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LUIS DE CAMOËNS.

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CHAPTER I.

"RIGHT excellent verses these, Rodrigo; take you them, and find from whence they come, we must encourage such genius; it shall not be said, Emmanuel can conquer his enemies, and colonize foreign countries, but knows not how to reward merit in his own subjects."

"May it please your majesty, if I am not much mistaken, they are the production of Don Luis de Camoëns, son to the gallant Captain. Simon Vaz de Camoëns, who lost his life in your royal brother's service; he left this child, and his widow Anne de Macedo has brought him carefully up, though on slender means; he promises to be an ornament to his country, his sparkling genius has already distinguished him on many an occasion."

"Seek him out, seek him out, good Rodrigo; he shall grace the court, and who knows but he may become another Virgil, make us the Eneas and Isabella the Dido, of his song. It is long since Lusitania boasted of a poet, and we will foster the rarity."

In pursuance of this command, Rodrigo, who was the king's favoured physician, sought the young Luis de Camoëns, informed him of the honour designed him, and bade him prepare for his presentation at the court. The heart of the poet throbb'd with hope and happiness, as he thought of the envied distinction which awaited him. Emmanuel, gay, chivalrous, brave, was the idol of his people, and the fair Isabella, the widowed bride of their former beloved prince, now once more become their queen by her long delayed union with the king, had often been the subject of his poetic inspirations, and many a fair plan had he sketched, and beautiful castle built, of the way in which he would be most likely to gain their attention, and win courtly favour. And now, without any effort of his own, he had gained the acme of his wishes—the goal was won, without the fatigue of the race, and with flushed and eager haste did he prepare himself for his presentation.

Seldom had the court of Lisbon seen more beauty, than in Luis de Camoëns, as introduced by Rodrigo, he bent in lowly reverence to the

king's salutation. Dressed in strict conformity to the fashion of the time, with purple velvet cloak and vest, and breeches of the richest satin, edged with velvet—all slashed, showing in gay contrast, to the sombre purple, the yellow lining; the cloak fastened at the throat with a magnificent topaz, a cap with a graceful feather drooping to his shoulders, just shading his face; unlike his countrymen, his complexion was fair, and his chestnut hair curled closely around his finely shaped head. A murmur of admiration echoed round the courtly circle, as, with perfect ease, and the high breeding of a scholar and a gentleman, he replied to the flattering compliments, which the monarch paid him on his genius, and the wish which he expressed, that the poet should devote his talents to the honour of his country.

The king was so much pleased with the address and appearance of the young man, that he gave him an appointment near his person, which rendered him a constant inmate of the palace, and soon all the bright eyes which illumined the formal court, were turned upon the poet cavalier for whom such a brilliant path seemed opened. Nor could he remain long-insensible to the power he possessed, and there was danger of his life being wasted in flippant meaningless flirtation, and his fine genius buried under the rubbish of amatory sonnets. He wandered from one bright star to another, now kneeling at the feet of a Juanna, now kissing the fair hand of an Isabella, now exciting the jealousy of one proud lord, now of another; enslaving all, but unenslaved. Fortunately, however, for the strengthening of his character, and the development of his powers, this butterfly existence was interrupted. A young princess, of the blood royal, a cousin of the king, came to take her first lesson in the ways of the world, or rather in courtly etiquette, under Isabella's auspices, and she soon won the mastery of the heart, for which so many had been striving.

Isadore de Santarene was indeed lovely enough to fill all a poet's fancy; and she no sooner appeared at court, than the young Camoëns had no thought for any one else. It was whispered to him, that she was betrothed to Ponce de Leon, one of the