

**The Pretty Sister Of José**

**By**

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## CHAPTER I.

It had taken him a long time, and it had cost him--José--much hard labor, to prepare for his aged grandmother and Pepita the tiny home outside Madrid, to which he at last brought them in great triumph one hot summer's day, when the very vine-leaves and orange-trees themselves were dusty. It had been a great undertaking for him in the first place, for he was a slow fellow--José; slow as he was dull and kind and faithful to Pepita and the grandmother. He had a body as big as an ox, and a heart as big as his body, but he was slow and dull in everything but one thing--that was his carpenter work. He was well enough at that, and more than well enough, for he had always had a fancy and a knack for it from the time when as a boy he had worked in his uncle's vineyards and tilled his fields and fed his beasts. His uncle had been counted a rich man among his neighbors, but when his sister and her husband died and left the two children, José and Pepita, penniless, and with no protector save himself and their grandmother, already an old woman, it was upon the grandmother that the burden fell, for he did nothing for them except to give them, grudgingly now and then, a few poor vegetables or a little fallen fruit. It is true that when José was old enough to labor in the fields he gave him work to do, but he paid him ill and treated him ill also, giving him poor food and harsh words, and often enough blows the poor lad did not deserve. So it came about that while he was at his work José fell into the way of planning to escape from all this, and make another home for himself and his pretty child-sister and the old woman. He knew there was only one way to do it: if he could

carry his one gift where it would be of more use to him than it could possibly be in a poor small village; if he could carry it to a market where there were more people and where work was better paid for. Where the king and queen were, of course, there must be more money, and one could find more to do and live better. It was Padre Alejandro, the village priest, who had suggested this to him first. He was a kind, jovial old fellow, the padre, and had seen something of the world, too, long ago, which was perhaps why he was never very hard upon a simple sinner who went to confession, and could give a bit of unecclesiastical advice now and then. He had always been kind to José, and as Pepita had grown prettier and prettier every day, he had often spoken of her to old Jovita, and said she should be well taught and taken care of, and once even--when she had come into the house with a basket of grapes on her little head, rose-flushed with the hot day, her black hair curling in moist silken rings on her forehead--he had been betrayed into the worldly remark that such pretty young things ought to have something brighter to look forward to than hard work and scant fare, which made them old before their time, and left them nothing to look back upon. But he only said it to Jovita, and Jovita only stared a little, it never having occurred to her that there was anything much in the world but hard labor and poverty. And what difference did it make that one was pretty, except that it became more probable that some gay, lazy fellow would pretend to fall in love with one, and then after marriage leave one all the work to do and a houseful of hungry children to feed? She had seen that often enough. Had it not been so with Pepita's mother, who died at twenty-five almost an old woman, worn out with trouble and hard

usage?

But afterward, when Padre Alejandro saw José, he spoke of Pepita to him also, though only as if incidentally among other things.

"She should marry some good fellow who could take care of her," he said.

"If you go to Madrid it will also be better for her."

And so the end of it all was that after much slow planning and many hopes and fears, and more than one disappointment, there came a day when the uncle was thrown into a violent rage by losing his best and most patient worker, and the poor cottage stood empty, and José and Pepita and Jovita found themselves in a new world.

What a new world it seemed to them all! Through the help of Padre Alejandro and an old friend of his, José had work bringing him pay which appeared absolute wealth to him. The cottage, with its good walls and roof, its neat rooms and garden, being compared with the mere hut they had left behind, seemed a palace. For the first few days, indeed, Jovita was scarce at ease; to feel no necessity for heavy labor, to have food enough, to be so comfortable, seemed unnatural, as if it might finally bring disaster. But it was not so with Pepita. All the joy of youth, all its delights and expectations filled her heart. To be so near the great, grand city, to look forward to seeing all its splendors, to walk in its streets, to share in the amusements she had heard of--this was rapture.

If she had been pretty before, she became now ten times prettier; her lovely eyes grew larger with laughter and wonder and joy; her light feet almost danced; her color was like that of a damask rose. Each day brought new innocent happiness to her. When José came home from his work at night, she sat by his side and asked him a thousand questions. Had he seen the palace--had he seen the king or the queen--what were the people doing--were the public gardens beautiful?

And then she would take the guitar, which had belonged to her gay father in his gayest days, and sit out in the little garden, among the vines and lemon-trees and oleanders, and play and sing one song after another, while José smoked and rested, and wondered at and delighted in her. It was she who had inherited all her father's gayety and spirit. José had none of them, and, being slow and simple, had always found her a wonder and a strange pleasure. She had, indeed, been the one bright thing in his life, and even her wilfulness had a charm for him. He always gave way to it and was content. Had she not even once defied the uncle when no one else would have dared to do it? holding her little head up and confronting him in such a burst of pretty rage that the old curmudgeon had been quite quelled for once in his life, and had ever afterward treated her with a kind of respect, even saying to a neighbor that "the lad was a fool, but the little devil had something in her, after all."

In all his plannings it was Pepita José had thought of first. Madrid

to him was only a sort of setting for Pepita; the clean, comfortable cottage a home for Pepita; the roses and lemon blossoms she would wear in her hair; under the fine grape-vines she would sit in the evening and play on her guitar. His wages would give her comfort and buy her pretty simple dresses. And then every one would see her beauty, and when she went to mass, or with himself and Jovita to the Prado or the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, people would look at her and tell each other how pretty she was, and all this would end in time in a good marriage perhaps. And she would be loved by some nice fellow, and have a home of her own, and be as happy as the day was long. There was only one obstacle in the way of this excellent plan; it was only a small obstacle, but--it was Pepita herself! Singularly enough, Pepita had a fixed antipathy to marriage. She had early announced her intention of remaining unmarried, and those young men who in her native village had desired to make love to her had been treated with disapproval and disdain. Knowing as little of love as a young bird unfledged, her coldness was full of innocent cruelty. She made no effort to soften any situation. She was willing to dance and laugh and sing, but when she found herself confronting lover-like tremors and emotion, she was unsparing candor itself.

"Why should I listen to you?" she had said more than once. "I do not love you. You do not please me. When you wish to marry me, I hate you. Go away, and speak to some one else."

"I will never marry any one," she said to José. "I will stay with you

and be happy. Girls who marry grow ugly and are wretched. Their husbands do not love them after they are married. They must work and slave and take care of the house and the children. Look at Tessa! Her husband used to be wild about her. She could make him pale with misery if she turned away from him; he used to follow her about everywhere. Now he makes eyes at Juanita, and beats Tessa if she complains. And don't we both remember how it was with our mother? I will never love any one, and never be married. Let them love me if they are so stupid, but I will be left alone. I care nothing for any of them."

The truth is that José knew it was what she remembered of her mother's unhappiness and what Jovita had told her, which was the foundation of all this. Did he not remember it himself, and remember, with a shudder, those first miserable years of their childhood--the great, beautiful, wretched eyes of their mother, their gay, handsome father, and his careless cruelty and frequent brutality? Had not Pepita and himself clung together hidden in the loft at night, listening to their mother's sobs, and often to the sound of blows and curses rained down upon her because she was no longer a beauty, and there were beauties who had smiles to bestow on handsome fellows who were free, and even upon those who were not? It was enough to irritate any handsome fellow--this one had thought--to come home to a squalid place after enjoyment, and be forced to face poverty and children and a haggard wife with large staring eyes, red with weeping. Yes, Pepita and José remembered all this, and upon Pepita's character it had left curious traces. Young as she was, she had awakened quite grand passions in more than one heart,

and on two or three occasions the suitors had been of far better fortune than herself--one of them, indeed, being the only son of a rich farmer, who might have chosen a wife of much greater importance than this pretty, scornful child, and whose family rebelled bitterly against his folly, and at last sent him away to Seville, but not before Pepita herself had coolly trodden him under her small feet.

"I like you less than any of them," she said, fixing her great, direct eyes upon him when he revealed his frenzy. "Go and marry that girl your father chose for you--if she will have you. They have no need to be afraid and speak ill of me. I don't want you. I can't bear to have you stand near me."

To José it never occurred to complain of her, but Jovita's sense of worldly advantage was outraged at this time, and she did not hesitate to express herself with much freedom and grumbling.

"God knows, I want no haste," she said; "but this is a chance for any girl. And see what a fool she is. But that is as it always happens. There will come along some worthless fellow, and she will be fooled like the rest, and be ready enough to run after him."

"I!" said Pepita, who stood in the doorway. "I!" And she opened her dark eyes in genuine anger and amazement.

"Yes, you," answered Jovita. "And you will be worse than any of them."



Girls who think themselves too good to be spoken to are always easiest to coax when they find their match. Let him come, and you'll drop like a ripe grape."

"He will never come," said Pepita. "Never!" And there was not a shade of doubt in her look--nothing but cold indignation at Jovita's ill-humor.

"I am not afraid of men. They are all stupid. They think they can have anything they want, and they can have nothing. They have to ask, and it is the girls who can say 'No;' and then they are miserable, and beg and beg until one detests them. If any one said 'No' to me, I would not let them see it hurt me. They should think I did not care."

"You will not always say 'No,'" grumbled Jovita. "Wait till the day for 'Yes' comes. You'll say it fast enough. That's the way with women."

A bewitching little smile slowly curved Pepita's lips and crept into her eyes.

"I am not a woman," she said, looking out at the sun-warmed vineyards.

"He said so himself. Felipe said, 'You are not a woman; you are a witch, and no one can touch your heart or conquer you.' I will be a witch."

Secretly she had liked those words better than any of the adoring praises she had heard before. She liked the suggestion that she was invincible and safe from all danger--to be a witch--to be free from all this disastrous folly--to be unconquerable. Yes, that pleased her. It

was not her fault that they would fall in love with her. What did she do to them? Nothing. She never allowed them to come near her or touch her; she never gave them tender glances or words. She laughed and was Pepita--that was all. Then it was no fault of hers.

And yet her little heart was warm enough. She loved José passionately; she loved Jo-vita; she loved little children and animals, and they loved her in return; old men and women adored her because of her simple, almost childish kindness and her readiness to help those who needed her young strength and bright spirit. It was only men who made love who were shown no mercy. She did not know that they needed mercy. She did not understand--that was all. It was as José had known it would be. When on the first holiday he took her to the public gardens with Jovita, every one who passed them gave her a second look; many turned to watch her; certainly there was not a man who did not glance over his shoulder at the bewitching girlish figure with the small round waist, at the piquant radiant face, at the well-carried little head with the red rose blooming in its cloud of soft black hair.

It was not long before two or three who were José's fellow-workmen sought him out and greeted him with great warmth. They had, it appeared, a great deal to say and many attentions to lavish upon him. Such a fine fellow, this José--such a good fellow--such a workman as was seldom seen in Madrid. And what a fine day for pleasure. And the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto--there never were such gardens for sport. And all the time

each one looked at Pepita, and lucky indeed was the man with mother and sisters to help him to make friends. And never had old Jovita met with such civilities, and encountered such deference. Pepita had the joy of a young bird in its first flight. The air of gayety enlivening everything, the people in their holiday clothes, the blue sky, the sunshine, the cheap simple pleasures of the day, were intoxicating delights to her. She made friends with the girls and their parents, and was even gracious to the young men who hung about José, and somehow seemed to find his neighborhood more attractive than any other. It was from one of these young men (his name was Manuel) she first heard of Sebastiano--the gay, the wonderful, the renowned Sebastiano. He had asked her, this Manuel, if she was going to the Plaza de Toros to see the bull-fight the following week, and when she said she did not know--that she had never seen a bull-fight--he found a great deal to say. He described the wonders of the great bull ring, where twelve thousand people could be accommodated, and where grand and beautiful ladies richly dressed and surrounded by their lovers and husbands uttered cries of joy and excitement as the fight became more dangerous, and both bulls and toreadors showed greater courage and fire; he described the costumes, the music, the picadors dashing in upon their horses; the banderilleros with their darts and ribbons; the matador with his reckless daring, his nerves and muscles of steel, and his lightning leaps. And then he described Sebastiano. Never before, it appeared from his enthusiasm, had Madrid known such a matador as Sebastiano. Never one so handsome, so dashing, so universally adored. When he appeared in the ring, what a roar of applause went up. When he made his proud bow to the president,

and said, "I go to slay this bull for the honor of the people of Madrid and the most excellent president of this tourney," and threw his hat away and moved forward, waving his scarlet cloak, what excitement there was awakened. Songs were sung about him in the streets, fans were ornamented with pictures of his daring deeds, there were stories of great ladies who had wept their eyes out for love of him, and as to the women of his own class, there was not a girl in Madrid who did not dream of him.

"Why?" said Pepita, in her cold, soft voice, and with the simply cold and curious look in her great, richly lashed eyes.

"Because they are in love with him--all of them," replied Manuel, sweepingly.

"Why?" said Pepita, again.

"Why?" Manuel echoed, somewhat bewildered by the frank, indifferent ignoring of all natural reasons in this question--"why? Because he is so tall and strong and well made, because he is handsome, because he is more daring and graceful than any of the others--because he is Sebastiano."

Pepita laughed, and opened and shut her fan quickly.

"Why do you laugh?" inquired Manuel.

"I was thinking how he must despise them," she answered.

"Oh, no," said Manuel, who was not very clever; "he is always good to women. There was Sarita--a poor little thing who had always lived in the country. She saw him at her first bull-fight and was never happy afterward. She could think of nothing else, and she was too innocent to hide it. She used to slip away from home and contrive to follow him when he did not see her. She found a woman who knew some one who knew him, and she gave her all her little savings in presents to bribe her to be her friend and talk to her about him. Once or twice she met him, and because she was such a pretty little one, he spoke kindly to her and praised her eyes and her dancing. He did not know she was in love with him."

Pepita laughed again.

"Why do you do that?" Manuel asked.

"He knew," said Pepita. "He would think she was, even if she cared nothing for him, and since she did care he would know before she did and would be proud of it, and make it as much worse as he could."

Manuel gazed at her a moment in silence, twirling his rather small mustacha. This beautiful, cool, mocking little person, the melting softness of whose eyes and lips should have promised such feminine

tenderness and emotion, bewildered him greatly; it was plain that she was wholly unmoved by the glories of Sebastiano, and saw no glamour in his romances. What other girl would have asked "Why?"--and in that tone? It was difficult to go on with his story.

"He could not help it that she was in love with him," he said. "And she could not help it."

"Why?" inquired Pepita for the third time, and with a prettier coolness than before.

"Why," stammered Manuel, "because--because that is the way with all of them."

Pepita showed all her little gleaming teeth, and then put the stem of a rose between them and held it there like a cigarette as she looked under her eyelashes at the people. The rose was not as red as her scornful little mouth.

"He was always kind to her when he saw her," continued Manuel. "Once he gave her his devisa. When she died she held it in her hand and would not let it go. It was buried with her. She was a pretty child--Sarita--but she had always lived in the country and knew nothing."

"I have always lived in the country and I know nothing," said Pepita,

mocking him with her great eyes; "but I can help anything I choose. It should be the others who cannot help it."

She thought him dull and tiresome, and soon wished he would go away, but he could not help it, and lingered about with all sorts of stupid excuses. The more she bewildered him, the more he was fascinated. It was almost enough to stand and stare at her and hear her voice as she talked to the others. How pretty she was--that girl--how she held her head as if she was some high-born lady instead of a peasant! When some passer-by, more bold than the rest, made (loud enough to be heard) some comment upon her beauty, it did not disturb her in the least--it was as if it were nothing to her. Was it possible that there could live a girl who did not care that she was so pretty? But to imagine that she did not care was to make a great mistake--she cared very much. Ever since she had been a tiny child, her little mirror and the water of the fountain had reflected back to her this pretty face, with its soft rose of cheek and mouth, its dark liquid eyes, and soft babyish rings of hair curling on the forehead. She had always heard too that she was pretty, and as she had grown older she had found out something else, namely, that she had a power more strong and subtle than that of her beauty--a power people did not even try to resist. She did not call it by any name herself or understand it in the least. She often wondered at it, and even sometimes had a childish secret terror lest the Evil One might have something to do with it; particularly when without making any effort, when simply standing apart and looking on at the rest, with a little smile she had drawn to her side the stupid love-making for which she

cared nothing. It was not so with Dolores and Maria and Isabella, who were pretty too. Somehow, handsome as they were, they must use their eyes on their lovers, they must laugh and dance and talk to be adored, while she need do nothing but be Pepita.

When, late that evening, she sat with José under the vines, the air about them heavy with jasmine and orange and lemon blossoms, she asked a great many questions about the bull-fight. It must be a grand thing to see--so many people, such gay colors, such music. José could describe it better than Manuel. He must tell her all about it.

He described it as well as he could, and in spite of his slow speech made quite an exciting picture for her; or rather she found it exciting, as she found all things just now in their novelty. Before Jovita and she had arrived, while he was making his small preparations for them, he had seen a bull-fight or so, and no point of detail had escaped his deliberate mind. He always remembered things--José.

"But you shall go," he said; "you shall go and see for yourself the very next time. It comes next week. We will go and take Jovita."

Pepita clapped her hands for joy. She sprang up and danced a few steps in her childish delight.

"That will be happiness," she said. "What happiness! Perhaps the king and queen will be there!"



"You will see Sebastiano," said José, seriously.

"I do not care for Sebastiano," cried Pepita, petulantly.

"You do not care," said José, in blank amaze, "for Sebastiano? You do not care?"

Pepita shrugged her shoulders.

"They talk too much of him," she answered, "and he is too vain. He thinks all women are in love with him, and that if a girl comes from the country she knows nothing, and will die of love if she only sees him."

"I did not know that," said José, staring. "I never heard them say so. They call him a fine fellow."

"I never heard them say so," Pepita answered scornfully; "but I know it. I am sure he is a fool," which remark caused José much bewilderment, and led him to reflect long and deeply, but did not, however, lead him to any conclusion but that Pepita was ruled by one of her caprices. He was rather afraid to admit that he himself had enjoyed the magnificent honor of seeing this great hero out of the ring; that through a quite miraculous favor he had even been allowed to speak to him and to hear him speak as he stood, the centre of a circle of admirers in a wine-shop. He had been saving this to tell Pepita, but now he thought it

well to save it a little longer.

But when the day of the bull-fight arrived it was not possible to conceal it.

Ah! the wonders, the splendors of that day from the first hour! At its very dawning Pepita was up and singing. Jovita must take her rest, that she might be in her best humor to enjoy the festivities, and not spoil them by grumbling. Pepita needed no rest; her little feet danced as she moved; as she made her preparations for the morning meal she chatted incessantly to José, asking a thousand questions. Everything conspired to add to her joys. The sky was deep brilliant blue, but there was a light breeze to make the heat bearable; the birds sang until their little throats throbbed; the flowers in the garden seemed to have flung out new masses of bloom to make the small world about them brighter. In her chamber, near the roof, Pepita's gala dress lay upon her bed, her new little shoes upon the floor; she had seen them in the moonlight each time she had awakened in the night. A year ago it would not have seemed possible that such pretty finery could ever be hers, even in dreams; but now almost anything seemed possible in this new and enchanting life.

And when she was dressed how bewitching she was! how her rose of a face glowed and dimpled! how enchanting was the velvet darkness of her eyes! how airy the poise of her little black head, with its brilliant flower tucked in at the side of the knot of curly hair! Jovita stared at her and made a queer half-internal sound of exclamation. It was not her way

to express approval at all freely, and she had no opinion of people who wasted time in telling girls they were pretty. But José looked at the girl as he might have looked at some rare tropical bird which had suddenly flown into the house. He looked and looked again, pulling his mustache, his not always alert face warming.

"Yes, yes," he said, "it all looks very well; that dress is pretty. None of the other girls will look better. Even Candida--"

Pepita laughed. Candida had been considered a great beauty in the village they had left, but she knew she was prettier than Candida.

José laughed also, though he scarcely knew why. Then with rather a cautious and uncertain air he produced a gay fan--a cheap one, but brilliant with color.

"This--" he began.

Pepita caught it from him, and unfurled it with a quick turn of her wrist. On one side was a picture--a dashing erect figure, in a richly hued costume.

"It is Sebastiano," said José, guiltily.

Pepita nodded her head and smiled.

"I knew it," she said; "I knew he would look like that."

"There is no other man who can slay a bull as he can," said José.

"Let him slay them," answered Pepita. And she stood and waved her fan with the prettiest inscrutable air in the world.

The journey to the Plaza de Toros was almost as delightful as the bull-fight itself to Pepita. The streaming crowds of people, all bent in one direction, and all in their gayest dress and mood, laughing, jostling each other, chatting, exchanging salutations and jokes, the grand carriages rolling by with fine ladies and gentlemen in them, the rattling old diligences, omnibuses, and tartanes, whose passengers seemed more hilarious than the occupants of the more splendid equipages, the ringing of mule bells, the shouts of drivers, the cracking whips, the sunshine, the color, the very dust itself, all added to the excitement of the hour. And as they made their way through the throng, it was again as it had been that first Sunday at the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, heads turned and exclamations were uttered when Pepita went by. And somehow it seemed that José was better known than even he himself had imagined, he received so many greetings. The truth was that already those who had seen the girl had spoken of her among themselves and to others, their readily fired Spanish natures aflame and elate. And those who had not seen, but only heard of her, were in as susceptible a condition as the more fortunate ones. She had been graphically and dramatically described again and again, so that by many a one she was

recognized as "the pretty sister of José."

That was what they called her--"the pretty sister of José." She heard it half a dozen times, but never once even so much as lifted her long lashes. She was so used to admiration that it was as if they spoke of some one else, and it moved her not in the least, as she sat watching the bulls, to know that bold or languishing eyes dwelt upon her face, and that efforts were being constantly made to attract her attention.

It was a magnificent day--every one said so; there were splendid bulls and splendid dresses, and the fighters were in superb condition. The people were in good spirits too--the little breeze tempering the heat had, perhaps, something to do with it. Everything pleased them; they applauded wildly, and uttered shouts of encouragement and delight to bulls and toreadors alike. The grand people were richly attired; beautiful ladies watched with excited eyes the bulls, wearing their colors in rosettes of satin and glittering tinsel; the thousands of waving, brilliantly hued fans fluttered like a swarm of butterflies; the music filled the air. Pe-» pita sat in a dream of joy, the color coming and going on her cheeks, her rapture glowing in her eyes. She was a Spanish girl, and not so far in advance of her age that the terrible features of the pastime going on before her could obscure its brilliancy and excitement. Truth to tell, she entirely forgot Sebastiano, not even recognizing him in the pageant of the grand entry, she was so absorbed in its glitter and blaze of color. But at the killing of the bull, that was different. Just a moment before she had awakened to the fact that

Manuel was near her--near enough to speak. He had been staring at her, and growing more restless every moment, until he had at last attracted the attention of José and Jovita, and his first words to her came amid shouts of applause and delight.

"Sebastiano," he said; "it is Sebastiano." Pepita turned to look. With what a proud and careless air he advanced; with what a strong, light step; how he held his head and shoulders; how his gold and silver garnishings glittered; how the people called to him with a sort of caressing ecstasy! They adored him; he was their idol. Yes, there was a thrill in it, even for her cold heart. She felt a quick pulsation. To be so proud and triumphant and daring--to be the central point of everything--to be able to awake this exultant fervor--was something after all. And he was beautiful too, though she cared nothing for that, except as she could see that it added to his triumphs and made them more complete. His athletic grace of bearing, his dark, spirited face, with its passionate Andalusian eyes, their shadows intensified by the close, long black lashes, the very arch of his foot, and superb movement of his limbs, would have set him apart from ordinary, less fortunate mortals; but to have all this and be also the demi-god of these impassioned people, it must be worth living for. If one cared for men, if one did not find them tiresome, if one was simple enough--like Sarita--to be carried away by things, there was at least something in all this to interest one a little.

"It is Sebastiano," said José.

But Sebastiano was addressing the president of the games. He extended his glittering sword, and made his announcement in a clear, rich voice. Pepita listened as he spoke. And then the most thrilling excitement of the sport began. It was no child's play Sebastiano had before him. The fierce black bull glaring at him with bent head and fiery eyes, uttering low, muttering bellowings of rage as he tore at the earth, throwing up the dust in a cloud, was a foe worthy of his mettle. He was a bull with vicious points and treacherous ones. Already goaded to fury by the play of the picadors and banderilleros, he must be watched, studied, excited, baffled; not one of his movements must be lost, or even regarded as trifling; wariness, quickness, magnificent daring, the subtlest forethought, all were needed. What play it was! what a match between brute cunning, power, and ferocity, and human courage, adroitness, and calculation! The brilliant, graceful figure was scarcely a moment in repose; it leaped and darted, the bright cloak waving, inviting, the bright sword glittering in the sun--it toyed with death and peril, evading both with an exultant grace and swiftness marvellous to behold, and rousing the on-lookers to shouts of joy and triumph. Even old Jovita wakened to a touch of fire which seemed like a renewal of her long-past youth. José and Manuel joined their cries with the rest. Pepita felt again--yes, more than once--that sudden throb and thrill.

And when at last the end was reached, with what a superb spring the last splendid blow was given! No need of a second; the bull staggered, shuddered, fell forward upon his knees, sank upon his side. Sebastiano

stood erect, a brilliant, careless, triumphant figure again, the air resounding with deafening applause.

"You have seen him," cried Manuel to Pepita--"you have seen Sebastiano?"

"Yes," she answered, a little breathlessly, "I have seen him."

And even as she spoke she knew that he had seen her; she knew it even before Manuel spoke again in great excitement.

"He looks this way--he looks at us--at you."

It was quite true. Something had attracted his attention to the tier of seats in which they sat, some cry--who knows what?--perhaps some subtle magnetic influence. He turned his head with a quick movement, and his eyes fell and fastened themselves instantly upon the brilliant little face glowing like some bright flower among those humbler and less blooming.

"He looks at you, Pepita," said José.

"He looks at you and at Jovita," Pepita answered. And she laughed and turned her face away.

But not before Sebastiano had seen it well. It was Fate. Yes, he knew that. He had been loved often; he had had romantic adventures, but it



had always been he who had received and the others who had given; he had always remained Sebastiano, the hero, the adored. And now he stood and looked at a little head half concealed by a fan, and forgot for a moment where he was, and that the people were still shouting their applause in deafening tumult.