

ther sought to veil the dark doings on the earth from her watchful glance. On the highest mountain in the neighbourhood a solitary individual plied a spade and pickaxe, so strenuously, that the sweat poured down his face in streams, causing him to throw up his sleeve to his brow every few minutes, to wipe off the flood that obscured his vision. Every now and then he stood still and listened, but hearing nothing, he would resume his labour till the fall of a tamarind or the heavier thump of a sour-sop made him start up in terror. Had he committed some deed of blood? Did he trespass on forbidden ground, or might some tenant of the tomb repose beneath the solitary sod, that thus he trembled in the performance of his unholy task?

Ever as he gave his whole strength to his task, his soul seemed confined within the narrow compass traversed by his busy spade, and an ill-defined hope hovered over each loosened sod: and when he unbent his lank body with an accompanying contortion of his skinny features, his hard breathing and the anxious look he always cast towards the east, as if he feared the advent of another day, proved his unwonted labours the result of no ordinary provocation.

Several hours had passed, and the weary digger, faint and haggard, stood on the brink of the deep pit, the picture of despair; the first grey light having surprised him as the last half dozen blows of his pick clicked against the solid rock that formed the peak of the mountain. Amid a shower of oaths, deep and frightful, he had given over his labour. His limbs ached and the perspiration had become cold and clammy—he looked up, and the moon looked down a silent and sorrowful reproof. He looked around and the trees pointed their shadows towards the yawning cave; and he fancied they bade him hide himself therein. Gathering up his tools, he sprang away from the spot and hurried towards his house, situate half way down the mountain in the direction of the bay. The suddenness of his exit

surprised something that lay concealed in the high grass. Muttering a suppressed “sacre,” he sped along the faster, and reached his door as the first bantam welcomed in the day.

“Holy Virgin! I am discovered!” he exclaimed, as he threw himself on one of the many hammocks* suspended round the outer apartment: *malice—revenge—devil*—escaping frequently between his grinding teeth, as he lay tossing and rocking from side to side, revolving in his mind the many ways he might escape the Argus-eyes of meddling neighbours; for even in that little community there were bickerings and friendly jests and harmless insinuations; and this Jaques Gomez was well aware of, for he had “been in” at the picking of many a luckless wight. Then again he tried to think he might have been mistaken—that his own shadow had deceived his heated fancy, and hereupon he fell asleep.

“Praised be the Virgin, I have him now! My foot is on his neck! My hand is in his hair!” shouted a pigmy figure, dancing round the grave-like pit Jose had just left. “O Santa! I’ve long watched for such a chance as this,” he roared, springing across the hole: “I’ll pay him up for a score of injuries, oh! oh!” here a suddenly conceived scheme of vengeance composed his features, which had pictured every thought stronger than language—his tongue which had rolled and swayed in his capacious mouth, and then protruded far beyond its confines, as if to gather in some noxious exhalation to sharpen up his malice, rested from its labours—the scheme so newly meditated being too adorable for words—and then he threw his five feet length—of which his head formed full a fourth—along the excavation—jumped up again, and left the spot.

“About five feet ten,” he soliloquised: “somewhere near his size—looks mighty like a grave, too, aye!” Here he stopped short and squinted with one eye like a gaoler at the half heard wail of a

* Hammocks made of a tough grass, and used as a substitute for chairs.