day, I paid a second visit to donna Mencia, who received me with her usual affability. She thanked me over again for the service I had rendered her. On that subject, rapid was the interchange of compliments. Then, wishing every kind of success, she bade me farewell, and withdrew, without giving me any thing but a ring worth thirty pistoles, which she begged me to keep as a remembrance.

I looked very foolish with my ring! I had reckoned on a much more considerable present. Thus, little satisfied with the lady's bounty, I measured back my steps in a very musing attitude: but as I entered the inn-door, a man overtook me, and throwing off his wrapping cloak, discovered a large bag under his arm. At the vision of the bag, apparently full of

current coin, I stood gaping, as did most of the company present. The voice of angel or archangel could not have been sweeter, than when this messenger of earthly dross, laying the bag upon the table, said: Signor Gil Blas, the lady marchioness desires her compliments. I bowed the bearer out, with an accumulation of fine speeches; and as soon as his back was turned, pounced upon the bag, like a hawk upon its quarry, and bore it between my talons to my chamber. I untied it without loss of time, and the contents were;—a thousand ducats! The landlord, who had overheard the bearer, came in just as I had done counting them, to know what was in the bag. The sight of my riches displayed upon a table, struck him in a very forcible manner. What the devil! here is a sum of money! So, so! you are the man! pursued he with a waggish sort of a leer, you know how to—tickle the—fancies of the ladies! Four and twenty hours only have you been in Burgos, and marchionesses, I warrant you, have surrendered at the first summons!

This discourse was not so much amiss. I was half inclined to leave Majuelo in his error; for it flattered my vanity. I do not wonder young fellows are fond of passing for men of gallantry. But as yet the purity of my morals was proof against the suggestions of my pride. I undeceived my landlord, by telling him donna Mencia's story, to which he listened very

attentively. Afterwards I let him into the state of my affairs; and, as he seemed to take an interest in them, besought him to assist me with his advice. He ruminated for some time; then said with a serious air: Master Gil Blas, I have taken a liking to you; and since you are candid enough to open your heart to me, I will tell you sincerely what I think would suit you best. You were evidently born for a court life: I recommend it to you to go thither, and to get about the person of some considerable nobleman. But make a point either of getting at his secrets, or administering to his pleasures; unless you do that, it will be all lost time in his family. I know the great: they reckon nothing upon the zeal and attachment of a real friend; but only care for pimping sycophants. You have besides another string to your bow. You are young, with an attractive person: parts out of the question, for they are not at all necessary, it is hard if you cannot turn the head of some rich widow, or handsome wife with a broomstick for her husband. Love may ruin men of fortune; but it makes amends by feathering the nests of those who have none. My vote therefore is for Madrid: but you must not make your appearance there without an establishment. There, as elsewhere, people judge by the outside; and you will only be respected according to the figure you make. I will find you a servant, a tried domestic, a prudent lad;

in a word, a fellow of my own creation. Buy a couple of mules; one for yourself, the other for him: and set off as fast as you can.

This counsel was too palatable to be refused. On the day following, I purchased two fine mules, and bargained with my new servant. He was a young man of thirty, of a very simple and godly appearance. He told me he was a native of Galicia, by name Ambrose de Lamela. Other servants are selfish, and think they never can have wages enough. This fellow assured me he was a man of few wants, and should be contented with whatever I had the goodness to give him. I bought a pair of boots, with a portmanteau to lock up my linen and my money. Having settled with my landlord, I set out from Burgos the next morning before sun-rise, on my way to Madrid.

CHAPTER XVI.

Shewing that prosperity will slip through a Man's fingers.

WE slept at Duengnas the first night, and reached Valladolid on the following day, about four o'clock in the afternoon. We alighted at the inn of the most respectable appearance in the town. I left the care of the mules to my fellow, and went up to a room whither I ordered my portmanteau to be carried by a waiter. As I felt a little weary, I threw myself on a couch in my boots, and fell asleep involuntarily. It was almost night when I awoke. I called for Ambrose. He was not to be found in the house; but made his appearance in a short time. I asked him where he had been: he answered in his godly way, that he was just come from church, whither he went for the purpose of thanksgiving, by reason that we had been graciously preserved from all perils and dangers between Burgos and Valladolid, I commended his piety; and ordered a chicken to be roasted for supper.

At the moment when I was giving this order, my landlord came into my room with a light in his hand. That cursed candle served to introduce a lady, hand-

some but not young, and very richly attired. She leant upon an usher, none of the youngest, and a little blackamoor was her train-bearer. I was under no small surprize when this fair incognita, with a profound obeisance, begged to know if my name might happen to be signor Gil Blas of Santdlane? I had no sooner blundered out yes, than she released her sweet hand from the custody of the usher, and embraced me with a transport of joy, of which I knew less and less what to make. Heaven be praised, cried she, for all its mercies! You are he, noble sir, the very man of whom I was in quest. By this introduction, I was reminded of my friend the parasite at Pegnaflor, and was on the point of suspecting the lady to be no better than an honest woman should be: but her finale gave me a much higher opinion of her. I am, continued she, first cousin to donna Mencia de Mosquera, whom you have so greatly befriended. It was but this morning I received a letter from her. She writes me word that having learnt your intention of going to Madrid, she wished me to receive you hospitably on your journey, if you went this way. For these two hours have I been parading the town. From inn to inn have I gone to inform myself what strangers were in the house; and I gathered from the landlords description, that you were most likely to have been my cousin's deliverer. Since then I have found you out, you shall know by experience my gratitude to the friends of my family,

and especially to my dear cousin's hero. You will take up your abode, if you please, at my house. Your accommodations will be better. I wished to excuse myself; and told the lady that I could not be so troublesome: but her importunities were more than a match for my modesty. A carriage was waiting at the door of the inn to convey us. She saw my portmanteau taken care of with her own eyes, because, as she justly observed, there were a great many light-fingered gentry about Valladolid—to be sure there were a great many light-fingered gentry about Valladolid, as she justly observed! In short, I got into the carriage with her and the old usher, and suffered myself to be carried off bodily from the inn, to the great annoyance of the landlord, who saw himself thus weaned from all the little perquisites he had reckoned on from my abode under his roof.

Our carriage, having rolled on some distance, stopped. We alighted at the door of a handsome house, and went up stairs into a well furnished apartment, illuminated by twenty or thirty wax candles. Several servants were in waiting, of whom the lady enquired whether don Raphael was come. They answered, No* She then addressed herself to me: Signor Gil Blas, I am waiting for my brother's return from a country seat of ours about two leagues distant. What an agreeable surprize will it be to him to find a man under his roof to whom our family is so much indebted! At the very moment she had finished this

pretty speech, we heard a noise, and were informed at the same time that it was occasioned by the arrival of don Raphael. This spark soon made his appearance. He was a young man of portly figure and genteel manners. I am in ecstasy to see you back again, brother, said the lady; you will assist me in doing the honours to signor Gil Blas of Santillane. We can never do enough to shew our sense of his kindness to our kinswoman, donna Mencía. Here, read this letter I have just received. Don Raphael opened the envelope, and read aloud as follows: "My dear Camilla, signor Gil Blas of Santillane, the saviour of my honour and my life, has just set out for court. He will of course pass through Valladolid. I conjure you by our family connection, and still more by our indissoluble friendship, to give him an hospitable reception, and to detain him for some time as your guest. I flatter myself that you will so far oblige me, and that my deliverer will receive every kind of polite attention from yourself, and my cousin don Raphael. Your affectionate cousin,

" *Burgos,*

DONNA MENCIA."

What! cried don Raphael, casting his eyes again over the letter, is it to this gentleman my kinswoman owes her honour and her life? Then heaven be praised for this happy meeting. With this sort of language, he advanced towards me; and squeezing me tightly in his arms: What joy to me is it, added

he, to have the honour of seeing signor Gil Blas of Santillane? My cousin the marchioness had no need to press our hospitality. Had she only told us simply that you were passing through Valladolid, that would have been enough. My sister Camilla and I shall be at no loss how to conduct ourselves towards a young gentleman, who has conferred an obligation, not to be repaid, on her of all our family most tenderly beloved by us. I made the best answer I could to these speeches, which were followed by many others of the same kind, and interlarded with a thousand bows and scrapes. But Lord bless me, he has his boots on! The servants were ordered in, to take them off.

We next went into another room, where the cloth was laid. Down we sat at table, the brother, sister, and myself. They paid me an hundred compliments during supper. Not a word escaped me, but they magnified it into an admirable hit! It was impossible not to observe the assiduity with which they both helped me out of every dish. Don Raphael often pledged me to donna Mencia's health. I could not refuse the challenge; and it looked a little as if Camilla, who was a very good companion, ogled at me with no questionable meaning. I even thought I could perceive that she watched her opportunity,, as if she was afraid of being detected by her brother. An oracle could not have convinced me more firmly that the lady was caught; and I looked forward to a

a little delicate amusement from the discovery, during the short time I was to stay at Valladolid. That hope was my tempter to comply with the request they made me, of condescending to pass a few days with them. They thanked me kindly for indulging them with my company; and Camilla's restrained, but visible transport, confirmed me in the opinion that I was not altogether disagreeable in her eyes.

Don Raphael, finding I had made up my mind to be his guest for a few days, proposed to take me to his country-house. The description of it was magnificent, and the round of amusements he meditated for me was not to be described. At one time, said he, we will take the diversion of the chace, at another that of fishing; and whenever you have a mind for a saunter, we have charming woods and gardens. In addition, we shall have agreeable society. I flatter myself, you will not find the time hang heavy on your hands. I accepted the invitation, and it was agreed we should go to this fine country-house the following day. We rose from table with this pleasant scheme in our mouths. Don Raphael seemed in ecstasy. Signor Gil Blas, said he, embracing me, I leave you with my sister. I am going presently to give the necessary orders, and send invitations round to the families I wish to be of the party. With these words, he sallied forth from the room where we were sitting. I went on chatting with the lady, whose

topics of discourse did not bely the glances of her expressive eyes. She took me by the hand, and playing with my ring: You have a mighty pretty brilliant there, said she ; but it is small. Are you a judge of jewellery ? I answered, no ! I am sorry for that, resumed she: because I was in hopes you could have told me what this is worth. As she uttered these words, she shewed me a large ruby on her finger; and, while I was looking at it, said: An uncle of mine, who was governor of the Spanish settlements in the Philippine isles, gave me this ruby. The jewellers at Valladolid value it at three hundred pistoles. It cannot be worth less, said I, for it is evidently a very fine stone. Why then since you have taken a fancy to it, replied she, an exchange is no robbery. In a twinkling she whisked off my ring, and placed her own on my little finger. After this exchange, a genteel way enough of making a present, Camilla pressed my hand and gazed at me with expressive tenderness; then, all at once breaking off the conversation, wished me good night, and retired to hide her blushes, as if she had been ready to sink at the indiscreet avowal of her sentiments.

No one hitherto had trod less in the paths of gallantry than myself! Yet I could not shut my eyes to the vista vision, opened to me by this precipitate retreat. Under these circumstances, a country excursion might have its charms. Full of this flat-

tering idea, and intoxicated with the prosperous condition of my affairs, I locked myself into my bed-room, after having told my servant to call me betimes in the morning. Instead of going to sleep, I gave myself up to the agreeable reflections which my portmanteau, snug upon the table, and my ruby excited in my breast. Heaven be praised, thought I, though misfortunes have been my lot, I am unfortunate no longer. A thousand ducats here, a ring of three hundred pistoles value there! I am in cash for a considerable time. Indeed Majuelo was no flatterer, I see clearly. The ladies of Madrid will take fire like touchwood, since the green sticks of Valladolid are so inflammable. Then the kind regards of the generous Camilla arrayed themselves in all their charms, and I tasted by anticipation the amusements don Raphael was preparing for me at his villa. In the mean while, amid so many images of pleasure, sleep was on the watch to strew his poppies on my couch. As soon as I felt myself drowsy, I undressed and went to bed.

The next morning, when I awoke, I found it rather late. It was odd enough that my servant did not make his appearance, after such particular orders. Ambrose, thought I to myself, my devout Ambrose is either at church, or abominably lazy this morning. But I soon let go this opinion of him to take up a worse; for getting out of bed, and seeing no port-

manteau, I suspected him to have stolen it during the night. To clear up my suspicions, I opened my chamber-door, and called the religious rascal over and over again. An old man answered, saying: What is your pleasure, sir? All your folks left my house before day-break. Your house! How now! exclaimed I: am I not under don Raphael's roof? I do not know the gentleman, said he. You are in a ready furnished lodging, and I am the landlord. Yesterday evening, an hour before your arrival, the lady who supped with you came hither, and engaged this suite of apartments for a nobleman of high rank, travelling *incognito*, as she called it. She paid me beforehand. I was now in the secret. It was plain enough what sort of people Camilla and don Raphael were; and I conjectured that my servant, having wormed himself into a complete knowledge of my concerns, had betrayed me to these impostors. Instead of blaming myself for this sad accident, and considering that it could never have happened but for my indiscretion in so unnecessarily betraying my confidence to Majuelo, I gave bad language to the poor harmless dame fortune, and cursed my ill star in a hundred different formularies. The master of the ready furnished lodging, to whom I related the adventure, which perhaps was as much his as mine, showed some little outward sensibility to my affliction. He lamented over me, and protested he was

deeply mortified that such a play should have been acted in his house: but I verily believe, notwithstanding his fine words, that he had an equal share in the cheat with mine host at Burgos, to whom I have never denied the merit of so ingenious an invention.

CHAPTER XVII.

The measures Gil Blas took after the adventure of the ready furnished lodging.

AFTER the first transports of my grief were over, I began to consider, that instead of giving way to remorse, I ought rather to bear up against my ill fate. I summoned back my resolution, and by way of comfort, said to myself as I was dressing : I am still in luck that the knaves have not carried off my clothes and what little money I had in my pocket. I gave them some credit for being so considerate. They had even been generous enough to leave me my boots, which I parted with to the landlord for a third of their cost. At last I sallied out of the ready furnished lodging, unincumbered, heaven be praised, with baggage or attendance. The first thing I did was to go and see if my mules were still at the inn, where we alighted the evening before. It was not to be supposed that Ambrose would have neglected a due attention to them; and it would have been well for me if I had always taken such exact measure of his character. I learned that he had not waited for the morning, but had been careful to fetch them off over night. Under these circumstances, satisfied I should never see them again, any more than my

portmanteau, I walked sulkily along the streets, "musing on the future plans I should adopt. I was tempted to go back to Burgos, and once more have recourse to donna Mencia; but, regarding this as an abuse of that lady's goodness, and being aware moreover what a fool I should look like, I thought it best to forego that idea. I made a vow too for the future to be on my guard against women: I could have sent the chaste Susanna to the house of correction. From time to time my ring caught my eye: it was a present from Camilla! and I was ready to burst with anguish. Alas ! thought I, I am no judge of jewellery, but I shall be, by experience of these hucksters who exchange without a robbery. I need not go to a jeweller to be told I am an ass ! I can see my own face in my ruby.

Yet I did not neglect to know the truth respecting the value of my ring, and shewed it to a lapidary, who rated it at three ducats. At such an estimate, though as much as I expected, I made a formal surrender to the devil, of the Philippine isles, the governor and his niece; or rather, I only restored his own subjects to their lawful sovereign. As I was going out of the lapidary's shop, a young fellow brushed by me, and on looking round, made a full stop. I could not recollect his name at first, though his features were perfectly familiar to me. How now, Gil Blas, said he, are you ashamed of an old acquaintance ? or have two years so altered the son

of Nunez the barber, that you do not know him ? Do not you recollect Fabricio, your townsman and schoolfellow ? How often have we kept, before doctor Godmez, upon universals and metaphysics !

These words did not flow so fast as my recollection : and we embraced with mutual good will. Weil, my friend, resumed he, I am overjoyed to meet with you. Words fall short . . . But, how is this ? Why you look like—as heaven is my judge, you are dressed like a grandee ! A gentleman's sword, silk stockings, a velvet doublet and cloak, embroidered with silver ! Plague take it ! this is getting on in the world with a vengeance. I will lay a wager you are in with some old monied harridan. You reckon without your host, said I ; my affairs are not so prosperous as you imagine. That will not do for me, replied he, I know better things : but you have a mind to be close. And that fine ruby on your finger, master Gil Blas, whence comes that, if I may be so bold ? It comes, quoth I, from an infernal jade. Fabricio, my dear Fabricio, far from being point, quint, and quatorze with the ladies of Valladolid, you are to know, my friend, that I am their complete bubble.

I uttered these last words so ruefully, that Fabricio saw plainly some trick had been played upon me. He was anxious to learn why I was out of humour with the lovely sex. I had no difficulty in satisfying his curiosity ; but as the story was a long one, and

besides we had no mind to part in a hurry, we went into a coffee-house to be a little more at our ease. There I recounted to him, during- breakfast, all that had happened to me since my departure from Oviedo. My adventures he thought whimsical enough; and testifying his sympathy in my present uneasy circumstances, added: We must make the best, my good lad, of all our misfortunes in this life. Is a man of parts in distress? He waits patiently for better luck. Such an one, as Cicero truly observes, never suffers himself to be humbled so low, as to forget that he is a man. For my own part, that is just my character: in or out of favour there is no sinking me: I always float on the surface of ill-luck. For example, I was in love with a girl of some family at Oviedo, and was beloved by her in return: I asked her of her father in marriage, he refused. Many a young fellow would have died of grief; but no! mark my spirit, I carried off the little baggage. She was lively, heedless, and coquettish; pleasure consequently was always uppermost to the prejudice of duty. I took her with me for six months backwards and forwards about Galicia: thence, adopting my taste for travelling, she had a mind to go to Portugal; but in other company: more food for despair. Yet I did not give in under the weight of this new affliction; but improving on Menelaus, thought myself much obliged to the Paris who had whispered in the ear of my Helen, for ridding me of a bad bar-

gain: I therefore determined to keep the peace. After that, not finding it convenient to return to the Asturias and balance accounts with justice, I went forward into the kingdom of Leon, spending between one town and another all the loose cash remaining from the rape of my Indian princess; for we had both of us bird-limed our fingers at our departure from Oviedo. I got to Palencia with a solitary ducat, out of which I was obliged to buy a pair of shoes. The remainder would not go far. My situation became rather perplexing. I began already to be reduced to short allowance: something must be done. I resolved to go out to service. My first place was with a woollen-draper in a large way, whose son was a lad of wit and fashion: here was a complete antidote to fasting; but then there was a little awkwardness. The father ordered me to dog the son, the son begged my assistance in imposing on the father: it was necessary to take one side or other. Entreaties sound more musical than commands; and my taste for music got me turned out of doors. The next service I entered into was with an old painter, who undertook, as a matter of favour, to teach me the principles of his art; but he was so busy in feeding me with knowledge, that he forgot to give me any meat. This neglect of substance for shadow disgusted me with my abode at Palencia. I came to Valladolid, where, by the greatest good luck in the world, I was hired by a governor of the hospital;

I am with him still, and delighted with my quarters. My master, signor Manuel Ordonnez, is a man of profound piety. He always walks with his eyes cast downwards, and a large rosary in his hand. They say that from his early youth, having been a close inspector of the poor, he has interested himself in their affairs with unwearied zeal. Charity draws down a blessing on the charitable : every thing has prospered with him. What a favourite of heaven ! The more he does for the poor, the richer he grows.

As Fabricio was going on in this manner, I interrupted him. It is well you are satisfied with your lot; but, between ourselves, surely you might play your part better in this world. Do not you believe it, Gil Blas, replied he ; be assured that for a man of my temper, a more agreeable situation could not possibly have been devised. The trade of a lacquey is toilsome, to be sure, for a poor creature; but for a lad of spirit, it is all enchantment. A superior genius, when he gets a service, does not go about it like a lumpish simpleton. He enters into a family as viceroy over the master, not as an inferior minister. He begins by measuring the length of his employer's foot; by lending himself to his weaknesses, he gains his confidence, and ends with leading him by the nose. Such has been my plan of operation at the governor's. I knew the pilgrim at once by his staff: his wish was for an earthly canonization. I pretended to believe **him** the saint he

wished to be taken for: hypocrisy costs nothing". Nay, I went further; for I took pattern by him; and playing the same part before him which he played before others, I out-cozened the cozeners, and by degrees got to be *major domo*. I am in hopes some day or other, under his wing, to have the fingering of the poor's-box. It may bring a blessing upon me as well as another; for I have caught the flame from him, and already feel deeply for the interests of charity.

These are fine hopes, my dear Fabricio, replied I; and I congratulate you upon them. For my part, I am determined on my first plan. I shall straightway convert my embroidered suit into a cassock, repair to Salamanca, and there, enlisting under the banner of the university, fulfil the sacred duties of a tutor. A fine scheme ! exclaimed Fabricio, a pleasant conceit! What madness, at your age, to turn pedant! Are you aware, you stupid fellow, what you take upon yourself by that choice ? As soon as you are settled, all the house will be upon the watch, your most trivial actions will be minutely sifted. You will lead a life of incessant constraint: you must set yourself off with a counterfeit outside, and affect to entertain a double set of the cardinal virtues in your bosom. You will not have a moment to bestow on pleasure. The everlasting censor of your pupil, your days will pass in teaching grammar, and administering saintly reprehension, when he shall say or do any thing

against decorum. After so much labour and confinement, what will be your reward? If the little gentleman is a pickle, they will lay the blame on your bad management; and you will be kicked out of the family, it may be without your stipend. Do not tell me then of a tutor's employment; it is worse than a cure of souls. But talk as much as you will about a lacquey's occupation; that is a sinecure, and pledges you to nothing. Suppose one's master not to be immaculate? A servant of superior genius will flatter his vices, and not unfrequently turn them to account. A footman lives at his ease in a good family. After having eat and drank his fill, he goes to bed peaceably, without troubling himself who pays the bills.

I should never have done, my dear fellow, pursued he, were I to enumerate all the advantages of service. Trust me, Gil Blas, discard for ever your foolish wish of being a tutor, and follow my example. So be it: but, Fabiicio, replied I, governors like yours are not to be met with every day; and if resolved to go to service, I should like at least to get a good situation. Oh! you are in the right, said he, and that shall be my concern. I will get you a comfortable place, if it was only to snatch a fine fellow from the jaws of the university.

The near approach of poverty with which I was threatened, and Fabricio's apparent good case, having more weight with me than his arguments, I,,

determined to wear a livery. On which we sallied forth from the tavern, and my townsman said : I am going to introduce you to a man, to whom most of the servants resort when they are on the ramble ; he has eves-droppers about him to pick up all that passes in families. He knows at once where the servants are going away, and keeps a correct register, not only of vacant places, but of vacant masters, with their good and bad properties. The fellow has been a friar in some convent or other. In short, he it was who got me my place.

While we were conversing about so singular an office of intelligence, the son of Nunez the barber took me into a street which had no thoroughfare. We went into a mean house, where we found a man about fifty writing at a table. We wished him good day, with quite as much humility as became us : but, whether it was from natural pride, or that, from a habit of seeing none but lacqueys and coachmen, he had got a trick of receiving his company with an easy freedom, without rising from his seat, he just gave a slight nod. He seemed surprised that a young man in embroidered velvet should want a place; he had rather expected me to have wanted a servant. However, he was not kept long in doubt, since Fabricio said at once: Signor Arias de Londona, give me leave to introduce one of my best friends. He is a youth of good connections, whom adverse circumstances have reduced to the necessity

of going to service. Have the goodness to provide for him handsomely, and you may trust to his gratitude. Gentlemen, replied Arias coolly, this is the way with you all; before you are settled, you make the finest promises in the world: but afterwards, Lord help us! your memories are very short. The deuce! replied Fabricio, why you do not complain of me? Have not I done the thing genteelly? You ought to have done it much better, rejoined Arias: your place is better than a clerk in a public office, and you paid me as if I had quartered you upon a poor author. Here I interfered, and told master Arias, that to convince him I was not a shabby fellow, I would make my acknowledgments beforehand; at the same time taking out two ducats, with an assurance of not stopping there if he got me into a good birth.

He seemed to like my mode of dealing. There are, said he, some very good places vacant. I will give you a list of them, and you shall take your choice. With these words, he put on his spectacles, opened a register on the table, turned over a few of the leaves, and began reading to this effect: Captain Torbellino wants a footman; a hasty, hair-brained, humoursome chap; scolds incessantly, swears, kicks his servants, and very often cripples them. Go on to the next, cried I, at this picture; such a captain will never do for me. My sprightliness made Arias smile, and he went on with his catalogue thus:

Donna Menuela de Sandoval, a superannuated dowager, peevish and fantastical, is in want at this very time; she keeps but one, and him never for four and twenty hours. There has been a livery in the house for these ten years, which fits every new-comer, whether tall or short. They only just try it on; so that it is as good as new, though it has had two thousand owners. Doctor Alvar Fanez wants a journeyman; an eminent member of the faculty ! He boards his family very handsomely, has every thing comfortable about him, and gives very high wages; but he is a little too fond of experiments. When he gets a parcel of bad drugs, which happens very often, there is a letty quick succession of new servants.

Oh! I do not in the least doubt it, interrupted Fabiicio with a horse-laugh. Upon my word you give a fine character of your customers. Patience, said Arias de Londona; we have not yet got to the end : there is variety enough. Thereupon he continued to read on : Donna Alfonsa de Solis, an old devotee, who lives two thirds of her time at church, and always keeps her servant at her apron-string, has been in want for these three weeks. The licentiate Sedillo, an old prebendary of the chapter here turned away his servant yesterday evening Halt there, signor Arias de Londona, cried Fabricio at that passage; we will stick to the church. The licentiate Sedillo is one of my master's friends, and I am very well acquainted with him. I know he has

for his housekeeper an old hypocrite, called dame Jacintha, who is complete mistress of the family. It is one of the best houses in Valladolid. A very idle life, and plenty of excellent meat and drink. Besides, his reverence is an old, gouty, infirm man, likely soon to make his will: there is a legacy to be looked after. That is a delightful prospect for one of our cloth! Gil Blas, added he, turning round to me, let us lose no time, my friend, but go immediately to the licentiate's house. I will introduce you myself, and give you a character. At these words, for fear of missing such an opportunity, we took a hasty leave of signor Arias, who assured me, for my money, that if I failed here, he would do something as good for me elsewhere.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

Fabricio introduces Gil Blas to the licentiate Sedillo, and procures him a reception. The domestic economy of that clergyman. Picture of his housekeeper.

WE were so dreadfully afraid of offending against the regular hours of the old licentiate, that we made but a hop, skip, and jump, from the street with one outlet, to the prebendal residence. The gates were barred: but we ventured to announce our arrival. A girl of ten years old, the housekeeper's professed niece, and slander could not gainsay the relationship, opened the door to us. As we asked to speak with his reverence, dame Jacintha made her appearance. She was a lady of ripe person and parts, but by no means past her prime; and I was particularly attracted by the clearness of her complexion. She wore a long woollen gown of the most ordinary quality, with a large leathern girdle, whence hung suspended a bunch of keys on one side, and on the other a tremendous string of beads. As soon as we

got a glimpse of her, we made our obeisances with all possible reverence. She returned our salutation with similar good-breeding, but with an air of modesty, and eyes communing with the ground.

I have been told, said my fellow-servant, that the reverend the licentiate Sedillo wants an honest lad, and I have one at his service with whom he will be well satisfied. The superintendant of the household turned up her eyes at these words, with a significant side-glance at me; and, finding it difficult to reconcile my laced jacket with Fabricio's exordium, asked if it was this fine gentleman who was come after the place. Yes, said the son of Nunez, it is this interesting and *engaging* youth. Just as you see him, the ups and downs of this transitory life have compelled him to wear an epaulette: but fate will have made him ample amends, added he with an affected languish, if he is so happy as to be an inmate here, and to profit by the society of the virtuous Jacintha. The patriarch of the Indies might have sighed for the virtuous Jacintha at the head of his establishment. At these words, this withered branch of piety withdrew her penetrating regards from me, to contemplate this courteous spokesman. Struck with certain lines which were not new to her, in his face, I have some floating idea of having seen you before, said she; but my memory wants a lift. Holy Jacintha, replied Fabricio, it is enough for me to have been blessed with your pious notice. Twice have I been under

this venerable roof with my master, signer Manuel Ordonez, governor of the hospital. Ah! just so, answered the lady chamberlain, I recollect! You are an old acquaintance. Well-a-day now! Your very belonging to signor Ordonez is enough to prove you a youth of merit and strict propriety. A servant is known by his place, and this lad could not have a better sponsor. Come along with me; I will introduce you to signor Sedillo. I am sure he will be glad to engage a lad at your recommendation.

We followed dame Jacintha. The canon lived in the lower part of the house, in a comfortable suite of wainscoted apartments. She begged us to wait a moment in the anti-chamber, while she went in to the licentiate's room. After some private parley with him, merely that he might know what he was about, she came to tell us we might walk in. We kenned the old cripple, immersed in an elbow chair, with a pillow under his head, cushions under his arms, and his legs supported on a large stool, stuffed with down. We were no niggards of our bows as we advanced; and Fabricio, still taking the lead, not only repeated over again what he had said to the housekeeper, but set about extolling my merit, and expatiated in an especial manner on the honours I had gained in the schools under doctor Godinez on all metaphysical questions; as if it was necessary for a prebendary's footman to be as learned as his master. However that might be, it served as a tub

to the whale. Besides, dame Jacintha did not look forbidding, and my surety received the following answer : Friend, I receive into my service the lad you recommend. I like him well enough; and as for his morals, they cannot be much amiss, since he presents himself under the wing of a domestic belonging to signor Ordonnez.

As soon as Fabricio saw me safe landed, he made a low bow to the prebendary, a still lower to the lady, and withdrew in high good humour, whispering in my ear that we should meet again, and that I had only to make good my footing. As soon as he had left the room, the licentiate enquired my name, why I had left my native place; and drew me on by his questions to relate my adventures before dame Jacintha. They were both highly amused, above all by my last rencounter. Camilla and don Raphael gave such play to their risible muscles, that I thought old chinks tone would have burst: for, as he laughed with all his might, so violent a cough laid hold of him, as went very near to have carried him off. His will was riot made. What an alarm for the housekeeper! Trembling, distracted, off she flew to the good man's succour, and, just like a nurse with a puking child, paddled about his forehead and tapped him on the back. Luckily it was a false alarm: the old gentleman left off coughing, and the housekeeper tormenting him. When it was over, I was for going on with my narrative; but

dame Jacintha, in awe of a second fit, set herself against it. She therefore took me with her out of the room to a wardrobe where, among several suits, was that of my predecessor. This I was to take, and leave my own in its room, which I was not sorry to see laid up safe, in the hope it might be of further use. After this, we went together to get dinner ready.

I knew what I was about in the art of dressing meat. Dame Leonarda, with whom I had served my time, might have passed for a very decent plain cook; -but a mere turnspit to dame Jacintha. The latter might almost have borne away the bell from the archbishop of Toledo's man. She was mistress of every thing; gravy soups, of the most delicious texture and relish ; and for made dishes, she could season them up, or soften them down to the most delicate or voluptuous palate. At dinner-time we returned to his reverence's apartment. While I was arranging the grand concern close by his arm chair, the lady of all work crammed a napkin under the aid boy's chin, and pinned it behind his back. Without losing a moment, in marched I with a stew, fit to be set before the first gourmand in Madrid, and two courses, to have tickled the gills of a viceroy, only that dame Jacintha had touched the spice-box with discretion, for fear of exasperating the gout. At the first glimpse of this goodly mess, my old master, whom I conceived to have lost the use of his

limbs, made me to understand that his arms were exempted from the interdict. He availed himself of their assistance, to get clear of his pillow and cushions, and proceeded gaily to the attack. His hand shook, to be sure; but some how or other it contrived to do its duty. He sent it backwards and forwards fast enough; though it brought but half its cargo to the landing-place at a lading: the table-cloth and napkin took toll. I carried off the soup when he had done, and brought in a partridge flanked by two roast quails, which dame Jacintha cut up for him. She took care to make him take a good draught of wine, a little lowered at proper intervals, out of a large, deep, silver cup, which she held to his mouth, as if he had been an infant. He winged the partridge, and came down slap-dash upon all the rest of the dishes. When he had done cramming, that saint of the sauce-pan unpinned his napkin, reinstated his pillow and cushions; then, leaving him composed in his arm-chair to the enjoyment of his usual nap after dinner, we took away, and demolished the remainder with appetites worthy of our master.

The dinner of to-day was the ordinary bill of fare. Our canon played the best knife and fork in the chapter. But the supper was a mere bauble; seldom more than a chicken and a little confectionary. I larded my inside in this house, and led a good easy life. There was but one awkward circumstance; and

that was sitting up with my master, to save the expence of a nurse. Besides a strangury, which kept him on the fidget ten times in an hour, he was very much given to perspire; and in that event, I shifted him. Gil Blas, said he on the second night, you are an active, clever fellow; I foresee that we shall jog on very well together. I only just give you a hint to keep in with dame Jacintha; the girl has been about me for these fifteen years, and manages all my little matters; she comforts my outward man, and I cannot do too much for her. For that reason, you are to know, that she is more to me than all my family. There is my nephew, my own sister's son; why I have turned him out of doors, only to please her. He had no regard for the poor lass: and so far from giving her credit for all her little assiduities, the saucy rascal swore she did not care a farthing for me! But now-a-days, young people think virtue and gratitude all a farce. Heaven be praised, I am rid of the varlet. What claim has blood, in comparison with unquestionable attachment? I am influenced by a give and take principle in my connections. You are right, sir, replied I; gratitude ought to be the first thing, and natural affection the last. Ay! resumed he; and my will shall be a comment on that text. My house-keeper shall be residuary legatee; and you shall have a corner in a codicil, if you go on as well as you have begun. The footman I turned off yesterday has lost a good legacy, by not knowing where to hit the right

nail on the head. If the blockhead had not obliged me, by his ill behaviour, to send him packing, I would have made a man of him: but the beggar on horse-back gave himself airs to dame Jacintha! Then master lazy-bones did not like sitting up! I might pass the night as I could, provided he had no trouble with me. Oh, the unfeeling scoundrel! exclaimed I, in the true spirit of Fabricio, he was not a man to be about so good a master. The lad for your money should be a humble, but confidential friend; he should not make a toil of what ought to be a pleasure, but think nothing of going through fire and water for your ease.

These professions were not lost upon the licentiate. Neither were my assurances of due submission to dame Jacintha's authority less acceptable. Puffing myself off for a servant, who was not afraid of work, I got through my business as cheerfully as I could. I never complained of my nursery. Though to be sure it was irksome enough; and if the legacy had not settled my stomach, I should have sickened at the nature of my employment. It is true I got some hours rest during the day. The housekeeper, to do her justice, was kind enough to me; owing to the insinuating manner in which I wormed myself into her good graces. Suppose me at table, with her and her niece Inesilla! I changed their plates, filled their glasses, never thought of my own dinner before they had every thing they wanted. This was the way to

thrive in their esteem. One day when dame Jacintha was gone to market, finding myself alone with Inesilla, \ began to make myself agreeable. Were her father and mother alive ? On! no, answered she; they have been dead this long, long time; for my good aunt says they have, and I have never seen them. I religiously believed the little innocent, though her answer was not of the clearest; and she got into such an humour of talking, as to tell me more than I wanted to know. She informed me, or rather I inferred it from her artless simplicity, that her good aunt had a good friend, who lived likewise with an old canon. The temporalities of the church were under his administration? and these lucky domestics reckoned upon entwining the spoils of their masters round the pdlars of the hymeneal temple, into whose sanctuary they had penetrated by anticipation. Dame Jacintha, as I have said before, though a little stricken in years, had still some bloom. To be sure, she spared no pains to cherish it: besides daily evacuations, she took plentiful doses of all-powerful jelly. She got her sleep in the night too, while I sat up with my master. But what perhaps contributed most to the freshness of this everlasting flower, was an issue in each leg, of which I should never have known, but for that blab Inesilla.

CHAPTER II.

*The canons illness; his treatment; the consequence;
the legacy to Gil Blas,*

I STAID three months with the licentiate Sedillo, without complaining of bad nights. At the end of that time he fell sick. The distemper was a fever; and it inflamed the gout. For the first time in his life, which had been long, he called in a physician. Doctor Sangrado was sent for; the Hippocrates of Valladolid. Dame Jacintha was for sending for the lawyer first, and touched that string; but the patient thought it was time enough, and had a little will of his own upon some points. Away I went therefore for doctor Sangrado; and brought him with me, A tall, withered, wan executioner of the sisters three, who had done all their justice for at least these forty years! This learned forerunner of the undertaker had an aspect suited to his office: his words were weighed to a scruple; and his jargon sounded grand in the ears of the uninitiated. His arguments were mathematical demonstrations : and his opinions had the merit of originality..

After studying my master's symptoms, he began with medical solemnity. The question here is, to re-

medy an obstructed perspiration. Ordinary practitioners, in this case, would follow the old routine of salines, diuretics, volatile salts, sulphur and mercury; but purges and sudorifics are a deadly practice! Chemical preparations are edged tools in the hands of the ignorant. My methods are more simple, and more efficacious. What is your usual diet? I live pretty much upon soups, replied the canon, and eat my meat with a good deal of gravy. Soups and gravy I exclaimed the petrified doctor. Upon my word, it is no wonder you are ill. High living is a poisoned bait; a trap set by sensuality, to cut short the days of wretched man, We must have done with pampering our appetites: the more insipid, the more wholesome. The human blood is not a gravy! Why then you must give it such a nourishment, as will assimilate with the particles of which it is composed. You drink wine, I warrant you? Yes, said the licentiate, but diluted. Oh! finely diluted, I dare say, rejoined the physician. This is licentiousness with a vengeance! A frightful course of feeding! Why you ought to have died years ago. How old are you! I am in my sixty-ninth year, replied the canon. So I thought, quoth the practitioner, a premature old age is always the consequence of intemperance. If you had only drank clear water all your life, and had been contented with plain food, boiled apples for instance, you would not have been a martyr to the gout, and your limbs would have performed their



functions with lubricity. But I do not despair of setting you on your legs again, provided you give yourself up to my management. The licentiate promised to be upon his good behaviour.

Sangrado then sent me for a surgeon of his own choosing, and took from him six good porringers of blood, by way of a beginning, to remedy this obstinate obstruction. He then said to the surgeon: Master Martin Onez, you will take as much more three hours hence, and to-morrow you will repeat the operation. It is a mere vulgar error, that the blood is of any use in the system: the faster you draw it off, the better. A patient has nothing to do but to keep himself quiet: with him, to live is merely not to die; he has no more occasion for blood than a man in a trance: in both cases, life consists exclusively in pulsation and respiration. When the doctor had ordered these frequent and copious bleedings, he added a drench of warm water at very short intervals, maintaining that water in sufficient quantities was the grand secret in the materia medica. He then took his leave, telling dame Jacintha and me with an air of confidence, that he would answer for the patient's life, if his system was fairly pursued. The housekeeper, though protesting secretly against this new practice, bowed to his superior authority. In fact, we set on the kettles in a hurry; and, as the physician had desired us above all things to give him enough, we began with pouring down two or three

pints at as many gulps. An hour after, we beset him again; then, returning to the attack time after time, we fairly poured a deluge into his poor stomach. The surgeon, on the other hand, taking out the blood as we put in the water, we reduced the old canon to death's door, in less than two days.

This venerable ecclesiastic, able to hold it out no longer, as I pledged him in a large glass of his new cordial, said to me in a faint voice: Hold, Gil Blas, do not give me any more, my friend. It is plain death will come when he will come, in spite of water; and, though I have hardly a drop of blood in my veins, I am no better for getting rid of the enemy. The ablest physician in the world can do nothing for us, when our time is expired. Fetch a notary: I will make my will. At these last words, pleasing enough to my fancy, I affected to appear unhappy; and concealing my impatience to be gone: Sir, said I, you are not reduced so low, thank God, but you may yet recover. No, no, interrupted he, my good fellow, it is all over. I feel the gout shifting, and the hand of death is upon me. Make haste, and go where I told you. I saw, sure enough, that he changed every moment; and the case was so urgent, that I ran as fast as I could, leaving him in dame Jacintha's care, who was more afraid than myself of his dying without a will. I laid hold of the first notary I could find; Sir, said I, the licentiate Sedillo, my master, is drawing near his end; he wants to settle his affairs; there

is not a moment to be lost. The notary was a ~~cap~~** per little old fellow, who loved his joke; and enquired who was our physician. At the name of doctor Sangrado, hurrying on his cloak and hat: For mercy's sake! cried he, let us set off with all possible speed; for this doctor dispatches business so fast, that our fraternity cannot keep pace with him. That fellow spoils half my jobs.

With this sarcasm, he set forward in good earnest, and, as we pushed on, to get the start of the grim tyrant, I said to him: Sir, you are aware that a dying testator's memory is sometimes a little short; should my master chance to forget me, be so good as to put in a word in my favour. That I will, my lad, replied the little proctor; you may rely on it. I will urge something handsome, if I have an opportunity. The licentiate, on our arrival, had still all his faculties about him. Dame Jacintha was by his bed-side, laying in her tears by wholesale. She had played her game, and bespoken a handsome remembrance. We left the notary alone with my master, and went together into the antichamber, where we met the surgeon, sent by the physician for another and a last experiment. We laid hold of him. Stop, master Martin, said the housekeeper, you cannot go into signor Sedillo's room just now. He is giving his last orders; but you may bleed away when the will is made.

We were terribly afraid, this pious gentlewoman

and I, lest the licentiate should go off with his will half finished; but, by good luck, the important deed was executed. We saw the proctor come out, who finding me on the watch, slapped me on the shoulder, and said with a simper: Gil Blas is not forgotten, At these words, I felt the most lively joy; and was so well pleased with my master for his kind notice, that I promised myself the pleasure of praying for his soul after death, which event happened anon; for the surgeon having bled him once more, the poor old man, quite exhausted, gave up the ghost under the lancet. Just as he was breathing his last, the physician made his appearance, and looked a little foolish, notwithstanding the universality of his death-bed experience. Yet, far from imputing the accident to the new practice, he walked off, affirming with intrepidity, that it was owing to their having been too lenient with the lancet, and too chary of their warm water. The medical executioner, I mean the surgeon, seeing that his functions also were at an end, followed doctor Sangrado.

As soon as we saw the breath out of our patron's body, dame Jacintha, Inesilla, and myself, joined in a decent chorus of funeral lamentation, loud enough to produce a proper effect in the neighbourhood. The emblem of a life to come, though she had more reason than any of us to rejoice, took the soprano part, and screamed out her afflictions in a most pathetic manner. The room in an instant was crowded

with people, attracted less by compassion than curiosity. The relations of the deceased no sooner got wind of his departure, than they pounced down upon the premises, and sealed up every thing. From the housekeeper's distress, they thought there was no will: but they soon found their mistake, and that there was one without a flaw. When it was opened, and they learned the disposition of the testator's principal property, in favour of dame Jacintha and the little girl, they pronounced his funeral oration in terms not a little disparaging to his memory. They gave a broad apostrophe at the same time to the godly legatee, and a few blessings to me in my turn. It must be owned I had earned them. The licentiate, heaven reward him for it, to secure my remembrances through life, expressed himself thus in a paragraph of his will: *Item, as Gil Blas has already some little smattering of literature, to encourage his studious habits, I give and bequeath to him my library, all my books and my manuscripts, without any drawback or exception.*

I could not conceive where this said library might be: I had never seen any. I only knew of some papers, with five or six bound books, on two little deal shelves in my master's closet: and that was my legacy. The books too could be of no great use to me: the title of one was, *The complete Man-cook*; another, *A Treatise on Indigestion, with the Methods of Cure*; the rest were the four parts of the *breviary*,

half eaten up by the worms. In the article of manuscripts, the most curious consisted of documents relating to a law-suit in which the prebendary was once engaged for his stall. After having examined my legacy with more minuteness than it deserved, I made over my right and title to these invidious relations. I even renounced my livery, and took back my own suit, claiming my wages as my only reward. I then went to look out for another place. As for dame Jacintha, besides her residue under the will, she had some snug little articles, which by the help of her good friend she had appropriated to her own use during the last illness of the licentiate.

CHAPTER III.

Gil Blas enters into doctor Sangrado's service, and becomes a famous practitioner.

I DETERMINED to throw my self in the way of signor Arias de Londona, and to look out for a new birth in his register: but as I was on my way to No Thoroughfare, who should come across me but doctor Sangrado, whom I had not seen since the day of my master's death. I took the liberty of touching my hat. He kenned me in a twinkling, though I had changed my dress; and with as much warmth as his temperament would allow him: Hey-day! said he, the very lad I wanted to see: you have never been out of my thought. I have occasion for a clever fellow about me, and pitched upon you as the very thing, if you can read and write. Sir, replied I, if that is all you require, I am your man. In that case, rejoined he, we need look no further. Come home with me; it will be all comfort; I shall behave to you like a brother. You will have no wages; but then every thing will be found you. You shall eat and drink according to the true faith, and be taught to cure all diseases. In a word, you shall rather be my young Sangrado than my footman.

I closed in with the doctor's proposal, in the hope of becoming an Esculapius under so inspired a master. He carried me home on the spur of the occasion, to instal me in my honourable employment; which honourable employment consisted in writing down the name and residence of the patients who sent for him in his absence. There had indeed been a register for this purpose, kept by an old domestic; but she had not the gift of spelling accurately, and wrote a most perplexing hand. This account I was to keep. It might truly be called a bill of mortality; for my members all went from bad to worse during the short time they continued in this system. I was a sort of book-keeper for the other world, to take places in the stage, and to see that the first come were the first served. My pen was always in my hand; for doctor Sangrado had more practice than any physician of his time in Valladolid. He had got into reputation with the public by a certain professional slang, humoured by a medical face, and some extraordinary cases, more honoured by implicit faith than scrupulous investigation.

He was in no want of patients, nor consequently of property. He did not keep the best house in the world: we lived with some little attention to economy. The usual bill of fare consisted of peas, beans, boiled apples or cheese. He considered this food as best suited to the human stomach, that is to say, as most amenable to the grinders, whence it was to en-

counter the process of digestion. Nevertheless, easy as was their passage, he was not for stopping the way with too much of them; and, to be sure, he was in the right. But though he cautioned the maid and me against repletion in respect of solids, it was made up by free permission to drink as much water as we liked. Far from prescribing us any limits there, he would tell us sometimes: Drink, my children; health consists in the pliability and moisture of the parts. Drink water by pails full; it is an universal dissolvent; water liquefies all the salts. Is the course of the blood a little sluggish? this grand principle sets it forward: too rapid? its career is checked. Our doctor was so orthodox on this head, that he drank nothing himself but water, though advanced in years. He defined old age to be a natural consumption which dries us up and wastes us away: on this principle, he deplored the ignorance of those who call wine old men's milk. He maintained that wine wears them out and corrodes them, and pleaded with all the force of eloquence against that liquor, fatal in common both to the young and old, that friend with a serpent in its bosom, that pleasure with a dagger under its girdle.

In spite of these fine arguments, at the end of a week, a looseness ensued, with some twinges, which I was blasphemous enough to saddle on the universal dissolvent, and the new-fashioned diet. I stated my symptoms to my master, in the hope he would

relax the rigour of his regimen, and qualify my meals with a little wine; but his hostility to that liquor was inflexible. If you have not philosophy enough, said he, for pure water, there are innocent infusions to strengthen the stomach against the nausea of aqueous quaffings. Sage, for example, has a very pretty flavour; and if you wish to heighten it into a debauch, it is only mixing rosemary, wild poppy, and other simples, but no compounds.

In vain did he crack off his water, and teach me the secret of composing delicious messes. I was so abstemious, that, remarking my moderation, he said: In good sooth, Gil Blas, I marvel not that you are no better than you are; you do not drink enough, my friend. Water taken in a small quantity serves only to separate the particles of bile, and set them in action; but our practice is to drown them in a copious drench. Fear not, my good lad, lest a superabundance of liquid should either weaken or chill your stomach: far from thy better judgment be that silly fear of unadulterated drink. I will ensure you against all consequences; and if my authority will not serve your turn, read Celsus. That oracle of the ancients makes an admirable panegyric on water; in short, he says in plain terms that those who plead an inconstant stomach in favour of wine, publish a libel on their own bowels, and make their organization a pretence for their sensuality.

As it would have been ungenteel in me to have run
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riot on my entrance into the career of practice, I affected thorough conviction: indeed I thought there was something in it. I therefore went on drinking water on the authority of Celsus, or to speak in scientific terms, I began to drown the bile in copious drenches of that unadulterated liquor; and though I felt myself more out of order from day to day, prejudice won the cause against experience. It is evident therefore that I was in the right road to the practice of physic. Yet I could not always be insensible to the qualms, which increased in my frame, to that degree, as to determine me on quitting doctor Sangrado. But he invested me in a new office which changed my tone. Hark you, my child, said he to me one day, I am not one of those hard and ungrateful masters, who leave their household to grow grey in service without a suitable reward. I am well pleased with you; I have a regard for you: and without waiting till you have served your time, I will make your fortune. Without more ado, I will initiate you in the healing art, of which I have for so many years been at the head. Other physicians make the science to consist of various unintelligible branches; but I will shorten the road for you, and dispense with the drudgery of studying natural philosophy, pharmacy, botany, and anatomy. Remember, my friend, that bleeding and drinking warm water are the two grand principles; the true secret of curing all the distempers incident to humanity. Yes, this marvellous

secret which I reveal to you, and which nature, beyond the reach of my colleagues, has failed in rescuing from my ken, is comprehended in these two articles, namely, bleeding and drenching. Here you have the sum total of my philosophy; you are thoroughly bottomed in medicine, and may raise yourself to the summit of fame on the shoulders of my long experience. You may enter into partnership at once, by keeping the books in the morning, and going out to visit patients in the afternoon. While I dose the nobility and clergy, you shall labour in your vocation among the lower orders; and when you have felt your ground a little, I will get you admitted into our body. You are a philosopher, Gil Blas, though you have never graduated: the common herd of them, though they have graduated in due form and order, are likely to run out the length of their tether without knowing their right hand from their left.

I thanked the doctor for having so speedily enabled me to serve as his deputy; and, by way of acknowledging his goodness, promised to follow his system to the end of my career, with a magnanimous indifference about the aphorisms of Hippocrates. But that engagement was not to be taken to the letter. This tender attachment to water went against the grain, and I had a scheme for drinking wine every day snugly among the patients. I left off wearing my own suit a second time, to take up with one of my master's and look like an inveterate prac-

itioner. After which, I brought my medical theorie# into play; leaving them to look to the event whom it might concern. I began on an alguazil in a pleurisy: he was condemned to be bled with the utmost rigour of the law, at the same time that the system was to be replenished copiously with water. Next I made a lodgment in the veins of a pastry-cook, who roared like a lion by reason of gouty spasms. I stood on no more ceremony with his blood than with that of the alguazil, and laid no restriction on his taste for simple liquids. My prescriptions brought me in twelve rials; an incident so auspicious in my professional career, that I only wished for the plagues of Egypt on all the hale subjects of Valladolid. As I was coming out of the pastry-cook's whom should I meet but Fabricio, a total stranger since the death of the licentiate Sedillo? He looked at me with astonishment for some seconds: then set up a laugh with all his might, and held his sides. He had no reason to be grave: for I had a cloak trailing on the ground, with a doublet and breeches of four times my natural dimensions. I was certainly a complete original. I suffered him to make merry as long as he liked, and could scarcely help joining in the ridicule: but I kept a guard on my muscles, to preserve a becoming digamy in public, and the better to enact the physician, whose part in society is not that of a buffoon. If the absurdity of my appearance excited Fabricio's merriment, my affected gravity added zest to it; and

when he had nearly exhausted his lungs: By all the powers, Gil Blas, quoth he, thou art in complete masquerade. Who the devil has dressed you up in this manner ? Fair and softly, my friend, replied I, fair and softly; be a little on your good behaviour with a modern Hippocrates. Understand me to be the substitute of doctor Sangrado, the most eminent physician in Valladolid. I have lived with him these three weeks. He has bottomed me thoroughly in medicine; and, as he cannot perform the obsequies of all the patients who send for him, I visit a part of them, to take the burden off his conscience. He does execution in great families, I among the vulgar. Vastly well, replied Fabricio; that is to say, he grants you a lease on the blood of the commonalty, but keeps to himself the fee-simple of the fashionable world. I wish you joy of your lot; it is a pleasanter line of practice among the populace than among great folk. Long live a snug connexion in the suburbs! a man's mistakes are easily buried, and his murders elude all but God's revenge. Yes, my brave boy, your destiny is truly enviable: in the language of Alexander, were I not Fabricio, I could wish to be Gil Blas.

To shew the son of Nunez the barber that he was not much out in his reckoning on my present happiness, I chinked the fees of the alguazil and the pastry-cook ; and this was followed by an adjournment to a tavern, to drink to their perfect recovery.

The wine was very fair; and my impatience for the well-known smack made me think it better than it was. I took some good long draughts; and, without gainsaying the Latin oracle, in proportion as I poured it into its natural reservoir, I felt my accommodating entrails to owe me no grudge for the hard service into which I pressed them. As for Fabricio and myself, we sat some time in the tavern, making merry at the expense of our masters, as servants are too much accustomed to do. At last, seeing the night approach, we parted, after engaging to meet at the same place on the following day after dinner.

CHAPTER IV.

Gil Blas goes on practising physic with equal success and ability. Adventure of the recovered ring.

I WAS no sooner at home, than doctor Sangrado came in. I talked to him about the patients I had seen, and paid into his hands eight remaining rials of the twelve I had received for my prescriptions. Eight rials! said he, as he counted them: mighty little for two visits! But we must take things as we find them. In the spirit of taking things as he found them, he laid violent hands on six, giving me the other two: Here, Gil Blas, continued he, see what a foundation to build upon. I make over to you the fourth of all you may bring me. You will soon feather your nest, my friend; for, by the blessing of providence, there will be a great deal of ill health this year.

I had reason to be content with my dividend: since, having determined to keep back the third part of what I received in my rounds, and afterwards touching another fourth of the remainder, half of the whole, if arithmetic is any thing more than a deception, would become my perquisite. This inspired me with new zeal for my profession. The next day,

as soon as I had dined, I resumed my medical paraphernalia, and took the field once more. I visited several patients on the list, and treated their several complaints in one invariable routine. Hitherto, things went on under the rose, and no individual, thank heaven, had risen up in rebellion against my prescriptions. But let a physician's cures be as extraordinary as they will, some quack or other is always ready to rip up his reputation. I was called in to a grocer's son in a dropsy. Whom should I find there before me, but a little black-looking physician, by name doctor Cuchillo, introduced by a relation of the family. I bowed round most profoundly; but dipped lowest to the personage whom I took to have been invited to a consultation with *me*. He returned my compliment with a distant air; then, having stared me in the face for a few seconds, Signor doctor, said he, I beg pardon for being inquisitive: I thought I had been acquainted with all my brethren in Valladolid; but I confess your physiognomy is altogether new. You must have been settled but a short time in town. I avowed myself a young practitioner, acting as yet under the direction of doctor Sangrado. I wish you joy, replied he politely; you are studying under a great man. You must doubtless have seen a vast deal of sound practice, young as you appear to be. He spoke this with so easy an assurance, that I was at a loss whether he meant it seriously, or was laughing at me. While I was

conning over my reply, the grocer, seizing on the opportunity, said: Gentlemen, I am persuaded of your both being perfectly competent in your art: have the goodness without ado to take the case in hand, and devise some effectual means for the restoration of my son's health.

Thereupon the little pulse-counter set himself about reviewing the patient's situation; and after having dilated to me on all the symptoms, asked me what I thought the fittest method of treatment. I am of opinion, replied I, that he should be bled once a day, and drink as much warm water as he can swallow. At these words, our diminutive doctor said to me with a malicious simper: And so you think such a course will save the patient? Never doubt it, exclaimed I in a confident tone; it must produce that effect, because it is a certain method of cure for all distempers. Ask signor Sangrado. At that rate, retorted he, Celsus is altogether in the wrong; for he contends that the readiest way to cure a dropsical subject, is to let him almost die of hunger and thirst. Oh! as for Celsus, interrupted I, he is no oracle of mine; as fallible as the meanest of us: I often have occasion to bless myself, for going contrary to his dogmas. I discover by your language, said Cuchillo, the safe and sure method of practice doctor Sangrado instils into his pupils. Bleeding and drenching are the extent of his resources. No wonder so many worthy people are cut off under his

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direction No defamation! interrupted I with some acrimony: a member of the faculty had better not begin throwing stones. Come, come, my learned doctor, patients can get to the other world without bleeding and warm water; and I question whether the most deadly of us has ever signed more passports than yourself. If you have any crow to pluck with signor Sangrado, write against him; he will answer you, and we shall soon see who will have the best of the battle. By all the saints in the calendar! swore he in a transport of passion, you little know whom you are talking to. I have a tongue and a fist, my friend: and am not afraid of Sangrado, who, with all his arrogance and affectation, is but a ninny. The size of the little death-dealer made me hold his anger cheap. I gave him a sharp retort: he sent back as good as I brought, till at last we came to cuffs. We had pulled a few handfuls of hair from each other's heads, before the grocer and his kinsman could part us. When they had brought this about, they feed me for my attendance, and retained my antagonist, whom they thought the more skilful of the two.

Another adventure succeeded close on the heels of this. I went to see an huge chanter in a fever. As soon as he heard me talk of warm water, he shewed himself so averse to this specific, as to fall into a fit of swearing. He abused me in all possible shapes, and threatened to throw me out at window.

I was in a greater hurry to get out of his house than to get in. I did not choose to see any more patients that day, and repaired to the inn where I had agreed to meet Fabricio. He was there first. As we found ourselves in a tippling humour, we drank hard, and returned to our employers in a pretty pickle, that is to say, so so in the upper story. Signor Sangrado was not aware of my being drunk, because he took the lively gestures, which accompanied the relation of my quarrel with the little doctor, for an effect of the agitation not yet subsided after the battle. Besides, he came in for his share in my report; and feeling himself nettled by Cuchillo, You have done well, Gil Blas, said he, to defend the character of our practice against this little abortion of the faculty. So he takes upon him to set his face against watery drenches in dropsical cases? An ignorant fellow! I maintain, I do, in my own person, that the use of them may be reconciled to the best theories. Yes, water is a cure for all sorts of dropsies, just as it is good for rheumatisms and the green sickness. It is excellent too in those fevers where the effect is at once to parch and to chill, and even miraculous in those disorders ascribed to cold, thin, phlegmatic and pituitous humours. This opinion may appear strange to young practitioners like Cuchillo; but it is right orthodox in the best and soundest systems: so that if persons of that description were capable of taking a philosophical view, instead of crying me

down, they would become my most zealous advocates.

In his rage, he never suspected me of drinking: for, to exasperate him still more against the little doctor, I had thrown into my recital some circumstances of my own addition. Yet, engrossed as he was by what I had told him, he could not help taking notice that I drank more water than usual that evening.

In fact, the wine had made me very thirsty. Any one but Sangrado would have distrusted my being so very dry, as to swallow down glass after glass: but as for him, he took it for granted, in the simplicity of his heart, that I began to acquire a relish for aqueous potations. Apparently, Gil Blas, said he with a gracious smile, you have no longer such a dislike to water. As heaven is my judge ! you quaff it off like nectar. It is no wonder, my friend, I was certain you would take a liking to that liquor. Sir, replied I, there is a tide in the affairs of men: with my present lights, I would give all the wine in Valladolid for a pint of water. This answer delighted the doctor, who would not lose so fine an opportunity of expatiating on the excellence of water*. He undertook to ring the changes once more in its praise, not like an hireling pleader, but as an enthusiast in the cause. A thousand times, exclaimed he, a thousand and a thousand times of greater value, as being more innocent than our modern taverns, were those baths

of ages past, whither the people went not shamefully to squander their fortunes and expose their lives, by swilling themselves with wine, but assembled there for the decent and economical amusement of drinking warm water. It is difficult enough to admire the patriotic forecast of those ancient politicians, who established places of public resort, where water was dealt out gratis to all comers, and who confined wine to the shops of the apothecaries, that its use might be prohibited but under the direction of physicians. What a stroke of wisdom! It is doubtless to preserve the seeds of that antique frugality, emblematic of the golden age, that persons are found to this day, like you and me, who drink nothing but water, and are persuaded they possess a prevention or a cure for every ailment, provided our warm water has never boiled; for I have observed that water, when it has boiled, is heavier, and sits less easily on the stomach.

While he was holding forth thus eloquently, I was in danger more than once of splitting my sides with laughing. But I contrived to keep my countenance: nay, more; to chime in with the doctor's theory, I found fault with the use of wine, and pitied mankind for having contracted an untoward relish to so pernicious a beverage. Then, finding my thirst not sufficiently allayed, I filled a large goblet with water, and after having swilled it like a horse: Come, sir, said I to my master, let us drink plentifully of this

beneficial liquor. Let us make those early establishments of dilution you so much regret, to live again* in your house. He clapped his hands in ecstasy at these words, and preached to me for a whole hour about suffering no liquid but water to pass my lips. To confirm the habit, I promised to drink a large quantity every evening; and, to keep my word with less violence to my private inclinations, I went to bed with a determined purpose of going to the tavern every day.

The trouble I had got into at the grocer's did not discourage me from phlebotomizing and prescribing warm water in the usual course. Coming out of a house where I had been visiting a poet in a phrenzy, I was accosted in the street by an old woman who came up and asked me if I was a physician. I said yes. As that is the case, replied she, I entreat you with all humility to go along with me. My niece has been ill since yesterday, and I cannot conceive what is the matter with her. I followed the old lady to her house, where I was shewn into a very decent room, occupied by a female who kept her bed. I went near, to consider her case. Her features struck me from the first; and I discovered beyond the possibility of a mistake, after having looked at her some little time, the she-adventurer who had played the part of Camilla so adroitly. For her part, she did not seem to recollect me at all, whether from the oppression of her disorder, or from my dress as a phy-

sician rendering me not easy to be known again. I took her by the hand, to feel her pulse; and saw my ring upon her finger. I was all in a twitter at the discovery of a valuable, on which I had a claim both in law and equity. Great was my longing to make a snatch at it; but considering that these fair ones would set up a great scream, and that don Raphael or some other defender of injured innocence might rush in to their rescue, I laid an embargo on my privateering. I thought it best to come by my own in an honest way, and to consult Fabricio about the means. To this last course I stuck. In the meantime the old woman urged me to inform her with what disease her niece was troubled. I was not fool enough to own my ignorance; on the contrary, I took upon myself as a man of science, and after my master's example, pronounced solemnly that the disorder accrued to the patient from the defect of natural perspiration; that consequently she must lose blood as soon as possible, because if we could not open one pore, we always open another: and I finished my prescription with warm water, to do the thing methodically.

I shortened my visit as much as possible, and ran to the son of Nunez, whom I met just as he was going out on an errand for his master. I told him my new adventure, and asked his advice about laying an information against Camilla. Pooh! Nonsense! replied he; that would not be the way to get

your ring again. Those gentry think restitution double trouble. Call to mind your imprisonment at Astorga; your horse, your money, your very clothes, did not they ail centre in the hands of justice? We must rather set our wits to work for the recovery of your diamond. I take on myself the charge of inventing some stratagem for that purpose. I will deliberate on it in my way to the hospital, where I have to say but two words from my master to the purveyor. Do you wait for me at our house of call, and do not be on the fret: I will be with you shortly.

I had waited however more than three hours at the appointed place, when he arrived. I did not know him again at first. Besides that he had changed his dress and platted his hair, a pair of false whiskers covered half his face. He wore an immense sword with a hilt of at least three feet in circumference, and marched at the head of five men of as swaggering an air as himself, with bushy whiskers and long rapiers. Good day to you, signor Gil Blas, said he by way of salutation; behold an alguazil upon a new construction, and marshalsmen of like materials in these brave fellows my companions. We have only to be shewn where the woman lodges who purloined the diamond, and we will obtain restitution, take my word for it. I hugged Fabricio at this discourse, which let me into the plot, and testified loudly my approval of the expedient* I paid my respects also

to the masquerading marshalmen. They were three servants and two journeymen barbers of his acquaintance, whom he had engaged to act this farce. I ordered wine to be served round to the detachment, and we went all together at night-fall to Camilla's residence. The door was shut, and we knocked. The old woman, taking my companions to be on the scent of justice, and knowing they would not come into that neighbourhood for nothing, was terribly frightened. Cheer up again, good mother, said Fabricio; we are only come here upon a little business Which will be soon settled. At these words we made our entry, and found our way to the sick chamber, under the guidance of the old dowager who walked before us, and by favour of a wax taper which she carried in a silver candlestick. T took the light, went to the bed-side, and, making Camilla take particular notice of my features, Traitress, said I, call to mind the too credulous Gil Blas whom you have deceived. Ah! thou wickedness personified, at last I have caught thee. The corregidor has taken down my deposition, and ordered this alguazil to arrest you. Come, officer, said I to Fabricio, do your duty. There is no need, replied he, swelling his voice, to inflame my severity. The face of that wretch is not new to me: she has long been marked with red letters in my pocket-book. Get up, my princess, dress your royal person with all possible dispatch.

I will be your squire, and lodge you in durance vile, if you have no objection.

At these words, Camilla, ill as she was, observing two marshalmen with large whiskers ready to drag her out of bed by main force, sat up of herself, clasped her hands in an attitude of supplication; and looking at me ruefully, said, Signor Gil Blas, have compassion on me: I call as a witness to my entreaties the chaste mother whose virtues you inherit. Guilty as I am, my misfortunes are greater than my crimes. I will give you back your diamond; so do not be my ruin. Speaking to this effect, she drew my ring from her finger, and gave it me back. But *I* told her my diamond was not enough, and that she must refund the thousand ducats they had embezzled in the ready-furnished lodging. Oh! as for your ducats, replied she, ask me not about them. That false-hearted deceiver, don Raphael, whom I have not seen from that time to this, carried them off the very same night. O ho! my little darling, said Fabricio in his turn, that will not do: you had a hand in the robbery, whether you went snacks in the profit or no. You will not come off so cheaply. Your having been accessory to don Raphael's manoeuvres is enough, to render you liable to an examination. Your past life is very equivocal; and you must have a good deal upon your conscience. You will have the goodness, if you please, just to step into the town-



jail, and there unburden yourself by a general confession. This good old lady shall keep you company; it is hard if she cannot tell a world of curious stories, such as Mr. Corregidor will be delighted to hear.

The two women, at these words, brought every engine of pity into play to soften us. They filled the air with cries, complaints, and lamentations. While the old woman on her knees, sometimes to the alguazil and sometimes to his attendants, endeavoured to melt their stubborn hearts, Camilla implored me, in the most touching terms, to save her from the hands of justice.. I pretended to relent. Officer, said I to the son of Nunez, since I have got my diamond, I do not 'much care about any thing else. It would be no pleasure to me to be the means of pain to that poor woman; I want not the death of a sinner. Out upon you, answered he, you set up for humanity! you would make a bad tipstaff. I must do my errand. My positive orders are to arrest these virgins of the sun; his honour the corregidor means to make an example of them. Nay! for mercy's sake, replied I, pay some little deference to my wishes, and slacken a little of your severity, on the ground of the present these ladies are on the point of offering to your acceptance. Oh! that is another matter, rejoined he; that is what you may call a figure of rhetoric suited to all capacities and all occasions, Well, then, let us see, what have they to give me? I have a pearl necklace,

said Camilla, and drop ear-rings of considerable value. Yes; but, interrupted he roughly, if these articles are the produce of the Philippine isles, I will have none of them. You may take them in perfect safety, replied she: I warrant them real. At the same time she made the old woman bring a little box, Whence she took out the necklace and ear-rings, which she put within the grasp of this incorruptible minister. Though he was much such a judge of jewellery as myself, he had no doubt of the drops being real, as well as the pearls. Hiese trinkets, said he, after having looked at them minutely, seem to be of good quality and fashion: and if the silver candlestick is thrown into the bargain, I would not answer for my own honesty. You had better not, said I in my turn to Camilla, for a trifle, reject so moderate and fair a composition. While uttering these words, I returned the taper to the old woman, and handed the candlestick over to Fabricio, who, stopping there because perhaps he espied nothing else that was portable in the room, said to the two women: Farewell, my dainty misses; set your hearts at rest, I will report you to his worship the corregidor, as purer than unsmutched snow. We can turn him round our finger; and never tell him the truth, but when we are not paid for our lies.

CHAPTER V.

Sequel of the foregoing adventure. Gil Blas retires from practice, and from the neighbourhood of Valladolid.

AFTER having thus carried Fabricio's plan into effect, we took our leave of Camilla's lodging, hugging ourselves on a success beyond our expectation ; for we had only reckoned on the ring. We carried off without ceremony all we could get besides. Far from making it a point of conscience not to steal from a description of ladies, whose names are commonly associated with rogues, we thought to cover some scores of other sins by so meritorious an action. Gentlemen, said Fabricio, when we were in the street, my counsel is for returning to our tavern, and devoting the night to a regale. To-morrow we will sell the candlestick, the necklace, the drop ear-rings, and then share the prize-money like brother adventurers, after which every man shall tramp home again, and make the best excuse he can to his master. His worship the alguazil's idea seemed equally bright and judicious. We returned rank and file to the tavern, some in the pious hope of finding a plausible excuse for having slept abroad, others in a

desperate indifference about being turned out of doors without a character.

We ordered a good supper to be got ready, and sat down to table with our physical and mental powers in full vigour. The relish was heightened by a thousand pleasant anecdotes. Fabricio, of all men in the world, having the happy knack of a chairman in a company of jovial spirits, kept the table in a roar. There escaped from him I know not how many charges of true Castilian wit, worth more either in the schools of philosophy or the exchange of commerce than the drug of Attic salt. While we were in a full peal of laughter, we were made to laugh on the other side of our mouths by an unforeseen occurrence. There appeared at table a man of no contemptible prowess, followed by two other as ill-looking dogs as ever existed. After this specimen we had three others, and reckoned up to a dozen, marching in by triplets. They were armed with carbines, swords and bayonets. We could not mistake their office, and were at no loss to guess their business. At first we had a mind to be refractory; but they beset us in an instant, and kept us under, as much by their numbers as by their weapons. Gentlemen, said the captain commandant in a jeering strain, I have been informed by what ingenious artifice you have recovered a ring from the custody of a lady no better than she should be. Undoubtedly, the device was admirable, and well deserves a

civic crown: the patriotism of our police will not be found wanting. Justice, with her lodgings to let for gentry of your description, will not be deficient in her acknowledgments for so brilliant a display of genius. The company to whom this introductory address was directed, looked a little sheepish on the occasion. Our countenances fell; and Camilla had her full revenge. Fabricio however, though pale and puzzled, made an attempt at a defence. Sir, said he, we did it in the innocence of our hearts, and of course we shall be forgiven this not immoral fraud. What the devil, replied the commandant in a rage, do you call this a not immoral fraud? Moral or immoral, it may bring you to the gallows. Besides that the power of restitution is too sacred to be assumed by the individual, you have made away with a candlestick, a necklace, and a pair of drop ear-rings: and what is worse, you have committed your rascalities in the livery of the law. Scoundrels dressing themselves up like the pillars of morality to undermine its very foundation! I shall wish you much joy if you are condemned to nothing worse than mowing the salt marsh. When he had impressed it on our convictions that the affair was even more serious than our first fears, we threw ourselves on his mercy, and implored him to have pity on our tender years; but his stubborn heart was relentless. He rejected moreover the proposal of relinquishing the necklace, ear-rings and candlestick; nay, he was

deaf to the rhetoric of my ring; perhaps because I offered it before too many witnesses: in short, he was the most obdurate dog of his kennel. He ordered my companions to be handcuffed, and sent us in a body to the public prison. As we were on our way, one of the marshalmen acquainted me that Camilla's old vixen, suspecting us not to be licensed scouts of justice, had dogged us to the tavern; and having satisfied her doubts, in revenge informed against us to the patrol.

We were searched in the first instance. Away went the necklace, the ear-rings and the candlestick. They picked my pocket of my ring, and my ruby of the Philippine isles; without even sparing the few fees I had received in the forenoon for my prescriptions: so that it was plain, trade was carried on by the same firm at Valladolid as at Astorga, and that all these reformers held the same creed. While they rifled me of my trinkets and money, the lord in waiting of the patrol made known our adventure to the inferior agents of legal rapine. The trespass appeared so audacious, that the majority voted it capital. A few kind souls were of opinion, that we might come off for two hundred lashes a piece, with a few years on board the galleys. Waiting his worship's sentence, we were locked up in a cell, where we lay upon straw, spread over our stable like a litter for horses. There might we have foddered for an age, and at last have been turned out to grass in the

galleys, if on the morrow, signor Manuel Ordonez had not got wind of our affair, and determined to release Fabricio; which he could not do without making a general gaol delivery. He was a man of the first credit in the town : his interest was exerted for us ; and partly by his own influence, and partly by that of his friends, he obtained our enlargement at the end of three days. But the period of delivery is always moulting-time with gaol birds: the candlestick, the necklace, the ear-rings, my ring and the ruby, all was left behind. One could not help repeating those excellent lines of Virgil, beginning with *Sic vos non vobis*.

As soon as we were at liberty, we returned to our masters. Doctor Sangrado received me kindly: My poor Gil Blas, said he, it was but this morning I was acquainted with thy misfortune. I was just setting about an active canvass for thee. We must derive comfort from adversity, my friend, and attach ourselves more than ever to the practice of physic. I affirmed that to be my intention; and in truth I laid about me. Far from wanting employment, it happened by a kind providence, as my master had foretold, to be a very sickly season. The smallpox and a malignant fever took alternate possession of the town and the suburbs. All the physicians in Valladolid had their share of business, and we not the least. We saw eight or ten patients a day; so that the kettle was kept on the simmer, and the blood in

the action of transpiring. But things will happen cross; they died to a man, either by our fault or their own. If their case was hopeless, we were not to blame; and if it was not hopeless, they were. Three visits to a patient was the length of our tether. About the second, we sometimes ran foul of the undertaker; or when we had been more fortunate than usual, the patient had got no further than the point of death. As I was but a young physician, not yet hardened to the trade of an assassin, I grieved over the melancholy issue of my own theory and practice. Sir, said I, one evening to doctor Sangrado, I call heaven to witness on the spot that I have never strayed from your infallible method; and yet I have never saved a patient: one would think they died out of spite, and were on the other side of the great medical question. This very day I came across two of them, going into the country to be buried. My good lad, replied he, my experience nearly comes to the same point. It is but seldom I have the pleasure of curing my kind and partial friends. If I had less confidence in my principles, I should think my prescriptions had set their faces against the work they were intended to perform. If you will take a hint, sir, replied I, we had better vary our system. Let us give, by way of experiment, chemical preparations to our patients: the worst they can do is to tread in the steps of our pure dilutions and our phlebotomizing evacuations. I would willingly give it a trial,

rejoined he, if it were a matter of indifference; but I have published on the practice of bleeding and the use of drenches : would you have me cut the throat of my own fame as an author ? Oh ! you are in the right, resumed I; our enemies must not gain this triumph over us : they would say that you were out of conceit with your own systems; and would ruin your reputation for consistency. Perish the people, perish rather our nobility and clergy! But let us go on in the old path. After all, our brethren of the faculty with all their tenderness about bleeding, have no patent for longevity any more than ourselves ; and we may set off their drugs against our specifics.

We went on working double tides, and did so much execution, that in less than six weeks we made as many widows and orphans as the siege of Troy. The plague must have got into Valladolid, by the number of funerals. Day after day came some father or other to know what was become of his son, who was seen last in our hands, or else a stupid fellow of an uncle, who had a foolish hankering after a deceased nephew. With respect to the nephews and the sons, on whose uncles and fathers we had equalized our system of destruction, they thought that least said was soonest mended. Husbands were altogether on their good behaviour: they would not split a hair about the loss of a wife or two. The real sufferers to whose reproaches we were exposed, were

sometimes quite savage in their grief; without being mealy mouthed in their expressions, they called us blockheads and assassins. I was concerned at their bad language; but my master, who was up to every circumstance, listened to their abuse with the utmost indifference. Yet I might have grown as callous as himself, to popular reproach, if heaven, interposing its shield between the invalids of Valladolid and one of their scourges, had not providently raised up an incident to disgust me with medicine, which from the outset had been disgusted with me.

The idle fellows about town assembled every day in our neighbourhood for a game at tennis. Among the number was one of those professed bullies, who set up for great dons, and are the complete cocks of the tennis-court. He was a Biscayan, and assumed the title of don Roderic de Mondragon. His age might be about thirty. His size was somewhat above the common; but he was lean and bony. Besides two sparkling little eyes, rolling about in his head, and throwing out defiance against all bystanders, a very broad nose came in between a pair of red whiskers, which turned up like a hook as high as the temples. His phraseology was so rough and uncouth, that the very sound of his voice would throw a quiet man into an ague. This tyrant over both the rackets and the game was lord paramount in all disputes between the players; and there was no appeal from his decisions, but at the risk of receiving

a challenge the next day. Precisely as I have drawn signor don Roderic, whom the don in the foreground of his titles could never make a gentleman, signoi don Roderic was sweet upon the mistress of the tennis-court. She was a woman of forty, in good circumstances, as charming as forty can well be, just entering on the second year of her widowhood. I know not how he made himself agreeable : certainly not by his exterior recommendations ; but probably by that within which passeth shew. However that might be, she took a fancy to him, and began to turn her thoughts towards the holy state of matrimony : but while that great event was in agitation, for the punishment of her sins, she was taken with a malignant fever, and with me for her physician. Had the disorder been ever so slight, my practice would have made a serious job of it. At the expiration of four days, there was not a dry eye in the tennis-court. The mistress joined the outward bound colony of my patients, and her family administered to her effects. Don Roderic, distracted at the loss of his mistress, or rather disappointed of a good establishment, was not satisfied with fretting and fuming at me: but swore he would run me through the body, or even frown me into a non-entity. A good-natured neighbour apprized me of this vow, with a caution to keep at home, for fear of coming across this devil of a fellow. This warning, though taken in good part, was a source of anxiety and apprehension. I was

eternally fancying the enraged Biscayan laying siege to the out-works of my citadel. There was no getting a moment's respite from alarm. This circumstance weaned me from the practice of medicine, and I thought of nothing but deliverance from my horrors. On went my embroidered suit once more. Taking leave of my master, who did all he could to detain me, I got out of town with the dawn, not heedless of that terrible don Roderic, who might waylay me on the road.

CHAPTER VI.

His route from Valladolid, with a description of his fellow-traveller.

I TRUDGED on at a great rate, and looked behind from time to time, to see if that dreadful Biscayan was not following me. My imagination was so engrossed by the fellow, that he haunted me in every tree and bush: my heart was in my mouth for fear at every foot-fall. But I took courage again at the distance of about a league, and went on more gently towards Madrid, whither I proposed directing my steps. I had no attachment to Valladolid. All my regret was at tearing myself from Fabricio, my dear Pylades, of whom I had not so much as taken my leave. It was no grievance to give up physic; on the contrary, I prayed heaven to forgive me for having tampered with it. Yet I did not count over the contents of my purse with less pleasure, because they were the wages of murder. In this I took after those ladies, who retire with a fortune to lead pious lives, and think it hard if they may not fatten religiously on the hard earnings of their libertine profession. I had, in rials, somewhere about the value of five ducats: and this was the sum total of my property. With these I designed repairing to

Madrid, where I had no doubt of finding a good service. Besides, I wished above all things to be in that magnificent city, the boasted epitome of the world and all its wonders.

While I was recollecting what I had heard of it, and enjoying beforehand the pleasures it affords, I heard the voice of a man coming after me, and singing till he had scraped his throat. He had a wallet on his back, a guitar suspended from his neck, and a long sword by his side. He got on at such a rate, as soon to overtake me. Who should [it.be](#) but one of the two journeymen barbers with whom I had been in gaol for the adventure of the ring. We knew one another at once, though we had shifted our dresses, and were in a thousand marvels at meeting so unexpectedly on the highway. If I testified my delight at having such a fellow-traveller, he seemed on his side to feel an excess of rapture at the renewal of our acquaintance. I told him why I had left Valladolid, and he trusted his own secret to me in return, by stating himself to have had a little brush with his master, on which they had taken an everlasting leave of one another. Had it been my pleasure, continued he, to take up my abode longer in Valladolid, ten shops would have taken me in for one that would have turned me out; since, vanity apart, I may safely say there is not a barber in all Spain better qualified to shave all sorts of beards, with the grain or against the grain, and to curl a

pair of whiskers. But I could no longer fight against a hankering after my native place, whence I departed full ten years since. I wish to inhale a little of my own country air, and to learn the present situation of my family. I shall be among them the day after to-morrow, at a place called Olmedo, a populous village on this side of Segovia.

I resolved on accompanying this barber home, and going to Segovia for the chance of a cast to Madrid. We began entertaining one another with indifferent subjects, as we went along. The young fellow was perfectly good humoured, with a ready wit. After an hour's conversation, he asked me if I was hungry. I referred him to the first house of call for my answer. To stop dilapidations till we get there, said he, we may renew our term by a little breakfast from my wallet. When I am on a journey, I am always my own caterer. None of your woollen drapery, nor linen drapeiy, nor any of your frippery or trumpery. I hate ostentation. My wallet contains nothing but a little exercise for my grinders, my razors, and a wash-ball. I extolled his discretion, and agreed with all my heart to the bargain he proposed. My appetite was keen, and sharp set for a comfortable meal: after what he had said, I could expect no less. We drew aside a little from the high road, and sat down upon the grass. There, my little journeyman barber laid out his provisions, consisting of five or six onions, with some scraps of bread and

cheese: but the best lot in the auction was a little leathern bottle, full as he said, of choice, delicate wine. Though the solids were not very relishing, the calls of hunger did not allow either of us to be dainty; and we emptied the bottle too, containing about two pints of a wine one could not recommend without some remorse of conscience. We then rose from table, and set out again on the tramp in high glee. The barber, who had heard some little snatches of my story from Fabricio, entreated me to furnish him with the whole from the best authority. It was impossible to refuse so munificent an host: I therefore gave him the satisfaction he lequired. In my turn I called on him, as an acknowledgment of my frankness, to communicate the leading circumstances of his terrestrial peregrinations. Oh! as for my adventures, exclaimed he, they are scarcely worth recording: a mere catalogue of common occurrences. Nevertheless, since we have nothing else to do, I will run over the narrative, such as it is. At the same time, he entered on the recital nearly in the following terms.

CHAPTER VII.

The journeyman barber's story.

I TAKE up my tale from the origin of things. My grandfather, Ferdinand Perez de la Fuente, barber-general to the village of Olmedo for fifty years, died leaving four sons. The eldest, Nicholas, succeeded to the shop, and lathered himself into the good graces of the customers. Bertrand, the next, having taken a fancy to trade, set up for a mercer; and Thomas, who was the third, turned schoolmaster. As for the fourth, by name Pedro, feeling within himself the high destinies of learning, he sold a dirty acre or two which fell to his share, and went to settle at Madrid, where he hoped one day to distinguish himself by his genius and erudition. The other three brothers would not part: they fixed their quarters at Olmedo, marrying peasants' daughters, who brought their husbands very little dowry, except an annual present of a chopping young rustic. They had a most public-spirited emulation in child-bearing. My mother, the barber's wife, favoured the world with a contribution of six within the first five years of her marriage. I was among the number. My father initiated me betimes in the mysteries of shaving; and when he saw me grown up to the age of *fifteen*,

laid this wallet across my shoulders, presented me with a long sword, and said : Go, Diego; you are now qualified to gain your own livelihood; go and travel about. You want a little acquaintance with the world to give you a polish, and improve you in your art. Off with you! and do not return to Olmedo till you have made the tour of Spain; nor let me hear of you till that is accomplished. Finishing with this injunction, he embraced me with fatherly affection, and shoved me out of doors by the shoulders.

Such were the parting benedictions of my sire. As for my mother, who had more the touch of nature in her manners, she seemed to feel somewhat at my departure. She dropped a few tears, and even slipped a ducat by stealth into my hand. Thus was I sent from Olmedo into the wide world, and took the road of Segovia. I did not go two hundred yards without stopping to examine my bag. I had a mind to view its contents, and to know the precise amount of my possessions. There I found a case with two razors, which must have travelled post over the chins of ten generations, by the evidence of their wear and tear, with a strap to set them, and a bit of soap. In addition to this, a coarse shirt quite new, a pair of my father's shoes quite old, and, what rejoiced me more than all the rest, a rouleau of twenty rials in a Hnen rag. Behold the sum total of my personals. You may conclude master Nicholas the barber to

have reckoned a good deal on my ingenuity, by his turning me adrift, with so slender a provision. Yet a ducat and twenty rials, by way of fortune, was enough to turn the head of a young man, unaccustomed to money concerns. I fancied my stock of cash inexhaustible ; and pursued my journey in the sunshine of brilliant anticipation, looking from time to time at the hilt of my rapier, while the blade was striking against the calf of my leg at every step, or tripping up my heels.

In the evening I reached the village of Ataquines, with a very catholic stomach. I put up at the inn ; and, as if I meant to spend freely, asked, *in* a lofty tone, what there was for supper. The landlord examined my pretensions with his eye; and, finding according to what cloth my coat was cut, said with true publican's civility: Yes, yes, my worthy master, you shall have no reason to complain; we will treat you like a lord. With this assurance, he shewed me into a little room, whither he brought me, a quarter of an hour afterwards, a ragout made of a great he-cat, on which I feasted with as famous an appetite as if it had been hare or rabbit. This excellent dish was washed down by so choice a wine, that the king had no better in his cellars. I found out however that it was pricked; but that was no hindrance to my doing it as much honour as the he-cat. The last article in this entertainment for a lord was a bed better adapted to drive sleep away than to

invite it. Figure it to yourself about the width of a coffin, and so short that I could not stretch my legs, though none of the longest. Besides, there was neither mattress nor feather-bed, but merely a little straw, sewed up in a sheet folded double, which was laid down clean for every hundredth traveller, and served the other ninety-nine, one after another without washing. Nevertheless, in such a bed, with a stomach distended to a surfeit by fricaseed cat, and then raked by sour wine, thanks to youth and a good constitution, I slept soundly, and passed the night without being disturbed.

On the following day, when I had breakfasted, and paid the reckoning as I had been treated, like a lord, I made but one stage to Segovia. On my arrival, I had the good fortune to find a shop, where they took me in for my board and lodging; but I staid there only six months : a journeyman barber, with whom I got acquainted, was going to Madrid, and drew me in to set off with him. I had no difficulty in procuring a situation on the same footing as at Segovia. I got into a shop of the very best custom. It is true, it was near the church of the Holy Cross, and that the neighbourhood of the Prince's Theatre brought a great deal of business. My master, two stirring fellows and myself, could scarcely lather the chins of the people who came to be shaved. They were of all trades and conditions; among the rest, players and authors. One day, two

persons of the last description happened to meet. They began conversing about the poets and pieces in vogue, when one of them mentioned my uncle's name: a circumstance which drew my attention more particularly to their discourse. Don Juan de Zavalata, said one, will never do any good as an author. A man of a cold genius, without a spark of fancy! he has written himself down at a terrible rate by his last publication. And Louis Velez de Guevara, said the other, what has he done? A fine work to bring before the public! Was there ever any thing so wretched? They mentioned I know not how many poets besides whose names I have forgotten: I only recollect that they said no good of them. As for my uncle, they made a more honourable mention of him, agreeing that he was a personage of merit. Yes, said one, don Pedro de la Fuente is an excellent author: there is a sly humour in his compositions, blended with solid sense, which communicates an attic poignancy to their general effect. I am not surprised at his popularity both in court and city, nor at the pensions settled on him by the great. For many years past, said the other, he has enjoyed a very large income. He lives at the duke de Medina Celi's table, and has an apartment in his house: so that he is at no expense: he must be very well in the world.

I lost not a syllable of what these poets were saying about my uncle. We had learnt in the

family, that he made a noise in Madrid by his works: some travellers, passing through Olmedo, had told us so; but as he took no notice of us, and seemed to have weaned himself from all natural ties, we on our side lived in a state of perfect indifference about him. Yet nature will prevail: as soon as I had heard that he was in a fair way, and had learned where he lived, I was tempted to go and call upon him. One thing staggered me a little : the literati had styled him don Pedro. This don was an awkward circumstance: I had my doubts whether he might not be some other poet of the name, and not my uncle. Yet that apprehension did not damp my ardour. I thought he might have been ennobled for his wit, and determined to pay him a visit. For this purpose, with my master's leave, I tricked myself out one morning as well as I could, and sallied from our shop, a little proud of being nephew to a man who had gained so high a character by his genius. Barbers are not the most diffident people in the world. I began to conceive no mean opinion of myself; and riding the high horse with all the arrogance of greatness, enquired my way to the duke de Medina Cell's palace. I rang at the gate, and said, I wanted to speak with signor don Pedro de la Fuente. The porter pointed with his finger to a narrow staircase at the fag end of the court, and answered: Go up there, then knock at the first door on your right. I did as he directed me; and knocked

at a door. It was opened by a young man, whom I asked if those were the apartments of signor don Pedro de la Fuente. Yes, answered he; but you cannot speak to him at present. I should be very glad, said I, just to say, How are you? I bring him news of his family. An you brought him news of the pope, replied he, I could not introduce you just now. He is writing; and while his wits are at work, he must not be disturbed. He will not be able to receive company till noon: take a turn, and come back about that time.

I departed, and walked about town all the morning, incessantly meditating on the reception my uncle would give me. I think, said I within myself, he will be overjoyed to see me. I measured his feelings by my own, and prepared myself for a very affecting discovery. I returned punctually to the appointed hour. You are just in time, said the servant; my master was going out. Wait here a moment: I will announce you. With these words, he left me in the anti-chamber. He returned almost immediately, and shewed me into his master's room. The face struck me all at once as a family likeness. To be sure he was the very image of my uncle Thomas; they might have been taken for twins. I bowed down to the ground, and introduced myself as the son of master Nicholas de la Fuente, the barber of Olmedo. I likewise informed him, that I had been working at my father's trade in Madrid,

for these three weeks, as a journeyman, and intended making the tour of Spain to complete my education. While I was speaking, my uncle was evidently in a brown study. He seemed to doubt whether he should disown me at once, or get rid of me with some little sacrifice to decency. The latter course he adopted. Affecting the affable: Well, my good kinsman, how are your father and your uneles ? Do they get on in the world ? I began thereupon by laying before him the family knack at propagation. All the children, male and female, called over by their names, with their godfathers and godmothers included in the list ! He took no extravagant interest in the particulars of my tale ; but leading to his own purposes, Diego, replied he, I am quite of your mind. You should go from place to place, and see a variety of practice. I would not have you tarry longer at Madrid : it is a very dangerous residence for youth ; you may get into bad habits, my sweet fellow. Other towns will suit you better : the state of society in the provinces is more patriarchal and philosophical. Determine on emigration ; and when your departure is fixed, come and take your leave. I will contribute a pistole to the tour of Spain. With this kind assurance, he handed me out of the room, and sent me packing.

I had not worldly wisdom enough to find out that he wanted to get quit of me. I went back to our shop, and gave my master an account of the visit I

had paid. He looked no deeper than myself into signor don Pedro's motives, and observed: I cannot help differing from your worthy uncle ; so far from advising you to travel the provinces, the real thing would be, in my opinion, to give you a comfortable settlement in this city. He is hand in glove with the first people: it is an easy matter for him to establish you in a great family; and that is a fortune at once. Struck with this lucky discovery, which seemed to settle the point without difficulty, I called on my uncle again two days afterwards, and made a modest proposal to him for a situation about some leading character at court. But the hint was not taken kindly. A proud man, living at free quarters among the great, and dining with them in a family party, did not exactly wish that, while he was sitting at my lord's table, his nephew should be a guest in the servant's hall. Little Diego might bring a scandal on signor don Pedro. He had no hesitation therefore in fairly turning me out of doors, and that with a flea in my ear. What, you little rascal, said he in a fit of extravagance, do you mean to relinquish your calling ? Begone: I consign you to the reptile whose pernicious counsels will be your ruin. Take your leave of these premises, and never set your foot on them again, or you shall have the reception you deserve! I was absolutely stunned at this language, and still more at the peremptory tone my uncle assumed. With tears in my eyes I withdrew, quite.

overcome by his severity. Yet, as I had always been lively and confident in my temper, I soon wiped away my tears. My grief was even turned into resentment, and I determined to take no further notice of this unnatural relative, whose kind offices I had hitherto been contented to want.

My attention was henceforth directed to the cultivation of my professional talent: I was quite a plodding fellow at my trade. I scraped away all day; and in the evening, by way of relief to my scraping, I twanged the guitar. My master on that instrument was an old *Senor Escudei*^o whom I shaved. He taught me music in return; and he was an adept. To be sure he had formerly been a chorister in a cathedral. His name was Marcos de Obregon. He was a man of the world, with good natural parts and acquired knowledge, which jointly induced him to fix on me as an adopted son. He was engaged as an attendant on a physician's lady, resident within thirty yards of our house. I went to him in the evening, when shop was shut, and we two, sitting on the threshold of the door, made up a little concert not displeasing to the neighbourhood. It was not that our voices were very fine; but in thrumming on the catgut, we made a pretty regular accompaniment to our duet, and filled up the harmony sufficiently for the gratification of our hearers. Our music was particularly agreeable to donna Mergelina, the physician's wife; she came into the passage to hear us,

and sometimes encored us in her favourite airs. Her husband did not interfere with her amusement. Though a Spaniard and in years, he was not possessed with jealousy: besides, his profession took up all his time; and as he came home in the evening, worn out with his numerous visits, he went to bed at an early hour, without troubling himself about his wife or our concerts. Possibly, if he thought about them at all, he might consider them as little likely to produce dangerous consequences. He had an additional security in his wife. Mergelina was young and handsome with a witness; but of so fierce a modesty, that she started at the very shadow of a man. How could he take umbrage at an amusement of so harmless and decorous a nature? He gave us leave to sing our hearts out.

One evening, as I came to the physician's door, intending to take my usual recreation, I found the old squire waiting for me. He took me by the hand; saying that he wished to take a little walk with me, before we struck up our little concert. At the same time he drew me aside into a by-street, where, finding an opportunity of opening his mind: Diego, my good lad, said he with a melancholy air, I want to give you an hint in private. I much fear, my good and amiable youth, that we shall both have reason to repent of beguiling our evenings with little musical parties at my master's door. Rely on my sincere friendship : I do not grudge your lessons in singing

and on the guitar; but if I could have foreseen the storm now brewing, in the name of charity! I would have selected some other spot to communicate my instructions. This address alarmed me. I entreated the gentle squire to be more explicit, and to tell me what we had to fear; for I was no Hector, and the tour of Spain was not yet finished. I will relate to you, replied he, what it concerns you to know, that you may take proper measure of our present danger.

When I got into the service of the physician, about a year ago, he said one morning, after having introduced me to his wife: There, Marcos, you see your mistress; that is the lady you are to accompany in all her peregrinations. I was smitten with donna Mergelina: she was lovely in the extreme, a model for an artist, and her principal attraction was the pleasantness of her deportment. Honoured sir, replied I to the physician, it is too great a happiness to be in the train of so charming a lady. My answer was taken amiss by Mergelina, who said rather crustily, A pleasant gentleman this! He is perfectly free and easy. Believe me! His fine speeches may go a begging for me. These words, dropped from such lovely lips, seemed rather inconsistent; the manners and ideas of bumpkins and dairy-maids coupled with all the graces of the most lovely woman in the world! As for her husband, he was used to her ways; and, hugging himself on the unrivalled character of his rib, Marcos, said he, my wife is a miracle of chastity. Then,

observing her put on her veil, and make herself ready to go to mass, he told me to attend on her at church. We were no sooner in the street than we met, and it was no wonder, blades who, struck with donna Mergelina's genteel carriage, told her a thousand flattering tales as they passed by. She was not backward in her answers; but silly and ill-timed, beyond what you can conceive. They were all in amaze, and could not imagine how a woman should take it amiss to be complimented. Why really! madam, said I to her at first, you had better be silent, or shut your ears to their addresses, than reply with asperity. No, no, replied she: I will teach these coxcombs, that I am not a woman to put up with impertinence. In short, her absurdity went so far, that I could not help telling her my mind, at the hazard of her displeasure. I gave her to understand, yet with the greatest possible caution, that she was unjust to nature, whose handiwork she marred by her preposterous ferocity; that a woman of mild and polished manners might inspire love without the aid of beauty; whereas the loveliest of the sex, divested of female softness, was in danger of becoming the public scorn. To this ratiocination, I added collateral arguments, always directed to the amendment of her manners. After having moralized to no purpose, I was afraid my freedom might exasperate my mistress, and draw upon me some taunting repartee. Nevertheless she did

not mutiny against my advice; but silently rendered it of no avail, and thus we went on from day to day.

I was weary of pointing out her errors to no purpose, and gave her up to the ferocious temperament of her nature. Yet, could you think it? the savage humour of that proud woman is entirely changed within these two months. She has a kind word for all the world, and manners the most accommodating. It is no longer the same Mergelina who gave such homely answers to the compliments of her swains: she is become assailable by flattery; loves to be told she is handsome, that a man cannot look at her without paying for it: her ears itch for fine speeches, and she is become a very woman. Such a change is almost inconceivable: and the best of the joke is, that you are the worker of this unparalleled miracle. Yes, my dear Diego, it is you who have transformed donna Mergelina; you have softened down the tigress into a domestic animal; in a word, you have made her feel. I have observed it more than once; and never trust my knowledge of the sex, if she is not desperately in love with you. Such, my dear boy, is the melancholy news I have to communicate, the awkward predicament in which we stand.

I do not see, said I in my turn to the old man, that there is any thing so melancholy in this accident, or any peculiar awkwardness in being the object of a pretty woman's partiality. Ah! Diego, replied he,

you argue like a young man: you only see the bait, without guarding against the hook: pleasure is your lure; while my thoughts are directed to the unpleasant circumstances attending it. Murder will out. If you go on singing at our door, you will provoke Mergehna's passion; and she probably, losing all command over herself, will betray her weakness to her husband, doctor Oloroso. That wretched husband, so complying now that he thinks there is no ground for jealousy, will run wild, take signal vengeance upon her, and perhaps play some dog's trick or other to you and me. Well then! rejoined I, your reasons shall be conclusive with me, and your sage counsels my rule. Lay down the line of conduct I am to adopt, for the prevention of any left-handed catastrophe. We will have no more concerts, was his peremptory decree. Do not shew yourself any more to my mistress: when the sight of you does not inflame her, she will recover her composure. Stay within doors: I will call in upon you, and we will torture the guitar with impunity. With all my heart, said I, and I will never set my foot again in your premises. In good truth, I was determined to serenade no longer before the physician's door, but henceforth to keep within the precincts of my shop, since my attractions as a man were so formidable.

In the mean time, good squire Marcos, with all his prudence, experienced in the course of a few days, that the plan he had devised to quench donna Mer-

gelina's flame produced a directly opposite effect. The lady, on the second night, not hearing me sing, asked why we had discontinued our concerts, and the reason of my absence. He told her I was so busy, as not to have a moment to spare for relaxation. She seemed satisfied with that excuse, and for three days longer bore the disappointment of all her hopes like an heroine; but at the end of that period, my martyr to the tender passion lost all patience, and said to her conductor: You are playing false with me, Marcos; Diego has not discontinued his visits without a cause. This mystery must be unravelled. Speak, I command you: conceal nothing from me. Madame, answered he, making use of another subterfuge, since the truth must be told, it has often happened to him, to find the cloth taken away at home, after the concert: he cannot run the risk any longer of going to bed without his supper. What, without his supper! exclaimed she in an agony, why did not you tell me so sooner? Go to bed without his supper! Oh! the poor little sufferer! Go to him this instant, and let him come again this evening; he shall not go home starving any more: there shall always be a luncheon for him.

What do I hear? said the squire, affecting astonishment at this language: oh heaven, what a reverse *I* Is this you, madam, and are these your sentiments? Well-a-day! Since when are you so compassionate and tender-hearted? Since, replied

she significantly, since you have lived in this house, or rather since you disapproved my disdainful manners, and have laboured to soften the acrimony of my temper. But, alas! added she, in a melting mood, I have gone from one extreme to the other. Proud and insensible as I was, I am become too susceptible, too tender. I am enamoured of your young friend Diego, and I cannot help myself: his absence, far from allaying my ardour, only adds fuel to the fire. Is it possible, resumed the old man, that a young fellow with neither face nor person should have inspired so strong a passion? I could make allowance for your feelings, if they had been set afloat by some nobleman of distinguished merit . . . Ah! Marcos, interrupted Mergelina, I am not like the rest of my sex; or rather, spite of your long experience, your penetration is but shallow, if you fancy merit to have much share in our choice. Judging by myself, we all leap before we look. Love is a mental derangement, forcibly drawing all our views and attachments into one vortex: a species of hydrophobia. Have done then with your hints, that Diego is not worthy of my tenderness; that he has it is enough, to invest him with a thousand perfections too setherial for your gross sight, and perhaps too unsubstantial for any but a lover's perception. In vain you disparage his features or his stature: in my eyes, he was created to undo, and encircled by the hand of nature with the glories of the opening day.

Nay more; there is a thrilling sweetness in his voice; his touch on the guitar has the taste of an amateur, and the execution of a professor. But, madam, subjoined Marcos, do you consider who Diego is? The meanness of his station . . . My own is very little better, interrupted she again; though, were I of noble birth, it would make no difference in my sensations.

The result of that conference was that the squire, concluding he should make no impression on the mind of his mistress, gave over struggling with her obstinacy, as a skilful pilot runs before the storm, though it carries him out to sea from his intended port. He did more: to satisfy his patroness, he paid me a visit, took me aside; and after having related what had passed between them: You see, Diego, said he, that we cannot dispense with the performance of our concerts at Mergelina's door. Absolutely, my friend, that lady must see you again; otherwise she may commit some act of desperation, fatal to her good name. I was not inexorable: but answered Marcos that I would attend with my guitar early in the evening; and dispatched him to his mistress with the happy tidings. He executed his office; and the impassioned dame was out of her wits with joy, in the delicious prospect of hearing and seeing me in a few hours.

A most disagreeable circumstance, however, was very near disappointing her in that hope. I could

not leave home before night; and, for my sins, it was dark as pitch. I went groping along the street, and had got, may be, half way, when down from a window came upon my head the contents of a perfuming pan, which did not tickle my olfactory nerves very pleasantly. I may say that not a whiff was wasted, so exactly had the giver taken measure of the receiver. In this situation, I was at a loss on what to resolve: to go back the way I came, what an exhibition before my comrades! It was surrendering myself to all their nasty witticisms. Then again, to go to Mergeлина in such a glorious trim, that hurt my feelings on the other side. I determined, at length, to get on towards the physician's. The old usher was waiting for me at the door. He said that doctor Oloroso was gone to bed, and we might amuse ourselves as we liked. I answered, that the first thing was to purify my drapery; at the same time relating my misfortune. He seemed to feel for me, and shewed me into a hall where his mistress was sitting. As soon as the lady got wind of my adventure, and had confirmed the testimony of her nose by the evidence of her eyes, she mourned over me as grievously as if my miseries had been mortal; then, apostrophising the absent cause of my foul array, she uttered a thousand imprecations. Well but, madam! said Marcos, do moderate this ecstasy of grief; consider that such casualties will happen; there is no occasion to take on so bitterly. Why, exclaimed she with vehemence,

why would you debar me from the privilege of weeping over the injuries of this tender lamb, this dove without gall, who does not so much as murmur at the affront he has sustained? Alas! why am I not a man at this moment to avenge him!

She uttered numberless soothing expressions besides, to mark distinctly the excess of her devotion; and her actions corresponded with her words: for while Marcos was employed in wiping me down with a towel, she ran into her chamber, and brought out a box furnished with every variety of perfumes. She burned sweet-smelling drugs, and perfumed my ciQthes with them; after which she drenched me in a deluge of essences. The fumigation and aspersion ended, this bountiful lady went herself, and fetched from the kitchen bread, wine, and some good slices of roast mutton, set by on purpose for me. She forced me to eat; and taking a pleasure in waiting on me, sometimes carved for me, and sometimes filled my glass, in spite of all that Marcos and myself could do to anticipate her condescension. When I had done supper, the gentlemen of the orchestra struck the key note, and tuned their sweet voices to the pitch of their guitars. We played and sung to the heart's delight of Mergelina. To be sure, we took care to carol none but amorous ditties; and, as we sung, I every now and then leered at her with such a roguish meaning, as to throw oil upon the tire; for the game began to be interesting. The concert,

though the acts were long, was not tedious. As *for* the lady, to whom hours seemed to fly like seconds, she could have been content to exhaust the night in listening, if the old squire, with whom the seconds seemed to lag like hours, had not hinted how late it was. She gave him the trouble of enforcing his moral on the lapse of time by at least ten repetitions. But she was in the hands of a man, not to be turned aside from his purpose; he let her have no rest till I was gone. Sensible and provident as he was, seeing his mistress given up to a mad passion, he dreaded lest our harmony should be resolved by some discord. His fears were ominous: the physician, whether his mind misgave him of some foul play, or the spirit of jealousy, hitherto on its good behaviour, had a mind to harass him gratuitously, bethought himself of quarrelling with our concerts. He did more: he put abroad negative upon them; and, without assigning his reasons for acting in this violent way, declared that he would suffer no more strangers to come about his premises.

Marcos acquainted me with this mortifying declaration, particularly levelled against my rising hopes. I had begun bobbing at this dainty cherry, and did not like to lose my game. Nevertheless, to act the part of a faithful reporter and true historian, I must own my impatience did not affect my health or spirits. Not so with Mergelina: her feelings were more **alive than** ever. My dear Marcos, said she to her usher,

it is only from you that I look for succour. Contrive, I beseech you, that I may see Diego in private. What do you require? asked the old man with a reproachful accent. I have been but too indulgent to you. I am not a person to crown your wanton wishes at the expense of my master's honour, your good fame, and my own eternal infamy; the infamy of a man, whose past life has been one continued series of faithful service and exemplary conduct. I had rather leave the family, than stay in it on such scandalous conditions. Alas! Marcos, interrupted the lady, frightened out of her wits at these last words, you wring my heart by talking in this manner. Obdurate man! Can you bear the thought of sacrificing her, who lays all her present agony to your account? Give me back my former pride, and that savage soul you have taken from me. Why am I no longer happy in my very imperfections! I might now have been at peace: but your rash counsels have robbed me of the repose I then enjoyed. You, the corrector of my manners, have tampered with my morals. . . . But why do I rave, unhappy wretch as I am? why upbraid you thus wrongfully? No, my guardian angel, you are not the fatal source of all my miseries; my evil destiny had decreed these tortures to await me. Lay not to heart, I conjure you, on my knees, these transports of a disordered imagination. Oh mercy! my passion drives me mad: have compassion on my weakness; you are my sole

support and stay; if then my life is not indifferent to you, deny me not your aid.

At these woids, her tears flowed in fresh torrents, and stifled her lugubrious accents. She took out her handkerchief, and, throwing it over her face, fell into a chair, like a person overcome by her affliction. Old Marcos, who was perhaps one of the most tractable go-betweens in the world, could no longer steel his heart against so touching a spectacle. Pierced to the quick, he even mingled his tears with those of his mistress, and spoke to her in a softened tone: Ah! madam, why are you thus bewitching! I cannot hold out against your sorrowful complaints; my virtue yields under the pressure of my pity. I promise you all the relief in my power. No longer do I marvel at the oblivious influence of passion over duty, since mere sympathy can mislead my footsteps from its thorny paths. Thus did this pander, whose past life had been one continued series of faithful service and exemplary conduct, sell himself to the devil, to feed Mergelina's illicit flame. One morning, he came and talked over the whole business with me; saying, at his departure, that he had a scheme in his head, to bring about a private interview between us. At the thought, my hopes were all re-kindled; but they glimmered tremblingly in the socket, at a piece of news I heard two hours afterwards. A journeyman apothecary in the neighbourhood, one of our customers, came in to be shaved.

While I was making ready to trim his bushy honours-, he said: Master Diego, do you know any thing about your friend, the old usher, Marcos de Obregon? Is not he going to leave doctor Oloroso? I said no. But he is though, replied he: he will get his dismissal this very day. His master and mine were talking about it just now in my hearing; and their conversation was to the following effect: Signor Apuntador, said the physician, I have a favour to beg of you. I am not easy about an old usher of mine, and should like to place my wife under the eye of a trusty, strict, and vigilant duenna. I understand you, interrupted my master. You want dame Melancia, my wife's directress, and indeed mine for the last six weeks, since I have been a widower. Though she would be very useful to me in housewifry, I give her up to you, from a paramount regard to your honour. You may rely upon her for the security of your brow: she is the phenix of the duenna tribe;—a spring-gun and a man-trap, set in the purlieus of female chastity. During twelve whole years that she was about my wife, whose youth and beauty, you know, were not without their attractions, I never saw the least semblance of manhood within my doors. No, no! By all the powers! That game was not so easily played. And yet I must let you know that the departed saint, heaven rest her soul! had in the outset a great hankering after the delights of the flesh; but dame Melancia

cast her in a new mould, and regenerated her to Virtue and self-denial. In short, such a guardian of the weaker sex is a treasure, and you will never have done thanking me for my precious gift. Hereupon the doctor expressed his rapture at the issue of the conference; and they agreed, signor Apuntador and he, on the duenna's succeeding the old usher on this very day.

This news, which I thought probable, and turned out to be true, disturbed the pleasurable ideas, just beginning to flow afresh, and renovate my soul. After dinner, Marcos completed the convulsion, by confirming the young drug-pounder's story: My dear Diego, said the good squire, I am heartily glad that doctor Oloroso has turned me *off*; it spares me a world of trouble. Besides that it hurt my feelings to be invested with the office of a spy, endless must have been the shifts and subterfuges to bring you and Mergelina together in private. We should have been rarely gravelled! Thanks to heaven, I am set free from all such perplexing cares, to say nothing of their attendant danger. On your part, my dear boy, you ought to be comforted for the loss of a few soft moments, which must have been dogged at the heels by a thousand fears and vexations. I relished Marcos' sermon well enough, because my hopes were at an end, the game was lost. I was not, it must be confessed, among the number of those **stub-feora** lovers, who bear up against every impediment;

but though I had been so, dame Melancia would have made me let go my hold. The established character of that duenna would have daunted the adventurous spirit of a knight-errant. Yet, in whatever colours this phenix of the duenna tribe might have been painted, I had reason to know, two or three days afterwards, that the physician's lady had unset the man-trap and spring-gun, and given a stop to this watch-dog of lubricity. As I was going out to shave one of our neighbours, a civil old gentlewoman stopped me in the street, and asked if my name was Diego de la Fuente. I said, Yes. That being the case, replied she, I have a little business with you. Place yourself this evening at donna Mergelina's door; and when you are there, give a signal, and you shall be let in. Vastly well! said I, what must the signal be? I can take off a cat to the life: suppose I was to mew a certain number of times? The very thing, replied this Iris of intrigue; I will carry back your answer. Your most obedient, signor Diego! Heaven protect the sweet youth! Ah! you are a pretty one! By St. Agnes, I wish I was but sweet fifteen, I would not go to market for other folks! With this hint, the old procuress waddled out of sight.

You may be sure this message put me in no small flutter. Where now was the morality of Marcos? I waited for night with impatience, and, calculating the time of doctor Oloroso's going to bed, took my

station at his door. There I set up my caterwauling, till you might hear me ever so far off, to the eternal honour of the master, who instructed me in that imitative art. A moment after, Mergelina opened the door softly with her own dear hands, and shut it again with me on the inside. We went into the hall, where our last concert had been performed. It was dimly lighted by a small lamp, which twinkled in the chimney. We sat down side by side, and began our tender parley, each of us overcome by our emotions, but with this difference; that hers were all inspired by pleasure, while mine were somewhat tainted by fear. In vain did the divinity of my adorations assure me, that we had nothing to fear from her husband. I felt the access of an ague, which unmanned my vigour. Madam, said I, how have you eluded the vigilance of your directress? After what I have heard of dame Melancia, I could not have conceived it possible for you to contrive the means of sending me any intelligence, much less of seeing me in private. Donna Mergelina smiled at this remark, and answered: You will no longer be surprised at our being together to-night, when I tell you what has passed between my duenna and me. As soon as she came to her place, my husband paid her a thousand compliments, and said to me: Mergelina, I consign you to the guidance of this wary lady, herself an abstract of all the virtues: in this, glass you may look without a blush, and array

yourself in habits of wisdom. This extraordinary personage has for these twelve years been a light to the ways of an apothecary's wife of my acquaintance; but how has she been a light to them? . . . why as ways never were enlightened before: she turned a very slippery piece of mortal flesh into a downright nun.

This panegyric, not belied by the austere mien of dame Melancia, cost me a flood of tears, and reduced me to despair. I fancied the din of eternal lectures from morning till night, and daily rebukes too harsh to be endured. In short, I laid my account in a life of wretchedness, beyond the patience of a woman. Keeping no measures in the expectation of such cruel sufferings, I said bluntly to the duenna, the moment I was alone with her: You mean, no doubt, to exercise your tyranny most wantonly on my poor person; but I cannot bear much severity, I warn you beforehand. I give you moreover fair notice, that I shall be as savage as you can be. My heart cherishes a passion, which not ail your remonstrances shall tear from it: so you may act accordingly. Watch me as closely as you please; it is hard if I cannot outwit such an old thing as you. At these taunting words, I thought this saracen in petticoats was going to give me a specimen of her discipline. But so far from it, she smoothed her brow, relaxed her surly features, and primming up her mouth into a smile, promulgated this comfortable doctrine: Your temper

charms me, and your frankness calls for a return. We must have been made for one another. Ah! lovely Mergelina, little do you fathom my character, to be deceived by the fine compliments of your husband the doctor, or by my Tartar contour! There never was a creature more fortified against moral prejudices! My inducement for getting into the service of jealous husbands is to lend myself to the enjoyments of their pretty wives. Long have I trodden the stage of life in masquerade ; and I may call myself doubly happy, in the spiritual rewards of virtue, and the temporal indulgences of the opposite side. Between ourselves, mine is the system of all mankind in the long run. Real virtue is a very expensive article: plated goods look just as well, and are within the reach of all purchasers.

Put yourself under my direction. We will make doctor Oloroso pay the piper to our dancing, or I am no duenna. By my troth, he shall go the way of signor Apuntador and all mankind. There is no reason why the forehead of a physician should be smoother than the brow of an apothecary. Poor dear Apuntador! What fun have we had with him, his wife and I! A charming woman, that wife of his! A dear little creature, open to all mankind, and prejudiced by none! Well! she is at peace, and has not left her fellow behind her! Take my word, short as her time was, she made the most of it. Let me see how many rampant chaps have been brought

to their bearings in that house, without the dear deluded husband being waked out of his evening's nap! Now, madam, you may see me in my true light; and assure yourself, whatever might be the abilities of your old usher, you will not fare the worse for going further. If he was a benefit to you, I shall be a blessing.

You may judge for yourself, Diego, continued Mergelina, how well I took it of the duenna, that she laid herself open so frankly. I had taken her virtue to be of the impenetrable cast. Look you now, how much women are liable to be scandalized. But her character of plain dealing won my heart at once. I threw my arms about her neck in a rapture, which bespoke my warm and tender feelings at the thoughts of such a mother abbess. I gave her *carte blanche* of all my private thoughts, and put in for a speedy *tete-a-tete* with your own dear self. She met me on my own ground. This very morning she engaged the old woman who spoke to you, to take the field: she is an old stager; a veteran in the service of the apothecary's wife. But the best of the joke in this comedy, added she in a paroxysm of laughter, is that Melancia, on my assurance that my husband's habit is to pass the night without stirring, is gone to bed by his side, and drones out my useless office at this moment. So much the worse, madam, said I then to Mergelina; your device is more plausible than profitable, Your husband is

very likely to wake, and discover the fraud. He will not discover any thing about it, replied she with no little urgency: set your heart at rest about that, and let not an empty fear poison the fountains of a pleasure, which ought to drown every vulgar and earthly consideration in the arms of a young lady who is yours for ever and ever.

The old doctor's help-mate, finding that her assurances had little effect upon my courage, left no stone unturned to put me in heart again; and she had so many encouraging ways with her, that a very coward must have plucked up a little. My thoughts were all with Jupiter and Alcmena; but at the very moment that the urchin Cupid, with his train of smiles and antics, was weaving a garland to compliment the crisis of our endeavours, we were stopped in our career by an importunate knocking at the street-door. In a moment, away flew love and all his covey, like game at the report of a fowling-piece. Mergelina popped me like an article of household furniture under the hall table; blew out the lamp; and, by previous agreement with her governess, in the event of so unlucky an accident, placed herself at the door of her husband's bedchamber. In the mean time, the knocking continued with reiterated violence, till the whole house resounded. The physician awoke suddenly, and called Melancia. The duenna flung herself out of bed, though the doctor, taking her for his wife, begged of her not to disturb

herself. She ran to her mistress, who, catching hold of her in the dark, began calling Melancia! and told her to go and see who was at the door. Madam, answered the directress, here I am at your service: go to bed again if you please; you shall soon know who it is. During this pailey Mergelina having undressed, got into bed to the doctor, who had not the least suspicion of the farce that was playing. To be sure the stage was darkened, and the actresses had very little occasion for a prompter; one of them was familiar with the boards, and the other wanted only a rehearsal or two to be perfect in her part.

The duenna, in her night-gown, made her appearance soon after, with a candle in her hand: Good doctor, said she to her master, have the goodness to get up. Our neighbour Fernandez de Buendia, the bookseller, is in an apoplectic fit: you are sent for; time presses. The physician got on his clothes as fast as he could, and went out. His wife, in her bed-gown, came into the hall with the duenna. They dragged me from under the table more dead than alive. You have nothing to fear, Diego, said Mergelina; put yourself in proper order. At the same time she told me how things were in two words. She had half a mind to renew our amorous intercourse; but the directress knew better. Madam, said she, your husband may possibly be too late to help the bookseller to the other world, and then he will return immediately* Besides, added she, observing me

benumbed with fright, it would be all lost labour upon this poor youth ! He is not in a condition to answer your demands. You had better send him home, and defer the debate till to-morrow evening. Donna Mergelina was sorry for the delay, as well knowing that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; and I flatter myself, she was disappointed at not putting a cuckold's nightcap on the doctor's head.

As for me, less grieved at having drawn a blank in the lottery of love, than rejoiced at getting my neck out of an halter, I returned to my master's, where I passed the remainder of the night in moralizing on the scene I had left. For some time, I was in doubt whether to keep my appointment on the following evening. I thought it was a foolish business from first to last; but the devil, who is always lurking for his prey, or rather taking possession of us as his lawful property, whispered in my ear that I should be a great fool, to pack up my alls when the prize was failing into my hands. Mergelina too with opening and unfathomable charms! The exquisite pleasures that awaited me! I determined to stick to my text; and promising myself a larger share of self-possession, took my station the next evening, at the doctor's door, between eleven and twelve, in a most spirit-stirring humour. The heavens were completely darkened; not a star to prate of my where-about. I mewed twice or thrice to give warn-

ing of my being in the street; and, as no one answered my signal, I was not satisfied with going over the old ground, but ran up and down the cat's gamut from bass to treble and from treble to bass, just as I used to sol-fa with a shepherd of Olmedo. I tuned my fundamental bass so musically, that a neighbour on his return home, taking me for one of those animals whose mewings I counterfeited, picked up an unlucky flint lying at his feet, and threw it at me with all his force, saying: The devil fetch that tom-cat! I received the blow on my head, and was so stunned for the moment, that I was very near falling backwards. I found the skin was broken. This was enough in all conscience to give me a surfeit of gallantry; so that, my passion oozing out with my blood, I made the best of my way homewards, where I rendered night hideous by my howling, and knocked all the family up. My master probed my wound, and played the true surgeon on it: he pronounced the consequences to be uncertain. He did all he could to make them certain; but flesh will heal in spite of the faculty; and there was not a scar remaining in three weeks. During all this time, I heard not a word from Mergelina. The probability is that dame Melancia, to wean her impure thoughts from me, engaged her in some better sport. However, I did not concern myself about the matter: but left Madrid to continue my tour of Spain, as soon as **I found** myself perfectly recovered.

CHAPTER VIII.

The meeting of Gil Blas and his companion with a man, soaking crusts of bread at a spring, and the particulars of their conversation.

SIGN OR Diego de la Fuente related some other adventures which had since happened to him; **but** they were so little worthy of preservation, that I shall pass them by in silence. Yet there was no getting rid of the recital, which was tedious enough: it lasted as far as Ponte de Duero. We halted in that town the remainder of the day. Our commons at the inn consisted of a vegetable soup, and a roast hare, whose genus and species we took especial pains to verify. At daybreak on the following morning we resumed our journey, after having replenished our flask with some very tolerable wine, and our wallet with some pieces of bread, and half the hare we had left at supper.

When we had gone about two leagues, we waxed hungry; and, espying at about two hundred yards from the high road some spreading trees, which threw an agreeable shade over the plain, we made up to the spot, and rested on our arms. There we met with a man from seven to eight and twenty, **who**

was dipping crusts of bread into a spring. He had a long sword lying by him on the grass, with a soldier's knapsack, of which he had eased his shoulders. We thought his air and person better than his attire. We accosted him with civility; and he returned our salutation. He then offered us his crusts, and asked with a smile, if we would take potluck with him. We answered in the affirmative, provided he had no objection to our clubbing our own breakfast, by way of making the meal more substantial. He agreed to it with the utmost readiness, and we immediately produced our provisions; which were not unacceptable to the stranger. What is all this, gentlemen, exclaimed he in a transport of joy, here is ammunition for an army! By your forecast, you must be commissaries or quartermasters. I do not travel with so much contrivance, for my part; but depend a good deal on the chances of the road. At the same time, though appearances may be against me, I can say, without vanity, that I sometimes make a very brilliant figure in the world. Would you believe that princely honours are commonly bestowed on me, and that I have guards in attendance? I comprehend you, said Diego; you mean to tell us, you are a player. You guess right, replied the other; I have been an actor for these fifteen years at least. From my very infancy, I was sent on the boards in children's parts. To deal freely, rejoined the barber, shaking his head, I do not believe a word of it. I

know the players; those gentry do not travel on foot, like you, nor do they mess with St. Anthony. I doubt whether you are any thing better than a candle-snuffer. You may, quoth the son of Thespis, think of me as you please; but my parts, for all that, are in the first line: I play the lovers. If that be the case, said my companion, I wish you much joy, and am delighted that signor Gil Blas and myself have the honour of breakfasting with so eminent a character.

We then began to pick up our crumbs, and to gnaw the precious relics of the hare, bestowing such hearty smacks upon the bottle, as to empty it very shortly. We were all three so deeply engaged in the great affair of eating, that we said very little till we had finished, when we resumed our conversation. I wonder, said the barber to the player, that you should be so much out at elbows. For a theatrical hero, you have but a needy exterior! I beg pardon if I speak rather freely. Rather freely! exclaimed the actor; ah! by my troth, you are not yet acquainted with Melchior Zapata. Heaven be praised, I have no mind to see things in a wrong light. You do me a pleasure by speaking so confidentially: for I love to unbosom myself without reserve. I honestly own I am not rich. Here, pursued he, shewing us his doublet lined with playbills, this is the common stuff which serves me for linings; and if you are curious to see my wardrobe, you shall not be disappointed. At the same time he took out of his knapsack a dress,

laced with tarnished frippery, a shabby head-dress for an hero, with an old plume of feathers; silk stockings full of holes, and red morocco shoes a great deal the worse for wear. You see, said he again, that I am very little better than a beggar. That is astonishing, replied Diego: then you have neither wife nor daughter? I have a very handsome young wife, rejoined Zapata, and yet I might just as well be without her. Look with awe on the lowering aspect of my horoscope. I married a personable actress, in the hope that she would not let me die of hunger; and, to my cost, she is cursed with incorruptible chastity. Who the devil would not have been taken in as well as myself? There was but one virtuous princess in a whole strolling company, and she, plague take her! fell into my hands. It was throwing with bad luck most undoubtedly, said the barber. But then, why did not you look out for an actress in the regular theatre at Madrid? You would have been sure of your mark. You are perfectly in the right, replied the stroller; but the mischief is, we underlings dare not raise our thoughts to those illustrious heroines. It is as much as an actor of the prince's company can venture on; nay some of them are obliged to match with citizens' daughters. Happily for our fraternity, citizens' daughters now-a-days contract theatrical notions; and you may often meet with characters among them, to the full as eccentric as any bona roba of the green-room.

Well! but have you never thought, said my fellow-traveller, of getting an engagement in that company? Is it necessary to be a Roscius for that purpose? That is very well of you! replied Melchior, you are a wag, with your Roscius! There are twenty performers. Ask the town what it thinks of them, and you will hear a pretty character of their acting. More than half of them deserve to carry a porter's knot. Yet for all that, it is no easy matter to get upon the boards. Bribery or interest must make up for the defect of talent. I ought to know what I say, since my debut at Madrid, where I was hissed and cat-called as if the devil had got among the grimalkins, though I ought to have been received with thunders of applause; for I whined, ranted, and offered all sorts of violence to nature's modesty: nay, I went so far as to clench my fist at the heroine of the piece; in a word, I adopted the conceptions of all the great performers; and yet that same audience condemned by bell, book, and candle in me, what was thought to be the first style of playing in them. Such is the force of prejudice! So that, being no favourite with the pit, and not having wherewithal to insinuate myself into the good graces of the manager, I am on my return to Zamora. There we shall all huddle together again, my wife and my fellow-comedians, who are making but little of the business. I wish we may not be obliged to

beg our way out of town; a catastrophe of too frequent occurrence!

At these words, up rose the stage-struck hero, slung across him his knapsack and his sword, and made his exit with due theatric pomp: Farewell, gentlemen; may all the gods shower all their bounties on your heads ! And you, answered Diego with corresponding emphasis, may you find your wife at Zamora, softened down in her relentless virtue, and in comfortable keeping. No sooner had signor Zapata turned upon his heel, than he began gesticulating and spouting as he went along. The barber and myself immediately began hissing, to remind him of his first appearance at Madrid. The goose grated harsh upon his tympanum; he took it for a repetition of signals from his (Id friends. But looking behind him, and seeing that we were diverting ourselves at his expense, far from taking offence at this merry conceit of ours, he joined with good humour in the joke, and went his way laughing as hard as he could. On our part, we returned the compliment in kind. After this, we got again into the high road, and pursued our journey.

CHAPTER IX.

The meeting of Diego with his family ; their circumstances in life ; great rejoicings on the occasion ; the parting scene between him and Gil Blas.

WE stopped for the night at a little village between Moyados and Valpuesta; I have forgotten the name: and the next morning about eleven, we reached the plain of Olmedo. Signor Gil Blas, said my companion, behold my native place. So natural are these local attachments, that I can hardly contain myself at the sight of it. Signor Diego, answered I, a man of so patriotic a soul, as you profess to be, might, methinks, have been a little more florid in his descriptions. Olmedo looks like a city at **this** distance, and you called it a village; it cannot be any thing less than a corporate town. I beg its township's pardon, replied the barber; but you **are** to know that after Madrid, Toledo, Saragossa, **and** all the other large cities I have passed through in my tour of Spain, these little ones are mere villages to me. As we got further on the plain, there appeared to be a great concourse of people about Olmedo : so that, when we were near enough to distinguish objects, we were in no want of food **for** speculation.

There were three tents pitched at some distance from each other; and hard by, a bevy of cooks and scullions preparing an entertainment. Here a party was laying covers on long tables set out under the tents; there a detachment was crowning the pitchers of Tellus with the gifts of Bacchus. The right wing was making the pots boil; the left was turning the spits, and basting the meat. But what caught my attention more than all the rest, was a temporary stage of respectable dimensions. It was furnished with pasteboard scenes, painted in a tawdry style, and the proscenium was decorated with Greek and Latin mottos. No sooner did the barber spy out these inscriptions, than he said to me: All these Greek words smell strongly of my uncle Thomas's lamp. I would lay a wager, he has a hand in them; for between ourselves, he is a man of parts and learning. He knows all the classics by heart. If he would keep them to himself, it would be very well; but he is always quoting in company, and that people do not like. But then, to be sure, he has a right; because this uncle of mine has translated ever so many of the Latin poets and hard Greek authors with his own hand and pen. He has got all antiquity at his fingers' ends, as you may know by his ingenious and profound criticisms. If it had not been for him, we might never have learned that the Athenian schoolboys cried when they were flogged:

we owe that fact in the history of education to his fundamental knowledge of the subject.

After my fellow-traveller and myself had looked about us, we had a mind to enquire what these preparations were for. Going about on the hunt, Diego recognized, in the manager, signor Thomas de la Fuente, to whom we made up with great eagerness. The schoolmaster did not recollect the young barber at first, such a difference had ten years made. But when convinced of his being his own flesh and blood, he gave him a cordial embrace, and said with much appearance of kindness : Ah ! here you are Diego, my dear nephew, here you are, restored after your wanderings to your native land. You come to revisit your household gods, your Penates, and heaven delivers you back safe and sound into the bosom of your family. Oh happy day, happy in all the proportions of arithmetic ! A day worthy to be marked with a white stone, and inserted among the Fasti ! We have annals in abundance for you, my friend : your uncle Pedro the poetaster has fallen a sacrifice at the shrine of Pluto ; to speak to the comprehension of the vulgar, he has been dead these three months. That miser, in his lifetime, was afraid of wanting necessities : *Argenti pallescebat amore*. Though the great were heaping wealth upon his head, his annual expenditure did not amount to ten pistoles. He had but one miserable attendant, and him he starved. This crazy fellow,

more wrong-headed than the Grecian Aristippus, who ordered his slaves to leave all their costly baggage in the heart of Lybia, as an incumbrance on their march, heaped up all the gold and silver he could scrape together. And to what end ? for those very heirs whom he refused to acknowledge. He died worth thirty thousand ducats, shared between your father, your uncle Bertrand, and myself. "We shall be able to do very well for our children. My brother Nicholas has already married off your sister Theresa to the son of a magistrate in this place: *Connubio junxit stahh propriamque dicavit.* These very hymeneals, greeted auspiciously by all the nuptial powers, have we been celebrating for these two days, with all this pomp and luxury. These tents in the plain are of our pitching. Pedro's three heirs have each a booth of his own, and we defray the expenses of the day alternately, I wish you had come sooner; you might have seen the whole progress of our festivities. The day before yesterday, the wedding-day, your father gave his treat. It was a superb entertainment, succeeded by running at the ring. Your uncle the mercer regaled us yesterday with a fete champetre, and paid the piper handsomely. There were ten of the best grown boys, and ten young girls, dressed out in pastoral weeds; all the frippery in his shop was brought out to prank them up. This assemblage of Ganymedes and Houris ran through all the mazes of the dance, and

warbled forth a thousand tender and spirit-stirring lays. And yet, though nothing was ever more genteel, the effect was not thought striking; but that must be owing to the bad taste of the spectators; the simplicity of pastoral is lost upon the present age.

To day, the wheels are greased by your humble servant, and I mean to present the burgesses of Olmcdo with a pageant of my own invention : *Finis coronabit optts*. I have got a stage erected, on which, God willing, shall be represented by my scholars a piece of my own composing, entitled and called : *The Amusements of Muley Bugentuf, king of Morocco*, It will be played to perfection; for my pupils declaim like the players of Madrid. They are lads of family at Penafiel and Segovia; boarders with me. They know how to touch the passions ! To be sure they have rehearsed under my tuition: their emphasis will seem as if struck in the mint of their master, *ut ita dtcam*. With respect to the piece, I shall not say a word about it; you shall be taken by surprise. I shall simply state that it must produce a deep impression on the audience. It is one of those tragic subjects, which harrow up the soul by images of death, presented to the senses in all their fearful forms. I am of Aristotle's mind; terror is a principal engine. Oh! if I had written for the stage, I would have introduced none but bloody tyrants, and death-dis-

pensing heroes. Not all the perfumes of Arabia should have sweetened this blood-polluted hand: I would have been up to my elbows in gore. There would have been tragedy with a vengeance : principal characters! ay, guards and attendants should all have been sprawling together. I would have butchered every man of them, and the prompter into the bargain. In a word, I refine upon Aristotle, and border on the horrible ; that is my taste. These plays to tear a cat in are the only things for popularity ; the actors live merrily on their own dying speeches, and the authors roll in luxury on the devastation of mankind.

Just as this harangue was over, we saw a great crowd of both sexes coming out of town into the plain. Who should it be, but the new-married couple, attended by their families and friends, with ten or twelve musicians in the van, producing a most obstreperous din of harmony. We went up to them, and Diego introduced himself. Peals of congratulation were immediately rung through the assembly, and every one was eager to shake him by the hand. He had enough upon his shoulders, to receive all their fraternal embraces. Relations and strangers, all were for having a pull at him. At length his father said: You are welcome, Diego. You find your kinsmen living upon the fat of the land, my friend. I shall say no more at present; a nod is as good as a wink. Mean while the company went

forward upon the plain, took their stations under the tents, and sat down to table. I kept close to my companion, and we both dined with the happy couple, who appeared to be suitably matched. The meal was not soon over; for the schoolmaster had the vanity to give three courses, for the purpose of cutting out his brothers, who had not been so magnificent in their hospitalities.

After the banquet, all the guests expressed their longing to see signor Thomas's play, not doubting but the performance of so extraordinary a genius would deserve all their ears. We came in front of the stage; the musicians had taken possession of the orchestra, for the overture and act-tunes. While every one was waiting, in profound silence, for the rising of the curtain, the actors appeared on the boards; and the author, with the piece in his hand, sat down at the wing, in the prompter's place. Well might he call it a tragedy; for in the first act, the king of Morocco, by way of diversion, shot an hundred Moorish slaves with arrows: in the second, he beheaded thirty Portuguese officers, taken prisoners by one of his captains: and in the third and last, this monarch, surfeited with long-indulged libertinism, set fire with his own hands to the seraglio where his wives were confined, and reduced it to ashes with its inhabitants. The Moorish slaves, as well as the Portuguese officers, were puppets on a very curious conjstructipn; apd the palace, built of pasteboard,

looked very naturally in flames by means of an artificial firework. This conflagration, accompanied by a thousand piercing cries, issuing from the ruins, concluded the piece, and the curtain dropped upon this amiable entertainment. The whole plain resounded with the applause of this fine tragedy; which spoke for the good taste of the poet, and proved that he knew where to look out for a subject.

I did not suppose there was any thing more to be seen, after *The Amusements of Maley Bugentvf*; but I was mistaken. Kettle-drums and trumpets announced a new exhibition: the distribution of prizes; for Thomas de la Fuente, to give additional solemnity to his Olympics, had made all his boys, as well day-scholars as boarders, write exercises; and on this occasion he was to give to those who had succeeded best, books bought at Segovia out of his own pocket. All at once were brought upon the stage two long forms out of the school, with a press, full of old worm-eaten books in fine new bindings. At this signal all the actors returned upon the stage, and took their places round sign or Thomas, who looked as big as the head of a college. He had a sheet of paper in his hand, with the names of the successful candidates. This he gave to the king of Morocco, who began calling over the list with an authoritative voice. Each scholar, answering to his name, went humbly to receive a book from the hands of the bum-jerker; after this he was crowned with laurel,

and seated on one of the two benches to be exposed to the gaze of the admiring company. Yet, desirous as the schoolmaster might be to send the spectators away in good humour, he brought his eggs to a bad market: for, having distributed almost all the prizes to the boarders, according to the usual etiquette of pedagogues, that those who pay most must necessarily be the cleverest fellows, the mammas of certain day-scholars caught fire at this instance of partiality, and fell foul of the disciplinarian thereupon: so that the festival, hitherto so much to the glory of the donor, seemed likely to have ended to the same tune as the carousal of the Lapithee.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

The arrival of Gil Blas at Madrid. His first place there.

I MADE some stay with the young barber. At my departure, I met with a traveller of Segovia passing through Olmedo. He was returning with four mules from a trading expedition to Valladolid, and took me by way of back carriage. We got acquainted on the road; and he took such a fancy to me, that nothing would serve him but I must be his guest at Segovia. He gave me free quarters for two days; and when he found me determined to leave him for Madrid under convoy of a muleteer, he troubled me with a letter, begging me to deliver it in person according to the superscription, without hinting that it was a letter of recommendation. I was punctual in calling on signor Matheo Melendez. He was a woollen-draper, living at the gate of the Sun, at the corner of Trunkmaker-street. No sooner had he broken the cover, and read the **con-**

tents, than he said with an air of complacency: Signor Gil Blas, my correspondent, Pedro Palacio, has written to me so pressingly in your favour, that I cannot do otherwise than offer you a bed at my house; moreover, he desires me to find you a good situation; and I undertake the commission with pleasure. I have no doubt of suiting you to an hair.

I embraced the offer of Melendez the more gratefully, because *my* funds were getting much below par: but I was not long a burden on his hospitality. At the week's end, he told me that he had mentioned my name to a gentleman of his acquaintance, who wanted a valet de chambre, and, according to present appearances, the place would not be long vacant. In fact, this gentleman happened to make his appearance in the very nick: Sir, said Melendez, pushing me forward, you see before you the young man as by former advice. He is a pupil of honour and integrity. I can answer for him as if he was one of my own family. The gentleman looked at me with attention, said that my face was in my favour, and hired me at once. He has nothing to do but to follow me, added he; I will put him into the routine of his employment. At these words, he wished the tradesman good morning, and took me into the high street, directly over against St. Philip's church. We went into a very handsome house, of which he occupied one wing; then, going up five or six steps, he took me into a room, secured by strong

double doors; with an iron grate between. From this room we went into another, with a bed and other furniture, rather neat than gaudy.

If my new master had examined me closely, I had all my wits about me as well as he. He was a man on the wrong side of fifty, with a saturnine and serious air. His temper seemed to be even, and I thought no harm of him. He asked me several questions about my family; and liking my answers: Gil Blas, said he, I take you to be a very sensible lad; and am well pleased to have you in my service. On your part, you shall have no reason to complain. I will give you six rials a day board wages, besides vails. Then, I require no great attendance; **for** I keep no table, but always dine out. You will only have to brush my clothes, and be your own master for the rest of the day. Only take care to be at home early in the evening, and to be in waiting at the door; that is your chief duty. After this lecture, he took six rials out of his purse, and gave them **to** me as earnest. We then went out; he locked the doors after him; and taking care of the keys: My friend, said he, you need not go with me; follow **the** devices of your own heart; but on my **return this** evening, let me find you on that staircase. **With** this injunction he left me, to dispose of myself as seemed best in my own eyes.

In good sooth, Gil Blas, said I in a soliloquy, **you** have got a jewel of a master. What! fall **in with an**

employer, to give you six rials a day, for wiping off the dust from his clothes, and putting his room to rights in the morning, with the liberty of walking about and taking your pleasure like a schoolboy in the holidays! By my troth! it is a place of ten thousand. No wonder I was in a hurry to get to Madrid; it was, doubtless, some mysterious boding of good fortune prepared for me. I spent the day in the streets, diverting myself with gaping at novelties; a busy occupation. In the evening, after supping at an ordinary not far from our house, I squatted myself down in the comer pointed out by my master. He came three quarters of an hour after me, and seemed pleased with my punctuality. Very well, said he, this is right, I like attentive servants. At these words, he opened the doors of his apartment, and closed them upon us again as soon as we had got in. As we had no candle, he took his tinder-box, and struck a light. I then helped him to undress. When he was in bed, I lighted, by his order, a lamp in his chimney, and carried the wax-light into the antichamber, where I lay in a pressbed without curtains. He got up the next day, between nine and ten o'clock: I brushed his clothes. He paid me my six rials, and sent me packing till the evening. My mysterious master went out himself too, not without great caution in fastening the doors; and we parted for the remainder of the day,

Such was our course of life, very agreeable to me.

The best of the joke was, that I did not know my master's name. Melendez did not know it himself. The gentleman came to his shop now and then, and bought a piece of cloth. My neighbours were as much at a loss as myself; they all assured me that my master was a perfect stranger, though he had lived two years in the ward. He visited no soul in the neighbourhood; and some of them a little given to scandal, concluded him to be no better than he should be. Suspicions got to be more rife: he was suspected of being a spy of Portugal, and it was thought but fair play to give me a hint for my own good. This intimation troubled me. Thought I to myself, should this turn out to be a fact, I stand a chance for seeing the inside of a prison at Madrid. My innocence will be no security: my past ill usage makes me look on justice with antipathy. Twice have I experienced that if the innocent are not condemned in a lump with the guilty, at least th[^]rights of hospitality are too little regarded in their persons, to make it pleasant to pass a summer in the purlieus of the law.

I consulted Melendez in so delicate a conjuncture. He was at a loss how to advise me. Though he could not bring himself to believe that my master was a spy, he had no reason to be confident on the other side of the question. I determined to watch my employer, and to leave him if he turned out to be an enemy of the state; but then prudence and

personal comfort required me to be certain of my fact. I began therefore to pry into his actions; and to sound him, Sir, said I one evening while he was undressing, I do not know how one ought to live so as to be secure from reflections. The world is very scurrilous ! We, among others, have neighbours not worth a curse. Sad dogs! You have no notion how they talk of us. Do they indeed, Gil Blas ? quoth he. Be it so! but what can they say of us, my friend ? Ah! truly, replied I, evil tongues never want a whet. Virtue herself furnishes weapons for her own martyrdom. Our neighbours say that we are dangerous people, that we ought to be looked after by government; in a word, you are taken for a spy of Portugal. In throwing out this hint, I looked hard at my master, just as Alexander squinted at his physician, and pursed up all my penetration to remark upon the effect of my intelligence. There seemed to be a hitch in the muscles of my mysterious lord, altogether in unison with the suspicions of the neighbourhood; and he fell into a brown study, which bore no very auspicious interpretation. However, he put a better face on the matter, and said with sufficient composure: Gil Blas, leave our neighbours to discourse as they please, but let not our repose depend on their judgments. Never mind what they think of us, provided our own consciences do not wince.

Hereupon he went to bed, and I did the like,

without knowing what course to take. The next day, just as we were on the point of going out in the morning, we heard a violent knocking at the outer door on the staircase. My master opened the inner, and looked through the grate. A well-dressed man said to him : Please your honour, I am an alguazil, come to inform you that Mr. Corregidor wishes to speak a word with you. What does he want? answered my pattern of secrecy. That is more than I know, sir, replied the alguazil; but you have only to go and wait on him ; you will soon be informed. I am his most obedient, quoth my master; I have no business with him. At the tail of this speech, he banged the inner door; then, after walking up and down a little while, like one who pondered on the discourse of the alguazil, he put my six rials into my hand, and said : Gil Blas, you may go out, my friend ; for my part, I shall stay at home a little longer, but have no occasion for you. He made an impression on my mind by these words, that he was afraid of being taken up, and was therefore obliged to remain in his apartments. I left him there; and, to see how far my suspicions were founded, hid myself in a place whence I could see if he went out. I should have had patience to have staid there all the morning, if he had not saved me the trouble. But an hour after, I saw him walk the street with an ease and confidence, which dumb-founded my sagacity. Yet far from yielding to these appearances, I mistrusted

them; for my verdict went to condemnation. I considered his easy carriage as put on; and his staying at home as a finesse to secure his gold and jewels, when probably he was going to consult his safety by speedy flight. I had no idea of seeing him again, and doubted whether I should attend at his door in the evening; so persuaded was I, that the day would see him on the outside of the city, as his only refuge from impending danger. Yet I kept my appointment; when to my extreme surprise, my master returned as usual. He went to bed without betraying the least uneasiness, and got up the next morning with the same composure.

Just as he had finished dressing, another knock at the door! My master looked through the grate. His friend the alguazil was there again, and he asked him what he wanted. Open the door, answered the alguazil; here is Mr. Corregidor. At this dreadful name, my blood froze in my veins. I had a devilish loathing of those gentry, since I had passed through their hands, and could have wished myself at that moment an hundred leagues from Madrid. As for my employer, less startled than myself, he opened the door, and received the magistrate respectfully. You see, said the corregidor, that I do not break in upon you with a whole posse: my maxim is to do business in a quiet way. In spite of the ugly reports circulated about you in the city, I think you deserve some little attention. What is your name,

and business at Madrid ? Sir, answered my master, I am from New Castile, and my title is don Bernard de Castil Blazo. With respect to my way of life, I lounge about, frequent public places, and take my daily pleasure in a select circle of polite company. Of course you have a handsome fortune! replied the judge. No, sir, interrupted my Mecenas, I have neither annuities, nor lands, nor houses. How do you live then ? rejoined the corregidor. I will shew you, replied don Bernard. At the same time he lifted up a part of the hangings, before a door I had not observed, opened that and one beyond, then took the magistrate into a closet containing a large chest chuck full of gold.

Sir, said he again, you know that the Spaniards are proverbially indolent; yet, whatever may be their general dislike to labour, I may compliment myself on bettering the example. I have a stock of laziness, which disqualifies me for all exertion. If I had a mind to puff my vices into virtues, I might call this sloth of mine a philosophical indifference, the work of a mind weaned from all that worldlings court with so much ardour; but I will frankly own myself constitutionally lazy, and so lazy, that rather than work for my subsistence, I would lay myself down and starve. Therefore, to lead a life befitting my fancy, not to have the trouble] of looking after my affairs, and above all to do without a steward, I have converted all my patrimony, consisting of several considerable

estates, into ready money. **In** this chest **there are** **fifty** thousand ducats; more than enough **for** the remainder of my days, should I live to be an **hundred** ! For **I** do not spend a thousand a year, and am already more than fifty years old. I have no fears therefore for futurity, since I am not addicted, heaven be praised, to any one of the three things which usually rum men. I care little for the pleasures of the table; I only play for my amusement; and I have given up women. There is no chance of my being reckoned, in my old age, among those libidinous grey-beards, to whom jilts sell their favours by troy weight.

You are an happy man! said the corregidor. **They** are in the wrong to suspect you of being a spy: that office is quite out of character for **a** man **like** you. Take your own course, don Bernard: continue to live as you like. Far from disturbing **your** peace, I declare myself your protector: I request your friendship, and pledge my own. Ah ! sir, exclaimed my master, thrilled with these kind expressions, I accept with equal joy and gratitude **your** precious offer. **In** giving me your friendship, **you** augment my wealth, and carry my happiness to its height. After this conversation, which the alguazil and myself heard from the closet door, the corregidor took his leave of don **Bernard, who could not** do enough **to** express his sense of **the obligation.** **On my part, mimicking my master in doing the**

honours of the house, I overburdened the alguazil with civilities. I made him a thousand low bows, though I felt for him in my sleeve the contempt and hatred which every honest man naturally entertains for an alguazil.

CHAPTER II.

The astonishment of Gil Blas at meeting captain Rolando in Madrid, and that robber's curious narrative.

DON Bernard de Castil Blazo, having attended the corregidor to the street, returned in a hurry to fasten his strongbox, and all the doors which secured it. We then went out both of us well satisfied, he at having acquired a friend in power, and myself, at finding my six rials a day secured to me. The desire of relating this adventure to Melendez made me bend my steps towards his house; but, near my journey's end, whom should I meet but captain Rolando! My surprise was extreme, and I could not help quaking at the sight of him. He recollected me at once, accosted me gravely, and, still keeping up his tone of superiority, ordered me to follow him. I tremblingly obeyed, saying inwardly: Alas! he means, doubtless, to make me pay my debts! Whither will he lead me? There may perhaps be some subterraneous retreat in this city. Plague take it! If I thought so, I would soon shew him I have not got the gout. I walked therefore behind him, carefully looking out where he might stop, with the pious

design of putting my best leg foremost, if there was any thing in the shape of a trap-door.

Rolando soon dispersed my alarms. He went into a well-frequented tavern : I followed him. He called for the best wine, and ordered dinner. While it was getting ready, we went into a private room, where the captain addressed me as follows: You may well be astonished, Gil Blas, to renew your acquaintance with your old commander; and you will be still more so, when you have heard my tale. The day I left you in the cave, and went with my troop to Mansilla, for the purpose of selling the mules and horses we had taken the evening before, we met the son of the corregidor of Leon, attended by four men on horseback well armed, following his carnage. Two of his people we made to bite the dust, and the other two ran away. On this the coachman, alarmed for his master, cried out to us in a tone of supplication: Alas! my dear gentlemen, in God's name, do not kill the only son of his worship the corregidor of Leon. These words were far from softening my comrades; on the contrary, their fury knew no bounds. Good folks, said one of them, let not the son of a mortal enemy to men like us escape our vengeance. How many ornaments of our profession has his father cut off in their prime ! Let us repay his cruelty with interest, and sacrifice this victim to their offended ghosts. The whole troop applauded the fineness of this feeling, and my lieu-

tenant himself was preparing to act as high priest at this unhallowed altar, when I interdicted the rites. Stop, said I; why shed blood without occasion? Let us rest contented with the youth's purse. As he makes no resistance, it would be against the laws of war to cut his throat. Besides, he is not answerable for his father's misdeeds; nay his father only doe* his duty in condemning us to death, as we do ours in rifling travellers.

Thus did I plead for the corregidor's son, and my intercession was not unavailing. We only took every farthing of his money, and carried off with us the hoises of the two men whom we had slain. These we sold with the rest at Mansilla. Thence we returned to the cavern, where we arrived the following morning a little before day-break. We were not a little surprised to find the trap open, and still more so, when we found Leonarda handcuffed in the kitchen. She unravelled the mystery in two words. We wondered how you could have overreached us : no one could have thought you capable of serving us such a trick, and we forgave the effect for the merit of the invention. As soon as we had released our kitchen-wench, I gave orders for a good luncheon. In-the mean time we went to look after our horses in the stable, where the old negro, who had been left to himself for four and twenty hours, was at the last gasp. We did all we could for his relief, but he was too far gone; indeed so much reduced, that, in spite

of our endeavours, we left the poor devil on the threshold of another world. It was very sad; but it did not spoil our appetites : and, after an abundant breakfast, we retired to our chambers, and slept away the whole day. On our awaking, Leonarda apprized us that Domingo had paid the debt of nature. We carried him to the charnel-house where you may recollect to have lodged, and there performed his obsequies, just as if he had been one of our own order.

Five or six days afterwards, it fell out that, one morning on a sally, we encountered three companies of the Holy Brotherhood, on the outskirts of the wood. They seemed waiting to attack us. We perceived but one troop at first. These we despised, though superior in number to our party, and rushed forward to the onset. But, while we were at loggerheads with the first, the two others in ambuscade came thundering down upon us ; so that our valour was of no use. There was no withstanding such a host of enemies. Our lieutenant and two of our gang gave up the ghost on this occasion. As for the two others and myself, we were so closely pressed and hemmed in, as to be taken prisoners: and, while two detachments convoyed us to Leon, the third went to destroy our retreat. How it was discovered, I will briefly tell you. A" peasant of Luceno, crossing the forest on his way home, by chance espied the trap-door of our subterraneous residence, which a certain young runaway had not

shut down after him, for it was precisely the day when you took yourself off with the lady. He had a violent suspicion of its being our abode, without having the courage to go in. It was enough to mark the adjacent parts, by lightly peeling with his knife bark from the nearest trees, and so on from distance to distance, till he was quite out of the wood. He then betook himself to Leon, with this grand discovery for the corregidor, who was so much the better pleased, as his son had been robbed by our gang. This magistrate collected together three companies to lay hold of us, and the peasant shewed them the way.

My arrival in the town of Leon was as good as that of a wild beast to the inhabitants. Even though I had been a Portuguese general made prisoner of war, the people could not have been more anxious to see me. There he goes, was the cry, that is he, the famous captain, the terror of these parts. It would serve him right to tear him piecemeal with pincers, and make his comrades join in the chorus. To the corregidor, was the universal cry; and his worship began insulting me. So, so! said he, scoundrel as you are, the powers of justice, worn to a thread with your past irregularities, hand over the task of punishment to me as their delegate. Sir, answered I, great as my crimes may have been, at least the death of your only son is not to be laid at my door. His life was saved by me; you owe me

some acknowledgment on that score. Oh ! wretch, exclaimed he, there are no measures to be kept with people of your description. And though it were my wish to save you, my sacred office would not allow me to indulge my feelings. Having spoken to this effect, he committed us to a dungeon, where my companions had no time to lament their hard fate. They got out of confinement, at the end of three days, to expatiate with tragic energy at the place of execution. For my part, I took up my quarters in limbo for three complete weeks. My punishment seemingly was deferred only to render it more terrible ; and I was looking out for some refinement on the ordinary course of criminal justice, when the corregidor, having summoned me before him, said : Give ear to your sentence. You are free. Had it not been for you, my only son would have been assassinated on the highway. As a father, my gratitude was due for this service; but not being competent to acquit you in my capacity of a magistrate, I have written up to court in your favour; have solicited your pardon, and have obtained it. Go then, whithersoever it may seem good to you. But take my advice; profit by this lucky escape. Look to your paths, and give up the trade of a highwayman for good and all.

I was deeply impressed by this advice, and took my departure for Madrid, in the firm determination of mending my ways, and living quietly in that city.

There I found my father and mother dead, and what they left behind them in the hands of an old kinsman, who administered duly and truly, as all trustees of course do. I saved three thousand ducats out of the fire; scarcely a quarter of what I was entitled to. But where was the remedy? There was no standing to the quirks and evasions of the law. Just to be doing something, I have purchased an alguazil's place. My colleagues would have set their faces against my admission, for the honour of the cloth, had they known my history. Luckily they did not, or at least affected not to know it, which was just as good as the reality; for, in that illustrious body, it is the boundenduty and interest of every member to wear a mask. The pot cannot call the kettle hard names, thank heaven. The devil would have no great catch in the best of us. And yet, my friend, I could willingly unbosom myself to you without disguise. My present occupation is much against the grain; it requires too circumspect and too mysterious a conduct: there is nothing to be done but by underhand dealings, gravity and cunning. Oh! for my first trade! The new one is safer, to be sure; but there is more fun in the other, and liberty is my motto. I feel disposed to get rid of my office, and to set out some sun-shiny morning for the mountains at the source of the Tagus. I know of a retreat thereabouts, inhabited by a numerous gang, composed chiefly of Catalonians: when I have said that, I need

say no more. If you will go along with me, we will swell the number of those heroes. I shall be second in command. To make your footing respectable at once, I will swear that you have fought ten times by my side. Your valour shall mount to the very skies. I will tell more good of you than a commander in chief of a favourite officer. I will not say a word about the run-away trick: that would re-tide-r you suspected of turning nose; *threfoie numi* is the word. What say you to it? Are you ready to set off? I am impatient to know your mind.

Everyone to his own fancy, said I then to Rolando; you were born for bold exploits, and your friend for a serene and quiet life. I understand you, interrupted he; the lady whom love induced you to carry off still preserves her influence over your heart, and you doubtless lead with her that serene life of which you are enamoured. Own the truth, master Gil Blas; she is become a thing of your own, and you are both living on the pistoles carried off from the subterraneous retreat. I told him he was mistaken; and, to set him right, related the lady's adventures and my own while we sat at dinner. When our meal was finished, he led back to the subject of the Catalonians, and attempted once more to engage me in his project. But, finding me inflexible, he looked at me with a terrific frown, and said seriously: Since you are dastard enough to prefer your servile condition to the honour of enlisting in a troop of

brave fellows, I turn you adrift to your own groveling inclinations. But mark me well; a lapse maybe fatal. Forget our meeting of to-day, and never prate about me to any living soul; for if I catch you bandying about my name in your idle talk—you know my ways: I need say no more. With these words, he called for the landlord, paid the reckoning, and we rose from table to go away.

CHAPTER III.

Gil Blas is dismissed by don Bernard de Castil Bhizo, and enters into the service of a beau.

As we were coming out of the tavern, and taking our leave, my master was passing along the street. He saw me, and I observed him look more than once at the captain. I had no doubt but he was surprised at meeting me in such company. It is certain that Rolando's physiognomy and air were not much in favour of moral qualities. He was a gigantic fellow: with a long face, a parrot's beak, and a very rascally contour, without being absolutely ugly.

I was not mistaken in my guess. In the evening I found don Bernard harping on the captain's figure, and charmingly disposed to believe all the fine things *I* could have said of him, if my tongue had not been tied. Gil Blas, said he, who is that great shark I saw with you a while ago? I told him it was an alguazil, and thought to have got off with that answer: but he returned to the charge; and, observing my confusion, from the remembrance of the threats used by Rolando, broke off the conversation abruptly and went to bed. The next morning, when I had performed my ordinary duties, he counted me over six

ducats instead of six rials, and said: Here, my friend, this is what I give you for your services up to this day. Go and look out for another place. A servant keeping such high company is too much for me. I bethought myself of saying, in my own defence, that I had known that alguazil, by having prescribed for him at Valladolid, while I was practising medicine. Very good, replied my master, the shift is ingenious enough: you might have thought of it last night, and not have looked so foolish. Sir, rejoined I, in good truth, prudence kept me silent, and gave to my reserve the aspect of guilt. Undoubtedly, resumed he, tapping me softly on the shoulder, it was carrying prudence very far: even to the confines of cunning. Go, lad, I have no farther occasion for your services.

I went immediately to acquaint Melendez with the bad news, who told me, for my comfort, that he would engage to procure me a better birth. Indeed, some days after, he said: Gil Blas, my friend, you have no notion of the good luck in store for you. You will have the most agreeable post in the world. I am going to settle you with don Matthias de Silva. He is a man of the first fashion, one of those young noblemen commonly distinguished by the appellation of beaus. I have the honour of his custom. He takes up goods of me, on tick indeed; but these great men are good pay in the long run: they often marry rich heiresses, and then old scores are wiped off; or,

should that fail, a tradesman who understands his business puts such a price upon his articles, that if three-fourths of his debts are bad, he is no loser. Don Matthias's steward is my intimate friend. Let us go and look for him. It will be for him to present you to his master, and you may rely upon it, that for my sake he will treat you with high consideration.

As we were on our way to don Matthias's house, this honest shopkeeper said: It is fit, methinks, that you should be let into the steward's character. His name is Gregorio Rodriguez. Between ourselves he is a man of low birth, with a talent for intrigue, in which vocation he has laboured, till a stewardship in two distressed families completed their ruin, and made his fortune. I give you notice, that his vanity is excessive; he loves to see the under-servants creeping and crawling at his feet. It is with him they must make interest, if they have any favour to beg of their master; for, should they happen to obtain it without his interference, he has always some shift or other at hand to get the boon revoked, or at least render it of no avail. Regulate your conduct on this hint, Gil Blas: pay court to signor Rodriguez, in preference to your master himself, and leave no stone unturned to get into his good graces. His friendship will be of material service to you. He will pay your wages to the day; and, if you have management enough to worm yourself into his confidence,

you may chance to pick up some of the fragments which fall from his table. There are enough for an hungrier dog than you! Don Matthias is a young nobleman, with no thought to throw away but on his pleasures, nor the slightest suspicion how his own affairs are going on. What a house for a steward, who knows how to be a steward!

When we got to our journey's end, we asked to speak with signor Rodriguez. We were told that we should find him in his own apartment. There he was sure enough, and with him a clownish sort of fellow holding a blue bag, full of money. The steward, looking more wan and yellow than a girl in a hurry for an husband, ran up to Melendez with open arms: the draper was not behind-hand with him; and they each hugged the other with a shew of friendship, at least as much indebted to art as nature for its plausible effect. After this, the next question was about me. Rodriguez examined me from top to toe; saying very civilly at the same time, that I was just such an one as don Matthias wanted, and that he would with pleasure take upon himself to present me to that nobleman. Thereupon Melendez gave him to understand how deeply he was interested in my behalf: he begged the steward to take Me under his protection; and, leaving me with him after plenty of compliments, withdrew. As soon as he was gone out, Rodriguez said: I will introduce you to my matter the moment I have dispatched this honest hue-

bandman. He called the countryman to him forthwith, and, taking his bag, Talego, said he, let us see if the five hundred pistoles are all right. He counted over the money himself* As the sum was found to be exact, the countryman took a receipt, and went away. The cash was put back again into the bag. It was my turn next to be attended to: We may now, said my new patron, go to my master's levee. He usually gets up about noon; it is now near one o'clock, and must be daylight in his apartment.

Don Matthias had indeed just risen. He was still in his morning gown, kicking his heels in a great chair, with a leg tossed over one of the elbows, swinging backwards and forwards, and manufacturing his own snuff. His conversation was addressed to a footman in waiting, who officiated as a temporary valet-de-chambre. My lord, said the steward, here is a young man whom I take the liberty of presenting to your lordship, in the place of him you discharged the day before yesterday. Your draper, Melendez, has given him a character; he undertakes for his qualifications, and I believe you will be very well pleased with him. That is enough, answered the young nobleman; since he has your recommendation, *I* adopt him blindfold into my retinue. He is my valet-de-chambre at once: that business is settled. Let us talk of other matters, Rodriguez, you are come just in time; I was going to send for you. I have a budget of bad news, my dear Rodriguez. I

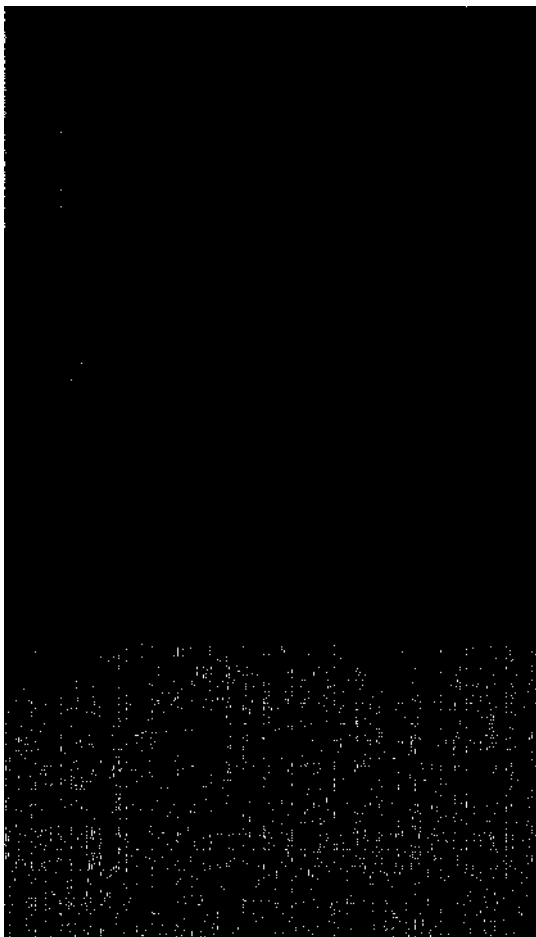
played with ill luck last night; an hundred pistoles in my pocket lost, and two hundred more on credit. You know how indispensable it is, for persons of high rank, to pay their debts of honour. As for any other, it is no matter when they are paid. Punctuality is ail very well between one tradesman and another; but they cannot expect it from one of us. These two hundred pistoles must be raised forthwith and sent to the countess de Pedrosa. Sir, quoth the steward, that is sooner said than done. Where, prythee, am I to get such a sum? Threaten as I will, I never touch a marvedi from your tenants. And yet your establishment is to be kept up in style, and I am wearing myself to a thread in furnishing the ways and means. It is true that hitherto, heaven be praised, we have rubbed on; but what witch to conjure for a wind now, I know not: the case is desperate. All this prosing is extremely impertinent, interrupted don Matthias; this counting-house talk makes me hideously nervous. So then, Rodriguez, you really think to undertake my reform, and metamorphose me iato a plodding manager of my own estates? A very elegant sort of pastime for a man in my station of life; a man of rank and fashion! Grant me patience! replied the steward, at the rate we are driving now, it is easily calculated how soon you will be released from all those cares. You are a very great bore, resumed the young nobleman rather peevishly; this brutal impertinence is downright murder to one's feelings. I

hate loud music; be so good as to let me be ruined *pianissimo*. I tell you, I want two hundred pistoles; and I must have them. Why then, said Rodriguez, we must have recourse to the old rascal who has lent you so much already on usurious terms. Have recourse to the devil, if he will do you any good, answered don Matthias; only let me have two hundred pistoles, and it is the same thing to me how you manage to get them.

While he was uttering these words in a hasty and fretful tone, the steward went out; and don Antonio Centelles, a young man of quality, came in. What is the matter, my friend? said this last to my master: your atmosphere is overcast; I trace passion in the lines of your countenance. Who can have ruffled that sweet temper? I would lay a wager, it was that booby just gone out. Yes, answered don Matthias, he is my steward. Every time he comes to speak to me, I am in an agony for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. He rings the changes on the state of my affairs; and tells me that I am spending principal and interest . . . A beast! He will say next, that I have ruined him into the bargain! My dear fellow, replied don Antonio, I am exactly in the same situation. My man of business is just such another scarecrow as your steward. , When the sneaking scoundrel, after repeated demands, brings me some niggardly supply, it is just as if he was lending me his own. He expostulates most barbarously. Sit,

says he you are going to rack and ruin; there m an
 exectrtaeri out against you I em Obliged to cut him
 shorf, and beg him to remonstrate in epitome. The
 worstof it is, said don Matthias, that there is no doing
 without these fellows; they are the penance attached
 to out etegant indiscretions. Just so, replied
 CenUsties. .. But listen; pursued he, bursting into
 a fit of laughter; a pleasant idea has just struck me.
 Nothing was ever more farcically fejjcied. We may
 introduce a *buffo carioeste in* to our serious opera, and
 r e l i e v e kitell of oar departed goods: and chattels
 with an humorcrus diveirtisemeat The plot is thus:
 let metry to totrow from your steward whatever you
 want You dhall do theaame widx ray man of busi-
 ness Then betthem both preach as they please; we
 shall hearkek with the utmost composose your
 stested will come and open his case to me; my man
 of besinest will plesid the poverty of the so you.
 I shall hear of aothingbuiyourextiavagaoc^^and
 you will see your own in mine as in a glass. It will
 be vastly entertaining.

A thousand brilliant conceits followed this flight
 jof genius, and put the young patricians into high
 spirits, so that they kept up the ball with vivacity, if
 not with wit. Their conversation was interrupted by
 Oregorie Rodriguez, who brought back with him a
 little old man with a bald head. Don Antonio was
 for moving off Farewell, don Matthias, said he,
 we shall meet again anon. I leave you with these



gentlemen; yon have, doubtless, some state affairs to discuss in council. Oh! no, no, answered my master, you had better stop; you will not interrupt us. This warm old gentleman has the moderation to lend me money at twenty per cent. What! at twenty per cent! exclaimed Centeltes in a tone of astonishment. In good truth! I wish you joy on being in such hands. I do not come off so cheaply, for my part: I pay through the nose for every farthing I get. My loans are generally raised at double that per cent. There is usury! said the father of the usurious tribe; unconscionable dogs! Where do they expect to go when they die? I do not wonder there is so strong a prejudice against money-lenders. It is the exorbitant profit which some of them derive from their discounts, that brings reproach and ill will upon us all. If ail my brethren of the blue balls were like me, we should not be treated so scurvily: for my part, I only lend, to do my duty towards my neighbour. Ah! if times were as good now as in my early days, my purse should be at your service as a fiaend; and even now, in the present distress of the maney-market, it goeas against the grain to take a poor twenty percent. But one would think the money was all game back to the miaes whence it came: there is no such thing to He had, and the scarcity compels me to depart a little from the disinterested severity of my benevolence, How much do you want? pur* sued he, addressnrg my master. Two hundred pis

toles, answered don Matthias. I have four hundred here in a bag, replied the usurer; it is only to give you half of them. At the same time he drew from underneath his cloak a blue bag, looking just like that in which farmer Talego had left five hundred pistoles with Rodriguez. I was not long in forming my judgment of the matter, and saw plainly that Melendez had not bragged without reason of the steward's aptness in the ways of the world. The old man emptied the bag, displayed the cash on a table, and set about counting it. The sight set all my master's extravagant passions in a flame; the sum total proved very striking to his comprehension. Signor Descomulgado, said he to the usurer, I have just made a very sensible reflection: I am a great fool. I only borrow enough to redeem my credit, without thinking of my empty pockets. I should be obliged to give you the trouble of coming again tomorrow. I think, therefore, it will be best to spare your age and infirmities, and ease you of the four hundred at once. My lord, answered the old man, I had destined half of this money to a good licentiate, who lays out the income of his large preferments in those pious and charitable uses, for which they were originally given to the clergy, as stewards of the poor, and guides to the young and unwary. In pursuance of this end, it is his great delight to wean young girls from the seductions of a wicked world, and place them in a snug, well-furnished little box of his own,

where they may be obnoxious to his ghostly admonitions by day and by night. But, since you have occasion for the whole sum, it is at your disposal. Something by way of security. . . . Oh! as for security, inteitupted Rodriguez, taking a paper out of his pocket, you shall have as good as the bank. Here is a note which signor don Matthias has only just to sign. He makes over five hundred pistoles, due from one of his tenants, Talego, a wealthy yeoman of Mondejar. That is enough, replied the usurer, I never split hairs, but deal upon the square. The steward insinuated a pen between his master's fingers, who signed his name at the bottom of the note, without reading it; and whistled as he signed, for want of thought.

That business settled, the old man took his leave of my noble employer, who shook him cordially by the hand, saying: Till I have the pleasure of seeing you again, good master pounds, shillings, and pence, I am your most devoted humble servant. I do not know why you should all be lumped together for a set of blood-suckers; you seem to me a necessary link in the chain of well-ordered society. You are as good as a physician to us pecuniary invalids of quality, and keep us alive by artificial restoratives in, the last stage of a consumptive purse. You are in the right, exclaimed Centelles. Usurers are a very gentlemanly order in society, and I must not be denied the privilege of paying my compliments to this

illustrious specimen, for the sake of his twenty per cent. With this banter, he came up and threw his arms about the old man's neck: and these two overgrown children, for their amusement, began sending him backward and forward between them like a shuttlecock. After they had tossed him about from pillar to post, they suffered him to depart with the steward, who ought to have come in for his share of the game, and for something a little more serious.

When Rodriguez and his stalking-horse had left the room, don Matthias sent, by the lacquey in waiting, half his pistoles to the countess de Pedrosa, and deposited the other half in a long purse worked with gold and silk, which he usually wore in his pocket. Very well pleased to find himself in cash, he said to don Antonio, with an air of gaiety: What shall we do with ourselves to-day? Let us call a council. That is talking like a statesman, answered Centelles: I am your man; let us ponder gravely. While they were collecting their deliberative wisdom on the course they were to pursue for the day, two other noblemen came in: don Alexo Segiat and don Ferdinand de Gamboa; both nearly about my master's age, that is, from eight and twenty to thirty. These four jolly blades began with such hearty salutations, as if they had not met for these ten years'. After that, don Ferdinand, a professed bacchanalian, made his proposals to don Matthias and don Antonio: Oentiemen, said he, where do you dine to-day? K

you are not engaged, I will take you to a tavern, where you shall quaff celestial liquor. I supped there last night, and did not come away till between five and six this morning. Would to heaven, exclaimed my master, I had done the same! I should not have lost my money.

For my part, said Centeiles, I treated myself yesterday evening with a new amusement; for variety has always its charms for me. Nothing but a change of pleasures can make the dull round of human life supportable. One of my friends introduced me neck and heels to one of those gentry cycled tax-gatherers, who do the government business and their own at the same time. There was no want of magnificence, good taste, or a well-designed set-out at table; but I found in the family itself an highly seasoned relish of absurdity. The farmer of the revenues, though the most meanly extracted of the whole party, must set up for a great man; and his wife, though hideously ugly, was a goddess in her own estimation, and made a thousand silly speeches, the zest of which was heightened by a Biscayan accent. Add to this, that there were four or five children with their tutor at table. Judge if it must not have been an amusing family party.

As for me, gentlemen, said don Alexo Segiar, I supped with Arsenia the actress. We were six at table: Arsenia, Florimonde, a coquet of her acquaintance, the marquis de Zenette, don Juan de Moncade,

and your humble servant. We passed the night in' drinking and talking bawdy. What a flow of soul! To be sure, Arsenia and Florimonde are not strong in their upper works; but then they have a facility in their vocation which is more than all the wit in the world. They are the dearest madcaps, gay, romping, and rampant: they are an hundred times better than your modest women of sense and discretion.

CHAPTER IV.

Gil Blas gets into company with his fellows; they shezv him a ready road to the reputation of wit, and impose on him a singular oath.

THOSE noblemen pursued this strain of conversation, till don Matthias, about whose person I was riddling all the while, was ready to go out. He then told me to follow him; and this bevy of fashionables set sail together for the tavern, whither don Ferdinand de Gamboa proposed to conduct them. I began my march in the rear rank with three other valets; for each of the gentlemen had his own. I remarked with astonishment that these three servants copied their masters, and assumed the same follies. I introduced myself as a new comer. They returned my salute in form; and one of them, after having taken measure of me very accurately, said: Brother, I perceive, by your gait, that you have never yet lived with a young nobleman. Alas! no, answered I, neither have I been long in Madrid. So it appears, replied he; you smell strong of the country. You seem timid and embarrassed; there is an hitch in your deportment. But no matter, we will soon wear off all stiffness, take my word for it. Perhaps you

think better of me than I deserve, said I. No, resumed he, no; there is no such cub, as we cannot lick into shape; assure yourself of that

This specimen was enough to convince me that I had hearty fellows for my comrades, and that I could not be in better hands to initiate me into high life below stairs. On our arrival at the tavern, we found an entertainment ready, which signor don Ferdinand had been so provident as to order in the morning: Our masters sat down to table, and we arranged ourselves behind their chairs. The conversation was spirited and lively. My ears tingled to hear them. Their humour, their way of thinking, their mode of expression diverted me. What fire! what sallies of imagination! They appeared like a new order of beings. With the desert, we sat before them a great choice of the best wines in Spain, and left the room, to go to dinner in a little parlour, where our cloth was laid.

I was not long in discovering that the combatants in our lists had more to recommend them than appeared at first sight. They were not satisfied with aping the manners of their masters, but even copied their phrases; and these varlets gave such a fac simile, that bating a little vulgarity, they might have passed themselves off very well. I admired their free and easy carriage; still more was I charmed with their wit, but despaired of ever coming up to them in my own person. Don Ferdinand's servant, on

the score of his master treating ours, did the honours; and, determined to do the thing genteelly, he called the landlord, and said to him: Master tapster, give us ten bottles of your very best wine; and, as you have an happy knack of doing, make the gentlemen up stairs believe that they have drank them. With all my heart, answered the landlord; but, master Gaspard, you know that signor don Ferdinand owes me for a good many dinners already. If through your kind intervention I could get some little matter on account. . . . Oh! interrupted the valet, do not be at all uneasy about your debt: I will take it upon myself; put it down to me. It is true that some unmannerly creditors have preferred legal measures to a reliance on our honour; but we shall take the first opportunity of obtaining a replevy, and will pay you without looking at your bill. To have my master on your books is like so many ingots of gold. The landlord brought us the wine, in spite of unmannerly creditors; and we drank to a speedy replevy. It was as good as a comedy to see us drinking each other's healths every minute, under our masters' titles. Don Antonio's servant called don Ferdinand's plain Gamboa, and don Ferdinand's servant called don Antonio's, Centelles: they dubbed me Silva; and we kept pace in drunkenness, under these borrowed names, with the noblemen to whom they properly belonged.

Though my wit was less conspicuous than that of the other guests, they lost no opportunity of testify-

ing their pleasure in my acquaintance. Silva, said one of our merriest soakers, we shall make something of you, my friend. I perceive that you have wit at will, if you did but know how to draw upon it. The fear of talking absurdly prevents you from throwing out at all; and yet it is only by a bold push, that a thousand people now-a-days set themselves up for good companions. Do you wish to be bright? You have only to give the reins to your loquacity, and to venture indiscriminately on whatever comes uppermost : your blunders will pass for the eccentricities of genius. Though you should utter an hundred extravagancies, let but a single good joke be packed up in the bundle, the nonsense shall be all forgotten, the witticism bandied about, and your talent be puffed into high repute. This is the happy method our masters have devised, and it ought to be adopted by all new candidates. Besides that I had but too strong a wish to pass for a clever fellow, the trick they taught me appeared so easy in the performance, that it ought not to be buried in obscurity. I tried it at once, and the fumes of the wine contributed to my success; that is to say, I talked at random, and had the good luck to strike out of much absurdity some flashes of merriment, very acceptable to my 'audience. This first essay inspired me with confidence. I redoubled my sprightliness, to sparkle in repartee; and chance gave a successful issue to my endeavours.

Well done! said my fellow-servant who had addressed me in the street, do not you begin to shake off your rustic manners? You have not been two hours in our company, and you are quite another creature: your improvement will be visible every day. This it is to wait on people of quality. It causes an elevation, which the mind can never attain under a plebeian roof. Doubtless, answered I: and for that reason I shall henceforth dedicate my little talents to the nobility. That is bravely said, roared out don Ferdinand's servant, half seas over, commoners are not entitled to possess such a fund of superior genius as exists in us. Come, gentlemen, let us make a vow never to colleague with any such beggarly fellows; let us swear to that by Styx. We laughed heartily at Gaspard's conceit: the proposal was received with applause; and we took this mock oath with our glasses in our hands.

Thus sat we at table till our masters were pleased to get up from it. This was at midnight; an outrageous instance of sobriety, in the opinion of my colleagues. To be sure, these noble lords left the tavern so early, only to visit a celebrated wanton, lodging in the purlieu of the court, and keeping open house night and day for the votaries of pleasure. She was a woman from five and thirty to forty, still in the height of her charms, entertaining in her discourse, and so perfect a mistress in the art of pleasure, that she sold the waste and refuse of her beauty

at an higher price than the first sample of the undulterated article. She had always two or three other pieces of damaged goods in the house, who contributed not a little to the great concourse of nobility resorting thither. The afternoon was spent in play; then supper, and the night passed in drinking and making merry. Our masters staid till morning, and so did we, without thinking the time long; for, while they were toying with the mistresses, we attacked the maids. At length, we all parted, when daylight peeped in on our festivities, and went to bed each of us at our separate homes.

My master getting up at his usual time, about noon, dressed himself. He went out. I followed him, and we paid a visit to don Antonio Centell6s, with whom we found one don Alvaro de Acuna. He was an old gentleman, who gave lectures on the science of debauchery. The rising generation, if they wanted to qualify themselves for fine gentlemen, put themselves under his tuition. He moulded their ductile habits to pleasure, taught them to make a distinguished figure in the world, and to squander their substance: he had no qualms as to running out his own, for the deed was done. After these three Wades had exchanged the compliments of the morning, CentelUs said to my master: In good faith, don Matthias, you could not have come at a more lucky time. Don Alvar is come to take me with him to a dinner, given by a citizen to the marquis de Zenette

and don Juan de Moncade: and you shall be of the party. And what is the citizen's name? said don Matthias. Gregorio de Noriega, said don Alvar, and I will describe the young man in two words. His father, a rich jeweller, is gone abroad, to attend the foreign markets, and left his son, at his departure, in the enjoyment of a large income. Gregorio is a blockhead, with a turn for every sort of extravagance, and an awkward hankering after the reputation of wit and fashion, in despite of nature. He has begged of me to give him a few instructions. I manage him completely; and can assure you, gentlemen, that I lead him a rare dance. His estate is rather deeply dipped already. I do not doubt it, exclaimed Centelles; I see the vulgar dog in an alms-house. Come, don Matthias: let us honour the fellow with our acquaintance, and be in at the death of him. Willingly, answered my master: for I delight in seeing the fortune of these plebeian upstarts kicked over, when they affect to mix among us. Nothing, for instance, ever entertained me so much as the downfall of the toll-gatherer's son, whom play, and the vanity of figuring among the great, have stripped, till he has not an house over his head. Oh! as for that, replied don Alvar, He deserves no pity; he is as great a coxcomb in his poverty, as he was in his prosperity.

Centelles and my master accompanied don Alvar to Gregorio de Noriega's party. We went there

also, that is Mogicon and myself both in extasy at having an opportunity of spunging on a citizen, and pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of being in at the death of him. At our entrance, we observed several men employed in preparing dinner; and there issued from the ragouts they were taking up, a vapour which conciliated the palate through the medium of the nostrils. The marquis de Zenette and don Juan de Moncade were just come. The founder of the feast seemed a great simpleton. He aped the man of fashion with a most clumsy grace; a wretched copy of admirable originals, or, more properly, an idiot in the chair of wisdom and taste. Figure to yourself a man of this character in the centre of five bantering fellows, all intent on making a jest of him, and drawing him into ridiculous expenses. Gentlemen, said don Alvar, after the first interchange of civilities, give me leave to introduce you to signor Gregorio de Noriega, a most brilliant star in the hemisphere of fashion. He owns a thousand amiable qualities. Do you know that he has an highly-cultivated understanding? Choose your own subject: he is equally at home in every branch, from the subtilty and closeness of logic, to the elementary science of the criss-cross-row. Oh! this is really too flattering, interrupted the scot and lot gentleman with a very uncouth laugh. I might, signor Alvaro, put you to the blush as you have put me; for you may truly be termed a reservoir as it

were, a common sewer of erudition. I had no intention, replied don Alvaro, to draw upon myself so savoury an encomium; but truly, gentlemen, signor Gregorio cannot fail of establishing a name in the world. As for me, said don Antonio, what is so delightful in my eyes, far above the honours of logic or the criss-cross-row, is the tasteful selection of his company. Instead of demeaning himself to the level of tradesmen, he associates only with the young nobility, and sets the expense at nought. There is an elevation of sentiment in this conduct which enchants me; and this is what you may truly call disbursing with taste and judgment.

These ironical speeches were only the preludes to a continual strain of banter. Poor Gregorio was attacked on all hands. The wits shot their bolts by turns, but they made no impression on the fool; on the contrary he took all they said literally, and seemed highly pleased with his guests; as if they did him & favour, by making him their laughing stock. In short, he served them for a butt, while they sat at table, which, they did not quit during the afternoon, nor till late at night. We, as well as our raasteng draak as we liked, so that the servants' hall and the dining-room were in equally high order, **when we took** our leave of the young jeweller.

CHAPTER V.

Gil Blas becomes the darling of the fair sex, and makes an interesting acquaintance.

AFTER some hours sleep, I got up in fine spirits; and calling the advice of Melendez to mind, went, till my master was stirring, to pay my court to our steward, whose vanity was rather flattered by this attention. He received me with a gracious air, and enquired how I was reconciled to the habits and manners of the young nobility. I answered, that they were strange to me as yet, but that use and good example might work wonders in the end.

Use and good example did work wonders, and that right soon. My temper and conduct were quite altered. From a discreet, sober lad, I got to be a lively, heedless merry andrew. Don Antonio's servant paid me a compliment on my transformation, and told me, that there wanted nothing but a tender interest in the lovely part of the creation to shine like a new star dropped from the heavens. He pointed out to me, that it was an indispensable requisite in the character of a pretty fellow: that all our set were well with some fine woman or other; and that he himself, to his own share, engrossed the favours of two beauties in high life. I was of opinion

that the rascal lied. Master Mogicon, said I, you are doubtless a very dapper, lively little fellow, with a modest assurance; but still I do not comprehend how women of quality, not having your sweet person on their own private establishments, should run the risk of being detected in an intrigue with a footman out of doors. Oh! as for that, answered he, they do not know my condition. To my master's wardrobe, and even to his name, am I indebted for these conquests. I will tell you how it is. I dress myself up as a young nobleman, and assume the manners of one. I go to public places; and tip the wink first to one woman and then to another, till I meet with one who returns the signal. Her I follow, and find means to speak with her. I take the name of don Antonio Centelles. I plead for an assignation; the lady is squeamish about it: I am pressing, she is kind, *et cetera*. Thus it is, my fine fellow, that I contrive to carry on my intrigues, and I would have you profit by the hint.

I was too ambitious of shining like a new star dropped from the heavens, to turn a deaf ear to such counsel: besides, there was about me no aversion to an amour. I therefore laid a plan to disguise myself as a young nobleman, and look out for adventures of gallantry. There was a risk in assuming my masquerade dress at home, lest it might be observed. I took a complete suit from my master's wardrobe, and made it up into a bundle, which I carried to a

barber's, where I thought I could dress and undress conveniently. There, I tricked myself out to the best advantage. The barber too lent a helping hand to my attire. When we thought it adjusted to a nicety, I sauntered towards Saint Jerome's meadow, whence I felt morally certain that I should not return without making an impression. But I could not even get thither, without a proof of my own attractions.

As I was crossing a bye-street, a lady of genteel figure, elegantly dressed, came out of a small house, and got into an hired carriage, standing at the door. I stopped short to look at her, and bowed significantly, so as to convey an intimation that my heart was not insensible. On her part, to shew me that her face was not less lovely than her person, she lifted up her veil for a moment. In the mean time the coach set off, and I stood stock still in the street, not a little stiffened at this vision. A vastly pretty woman! said I to myself; bless us! this is just what is wanting to make me perfectly accomplished. If the two ladies who share Mrgicon between them are equally handsome, the scoundrel is in luck! I should be delighted with her for a mistress. Ruminating on these things, I looked by chance towards the house whence that lovely creature had glided, and saw at a window on the ground floor an old woman beckoning me to come in.

I flew like lightning into the house, and found in

a very neat parlour, this venerable and wary matron, who, taking me for a marquis at least, dropped a low courtesy, and said: I doubt not, my lord, but you must have a bad opinion of a woman who, without the slightest acquaintance, beckons you out of the street; but you will perhaps judge more favourably of me, when you shall know that I do not pay that compliment promiscuously. You look like a man of fashion! You are perfectly in the right, my Old girl, interrupted I, stretching out my right leg, and throwing the weight of my body on my left hip; mine is, vanity apart, one of the best families in Spain. It must be so by your looks, replied she, and I will fairly own that I delight in doing a kindness to people of quality; that is my weak side. I watched you through my window. You looked very earnestly at a lady who has just left me. Perhaps you may have taken a fancy to her? tell me so plainly. By the honour of my house, answered I, she has shot me through the heart. I never saw any thing so tempting: a most divine creature! Do bring us acquainted, my dear, and rely on my gratitude. It is worth while to do these little offices for us of the beau monde; they are better paid than our bills.

I have told you once for all, replied the old woman, I am entirely devoted to people of condition; it is my passion to be useful to them: I receive here, for example, a certain class of ladies, whom appearances prevent from seeing their favourites at home

I lend them my house; and thus the warmth of their constitutions is indulged, without risk to their characters. Vastly well, quoth I; and you have just done that kindness to the lady in question? No, answered she: this is a young widow of quality, in want of an admirer: but so difficult in her choice, that I do not know whether you will do for her, however great your requisites may be. I have already introduced to her three well-furnished gallants, but she turned up her nose at them. Oh!• egad, my life, exclaimed I confidently, you have only to stick me in her skirts; I will give you a good account of her, take my word for it. I long to have a grapple with a beauty of such peremptory demands: they have not yet fallen in my way. Well then, said the old woman, you have only to come hither tomorrow at the same hour; your curiosity shall be satisfied. I will not fail, rejoined I: we shall see whether a young nobleman can miss a conquests

I returned to the little barber's, without looking for other adventures, but deeply interested in the event of this. Therefore, on the following day, I went, in splendid attire, to the old woman's an hour sooner than the time. My lord, said she, you are punctual, and I take it kindly. To be sure the game is worth the chase. I have seen our **young widow**, and we have had a good deal of talk **about you**. Not **a** word was to be said; but I have **taken** such **a liking to** you, that **I** cannot hold my tongue. You

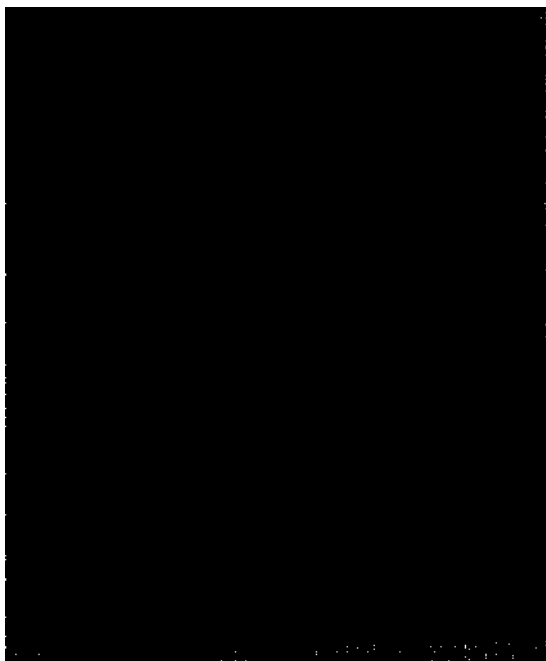
have made yourself agreeable, and will soon be an happy man. Between ourselves, the lady is a relishing morsel: her husband did not live long with her; he glided away like a shadow; she has all the merit of an absolute girl. The good old lady, no doubt, meant one of those clever girls, who contrive not to live single, though they live unmarried.

The heroine of the assignation came soon in an hired carriage, as on the day before, dressed very magnificently. As soon as she came into the room, I led off with five or six coxcomical bows, accompanied by the most fashionable grimaces. After this, I went up to her with a very familiar air, and said: My adored angel, you behold a gentleman, of no mean rank, whom your charms have undone. Your image, since yesterday, has taken complete possession of my fancy: you have turned a duchess neck and heels out of my heart, who was beginning to establish a footing there. The triumph is too glorious for me, answered she, throwing off her veil; but still my transports are not without alloy. Young men of fashion love variety, and their hearts are, they say, bandied about from one to the other, like a piece of base money. Ah! my sovereign mistress, replied I, let us leave the future to shift for itself; and think only of the present. You are lovely, I am in love. If my passion is not hateful to you, let it take its course at random. We will embark like true sailors; set the storms and shipwreck of a long voyage at

defiance, and only take the fair weather of the time present into the account.

In finishing this speech, I threw myself in raptures at the feet of my nymph; and, the better to hit off my assumed character, pressed her with some little peevishness, not to delay my bliss. She seemed a little touched by my remonstrances, but thought it too soon to yield; and giving me a gentle rebuff, Hold, said she, you are too importunate; this is like a rake. I fear, you are but a loose young fellow. For shame, madam, exclaimed I; can you set your face against what women of the first taste and condition encourage? A prejudice against what is vulgarly called vice may be all very well for citizens' wives. That is decisive, replied she; there is no resisting so forcible a plea. I see plainly that with men of your order, dissimulation is to no purpose: a woman must meet you half way. Learn then your victory, added she with an appearance of disorder, as if her modesty suffered by the avowal; you have inspired me with sentiments such as are new to my heart, and I only wait to know who you are, that I may take you for my acknowledged lover. I believe you a young lord, and a gentleman: yet there is no trusting to appearances; and, however prepossessed I may be in your favour, I would not give away my affections to a stranger.

I recollected at the moment how don Antonio's servant had got out of a similar perplexity; and



determining, after his example, to pass for my master, Madam, said I to my dainty widow, I will not excuse myself from telling you my name; it is one that will not disparage its owner. Have you ever heard of don Matthias de Silva ? Yes, replied she; indeed I have seen him with a lady of my acquaintance. Though considerably improved in impudence, I was a little troubled by this discovery. Yet I rallied my forces in an instant, and extricating myself with a happy presence of mind. Well then, my fair one, retorted I, the lady of your acquaintance. . . . knows a lord. . . . of my acquaintance and I am of his acquaintance; of his own family, since you must know it. His grandfather married the sister-in-law of my father's uncle. You see, we are very near relations. My name is don Caesar. I am the only son of the great don Ferdinand de Ribera, slain fifteen years ago, in a battle on the frontiers of Portugal. I could give you all the particulars of the action; it was a devilish sharp orie , . . . but to figt it over again would be losing the precious moments of mutual love.

After this discourse, I got to be importunate and impassioned; but without bringing matters at all forwarder. The favours which my goddess winked at my snatching, tended only to make me languish for what she was more chary of. The tyrant got back to her coach, which was waiting at the door. Nevertheless, I withdrew, well enough pleased with

my success, though it still fell short of the only perfect issue. If, said I to myself, I have obtained indulgences but by halves, it is because this lady forsooth is a high-born dame, and thinks it beneath her quality to play the very woman at the first interview. The pride of pedigree stands in the way of my advancement just now; but in a few days, we shall be better acquainted. To be sure, it did not once come into my head, that she might be one of those cunning gipsies, always on the catch. Yet I liked better to look at things on the right side than on the wrong; and thus maintained a favourable opinion of my widow. We had agreed at parting to meet again on the day after the morrow; and the hope of arriving at the summit of my wishes gave me a foretaste of the pleasures with which I tickled my fancy.

With my brain full of joyous traces,, I returned to my barber. Having changed my dress* I went to attend my master at the tennis-court. I found him at play* and saw that he won; for he was not one of those impenetrable gamesters, who make or mar a fortune without moving a muscle. In prosperity he was flippant and overbearing, but quite peevish on the losing side. He left the tennis-court in high spirits, and went for the *Prince's Theatre*. I followed him to the box-door: then, putting a ducat into my hand, Here, Gil Blas, said he, as I have been a winner to day, you shall not be the worse for it: go, divert yourself with your friends, and come to me

about midnight at Arsenia's, where I am to sup with don Alexo Segiar. He then went in, and I stood debating with whom I should disburse my ducat, according to the pious will of the founder. I did not muse long. Clarin, don Alexo's servant, just then came in my way. I took him to the next tavern, and we amused ourselves there till midnight. Thence we repaired to Arsenia's house, where Clarin had orders to attend. A little footboy opened the door, and shewed us into a room down stairs, where Arsenia's waiting-woman, and the lady who held the same office about Florimonde, were laughing ready to split their sides, while their mistresses were above stairs with our masters.

The addition of two jolly fellows, just come from a good supper, could not be unwelcome to abigails, and to the abigails of actresses too: but what was my astonishment when in one of these lowly ladies I discovered my widow, my adorable widow, whom I took for a countess or a marchioness! She appeared equally amazed to see her dear don Caesar de Ribera metamorphosed into the valet of a beau. However, we looked at one another without being out of countenance; indeed, such a tingling sensation of laugh*ter came over us both, as we could not help indulging in. After which Laura, for that was her name, drawing me aside while Clarin was speaking to her fellow-servant, held out her hand to me very kindly, and said in a low voice: Accept this pledge, signor

don Ceesar; mutual congratulations are more to the purpose than mutual reproaches, my friend. You topped your part to perfection, and I was not quite contemptible in mine. What say you? Confess now: did not you take me for one of those precious peeresses who are fond of a little smuggled amusement? It is even so, answered I: but whoever you are, my empress, I have not changed my sentiments with my paraphernalia. Accept my services in good part, and let the valet-de-chambre of don Matthias consummate what don Ceesar has so happily begun. Get you gone, replied she, I like you ten times better in your natural, than in your artificial character. You axe as a man what I am as a woman, and that is the greatest compliment I can pay you. You are admitted into the number of my adorers. We have no longer any need of the old woman as a blind; you may come and see me whenever you like. We theatrical ladies are no slaves to form, but live higgledy piggledy with the men. I allow that the effects are sometimes visible; but the public wink hard at our irregularities: the drama's patrons, as you well know, give the drama's laws, and absolve us from all others.

We went no further, because there were bystanders. The conversation became general, lively, jovial, inclining to loose jokes, not very carefully wrapped up. We all of us bore a bob. Arsenia's attendant above all, my amiable Laura, was very

conspicuous; but her wit was so extremely nimble, that her virtue could never overtake it. Our masters and the actresses on the floor above, raised incessant peals of laughter, which reached us in the regions below: and probably the entertainment was much alike with the celestials and the infernals. If all the knowing remarks had been written down, which escaped from the philosophers that night assembled at Arsenia's, I really think, it would have been a manual for the rising generation. Yet we could not arrest the chaste moon in her progress; the rising of that blab, the sun, parted us. Clarin followed the heels of don Alexo, and I went home with don Matthias.

CHAPTER VI.

The prince's company of comedians.

MY master getting up the next day, received a note from don Alexo Segiar, desiring his company immediately. We went, and found there the marquis de Zenette, and another young nobleman of prepossessing manners, whom I had never seen. Don Matthias, said Segiar to my protector, introducing the stranger, give me leave to present don Pompeyo de Castro, a relation of mine. He has been at the court of Portugal almost from his childhood. He reached Madrid last night, and returns to Lisbon to-morrow. He can allow me only one day: I wish to make the most of the precious moments; and thought of asking you and the marquis de Zenette to make out the time agreeably. Thereupon my master and don Alexo's relation embraced heartily, and complimented one another in the most extravagant manner. I was much pleased with don Pompeyo's conversation; it shewed both acuteness and solidity.

They dined with Segiar; and the gentlemen, after the desert, amused themselves at play till the theatre opened. Then they went all together to the *Prince's House*, to see a new tragedy, called *The Queen of Carthage*. At the end of the piece, they returned

to supper; and their conversation ran first on the composition, then upon the actors. As for the work, cried don Matthias, I think very lightly of it. Eneas is a more pious blockhead there than in the Eneid. But it must be owned that the piece was played divinely. What does signor don Pompeyo think of it? He does not seem to agree with me. Gentlemen, said the illustrious stranger with a smile, you are so enraptured with your actors, and still more with your actresses, that I scarcely dare avow my dissent. That is very prudent, interrupted don Alexo with a sneer, your criticisms would be very ill received. You should be tender of our actresses before the trumpeters of their fame. We carouse with them every day; we warrant them sound in their conceptions : we would give vouchers for the justness of their expression, if it were necessary. No doubt of it, answered his kinsman; you would do the same kind office by their lives and their manners, from the same motives of companionable feeling.

Your ladies of the sock and buskin at Lisbon, said the marquis de Zenette, laughing, are doubtless far superior? They certainly are, replied don Pompeyo. They are some of them at least perfect in their cast. And these, resumed the marquis, would be warranted by you in their conceptions and expressions? I have no personal acquaintance with them, rejoined don Pompeyo, I am not of their

revels; and can judge of their merit without partiality. Do you, in good earnest, think your company first-rate ? No really, said the marquis, I think no such thing, and only plead the cause of a few individuals. I give up all the rest. Will you not allow extraordinary powers to the actress who played Dido ? Did she not personate that queen with the dignity, and at the same time with all the bewitching charms, calculated to realize our idea of the character ? Could you help admiring the skill, with which she seizes on the passions of the spectator, and harmonizes their tone to the vibrations she purposes to produce ? She may be called perfect in the exquisite art of declaiming. I agree with you, said don Pompeyo, that she can touch the string either of terror or of pity: never did any actress come closer to the heart, and the performance is altogether fine; but still she is not without her defects. Two or three things disgusted me in her playing. Would she denote surprise ? She glances her eyes to and fro in a most extravagant manner, altogether unbecoming her supposed majesty as a princess. Add to this, that in swelling her voice, which is of itself sound and mellifluous, she goes out of her natural key, and assumes a harsh ranting tone. Besides, it should seem as if she might be suspected, in more than one passage, of not very clearly comprehending her author. Yet I would in candour rather suppose her wanting in diligence than capacity.

As far as I see, said don Matthias to the critic, you will never write complimentary odes to our actresses! Pardon me, answered don Pompeyo. I can discover high talent through all their imperfections. I must say that I was enchanted with the chambermaid in the interlude. What fine natural parts! With what grace she treads the stage! Has she any thing pointed to deliver? She heightens it by an arch smile, with a keen glance and sarcastic emphasis, which convey more to the understanding than the words to the ear. It might be objected, that she sometimes gives too much scope to her animal spirits, and exceeds the limits of allowable freedom : but that would be hypercritical. There is one bad habit, I should strongly advise her to correct. Sometimes, in the very crisis of the action, and in an affecting passage, she bursts in all at once upon the interest, with some misplaced jest, to curry favour with the mob of barren spectators. The pit, you will say, is caught by her artifice: that may be well for her popularity, but not for their taste.

And what do you think of the men? interrupted the marquise: you must give them no quarter, since you have handled the women so roughly. Not so, said don Pompeyo. There are some promising young actors; and I am particularly well pleased with that corpulent performer who played the part of Dido's prime minister. His recitation is unaffected, and he declaims just as they do in Portugal.

If you can bear such a fellow as that, said Segiar, you must be charmed with the representative of Eneas. Did not you think him a great, an original performer? Very original indeed, answered the critic: his inflections are quite his own; they are as shrill as an hautboy. Almost always out of nature, he Tattles the impressive words of the sentence off his tongue, while he labours and lingers on the expletives: the poor conjunctions are frightened at their own report as they go off. He entertained me excessively, and especially when he was expressing in confidence his distress at abandoning the princess: never was grief more ludicrously depicted. Fair and softly, cousin, replied don Alexo; you will make us believe at last that good taste is not greatly cultivated at the court of Portugal. Do you know that the actor of whom we are -speaking is esteemed a phenomenon? Bid you not observe what thunders of applause he called down? He cannot therefore *be* contemptible. That therefore does not prove the proposition, replied don Pompeyo. But, gentlemen, let us lay aside, I beseech you, the injudicious suffrages of the pit: they are often given to performers very unseasonably. Indeed, their boisterous tokens of approbation are more frequently bestowed on paltry copies than on original merit, as Phedrus teaches us by an ingenious fable. Allow me to repeat it as follows.

The whole population of a city was assembled in

a large square, to see a pantomime played. Among the performers, there was one whose feats were applauded every instant. This buffoon, at the end of the entertainment, wished to close the scene with a new device. He came alone upon the stage, stooping down, covering his head with his mantle, and began counterfeiting the squeak of a pig. He acquitted himself so naturally as to be suspected of having the animal itself concealed within the folds of his drapery. He stripped, but there was no pig. The assembly rang with more furious applause than ever. A peasant, among the spectators, was disgusted at this misplaced admiration. Gentlemen, exclaimed he, you are in the wrong to be so delighted with this buffoon; he is not so good a mimic as you take him for. I can enact the pig better; if you doubt it, only attend here this time to-morrow. The people, prejudiced in the cause of their favourite, collected in greater numbers on the next day, rather to hiss the countryman, than to see what he Could do. The rivals appeared on the stage. The buffoon began, and was more applauded than the day before. Then the farmer stooping down in his turn, with his head wrapped up in his cloak, pulled the ear of a real piig under his arm, and made it squeal most horribly. Yet this enlightened audience persisted in giving the preference to their favourite, and hooted the countryman off the boards, who, producing the pig before he went, said, Gentlemen, you

are not hissing me, but the original pig* So much for your judgment!

Cousin, said don Alexo, your fable is rather satirical. Nevertheless, in spite of your pig, we will not bate an inch of our opinion. But let us change the subject; this is grown threadbare. Then you set off to-morrow, do what we can to keep you with us longer? I should like, answered his kinsman, to protract my stay with you ; but it is not in my power. I have told you already, that I am come to the court of Spain on an affair of state. Yesterday, on my arrival, I had a conference with the prime minister: I am to see him to-morrow morning, and shall set out immediately afterwards on my return to Lisbon. You are become quite a Portuguese, observed Segiar, and, to all appearance, we shall lose you entirely from Madrid, I think otherwise, replied don Pompeyo; I have the honour to stand well with the king of Portugal, and have many motives of attachment to that court. Yet with all the kindness that sovereign has testified towards me, would you believe that I have been on the point of quitting his dominions for ever? Indeed! by what strange accident? said the marquis. Give us the history, I beseech you. Very readily, answered don Pompeyo, and at the same time my own; for it is closely interwoven with the recital for which you have called.

CHAPTER VII

History of don Pompeyo de Castro.

DON ALEXO knows, that, from my boyish days, my passion was for a military life. Our own country being at peace, I went into Portugal: thence to Africa with the duke of Braganza, who gave me a commission. I was a younger brother, with as slender a provision as most in Spain; so that my only chance was in attracting the notice of the commander in chief by my bravery. I was so far from deficient in my duty, that the duke promoted me step by step, to one of the most honourable posts in the service. After a long war, of which you all know the issue, I devoted myself to the court: and the king, on strong testimonials from the general officers, rewarded me with a considerable pension. Alive to that sovereign's generosity, I lost no opportunity of proving my gratitude by my diligence. I was in attendance as often as etiquette would allow me to offer myself to his notice. By this conduct I gained insensibly the love of that prince, and received new favours from his hands.

One day, when I distinguished myself in running at the ring, and in a bull-fight preceding it, all the

court extolled my strength and dexterity. On my return home, with my honours thick upon me, I found there a note, informing me that a lady, my conquest over whom ought to flatter me, more than all the glory I had gained that day, wished to have the pleasure of my company; and that I had only to attend, in the evening, at a place marked out in the letter. This was more than all my public triumphs; and I concluded the writer to be a woman of the first quality. You may guess that I did not loiter by the way. An old woman, in waiting as my guide, conducted me by a little garden-gate into a large house, and left me in an elegant closet, saying: Stay here; I will acquaint my mistress with your arrival. I observed a great many articles of value in the closet, which was magnificently illuminated; but this splendour only caught my attention, as confirming me in my previous opinion of the lady's high rank. If appearances strengthened that conjecture, her noble and majestic air on her entrance left no doubt on my mind. Yet I was a little out in my calculation.

Noble sir, said she, after the step I have taken in your favour, it were impertinent to disown my partiality. Your brilliant actions of to-day, in presence of the court, were not the inspirers of my sentiments; they only urge forward this avowal. I have seen you more than once; have enquired into your character, and the result has determined me to follow the impulse of my heart. But do not suppose that

you are well with a duchess. I am but a widow of a captain in the king's guards: yet there is something to throw a radiance round your victory, . . . the preference you have gained over one of the first noblemen in the kingdom. The duke d'Almeyda loves me, and presses his suit with ardour, yet without success. My vanity only induces me to bear his importunities.

Though I saw plainly, by this address, that I had got in with a coquet, my presiding star was not a whit out of my good graces for involving me in this adventure. Donna Hortensia, for that was the lady's name, was just in the ripeness and luxuriance of youth and dazzling beauty. Nay more, she had refused the possession of her heart to the earnest entreaties of a duke, and offered it unsolicited to me. What a feather in the cap of a Spanish cavalier! I prostrated myself at Hortensia's feet, to thank her for her favours. I talked just as a man of gallantry always does talk, and she had reason to be satisfied with the extravagance of my acknowledgments. Thus we parted the best friends in the world, on the terms of meeting every evening when the duke d'Almeyda was prevented from coming; and she promised to give me due notice of his absence. The bargain was exactly fulfilled, and I was turned into the Adonis- of this new Venus.

But the pleasures of this life are transitory. With all the lady's precautions to conceal our private

treaty of commerce from my rival, he found means of gaining a knowledge, of which it concerned us greatly to keep him ignorant: a disloyal chambermaid divulged the state secret. This nobleman, naturally generous, but proud, self-sufficient and violent, was exasperated at my presumption. Anger and jealousy set him beside himself. Taking counsel only with his rage, he resolved on an infamous revenge. One night when I was with Hortensia, he waylaid me at the little garden gate, with all his servants provided with cudgels. As soon as I came out, he ordered me to be seized, and beat to death by these wretches. Lay on, said he, let the rash intruder *give up the ghost* under your chastisement; thus shall his insolence be punished. No sooner had he finished these words, than his myrmidons assaulted me in a body, and gave me such a beating, as to stretch me senseless on the ground: after which they hurried off with their master, to whom this butchery had been a delicious pastime. I lay the remainder of the night, just as they had left me. At day-break, some people passed by, who, finding that life was still in me, had the humanity to carry me to a surgeon. Fortunately my wounds were not mortal; and, falling into skilful hands, I was perfectly cured in two months* At the end of that period I made my appearance again at court, and resumed my former way of life, except that I steered clear of Hortensia, who on her part made no further attempt

to renew the acquaintance, because the duke, on that condition, had pardoned her infidelity.

As my adventure was the town talk, and I was known to be no coward, people were astonished to see me as quiet as if I had received no affront; for I kept my thoughts to myself, and seemed to have no quarrel with any man living. No one knew what to think of my counterfeited insensibility. Some imagined that, in spite of my courage, the rank of the aggressor overawed me, and occasioned my tacit submission. Others, with more reason, mistrusted my silence, and considered my inoffensive demeanour as a cover to my revenge. The king was of opinion, with these last, that I was not a man to put up with an insult, and that I should not be wanting to myself at a convenient opportunity. To discover my real intentions, he sent for me one day into his closet, where he said: Don Pompeyo, I know what accident has befallen you, and am surprised, I own, at your forbearance. You are certainly acting a part. Sire, answered I, how can I know whom to challenge? I was attacked in the night by persons unknown: it is a misfortune of which I must make the best. No, no, replied the king, I am not to be duped by these evasive answers. The whole story has reached my ears. The duke d'Almeyda has touched your honour to the quick. You are nobly born and a Castilian: I know what that double character requires.. You cherish hostile designs.

Admit me a party to your purposes; it must be so. Never fear the consequences of making me your confident.

Since your majesty commands it, resumed I, my sentiments shall be laid open without reserve. Yes, sir, I meditate a severe retribution. Every man, wearing such a name as mine, must account for its untarnished lustre with his family. You know the unworthy treatment I have experienced; and I purpose assassinating the duke d'Almeyda, as a mode of revenge correspondent to the injury. I shall plunge a dagger in his bosom, or shoot him through the head, and escape, if I can, into Spain. This is my design.

It is violent, said the king: and yet I have little to say against it, after the provocation which the duke d'Almeyda has given you. He is worthy of the punishment you destine for him. But do not be in a hurry with your project. Leave me to devise a method of bringing you together again as friends. Oh! sir, exclaimed I with vexation, why did you extort my secret from me? What expedient can If mine is not to your satisfaction, interrupted he, you may execute your first intention. I do not mean to abuse your confidence. I shall not implicate your honour; so rest contented on that head.

I was greatly puzzled to guess by what means the king designed to terminate this affair amicably: but thus it was. He sent to speak with the duke d'

Almeyda in private. Duke, said he, you have insulted don Pompeyo de Castro. You are not ignorant that he is a man of noble birth, a soldier who has served with credit, and stands high in my favour. You owe him reparation. I am not of a temper to refuse it, answered the duke. If he complains of my outrageous behaviour, I am ready to justify it by the law of arms. Something very different must be done* replied the king: a Spanish gentleman understands the point of honour too well, to fight on equal terms with a cowardly assassin. I can use no milder term; and you can only atone for the heinousness of your conduct, by presenting a cane in person to your antagonist, and offering to submit yourself to its discipline. Oh heaven! exclaimed the duke: what! sir, would you have a man of my rank degrade, debase himself before a simple gentleman, and submit to be caned! No, replied the monarch, I will oblige don Pompeyo to promise not to touch you. Only offer him the cane, and ask his pardon: that is all I require from you. And that is too much, sir, interrupted the duke d'Almeyda warmly: I had rather remain exposed to all the secret machinations of his resentment. Your life is dear to me, said the king; and I should wish this affair to have no bad consequences. To terminate it with less disgust to yourself, I will be the only witness of **the** satisfaction, which I order you- ta offer to the Spaniard.

The king was obliged to stretch his influence over the duke to the utmost, before he could induce him to so mortifying a step. However, the peremptory monarch effected his purpose; and then sent for me. He related the particulars of his conversation with my enemy, and enquired if I should be content with the stipulated reparation. I answered, yes: and gave my word that, far from striking the offender, I would not even accept the cane, when he presented it. With this understanding, the duke and myself at a certain hour attended the king, who took us into his closet. Come, said he to the duke, acknowledge your fault, and deserve to be forgiven by the humility of your contrition. Then my antagonist made his apology, and offered me the cane in his hand. Don Pompeyo, said the monarch unexpectedly, take the cane, and let not my presence prevent you from doing justice to your outraged honour. I release you from your promise not to strike the duke. No, sir, answered I, it is enough that he has submitted to the indignity of the offer: an offended Spaniard asks no more. Well then *I* replied the king, since you are content with this satisfaction, you may both of you at once assume the privilege of a gentlemanly quarrel. Measure your swords, and discuss the question honourably. It is what I most ardently desire, exclaimed the duke d'Almeyda in a menacing tone; for that only is competent to make me amends for the disgraceful step I have taken.

COLLEGE BLAS.

With these words, he went away full of rage and shame; and sent to tell me, two hours after, that he was waiting for me in a retired place. I kept the appointment, and found this nobleman ready to fight lustily. He was not five and forty; deficient neither in courage nor in skill: so that the match was fair and equal. Come on, don Pompeyo, said he, let us terminate our difference here. Our hostility ought to be reciprocally mortal; yours, for my aggression, and mine, for having asked your pardon. These words were no sooner out of his mouth, than he drew upon me so suddenly, that I had no time to reply. He pressed very closely upon me at first, but I had the good fortune to put by all his thrusts. I acted on the offensive in my turn: the encounter was evidently with a man equally skilled in defence or in attack; and there is no knowing what might have been the issue, if he had not made a fake step in retiring, and fallen backwards. I stood still immediately, and said to the duke, Recover yourself. Why give me any quarter? he answered. Your forbearance only aggravates my disgrace. I will not take advantage of an accident, replied I: it would only tarnish my glory. Once more recover yourself, and let us fight it out.

Don Pompeyo, said he rising, after this act of generosity, honour allows me not to renew the attack upon you. What would the world say of me, were I to wound you mortally? I should be branded as a

coward for having murdered a man, at whose mercy I had just before lain prostrate. I cannot therefore again lift my arm against your life, and I feel my resentful passions subsiding into the sweet emotions of gratitude. Don Pompeyo, let us mutually lay aside our hatred. Let us go still further; let us be friends. Ah! my lord, exclaimed I, so flattering a proposal I joyfully accept. I proffer you my sincere friendship; and, as an earnest, promise never more to approach donna Hortensia, though she herself should invite me. It is my duty, said he, to yield that lady to you. Justice requires me to give her up, since her affections are yours already. No, no, interrupted I; you love her. Her partiality in my favour would give you uneasiness: I sacrifice my own pleasures to your peace. Ah! too generous. Castilian, replied the duke, embracing me, your sentiments are truly noble. With what remorse do they strike me! Grieved and ashamed, I look back on the outrage you have sustained. The reparation in the king's chamber seems now too trifling. A better recompense awaits you. To obliterate all remembrance of your shame, take one of my nieces, whose hand is at my disposal. She is a rich heiress, not fifteen, with beauty beyond the attractions, of mere youth.

I made my acknowledgments to the duke in terms, such as the high honour of his alliance might suggest, and married his* niece a few days afterwards.

All the court complimented this nobleman on having made such generous amends to an insulted rival; and my friends took part in my joy at the happy issue of an adventure, which might have led to the most melancholy consequences. From this time, gentlemen, I have lived happily at Lisbon. I am the idol of my wife, and have not sunk the lover in the husband. The duke d'Almeyda gives me new proofs of friendship every day; and I may venture to boast of standing high in the king of Portugal's good graces. The importance of my errand hither sufficiently assures me of his confidence.

CHAPTER VIII.

An accident, in consequence of which Gil Blas was obliged to look out for another place.

SUCH was don Pompeyo's story, which don Alexo's servant and myself overheard, though we were prudently sent away before he began his recital. Instead of withdrawing, we skulked behind the door, which we had left half open, and from that station we did not miss a word. After this, the company went on drinking; but they did not prolong their caiousals till the morning, because don Pompeyo, who was to speak with the prime minister, wished for a little rest beforehand. The marquis de Zenette and my master took a cordial leave of the stranger, and left him with his kinsman.

We went to bed for once before daybreak; and don Matthias, when he awoke, invested me with a new office. Gil Blas, said he, take pen, ink, and paper, and write two or three letters as I shall dictate: you shall henceforth be my secretary. Well and good! said I to myself, a plurality of functions. As footman, I follow my master's heels; as valet-de-chambre, I help him to dress; and write for him as his secretary. Heaven be praised for my apotheosis!

Like the triple Hecate of the Pantheon, I am to enact three different characters at the same time. Can you guess my intention? continued he. Thus it is: but take care what you are about; your life may depend on it. As I am continually meeting with fellows, who boast of their success among the women, I mean, by way of getting the upper hand, to fill my pockets with fictitious love-letters, and read them in company. It will be amusing enough. Happier than my competitors, who make conquests only for the pleasure of the boast, I shall take the credit of intrigue, and spare myself the labour. But vary your writing, so that the manufacture may not be detected by the sameness of the hand.

I then sat down to comply with the commands of don Matthias, who first dictated a tender epistle to this tune: *You did not keep your promise to-night. Ah ! don Matthias, how will you exculpate yourself? My error was a cruel one I But you punish me deservedly for my vanity, in fancying that business and amusement were all to give way, before the pleasure of seeing donna Clara de Mendoza !* After this pretty note, he made me write another, as if from a lady who sacrificed a prince to him; and then a third whose fair writer offered, if she could rely on, his discretion, to embark with him for the shores of Cytherean enchantment. It was not enough to dictate these love-sick strains; he forced me to subscribe them with the most high-flying names in Madrid. I

could not forbear hinting at some little hazard in all this: but he begged me to keep my sage counsels till they were called for. I was obliged to hold my tongue, and dispatch his orders out of hand. That done, he got up, and dressed with my assistance. The letters were put into his pocket, and out he went. I followed him to dinner with don Juan de Moncade, who entertained five or six gentlemen of his acquaintance that day.

There was a grand set-out; and mirth, the best relish, was not wanting to the banquet. All the guests contributed to enliven the conversation, some by wit and humour, others by anecdotes of which the relaters were the heroes. My master would not lose so fine an opportunity of bringing our joint performances to bear. He read them audibly, and with so much assurance, that probably the whole party, with the exception of his secretary, was taken in by the device. Among the company, before whom this trick was so impudently played off, there was one person, by name don Lope de Velasco. This person, a very grave don, instead of making himself merry like the rest with the fictitious triumphs of the reader,, asked him coolly if the conquest of donna Clara had been achieved with any great difficulty? Less than the least, answered don Matthias; the advances were all on her side. She saw me in public, and took a fancy to my person. A scout was commissioned to follow me, and thus she got at

my name and condition. She wrote to me, and gave me an appointment at an hour of the night when the house was sure to be quiet. I was true as the needle to the pole; her bedchamber was the place. . . . But prudence and delicacy forbid my describing what passed there.

At this instance of tender regard for the lady's character, signor de Velasco betrayed some very passionate workings in his countenance. It was easy to see the interest he took in the subject. All these letters, said he to my master, looking at him with an eye of indignation and contempt, are infamous forgeries, and above all that which you boast of having received from donna Clara de Mendoza. There is not in all Spain a more modest young creature than herself. For these two years, a gentleman, at least your equal in birth and personal merit, has been trying every method of insinuating himself into her heart. Scarcely have his assiduities extorted the slightest encouragement: but yet he may flatter himself that, if any thing beyond common civility had been granted at all, it would have been to him only. Well! Who says to the contrary? interrupted don Matthias in a bantering way. I agree with you, that the lady is a very pretty behaved young lady. On my part, I am a very pretty behaved young gentleman. Ergo you may rest assured that nothing took place between us, but what was pretty and well-behaved. Indeed! This is too much, interrupted

don Lope in his turn; let us lay aside this unseasonable jesting. You are an impostor. Donna Clara never gave you an appointment by night. Her reputation shall not be blackened by your ribaldry. But prudence and delicacy forbid my describing what must pass between you and me. With this retort on his lips, he looked contemptuously round, and withdrew with a menacing aspect, which anticipated serious consequences to my judgment. My master, whose courage was better than his cause, held the threats of don Lope in derision. A block-head ! exclaimed he, bursting into a loud fit of laughter. Our knights-errant used to tilt for the beauty of their mistresses; this fellow would engage in the lists for the forlorn hope of virtue in his: he is more ridiculous than his prototypes.

Velasco's retiring, in vain opposed by Moncade, occasioned no interruption to the merriment. The party, without thinking further about it, kept the ball up briskly, and did not part till they had made *iree* with the next day. We went to bed, that is, my master and myself, about five o'clock in the morning. Sleep sat heavy on my eyelids, and, as I thought, was taking permanent possession thereof: but I reckoned without my host; or rather without our porter, who came and waked me in an hour, to say that there was a lad enquiring for me at the door. Oh ! thou infernal porter, muttered I indistinctly, through the interstices of a long yawn, do you consider that

I have but now got to bed ? Tell the little rascal that I am just asleep: he must come again by and by. He insists, replied Cerberus, on speaking with you instantly; his business cannot wait. As that was the case, I got up; put on nothing but my breeches and doublet, and went down stairs, swearing and gaping. My friend, said I, be so good as to let me know what urgent affair procures me the honour of seeing you so early ? I have a letter, answered he, to deliver personally into the hands of signor don Matthias, to be read by him without loss of time; it is of the last consequence to him: pray shew me into his room. As I thought the matter looked serious, I took the liberty of disturbing my master. Excuse me, said I, for waking you; but the pressing nature . . . What do you want ? interrupted he, just in my style with the porter. Sir, said the lad who was at my elbow, here is a letter from don Lope de Velasco. Don Matthias looked at the cover, broke it; and after reading the contents, said to the messenger of don Lope: My good fellow, I never get up before noon, let the party be ever so agreeable; judge whether I can be expected to be stirring by six in the morning, for a small-sword recreation. You may tell your master, that if he chooses to kick his heels at the spot till half past twelve, we will come and see how he looks there: carry him that answer. With this flippant speech, he plunged down snugly

under the bed-clothes, and fell fast asleep again as if nothing had happened.

Between eleven and twelve, he got up and dressed himself with the utmost composure; and went out, telling me that there was no occasion for my attendance : but I was too much on the tenterhooks about the result, to mind his orders. I sneaked after him to Saint Jerome's meadow, where I saw don Lope de Velasco waiting for him. I took my station to watch them; and was an eye-witness to all the circumstances of their rencounter. They saluted, and began their fierce debate without delay. The engagement lasted long. They exchanged thrusts alternately, with equal skill and mettle. The victory, however, was on the side of don Lope: he ran my master through, laid him helpless on the ground, and made his escape, with apparent satisfaction at this severe reprisal. I ran up to the unfortunate don- Matthias; and found him in a most desperate situation. The sight melted me. I could not help weeping at a catastrophe, to which I had been an involuntary contributor. Nevertheless, with all my sympathy, I had still my little wits about me. Home went I in a hurry, without saying a word. I made up a bundle of my own goods and chattels, inadvertently slipping in some odd articles belonging to my master : and when I had deposited this with the barber, where my dress as a fine gentleman was still lodged, I published the news of the fatal acci-

dent. Any gaper might have it for the trouble of listening; and above all I took care to make Rodriguez acquainted with it. He would have been extremely afflicted, but that his own proceedings in this delicate case required all his attention. He called the servants together, ordered them to follow him, and we went all together to Saint Jerome's meadow. Don Matthias was taken up alive, but he died three hours after he was brought home. Thus ended the life of signor don Matthias de Silva, only for having taken a fancy to reading supposititious love-letters unseasonably.

CHAPTER IX.

A new service, after the death of don Matthias de Silva,

SOME days after the funeral, the establishment was paid up and discharged. I fixed my headquarters with the little barber; in a very close connection with whom I began to live. It seemed to promise more pleasure than with Melendez. As I was in no want of money, it was time enough to think of another place: besides, I had got to be rather nice on that head. I would not go into service any more, but in families above the vulgar. In short, I was determined to enquire very strictly into the character of a new place. The best would not be too good; such high pretensions did the late valet of a young nobleman think himself entitled to assume above the common herd of servants.

Waiting till fortune should throw a situation in my way, worthy to be honoured by my acceptance, I thought I could not do better than to devote my leisure to my charming Laura, whom I had not seen since the pleasant occurrence of our double discovery. I could not venture on dressing as don Caesar de Ribera; it would have been an act of mad-

ness to have assumed that style, but as a disguise. Besides that my own suit was not much out of condition, all smaller articles had propagated miraculously in the aforesaid bundle. I made myself up therefore, with the barber's aid, as a sort of middle man between don Ceesar and Gil Blas. In this demy-character, I knocked at Arsenia's door. Laura was alone in the parlour where we had met last. Ah! is it you, cried she, as soon as she saw me; I thought you were lost. You have had leave to come and see me for this week: but it seems you are modest, and do not presume too much on your license.

I made my apology on the score of my master's death, with my own engagements consequent thereupon; and I added in the spirit of gallantry, that in my greatest perplexities, my lovely Laura had always been foremost in my thoughts. That being so, said she, I have no more reproaches to make; and I will frankly own that I have thought of you. As soon as I was acquainted with the untimely end of don Matthias, a plan occurred to me, probably not quite displeasing to you. I have heard my mistress say some time ago, that she wanted a sort of man of business; a good arithmetician, to keep an exact account of our outgoings. I fixed my affections on your lordship; you seem exactly calculated for such an office. I feel myself, answered I, a steward by inspiration. I have read all that Aristotle

has written on finance; and as for reducing it to the modern system of book-keeping. . . . But, my dear girl, there is one impediment in the way. What impediment? said Laura. I have sworn, replied I, never again to live with a commoner: I have sworn by Styx, or something else as binding. If Jupiter could not burst the links of such an oath, judge whether a poor servant ought not to be bound by it. What do you mean by a commoner? rejoined the impetuous abigail: for what do you take us actresses? Do you take us for the ribs of the limbs of the law? for attorney's wives? I would have you to know, my friend, that actresses rank with the first nobility; being only common to the uncommon, and therefore though common, uncommonly illustrious.

On that footing, my uncommon commoner, said I, the post you have destined for me is mine: I shall not lower my dignity by accepting it. No, to be sure, said she: backwards and forwards between a puppy of fashion, and a she-wolf of the stage; why it is exactly preserving an equilibrium of rank in the creation. We are sympathetic animals, just on a level with the people of quality. We have our equipages in the same style; we give our little suppers on the same scale; and on the broad ground we are just of as much use in civil society. In fact, to draw a parallel between a marquis and a player through the space of four and twenty hours, they are just on a par. The marquis, for three-fourths of the time,

ranks above the player by political courtesy and sufferance : the player, during his hour on the stage, overtops the marquis in the part of an emperor or a king, which he better knows how to enact. Thus there seems to be a balance between natural and political nobility, which places us at least on a level with the live lumber of the court. Yes truly, replied I, you are a match for one another, there is no gain-saying it. Bless their dear hearts! the players are not men of straw, as I foolishly believed, and you have made my mouth water to serve such a worshipful fraternity. Well then! resumed she, you have only to come back again in two days. That time will be sufficient to incline my mistress in your favour: I will speak up for you. She is a little under ray influence; I do not fear bringing you under this roof.

I thanked Laura for her good dispositions. My gratitude took the readiest way to prove itself to her comprehension; and my tender thrillings expressed more than words. We had a pretty long conversation together, and it might have lasted till this time, if a little skipping fellow had not come to tell my nymph of the side scenes that Arsenia was enquiring for her. We parted. I left the house, in the sweet hope of soon living there scot-free; and my face was shown up again at the door in two days. I was looking out for you, said my accomplished scout, to

assure you that you are a messmate at this hotise; Come, follow me; I will introduce you to my mistress. At these words, she led me into a suite of five or six rooms on a floor, in a regular gradation of costly furniture and tasteful equipment.

What luxury! What magnificence! I thought myself in presence of a vice-queen, or, to mend, the poverty of the comparison, in a fairy palace, where all the riches of the earth were collected. In fact, thei'e were the productions of many people and of jnany countries, so that one might describe this residence as the temple of a goddess, whither every traveller brought some rare product of his native land, as a votive offering. The divinity was reclining on a voluptuous satin sofa: she was lovely in my eyes, and pampered with the fumes of daily sacrifices. She was in a tempting dishabille, and her polished hands were elegantly busy about a new head-dress for her appearance that evening. Madam, said the abigail, here is that said steward; take my word for it, you will never get one more to your liking. Arsenia looked at me very inquisitively, and did not find me disagreeable. Why this is something, Laura, cried she; a very smart youth truly; I foresee that we shall do very well together. Then directing her discourse to me, Young man, added she, you suit me to an hair, and I have only one observation to make; you will be pleased with me,

if I am so with you. I answered that I should do my utmost to serve her to her heart's content. As I found that the bargain was struck, I went immediately to fetch in my own little accommodations, and returned to take formal possession.

CHAPTER X.

Much such another as the foregoing.

IT was near the time of the doors opening. My mistress told me to attend her to the theatre with Laura. We went into her dressing-room, where she threw off her ordinary attire, and assumed a more splendid costume for the stage. When the performance began, Laura shewed me the way, and seated herself by my side where I could see and hear the actors to advantage. They disgusted me for the most part, doubtless because don Pompeyo had prejudiced me against them. Several of them were loudly applauded; but the fable of the pig would now and then come across my mind.

Laura told me the names of the actors and actresses, as they made their entrances. Nor did she stop there; for the hussy gave some highly-seasoned anecdotes into the bargain. Her characters were, crack-brain for this, impertinent fellow for that. That delicate sample of sin, who depends on her wantonness for her attractions, goes by the name of Rosarda: a bad speculation for the company! She ought to be sent with the next cargo to New Spain: she may answer the purpose of the viceroy. Take particular notice of that brilliant star now coming

forward; that magnificent setting sun, increasing in bulk as its fires become less vivid. That is Casilda. If from that distant day when she first laid herself open to her lovers, she had required from each of them a brick to build a pyramid, like an indent Egyptian princess, the edifice by this time would have mounted to the third heaven. In short, Laura tore all character to pieces by her scandal. Heaven forgive her wicked tongue! She blasphemed her own mistress.

And yet I must own my weakness. I was in love with the wench, though her morals were not strictly pure. She scandalized with so winning a malignity, that one liked her the better for it. Off went the jill-flirt between the acts, to see if Arsenia wanted her: but instead of coming straight back to her place, she amused herself behind the scenes, in laying herself out for the little flatteries of all the wheedling fellows. I dogged her once, and found that she had a very large acquaintance. No less than three players did I reckon up, who stopped to chat with her one after the other, and they seemed to me to be on a very improvable footing. This was not quite so well; and, for the first time in my life, I felt what jealousy was. I returned to my seat so absent and out of spirits, that Laura remarked it as soon as she came back to me. What is the matter, Gil Blas? said she with astonishment: what blue devil has perched upon your shoulder in my ab-

sence? You look gloomy and out of temper. *Mf* fairy queen, answered I, it is not without reason; you have an ugly kick in your gallop. I have observed you with the players. . . . So, so! An admirable subject for a long face, interrupted she with a laugh. What! That is your trouble, is it? Why really! You are a very silly swain: but you will get better notions among us. You will fall by degrees into our easy manners. No jealousy, my dear creature: you will be completely laughed out of it in the theatrical world. The passion is scarcely known there. Fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, and cousins, are all upon a liberal plan of community, and often make a strange jumble of relation* ships.

After having warned me to take no umbrage, but to look at every thing like a philosophical spectator, she vowed that I was the happy mortal, who had found the way to her heart. She then declared that she should love me always, and only me. On this assurance, which a man might have doubted without criminal scepticism, I promised her not to be alarmed any more, and kept my word. I saw her, on that very evening, whisper and giggle with more men than one. At the end of the play, we returned home with our mistress, whither Florimonde came soon after to supper with three old noblemen and a player. Besides Laura and myself, the establishment consisted of a cook-maid, a coachman, and a

little footboy. We all laboured in our respective vocations. The lady of the frying-pan, no less an adept than dame Jacintha, was assisted in her cookery by the coachman. The waiting-woman and the little footboy laid the cloth, and I set out the sideboard, magnificently furnished with plate, offered up at the shrine of our green-room goddess. There was every variety of wines; and I played the cup-bearer, to shew my mistress the versatility of my talents. I sweated at the impudence of the actresses during supper: they gave themselves quality airs, and affected the tone of high life. Far from giving their guests all their style and titles, they did not even vouchsafe a simple "Your lordship;" but called them familiarly by their proper names. To be sure, the old fools encouraged their vanity, by forgetting their own distance. The player, for his part, in the habits of the heroic cast, lived on equal terms with them: he challenged them to drink, and in every respect took the upper hand. In good truth, said I to myself, while Laura was demonstrating the equality of the marquis and the comedian during the day, she might have drawn a still stronger inference for the night, since they pass it so merrily in drinking together.

Arsenia and Florimonde were naturally frolicsome. A thousand broad hints escaped them, intermingled with small favours, and then a coquetish revolt at their own freedom, which were all

seasoned exactly to the taste of these old sinners. While my mistress was entertaining one of them with a little harmless toying, her friend, between the other elders, had not taken the cue of Susanna. While I was contemplating this picture, which had but too many attractions for a knowing youth like me, the desert was brought in. Then I set the bottles and glasses on the table, and made my escape, to sup with Laura, who was waiting for me* How now! Gil Blas, said she, what do you think of those noblemen above stairs? Doubtless, answered I, they are deeply smitten with Arsenia and Florimonde* No, replied she, they are old sensualists who hang about our sex without any particular attachment. All they ask is some little frivolous compliance; and they are generous enough to pay well for the least trifle of amorous endearment. Heaven be praised, Florimonde and my mistress are at present without any serious engagements: I mean that they have no husband-like lovers, who expect to engross all the pleasures of a house, because they stand to the expences. For my part, I am\ very glad of it; and maintain that a sensible woman of the world Ought to refuse all such monopolies. Why take a master? It is better to support an establishment by retail trade, than to confine one's self to chamber practice on such terms.

When. Laura's tongue was wound up, and it was seldom down, words seemed to cost her nothings

What a glorious volubility! She told a thousand stories of the actresses belonging to the prince's company; and I gathered from her whole drift, that I could not be better situated to take a scientific view of the cardinal vices. Unfortunately I was at an age, when they inspire but little horror; and this abigail had the art of colouring her corruptions so lusciously, as to hide their deformities and heighten their meretricious lure. She had not time to open the tenth part of her theatrical budget; for she did not talk more than three hours. The senators and the player went away with Florimonde, whom they saw safe home.

When they were gone, my mistress said to me ; Here, Gil Blas, are ten pistoles to go to market to-morrow. Five or six of our gentlemen and ladies are to dine here: take care that we are well served. Madam, answered I, with this sum there shall be a banquet for the whole troop. My friend, replied Arsenia, correct your phraseology; you must say company, not troop. A troop of robbers, a troop of beggars, a troop of authors; but a company of comedians ; especially when you have to mention the actors of Madrid. I begged my mistress's pardon for having used so disrespectful a term; and entreated her to excuse my ignorance. I protested that henceforward, when I spoke collectively of so august a body, I would always say the company.

CHAPTER XL

A theatrical life, and an author's life,

I TOOK the field the next morning, to open my campaign as steward. It was a fish day; for which reason I bought some good fat chickens, rabbits, partridges, and every variety of game. As the gentlemen of the sock and buskin are not on the best possible terms with the church, they are not over scrupulous in their observance of the rubric. I brought home provisions, more than enough for a dozen portly gentlemen to have fasted on during a whole Lent. The cook had a good morning's work. While she was getting dinner ready, Arsenia got up, and spent the early part of the day at her toilet. At noon came two of the players; signor Rosimiro and signor Ricardo. Afterwards two actresses, Constance and Celinaura; then entered Florimonde, attended by a man who had all the appearance of a most spruce cavalier. He had his hair dressed in the most elegant manner, his hat set off with a fashionable plume, very tight breeches, and a shirt with a laced frill. His gloves and his handkerchief were in the hilt of his sword; and he wore his cloak with a grace altogether peculiar to himself

With a prepossessing physiognomy and a good

person, there was something extraordinary in the first blush of him. This gentleman, said I to myself, must be an original. I was not mistaken; his singularities were striking. On his entrance, he ran, with open arms, and embraced the company, male and female, one after another. His grimaces were more extravagant than any I had yet seen in this region of foppery. My prediction was not falsified by his discourse. He dwelt with fondness on every syllable he uttered; and pronounced his words in an emphatic tone, with gestures and glances artfully adapted to the subject. I had the curiosity to ask Laura who this strange figure might be. I forgive you, said she, this instance of an inquisitive disposition. It is impossible to see and to hear signor Carlos Alonso de la Ventoleria for the first time, without having such a natural longing. I will paint him to the life. In the first place, he was originally a player.' He left the stage through caprice, and has since repented in sober sadness of the step, Did you notice his dark hair? Every thread of it is pencilled, as well as his eyebrows and his whiskers? He was born in the reign of Saturn's father, in the age before the golden; but as there were no parish registers at that time, he avails himself of the primitive barbarism, and dates at least twenty centuries below the true epoch. Moreover, his self-sufficiency keeps pace with his antiquity. He passed the olympiads of his youth in the grossest ignorance;

but taking a fancy to become learned about the Christian era, he engaged a private tutor, who taught him to spell in Greek and Latin. Nay more,, he knows by heart an infinite number of good stories,, which he has given so often as genuine, that he actually begins to believe them himself. They are eternally pressed into the service; and it may truly be said that his wit shines at the expense of his memory. He is thought to be a great actor. I am willing to believe it implicitly; but I must own, he is not to my taste. He declaims here sometimes; and I have observed, among other defects, an affectation in his delivery, with a tremulousness of voice, bordering on the antiquated and ridiculous.

Such was the portrait, drawn by my abigail, of this honorary spouter: and never was mortal of a more stately carriage. He prided himself too on being an agreeable companion. He never was at a loss for a commodity of trijbe remarks, which he delivered with an air of authority. OB the other hand, the Thespian fraternity were not much addicted to silence. They began canvassing their absent colleagues in a manner little consistent with charity, it must be owned ; but this is a failing, pardonable in players as well as in authors. The fire grew brisk, and the satire personal. You have not heard, ladies, said Rosimiro, a new stroke of our dear brother, Cesarino* This very morning he bought silk stockings, ribbons, and laces, and sent them to rehearsal

by a little page, as a present from a countess. What a knavish trick! said signor de la Ventoleria, with a smile made up of fatuity and conceit. In my time there was more honesty; we never thought of descending to such impositions. To be sure, women of fashion were tender of our inventive faculties; nor did they leave such purchases to be made out of our own pockets: it was their whim. By the honour of our house, said Ricardo in the same strain, that whim of theirs is lasting; and if it were allowable to kiss and tell. . . . But one must be secret on these occasions, above all when persons of a certain rank are concerned.

Gentlemen, interrupted Florimonde, a truce, if you please, with your conquests and successes; they are known over the whole earth. A-propos of Ismene. It is said that the nobleman, who has fooled away so much money upon her, has at length recovered his senses. Yes indeed, exclaimed Constance; and I can tell you besides, that she has lost by the same stroke a snug little hero of the counting-house, whose ruin would otherwise have been signed and sealed. I have the thing from the first hand. Her Mercury made an unfortunate mistake: for he carried a tender invitation to each, and delivered them wrong. These were great losses, my darling, quoth Florimonde. Oh! as for that of the lord, replied Constance, it is a very trifling matter. The man of blood had almost run through his estate;

but the little fellow with the pen behind his ear waff but just coming into play. He had never been fleeced before: it is a pity he should have escaped so easily.

Such was the tenor of the conversation before dinner; and it was not much mended in its morality at table. As I should never have done with the recital of all their ribaldry and nonsense, the reader will excuse the omission, and pass on to the entrance of a poor devil, ycleped an author, who called just before the cloth was taken away.

Our little footboy came and said to my mistress in an audible voice: Madam, a man in a dirty shirt, splashed up to his middle, with very much the look of a poet, saving your presence, wants to speak with you. Let him walk up, answered Arsenia, Keep your seats, gentlemen; it is only an author. To be sure so it was: one whose tragedy had been accepted; and he was bringing my mistress her part. His name was Pedro de Moya. On coming into the room, he made five or six low bows to the company, who neither rose, nor took the least notice of him. Arsenia just returned his superabundant civilities with a slight inclination of the head. He came forward with tremor and embarrassment. He dropped his gloves, and let his hat fall. He ventured to pick them up again; then advanced towards my mistress, **and** presenting to her a paper with more ceremony **than** a defendant an affidavit to the judge of the court: Madam, said he, have the goodness to receive

under your protection the part I take the liberty of offering you. She stretched out her hand for it with cold and contemptuous indifference; nor did she condescend even to notice the compliment by a look.

But our author was not disheartened. Seizing this opportunity to distribute the cast, he gave one character to Rosimiro and another to Florimonde, who treated him just as genteelly as Arsenia had done. On the contrary, the low comedian, a very pleasant fellow, as those gentlemen for the most part affect to be, insulted him with the most cutting sarcasms. Pedro de Moya was not made of stone. Yet he dared not take up the aggressor, lest his piece should suffer for it. He withdrew without saying a word, but stung to the quick, as it seemed to me, by his reception. He could not fail, in the transports of his anger, mentally to apostrophize the players as they deserved : and the players, when he was gone, began to talk of authors in return with infinite deference and kindness. It should seem, said Florimonde, as if signor Pedro de Moya did not go away very well pleased.

Well! madam, cried Rosimiro, and why should you trouble yourself about that ? Are we to study the feelings of authors ? If we were to admit them upon equal terms, it would only be the way to spoil them. I know that contemptible squad; I know them of old: they would soon forget their distance. There is no dealing with them but as slaves; and as

for tiring their patience, never fear that. Though they may take themselves off in a pet sometimes, the itch of writing brings them back again; and they are raised to the third heavens, if we will but condescend to support their pieces. You are right, said Arsenia; we never lose an author till we have made his fortune. When that is done, as soon as we have provided for the ungrateful devils, they get to be in good case, and then they run restive. Luckily the manager does not break his heart after them, and one is just as good as another to the public.

These liberal and sagacious remarks met with their full share of approbation. It was carried unanimously that authors, though treated rather too scurvily behind the scenes, were on the whole the obliged persons. These fretters of an hour upon the stage ranked the inhabitant of Parnassus below themselves; and malice could not degrade him lower

CHAPTER XII

Gil Blas acquires a relish for the theatre, and takes a full swing of its pleasures, but soon becomes, disgusted.

THE party sat at table till it was time to go to the theatre. I went after them, and saw the play again that evening. I took such delight in it, that I was for attending every day. I never missed, and by degrees got accustomed to the actors. Such is the force of habit, I was particularly delighted with those who were most artificial and unnatural; nor was I singular in my taste.

The beauties of composition affected me much on the same principle as the excellence of representation. There were some pieces with which I was enraptured. I liked, among others, those which brought all the cardinals or the twelve peers of France upon the stage. I got hold of striking passages in these incomparable performances. I recollect that in two days I learnt by heart a whole play, called, *The Queen of Flowers*, The Rose, who was the queen, had the Violet for her maid of honour, and the Jessamin for her prime minister. I could conceive nothing more elegant or **refined**: such **pro-**

ductions seemed to be the triumph of our Spanish wit and invention.

I was not content to store my memory and discipline my mind with the choicest selections from these dramatic masterpieces: but I was bent on polishing my taste to the highest perfection. To secure this grand object, I listened with greedy ears to every word which fell from the lips of the players. If they commended a piece, I was ravished by it: but suppose they pronounced it bad ? why then I maintained that it was infernal stuff* I conceived that they must determine the merits of a play, as a jeweller the water of a diamond. And yet the tragedy by Pedro de Moya was eminently successful, though they had predicted its entire miscarriage. This however was no disparagement of their critical skill in my estimation ; and I had rather believe the audience to be divested of common sense, than doubt the infallibility of the company. But they assured me on all hands, that their judgments were usually confirmed by the rule of contraries. It seemed to be a maxim with them, to set their faces point blank against the taste of the public; and as a proof of this, there were a thousand cases in point of unexpected successes and failures. All these testimonies were scarcely sufficient to undeceive me.

I shall never forget what happened one day at the first representation of a new comedy. The performers had pronounced it uninteresting and tedious; they

had even prophesied that it would not be heard to the end. Under this impression, they got through the first act, which was loudly applauded. This was very astonishing! They played the second act; the audience liked it still better than the first. The actors were confounded. What the devil, said Rosimiro, this comedy succeeds! At last they went on in the third act, which rose as a third act ought to rise. I am quite thrown upon my back, said Ricardo; we thought this piece would not be relished; and all the world are mad after it. Gentlemen, said one of the players archly, it is because we happened accidentally to overlook all the wit.

From this time I held my opinion no longer of the players as competent judges, and began to appreciate their merit more truly than they had estimated that of the authors. All the lampoons which were current about them were fully justified. The actors and actresses ran riot on the applauses of the town, and stood so high in their own conceit, as to think that they conferred a favour by appearing on the boards. I was shocked at their public misconduct; but unfortunately reconciled myself too easily to their private manners, and plunged into debauchery. How could I do otherwise? Every word they uttered was poison in the ears of youth, and *every* scene that was presented, an alluring picture of corruption. Had I been a stranger to what passed with Casilda, with Constance, and with the othet

actresses, Arsenia's house alone would have been sufficient for my ruin. Besides the old noblemen of whom I have spoken, there came thither young debauchees of fashion, who forestalled their inheritances by the disinterested mediation of money-lenders : and sometimes we had officers under government, who, were so far from receiving fees, as at their public boards* that they paid most exorbitant ones for the privilege of mixing with such worshipful society.

Florimonde, who lived at next door, dined and supped with Arsenia every day. Their long intimacy surprised every one. Coquets were not thought usually to maintain so good an understanding with each other. It was concluded that they would quarrel, sooner or later, about some paramour; but such reasoners could not see into the hearts of these exemplary friends. They were united in the bonds of indissoluble love. Instead of harbouring jealousy, like other women, they had every thing in common. They had rather divide the plunder of mankind, than childishly fall out, and contend for such trumpery as hearts and affections.

Laura, after the example of these two illustrious partners, turned the fresh season of youth to the best advantage. She had told me that I should see strange doings. And yet I did not take up the jealous part, I had promised to adopt the principles of the company on that score. For some days I kept my thoughts to myself. I only just took the

liberty of asking her the names of the men whom she favoured with her private ear. She always told me that they were uncles or cousins. From what a prolific family was she sprung! King Priam had no luck in propagation, compared with her ancestors. Nor did this precious abigail confine herself to her uncles and cousins: she went now and then to lay a trap for unwary aliens, and personate the widow of quality under the auspices of the discreet old dowager above mentioned. In short Laura, to hit off her character exactly, was just as young, just as pretty, and just as loose as her mistress, who had no other advantage over her, than that of figuring in a more public capacity.

I was borne down by the torrent for three weeks, and ran the career of dissipation in my turn. But I must at the same time say for myself, that in the midst of pleasure, I frequently felt the still small voice of conscience, arising from the impression of a serious education, which mixed gall in the Circean cup. Riot could not altogether get the better of remorse: on the contrary, the pangs of the last grew keener with the more shameful indulgence of the first; and, by a happy effect of my temperament, the disorders of a theatrical life began to make me shudder. Ah! wretch, said I to myself, is it thus that you make good the hopes of your family? Is it not enough to have thwarted their pious intentions, by not following your destined course of life as an in-

Structor of youth ? Need your condition of a servant hinder you from living decently and soberly ? Are such monsters of iniquity fit companions for you *t* Envy, hatred, and avarice are predominant here; intemperance and idleness have purchased the fee-simple there: the pride of some is aggravated into the most barefaced impudence, and modesty is turned out of doors by the common consent of all. The business is settled: I will not live any longer with the seven deadly sins.

END OF vot. I.

