

murmured sadly in the numerous caverns they had made around and beneath her, kept up a sad accompaniment to the softly-breathed accents of her prayer :

"ADORABLE JESU, guard me well ! gentle Maria shield me from the follies of my own heart ! receive my prayer, accept my thanks !" The low prayer died away from her lips, still she remained in the same posture.

"Blessed are the lowly in heart !" said a subdued voice near by, and looking up Father Urbani stood beside her.

"Father," she said rising, "I feel sad, but know not the cause ; all about me seems so cheerful and happy, still it has no power to rouse an harmonious chord in my own soul ; all seems discordant, seems to break over one mournfully with unpleasant keys, whose sound grates harshly upon the ear."

"Daughter," said the Father, "our friends seek you ; I have let them into a secret, and now I have much to say to you." Soon Don Gomez, with Antonia leaning upon his arm, entered the arbor. "Children," continued the Father, "be silent, for I would be heard. Nearly a score of years have passed since first I saw any of you. Since then you have seen much sorrow, and to set a few matters aright, have I taken this dangerous journey. First, you must listen to a story of real life which I must tell.

"There once lived in a certain Province of Hispania a worthy pair who inherited the vast possessions of their noble ancestors. They were happy, and no thought of sorrow entered their dwelling until the advent of a little heir, a fine boy, who claimed a portion of their love. Once only did the mother smile gladly on the little stranger, then closed her eyes, and sorrow entered their home when death left it, bearing away the joy and light of the household. The boy grew and waxed strong, and when, three years afterwards, a new bride was brought to the villa, he crowed loudly that he had found a new playmate.

"But death was not yet satisfied, and soon after the boy had rejoiced over a new sister, the father was borne away, and another year beheld them orphans, beneath the care of an eccentric and revengeful guardian, who loved the boy in whose service he placed all his sympathies, whilst the girl he hated, because he had sought her mother's hand unsuccessfully years before, so she was placed under the protection of his brother. But when years afterward she was allowed to visit her brother (she had been taught to consider him as a cousin, several times removed) with her guardian, an attachment sprung up between them, which resulted in the Convent of *Saint Jesu*, at Madridati, receiving a ward, under rather suspicious commands regarding her future.

"Rise up Don Gomez de Manchez, thou art that boy !"

With trembling movements they arose and embraced each other, and "MY BROTHER !" "MY SISTER !" came to each lip simultaneously in faltering accents.

"Kneel, my children !"

Anietta drew Antonia's arm within that of her brother, and the trio knelt at the feet of the holy man, who blessed them in a clear voice.