

laughter greeted this new discomfiture. Foam-
ing with rage he picked himself up, and in a
voice choked with passion blurted out:

"Trenchery! That was no fair hit."
"How so, may it please you, senior colonel,"
asked the Frenchman, who had been unable to
resist joining in the general laugh.

"We are fighting with swords, and you strike
as you would with a knife."

"Perhaps you think I have an advantage
over you, and would like to exchange weapons.
In that case I shall be happy to accommodate
you."

Fresh screams of laughter greeted the young
officer's irony.
"Well," he continued, "of what do you com-
plain?"

"I haven't room here. What, the mischief!
I'm no pasteboard Punchinello to fight in a box.
I've my ways, I have, when I've got a sword in
my hand."

"So it seems. But I have no wish to be dis-
agreeable, so I will make a proposal. Let us
fight it out in the garden."

"So be it. But look to yourself!"
"No, no, colonel. You are mistaken. It is
you that should look to yourself. Why, in your
bravado, you have managed so as to
be hurt behind as well as before."

This really caused fresh applause and laugh-
er, which lashed the huge Mexican into fury. The
two combatants stepped into the garden, while
they were followed by the crowd, and took
their positions under the trees.

Ramirez, without stopping to put himself on
guard, began to describe the stranger's figures
with his cleaver. Trusting to the length of his
weapon he hoped thus to reach his enemy, at
the same time keeping him off at a safe dis-
tance. But he did not take into consideration
either the agility or the skill which his ad-
versary had already displayed. The young man,
with wonderful suppleness and adroitness, easily
avoided the blows aimed at him, and finally,
when the Mexican had thoroughly tired himself,
he again darted forward, as he had done in the
first encounter, and with a skillfully directed
thrust laid open his opponent's cheek.

On feeling this second wound the *soi-disant*
colonel gave himself up for lost, and turning on
his heel made for the gate in a series of Gargan-
t. an strides.

The Frenchman followed.

"*Vamos, cobarde,*" he cried; which means in
English, come on, coward.

The Mexican ran all the faster, followed by the
yell of the crowd, in which even the big negro
joined:

"*Vamos, cobarde, vamos!*"

As he reached the gate, the colonel felt the
tip of the rapier at his back. Terror lent new
wings to his speed. Gathering his strength for
a last effort at one bound he cleared the hedge
and found himself in the empty street. But it
was too late. The little rapier had opened a
great gash clean across his back—not the most
desirable place for a redoubtable warrior to
receive a wound.

Fresh and redoubled shouts of laughter greet-
ed this undignified exit. Two or three of the
on-lookers rushed to the gate with the intention
of capturing the fugitive and compelling him to
renew the combat. But the gallant colonel was
nowhere to be seen.

IV.

CARMEN AND MORALES.

The dancing-girl, Carmen, had, as we have
seen, left the gambling-house just as the Mexi-
can drew his sword and, to all appearances, was
about to make a mouthful of the young French-
man, "knitting-needle" and all.

She was closely followed by her brother, who
found her seated on the ground in front of the
garden gate, her elbows on her knees and her
face hidden in her hands. In the darkness he
would have passed her had she not called to him.

"What the devil are you doing there, Car-
men?" he asked.

"I am thinking."

"Thinking! of what?"

"Can't you guess?"

"My faith, no; unless it is of the pretty little
sum we have earned this evening."

"No. Not that."

"Then I give it up. He must be a cleverer
fellow than I who can guess a woman's
thoughts."

"I am thinking of that young man who de-
fended me so bravely when you cowardly aban-
doned me to that wretch."

"Bah! You are a fool, and the young fellow
is an idiot. Refuse a hundred dollars for one
poor little kiss! Why, it's absurd. I can hard-
ly bring myself to forgive you. As for the
Frenchman, he has mixed himself up in a ridi-
culous affair, for you were not in danger. How-
ever, he gave you three onzas, and I hope he
may get out of the scrape without hurt."

"Morales, do you know that while we are
talking here he may be bleeding to death?"

"Not much fear of it. Colonel Ramirez is
not dangerous."

"Do you know him?"

"Everyone in Havana knows him! He is a
great filibuster—a braggart who talks a great
deal and does very little. He is always brag-
ging about his fighting, but when it comes to
the scratch he is the veriest coward living."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure? Yes. I would bet our three ounces
of gold to a beggarly maravedi that the colonel
is frightened of the Frenchman. Are you satis-
fied now?"

"Well, somewhat."

"In that case, as there is nothing to detain us
here, let us be off."

"Go, if you want to. I shall remain here."

"Here? In the street?"

"Here. In the street."

"You must be out of your mind, Carmen."

"Not a bit of it."

"But what do you intend doing?"

"Waiting for him."

"Him. The Frenchman, eh? Caramba.

Are you going to speak to him?"

"Certainly not."

"Then I don't understand what motive you
have for remaining."

"I have two reasons. First, I want to be
sure that he is safe and unhurt; and secondly, I
mean to follow him, and find out what is his
name and where he lives."

"What does it matter to you?"

"Carmen made no answer."

"I suppose you are in love with him?"

"It was now the girl's turn to ask:

"What does it matter to you?"

"As your brother I have a right to see that
you do not commit yourself to an absurd piece
of folly."

"Who told you that I was going to do any
such thing?"

"But it seems to me—"

"It seems to you! As for your brotherly
rights, you know perfectly well that I absolute-
ly refuse to recognize them. I am your sister,
true. But our relationship is nothing more to
you than in so far as it enables you to pocket all
the money I earn by my singing and dancing.
What would become of you without me? Your
voice, fine as it is, would not earn you a living.
The day that I leave you you will have to go
a-begging or a-stealing, and you know this as
well as I do, my poor brother."

Morales hung his head and made no reply;
his sister was right. Carmen continued:

"Then don't make such a display of pretend-
ed authority. Remember that I can get on
very well without you, and, consequently, when
I say that I wish a thing to be done it has got
to be done."

"That is enough," growled the brother, evi-
dently in a bad humor. "Do as you like, since
you refuse to be guided by my experience. So
you want to know where the young Frenchman
lives?"

"I do."

"Very well; then we will follow him. But
what will Quirino say?"

"Quirino will not say anything."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it; and that for the best of all
reasons. Quirino will not know anything about
it—unless you tell him, and you will not do
that."

"Well, well," grunted Morales, "women have
the devil's own will. But I wash my hands of
the results of this escapade."

So saying he sat down at Carmen's side, and
as an agreeable means of passing the time, set
to work to count up the earnings of the day.
As he was thus occupied a noise of many voices
was heard in the garden, followed by a dead
silence broken by a clashing of swords. Carmen
shuddered. Soon the clashing ceased; a scrap-
ing of feet was heard in its place, and cries of
"*Vamos, cobarde,*" Then a huge black mass,
resembling the form of a gigantic orang-outang,
rose in the air, landed in the street, and disap-
peared. It was Ramirez making the great leap
which did so much honor to his muscle and so
little to his manhood.

Carmen and her brother both recognized the
colonel.

"You see," whispered Morales, "I told you
he was not dangerous. Caramba, how he runs!
My faith, he would outrun a deer. That's a fine
talent he possesses, that fellow. It's a good
thing to have long legs when one's courage
falis."

"Where is he gone to?" asked Carmen.

"I suppose that by this time he is racing up
the Calle del Obispo."

"I did not see him go out of the street."

"No more did I. But it is so dark that by
keeping close to the houses he could easily get
away without our seeing him."

"Morales!"

"Well."

"This Mexican is a coward who runs from a
sword, but he may have recourse to the knife."

"Not unlikely."

"And he is sure to revenge himself on the
Frenchman."

"Possibly. Nay more, probably."

"How do we know that he is not lurking in
some corner there waiting for a chance to as-
sassinate the Frenchman?"

"He will not try it to-night, I think. To-
morrow, perhaps."

"Then the Frenchman must be warned."

"Who is to warn him?"

"You."

"Not I, indeed. I don't intend getting up a
quarrel with Quirino."

"Quirino again!"

"Gracious, yes—again, and again, and again,
for evermore. He is as jealous as a tiger and as
crafty as a serpent."

"After all I am not his wife."

"No, but you are betrothed to him, and I
promise you I would not give a single real for
the Frenchman's life if Quirino were to learn
one word of what we are talking about, espe-
cially if you carry out your insane idea."

"In that case, once my husband, Quirino
would make me his slave."

"Not exactly," replied Morales, "for the
man perfectly adores you, but he is naturally so
suspicious that he might watch you rather
closely."

"So much the worse for him then. I will
never marry him."

"And your promise?"

"I will take it back."

"He will not hear of it."

"We will see about that. You have often told
me, Morales, that I have in my veins the blood
of the old Moorish kings of Spain."

"That's true. We are descended, illegiti-
mately, from the great Boabdil himself, and I
can prove it."

"You see, I am born to command, not to
obey. At times the illustrious blood you speak
of inspires me with strange thoughts. I dream
of riches and greatness. I long to possess an
immense fortune and to bear an illustrious
name."

Morales burst out laughing.

"Caramba! Do you know, little one, that
your ambition soars high. Riches and great-
ness, an immense fortune and an illustrious
name! Is that all? Well, I could thirst for
the same things, but unfortunately the cup is
too far from our lips to allow of our drinking.
We may dream as much as we like, but we shall
never be anything else but what we are—a couple
of poor devils."

"Who knows?" thought Carmen. "At eigh-
teen, with the spirit of a demon and the beauty
of an angel, one ought to be able to reach any
position."

"Well," continued Morales, "what is to be
the end of all this?"

"The end of it? I will never marry Quirino."

"Take care, Carmen, he will have his re-
venge."

"Revenge! On me! Revenge himself on a
woman! If he tried to do that he would be a
greater coward than that Mexican scoundrel
there."

Morales gave vent to his feelings in a grunt,
but did not venture to say what he thought.

After the flight of Ramirez the Frenchman
and the crowd who had witnessed the duel re-
turned to the house and resumed their play.
After a couple of games, in which fortune no
longer favored him he rose and went to the
croupier's desk for his winnings. Having tied
up the rolls of gold in his handkerchief he was
making for the door when a thought struck him.
Returning to the desk he asked:

"Can you give me any information with re-
gard to these two singers who were here just
now?"

"I cannot, señor," returned the croupier.

"Have you never seen them before?"

"Never, señor. They are evidently strangers
recently arrived in Havana. Does your honor
wish me to make any inquiries about them?"

"Thank you, no. It would be perfectly use-
less."

"Your honor will permit me to observe that
creatures of this kind, in this city especially, are
exceedingly dangerous. I have never yet heard
of an affair in which a gitano was concerned
that did not end with the knife."

"Your intention is good," said the French-
man with an air of disdain, "and I thank you,
but I am perfectly able to take care of myself."

And passing his bundle over his left arm he
left the house, dropping, as he passed, a handful
of reals into the hand of the negro porter who
was fast asleep in his rocking-chair.

V.

CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

Carmen was right when she told her brother
that she had not seen Ramirez leave the street.
After clearing the hedge he ran as fast as his
legs would carry him towards the Calle del Obis-
po, under the impression that the possessor of
the murderous "knitting-needle" was close at
his heels. On finding, however, that no one was
in pursuit he turned into an empty house, the
door of which happened to be standing open,
and there lay in wait for his late adversary on
whom he was determined to have his revenge.

Meantime Carmen and Morales, whom he had
not had time to observe, sat in silence waiting
for the Frenchman to make his appearance.

At the expiration of an hour the garden gate
was opened and the young officer, gaily hum-
ming an opera air, stepped into the street.

"There he is," whispered Carmen under her
breath.

"Caramba! I see him," returned Morales.

"Let us follow him."

"Patience for a moment. Let him get a little
further on, so that he will not see us."

When the young man had made some hun-
dred paces Morales rose.

"Come," he said, "let us go now."

Carmen started off at a great pace with a view
to diminishing the distance between the French-
man and themselves. Shrugging his shoulders
philosophically Morales grumbled:

"Oh, these women, these women! trouble-
some set that they are. Caramba, this one here
takes it into her head to go on a wild goose
chase and who knows but what Quirino will
hold me responsible. I would give those three
ounces of gold if this evening's work could be
undone."

His mournful reflections were interrupted by
his sister who, tightening her grasp on his arm,
whispered excitedly in his ear:

"Look! look!"

Morales raised his head, and on seeing what
was going on gave vent to his astonishment in
his favorite exclamation, "Caramba!"

The Frenchman had just past the empty
house in which Ramirez was concealed, and was
closely followed by the Mexican. The latter

had just raised his immense sword, intending to
bring it down upon his adversary's head, when
a loud shriek burst from the dancing-girl.

"Without your help," she exclaimed, pushing
her brother forward with all her strength, "he
is lost."

"But it was too late. The blade of the Mexi-
can's sword descended with fearful force upon
the head of the devoted young man, who rolled
senseless upon the ground. Drawing his hanger
Morales rushed upon the assassin, who imme-
diately on seeing the danger threatening him
took to his heels. He was however no match for
his pursuer. In a few short strides Morales
reached him and drove his sword clean through
the Mexican's body. With a horrible hissep-
my Ramirez fell dead. At this juncture Car-
men came up.

"Well?" she asked, gasping for breath.

"It's all over," returned Morales as he wiped
his sword with a handful of grass. "He's
dead."

"O! poor fellow!" cried the girl, thinking that
her brother spoke of the Frenchman.

"Caramba! That's just the way with women.
They ask you to kill a man, and when you have
done it they complain, caramba."

"Then changing his tone, he added:

"Look here, Carmen, when you sent me after
the colonel, you knew it would fare badly with
one of us. Would you have preferred seeing me
lying dead in his place?"

"Pooh, who cares for that wretch?"

"What are you talking about then?"

"You know perfectly well. About him—the
young man. Did you not say that he is dead?"

"Faith, no. Why the mischief should he be
dead? Unless I am very much mistaken the
Mexican had not time to finish him. He is only
stunned by the blow with the flat of the sword."

Brother and sister both bent over the French-
man, but with very different intentions. Carmen
wished to see if life still remained in the inani-
mate body. Morales intended merely to exam-
ine his pockets.

Simultaneous each uttered a cry of joy. The
young girl had discovered a faint palpitation of
the heart. Her brother had come across the
bundle of gold.

"He lives," cried the one.

"His winnings," muttered the other. "My
fortune is made."

With a dexterity that was the fruit of long ex-
perience Morales untied the handkerchief and
emptied the contents into his capacious pockets.

This done he remembered the money with
which the colonel had endeavored to purchase a
kiss. This soon followed the Frenchman's win-
nings.

"Caramba," he murmured in ecstasy, "two
or three more adventures like this and I shall
be the richest man in Havana. Bless you a
hundred times, my dear colonel, illustrious dead,
for putting me in the way of such a stroke of
luck."

While Morales was thus giving way to his
 transports of joy, Carmen still held her hand
over the young man's heart. In removing her
hand she felt a small pocket book which had
fallen from the breast pocket of the coat. This
she took and slipped into her bosom.

"Morales," she exclaimed suddenly, "we
cannot leave this poor young man here."

"What the mischief are we to do with him,
my dear sister?"

"You are strong enough to carry him."

"Yes, but where shall I take him?"

"To the first house we find open. No one can
refuse to take him in the state he is in."

"All the houses are shut at this time of
night."

"Then we must take him home with us."

Morales made no answer. He appeared to be
listening attentively to something at the other
end of the street.

"Hark," he said, after a moment's indecision.
"Don't you hear something. It seems to me
that I hear some one coming."

As he spoke several lights appeared in the
direction indicated, advancing slowly towards
them.

"I thought as much," he continued. "Here
are some people coming just in the nick of time
to help us out of the difficulty. They will take
care of the young fellow very much better than
we could."

"But suppose they are robbers?"

"Robbers, indeed—with torches. That's
hardly likely."

"Well, in any case we will wait for them."

"Wait for them! Caramba, are you mad,
Carmen? They are coming, quick let us hide
ourselves in this empty house."

"Why should we hide ourselves?"

"Because I don't want to be accused of having
murdered these two men for the sake of plun-
der."

"But you didn't murder them."

"Well, no. But you see it would be utterly
impossible for me to prove my innocence. The
Frenchman does not know who it was tried to
assassinate him. And as I did kill the Mexican
to save the other I should be sure to be con-
victed. And that would not suit my views.
Caramba, I have been hung once and I don't
care to have the operation repeated."

And so saying Morales seized his sister's arm
and hurried into the empty house.

VI.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

As the two disappeared the lights drew nearer
and nearer, and the brother and sister were soon
able to distinguish a cortège of some half dozen
people surrounding a palanquin, which was