

CHAPTER III.

THE JEW EVERY WHERE A JEW.

André Certa, once introduced into the house of Samuel, and laid in a bed hastily prepared, recovered his senses and pressed the hand of the old Jew. The physician, summoned by one of the domestics, was promptly in attendance. The wound appeared to be a slight one; the shoulder of the mestizo had been pierced in such a manner that the steel had only glided among the flesh. In a few days, André Certa might be once more upon his feet.

When Samuel was left alone with André, the latter said to him:

"You would do well to wall up the gate which leads to your terrace, Master Samuel."

"What fear you, André?"

"I fear lest Sarah should present herself there to the contemplation of the Indians. It was not a robber who attacked me; it was a rival, from whom I have escaped but by miracle!"

"By the holy tables, it is a task to bring up young girls!" exclaimed the Jew. "But you are mistaken, señor," he resumed, "Sarah will be a

dutiful spouse. I spare no pains that she may do you honor."

André Certa half raised himself on his elbow.

"Master Samuel, there is one thing which you do not enough remember, that I pay you for the hand of Sarah a hundred thousand piasters."

"Señor," replied the Jew, with a miserly chuckle, "I remember it so well, that I am ready now to exchange this receipt for the money."

As he said this, Samuel drew from his pocket-book a paper which André Certa repulsed with his hand.

"The bargain is not complete until Sarah has become my wife, and she will never be such if her hand is to be disputed by such an adversary. You know, Master Samuel, what is my object; in espousing Sarah, I wish to be the equal of this nobility which casts such scornful glances upon us."

"And you will, señor, for you see the proudest grandees of Spain through our saloons, around the pearl of Lima."

"Where has Sarah been this evening?"

"To the Israelitish temple, with old Ammon."

"Why should Sarah attend your religious rites?"

"I am a Jew, señor," replied Samuel proudly, "and would Sarah be my daughter if she did not fulfill the duties of my religion?"

The old Jew remained sad and silent for several minutes. His bent brow rested on one of his withered hands. His face usually bronze, was now almost pale; beneath a brown cap appeared locks of an indescribable color. He was clad in a sort of great-coat fastened around the waist.

This old man trafficked every where and in every thing; he might have been a descendant of the Judas who sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. He had been a resident of Lima ten years; his taste and his economy had led him to choose his dwelling at the extremity of the suburb of San Lazaro, and from thence he entered into various speculations to make money. By degrees, Samuel assumed a luxury uncommon in misers; his house was sumptuously furnished; his numerous domestics, his splendid equipages betokened immense revenues. Sarah was then eight years of age. Already graceful and charming, she pleased all, and was the idol of the Jew. All her inclinations were unhesitatingly gratified. Always elegantly dressed, she attracted the eyes of the most fastidious, of which her father seemed strangely careless. It will readily be understood how the mestizo, André Certa, became enamored of the beautiful Jewess. What would have appeared inexplicable to the public, was the hundred thousand piasters, the price of her hand; but this bargain was secret. And besides, Samuel trafficked in sentiments as in

native productions. A banker, usurer, merchant, ship-owner, he had the talent to do business with everybody. The schooner Annonciation, which was hovering about the mouth of the Rimac, belonged to the Jew Samuel.

Amid this life of business and speculation this man fulfilled the duties of his religion with scrupulous punctuality; his daughter had been carefully instructed in the Israelitish faith and practices.

So, when the mestizo had manifested his displeasure on this subject, the old man remained mute and pensive, and André Certa broke the silence, saying:

"Do you forget that the motive for which I espouse Sarah will compel her to become a convert to Catholicism? It is not my fault," added the mestizo; "but in spite of you, in spite of me, in spite of herself, it will be so."

"You are right," said the Jew sadly; "but, by the Bible, Sarah shall be a Jewess as long as she is my daughter."

At this moment the door of the chamber opened, and the major-domo of the Jew Samuel respectfully entered.

"Is the murderer arrested?" asked the old man.

"We have reason to believe he is dead!"

"Dead!" repeated André, with a joyful exclamation.

"Caught between us and a company of soldiers," replied the major-domo, "he was obliged to leap over the parapet of the bridge."

"He has thrown himself into the Rimac!" exclaimed André.

"And how do you know that he has not reached the shore?" asked Samuel.

"The melting of the snow has made the current rapid at that spot; besides, we stationed ourselves on each side of the river, and he did not re-appear. I have left sentinels who will pass the night in watching the banks."

"It is well," said the old man; "he has met with a just fate. Did you recognize him in his flight?"

"Perfectly, sir; it was Martin Paz, the Indian of the mountains."

"Has this man been observing Sarah for some time past?"

"I do not know," replied the servant.

"Summon old Ammon."

The major-domo withdrew.

"These Indians," said the old man, "have secret understandings among themselves; I must know whether the pursuit of this man dates from a distant period."

The duenna entered, and remained standing before her master.

"Does my daughter," asked Samuel, "know any thing of what has taken place this morning?"

"When the cries of your servants awoke me, I ran to the chamber of the señora, and found her almost motionless and of a mortal paleness."

"Fatality!" said Samuel; "continue," added he, seeing that the mestizo was apparently asleep.

"To my urgent inquiries as to the cause of her agitation, the señora would not reply; she retired without accepting my services, and I withdrew."

"Has this Indian often thrown himself in her way?"

"I do not know, master; nevertheless I have often met him in the streets of San Lazaro."

"And you have told me nothing of this?"

"He came to her assistance this evening on the Plaza-Mayor," added the old duenna.

"Her assistance! how?"

The old woman related the scene with downcast head.

"Ah! my daughter wish to kneel among these Christians!" exclaimed the Jew, angrily; "and I knew nothing of all this! You deserve that I should dismiss you."

The duenna went out of the room in confusion.

"Do you not see that the marriage should take place soon?" said André Certa. "I am not asleep, Master Samuel! But I need rest, now, and I will dream of our espousals."

At these words, the old man slowly retired. Before regaining his room, he wished to assure himself of the condition of his daughter, and softly entered the chamber of Sarah.

The young girl was in an agitated slumber, in the midst of the rich silk drapery around her; a watch-lamp of alabaster, suspended from the arabesques of the ceiling, shed its soft light upon her beautiful

countenance; the half-open window admitted, through lowered blinds, the quiet coolness of the air, impregnated with the penetrating perfumes of the aloes and magnolia; creole luxury was displayed in the thousand objects of art which good taste and grace had dispersed on richly carved étagères; and, beneath the vague and placid rays of night, it seemed as if the soul of the child was sporting amid these wonders.

The old man approached the bed of Sarah: he bent over her to listen. The beautiful Jewess seemed disturbed by sorrowful thoughts, and more than once the name of Martin Paz escaped her lips.

Samuel regained his chamber, uttering maledictions.

At the first rays of morning, Sarah hastily arose. Liberta, a full-blooded Indian attached to her service, hastened to her; and, in pursuance of her orders, saddled a mule for his mistress and a horse for himself.

Sarah was accustomed to take morning-rides, accompanied by this Indian, who was entirely devoted to her.

She was clad in a saya of a brown color, and a mantle of cashmere with long tassels; her head was not covered with the usual hood, but sheltered beneath the broad brim of a straw hat, which left her long black tresses to float over her shoulders; and to conceal any unusual pre-occupation, she held between her lips a cigarette of perfumed

tobacco.

Liberta, clad like an Indian of the mountains, prepared to accompany his mistress.

"Liberta," said the young girl to him, "remember to be blind and dumb."

Once in the saddle, Sarah left the city as usual, and began to ride through the country; she directed her way toward Callao. The port was in full animation: there had been a conflict during the night between the revenue-officers and a schooner, whose undecided movements betrayed a fraudulent speculation. The Annonciation seemed to have been awaiting some suspicious barks near the mouth of the Rimac; but before the latter could reach her, she had been compelled to flee before the custom-house boats, which had boldly given her chase.

Various rumors were in circulation respecting the destination of this vessel--which bore no name on her stern. According to some, this schooner, laden with Colombian troops, was seeking to seize the principal vessels of Callao; for Bolivar had it in his heart to revenge the affront given to the soldiers left by him in Peru, and who had been driven from it in disgrace.

According to others, the schooner was simply a smuggler of European goods.

Without troubling herself about these rumors, more or less important, Sarah, whose ride to the port had been only a pretext, returned toward Lima, which she reached near the banks of the Rimac.

She ascended them toward the bridge: numbers of soldiers, mestizoes, and Indians, were stationed at various points on the shore.

Liberta had acquainted the young girl with the events of the night. In compliance with her orders, he interrogated some Indians leaning over the parapet, and learned that although Martin Paz had been undoubtedly drowned, his body had not yet been recovered.

Sarah was pale and almost fainting; it required all her strength of soul not to abandon herself to her grief.

Among the people wandering on the banks, she remarked an Indian with ferocious features--the Sambo! He was crouched on the bank, and seemed a prey to despair.

As Sarah passed near the old mountaineer, she heard these words, full of gloomy anger:

"Wo! wo! They have killed the son of the Sambo! They have killed my son!"

The young girl resolutely drew herself up, made a sign to Liberta to

follow her; and this time, without caring whether she was observed or not, went directly to the church of Santa Anna; left her mule in charge of the Indian, entered the Catholic temple, and asking for the good Father Joachim, knelt on the stone steps, praying to Jesus and Mary for the soul of Martin Paz.