

CHAPTER VIII.

CONQUERORS AND CONQUERED.

A prey to his blind grief, Don Vegal walked at random. After having lost his daughter, the hope of his race and of his love, was he about to see himself also deprived of the child of his adoption whom he had wrested from death? Don Vegal had forgotten Sarah, to think only of Martin Paz.

He was struck with the great number of Indians, of zambos, of chiños, who were wandering about the streets; these men, who usually took an active part in the sports of the Amancaës, were now walking silently with singular pre-occupation. Often some busy chief gave them a secret order, and went on his way; and all, notwithstanding their detours, were assembling by degrees in the wealthiest quarters of Lima, in proportion as the Limanians were scattered abroad in the country.

Don Vegal, absorbed in his own researches, soon forgot this singular state of things. He traversed San Lazaro throughout, saw André Certa there, enraged and armed, and the Jew Samuel, in the extremity of distress, not for the loss of his daughter, but for the loss of his hundred thousand piasters; but he found not Martin Paz, whom he was impatiently seeking. He ran to the consistorial prison. Nothing! He returned home. Nothing! He mounted his horse and hastened to Chorillos.

Nothing! He returned at last, exhausted with fatigue, to Lima; the clock of the cathedral was striking four.

Don Vegal remarked some groups of Indians before his dwelling; but he could not, without compromising the man of whom he was in search, ask them--

"Where is Martin Paz?"

He re-entered, more despairing than ever.

Immediately a man emerged from a neighboring alley, and came directly to the Indians. This man was the Sambo.

"The Spaniard has returned," said he to them; "you know him now; he is one of the representatives of the race which crushes us--wo to him!"

"And when shall we strike?"

"When five o'clock sounds, and the tocsin from the mountain gives the signal of vengeance."

Then the Sambo marched with hasty steps to the chingana, and rejoined the chief of the revolt.

Meanwhile the sun had begun to sink beneath the horizon; it was the hour

in which the Limanian aristocracy went in its turn to the Amancaës; the richest toilets shone in the equipages which defiled to the right and left beneath the trees along the road; there was an inextricable mêlée of foot-passengers, carriages, horses; a confusion of cries, songs, instruments, and vociferations.

The clock on the tower of the cathedral suddenly struck five! and a shrill funereal sound vibrated through the air; the tocsin thundered over the crowd, frozen in its delirium.

An immense cry resounded in the city. From every square, every street, every house issued the Indians, with arms in their hands, and fury in their eyes. The principal places of the city were thronged with these men, some of whom shook above their heads burning torches!

"Death to the Spaniards! death to the oppressors!" such was the watch-word of the rebels.

Those who attempted to return to Lima must have recoiled before these masses; but the summits of the hills were quickly covered with other enemies, and all retreat was impossible; the zambos precipitated themselves like a thunderbolt on this crowd, exhausted with the fatigues of the festival, while the mountain Indians cleared for themselves a bloody path to rejoin their brethren of the city.

Imagine the aspect presented by Lima at this terrible moment. The rebels

had left the square of the tavern, and were scattered in all quarters; at the head of one of the columns, Martin Paz was waving the black flag--the flag of independence; while the Indians in the other streets were attacking the houses appointed to ruin, Martin Paz took possession of the Plaza-Mayor with his company; near him, Manangani was uttering ferocious yells, and proudly displaying his bloody arms.

But the soldiers of the government, forewarned of the revolt, were ranged in battle array before the palace of the president; a frightful fusillade greeted the insurgents at their entrance on the square; surprised by this unexpected discharge, which extended a goodly number of them on the ground, they sprang upon the troops with insurmountable impatience; a horrible *mêlée* followed, in which men fought body to body. Martin Paz and Manangani performed prodigies of valor, and escaped death only by miracle.

It was necessary at all hazards that the palace should be taken and occupied by their men.

"Forward!" cried Martin Paz, and his voice led the Indians to the assault. Although they were crushed in every direction, they succeeded in making the body of troops around the palace recoil. Already had Manangani sprang on the first steps; but he suddenly stopped as the opening ranks of soldiers unmasked two pieces of cannon ready to fire on the assailants.

There was not a moment to lose; the battery must be seized before it could be discharged.

"On!" cried Manangani, addressing himself to Martin Paz.

But the young Indian had just stooped and no longer heard him, for an Indian had whispered these words in his ear:

"They are pillaging the house of Don Vegal, perhaps assassinating him!"

At these words Martin Paz recoiled. Manangani seized him by the arm; but, repulsing him with a vigorous hand, the Indian darted toward the square.

"Traitor! infamous traitor!" exclaimed Manangani, discharging his pistols at Martin Paz.

At this moment the cannons were fired, and the grape swept the Indians on the steps.

"This way, brethren," cried Martin Paz, and a few fugitives, his devoted companions, joined him; with this little company he could make his way through the soldiers.

This flight had all the consequences of treason; the Indians believed themselves abandoned by their chief. Manangani in vain attempted to

bring them back to the combat; a rapid fusillade sent among them a shower of balls; thenceforth it was no longer possible to rally them; the confusion was at its height and the rout complete. The flames which arose in certain quarters attracted some fugitives to pillage; but the conquering soldiers pursued them with the sword, and killed a great number without mercy.

Meanwhile, Martin Paz had gained the house of Don Vegal; it was the theatre of a bloody struggle, headed by the Sambo himself; he had a double interest in being there; while contending with the Spanish noblemen, he wished to seize Sarah, as a pledge of the fidelity of his son.

On seeing Martin Paz return, he no longer doubted his treason, and turned his brethren against him.

The overthrown gate and walls of the court revealed Don Vegal, sword in hand, surrounded by his faithful servants, and contending with an invading mass. This man's courage and pride were sublime; he was the first to present himself to mortal blows, and his formidable arm had surrounded him with corpses.

But what could be done against this crowd of Indians, which was then increasing with all the conquered of the Plaza-Mayor. Don Vegal felt that his defenders were becoming exhausted, and nothing remained for him but death, when Martin Paz arrived, rapid as the thunderbolt, charged

the aggressors from behind, forced them to turn against him, and, amid balls, poignard-strokes and maledictions, reached Don Vegal, to whom he made a rampart of his body. Courage revived in the hearts of the besieged.

"Well done, my son, well done!" said Don Vegal to Martin Paz, pressing his hand.

But the young Indian was gloomy.

"Well done! Martin Paz," exclaimed another voice which went to his very soul; he recognized Sarah, and his arm traced a bloody circle around him.

The company of Sambo gave way in its turn. Twenty times had this modern Brutus directed his blows against his son, without being able to reach him, and twenty times Martin had turned away the weapon about to strike his father.

Suddenly the ferocious Manangani, covered with blood, appeared beside the Sambo.

"Thou hast sworn," said he, "to avenge the treason of a wretch on his kindred, on his friends, on himself. Well, it is time! the soldiers are coming; the mestizo, André Certa, is with them."

"Come then," said the Sambo, with a ferocious laugh: "come then, for our vengeance approaches."

And both abandoned the house of Don Vegal, while their companions were being killed there. They went directly to the company who were arriving. The latter aimed at them; but without being intimidated, the Sambo approached the mestizo.

"You are André Certa," said he; "well, your betrothed is in the house of Don Vegal, and Martin Paz is about to carry her to the mountains."

This said, the Indians disappeared. Thus the Sambo had put face to face two mortal enemies, and, deceived by the presence of Martin Paz in the house of Don Vegal, the soldiers rushed upon the dwelling of the marquis.

André Certa was intoxicated with rage. As soon as he perceived Martin Paz, he rushed upon him.

"Here!" exclaimed the young Indian, and quitting the stone steps which he had so valiantly defended, he joined the mestizo. Meanwhile the companions of Martin Paz were repulsing the soldiers body to body.

Martin Paz had seized André Certa with his powerful hand, and clasped him so closely that the mestizo could not use his pistols. They were there, foot against foot, breast against breast, their faces touched,

and their glances mingled in a single gleam; their movements became rapid, even invisible; neither friends nor enemies could approach them; in this terrible embrace respiration failed, both fell. André Certa raised himself above Martin Paz, whose poignard had escaped his grasp. The mestizo raised his arm, but the Indian succeeded in seizing it before it had struck. The moment was horrible. André Certa in vain attempted to disengage himself; Martin Paz, with supernatural strength, turned against the mestizo the poignard and the arm which held it, and plunged it into his heart.

Martin Paz arose all bloody. The place was free, the soldiers flying in every direction. Martin Paz might have conquered had he remained on the Plaza-Mayor. He fell into the arms of Don Vegal.

"To the mountains, my son; flee to the mountains! now I command it."

"Is my enemy indeed dead?" said Martin Paz, returning to the corpse of André Certa.

A man was that moment searching it, and held a pocket-book which he had taken from it. Martin Paz sprang on this man and overthrew him; it was the Jew Samuel.

The Indian picked up the pocket-book, opened it hastily, searched it, uttered a cry of joy, and springing toward the marquis, put in his hand a paper on which were written these words:

"Received of the Señor André Certa the sum of 100,000 piasters; I pledge myself to restore this sum doubled, if Sarah, whom I saved from the shipwreck of the San-José, and whom he is about to espouse, is not the daughter and only heir of the Marquis Don Vegal.

"SAMUEL."

"My daughter! my daughter!" exclaimed the Spaniard, and he fell into the arms of Martin Paz, who carried him to the chamber of Sarah.

Alas! the young girl was no longer there; Father Joachim, bathed in his own blood, could articulate only these words:

"The Sambol!--carried off!--toward the river of Madeira!--"

And he fainted.