

game quietly examined the room and its occupants. As to the former, nothing could be more primitive. The walls were barely white-washed, and the roof upheld by small rafters painted bright red. For furniture there were some sixty small tables, also painted red, and perhaps twice as many common cane chairs. All the tables, with one or two exceptions, were occupied by loteria players.

If the furniture was not calculated to excite much curiosity, it was otherwise with the players. There were Havaneses, Spaniards, Jamaica and San Domingo traders, colonists from Florida, and slave ship *capitanos*. Some of the motley crew were clad with the richest extravagance—magnificently embroidered *serapes* thrown over the shoulder, hat-bands of strings of fine pearls, richly mounted pistols in the belt, and enormous diamonds, clumsily mounted, shone in their shirt-fronts. Others were simply clad in rags.

Notwithstanding the difference in their dress, however, the players were on the best of terms with one another. The proprietors of the embroidered *serapes* mingled freely and chatted on equal terms with the wearers of tattered *calzoneras*. The fact is, two things only were necessary to obtain admission to the gambling-house,—money and blood. The most notorious evildoers were welcome provided they could prove the presence of dollars in their pockets and the absence of mixed blood in their pedigree. Any one with a drop of negro or Indian blood in his veins, who might have ventured to present himself, would, undoubtedly—even were he possessed of the riches of Croesus—have been ignominiously turned, nay, kicked out on the spot. Jupiter, the big negro who acted as porter, had his orders on this point, and we may be sure he respected them.

A remarkable feature in all the players, of whatever station, was the fierce, vulture-like look with which they followed the game. In each the cruel face, the gleaming eye, and the eager, rapacious glance was repeated. Of all who were assembled in the room the Frenchman was the only young man.

Finally the game came to an end amidst a general hubbub. The servants of the establishment collected and shuffled the cards, while the fortunate winners received their winnings from their croupier.

After some five minutes' interruption the croupier drew from his pocket an immense oval chronometer.

"Senores," he said, in Spanish, "it is half-past nine. According to the invariable custom of the house the price of each card will, for the remainder of the evening be raised from six dollars to an *onza* (ounce) of gold."

No objection was made, for the *loteria*, like the lot of the present day, was merely a kind of pool, in which the winner pocketed the stakes of all the players. If the stakes were tripled the winnings were increased in proportion.

A few of the gamblers, the contents of whose pockets would not allow them to indulge in such high play, withdrew, while the servants distributed the cards and collected the money in small bowls made of cocoa-nut shells.

The Frenchman took two cards and sat himself down at one of the small tables. In the meantime the croupier had resumed his seat and began to call out the numbers.

The game was necessarily one of intense interest, in view of the large sums at stake. About a hundred cards were out, and the stake thus consisted of over seventeen hundred dollars, from which a small percentage, "for the good of the house," had to be deducted.

It was very evident from the half-drawn breaths, the dead silence, and the livid pallor which overspread the countenances of some of the players, that more than one of their number had risked his last *onza*.

The suspense, however, did not last long. The croupier had hardly called twenty numbers, when a voice called out in a triumphant tone, "Quine!"

A volley of oaths, half-stifled imprecations and curses greeted the announcement. Every one left his seat, and the eyes of all turned with looks of intense envy and covetousness on the fortunate winner.

II.

THE DANCING GIRL.

The Frenchman—for he it was on whom fortune had so kindly smiled—endeavored in vain to maintain his composure and to hide his joy from the jealous eyes that surrounded him. Assuming an air of indifference he made his way towards the high narrow counter on which the croupier was arranging in small piles the broad gold pieces which formed the stake. The latter, as the fortunate winner approached, greeted him with the stereotyped smile which the croupiers of all ages and all countries are accustomed to assume on addressing a successful player.

"Be good enough," said the young man, laying down the winning card, "to see that the numbers are correct."

"Oh senor," returned the other with an obsequious air, "that would never do. It would be, as it were, casting a doubt upon your honor's word."

This, however, did not appear to meet the views of the players, among whom arose a murmur of discontent.

"See that it's correct!" cried an ill-looking Mexican in a harsh, commanding tone. "It's the rule. We except no one. All are equal here."

"Your honor will excuse me," returned the

croupier. "It is indeed the rule. I should have liked to have made an exception in your case, but the honorable gentlemen insist."

Agreeably to the will of the "honorable gentlemen"—and a more villainous lot of honorables was never seen—the examination was made and the numbers were found correct.

"Here is the amount," said the croupier more obsequiously than ever. "Will your honor be pleased to count it?"

"It is not necessary. Although it may be the rule of the house I can afford to make an exception."

"Will your honor carry the money, or shall I send it to-morrow?"

"I will take it myself. Be good enough to put it up in paper."

While the croupier was wrapping up the coin in small rolls, taking care to slip in all the pieces of doubtful nature and short weight, the door opened and two new comers entered the room.

The first of this was a man, the other a young girl—both street-singers and dancers.

The man, who might have been any age between twenty-five and forty, offered a most singular appearance. At first glance the most prominent feature about him was his immense nose, long and curved like the beak of a bird of prey. His one eye—for only one was visible, the other being covered by a black neckerchief, shone with an almost supernatural brilliance. His lips were so thin that although his mouth was large when closed it resembled a half-healed scar. In the expression of his face, absurd as it was, there was something frightfully revolting. It was easy to read in his whole countenance cruelty, rapacity, and treachery. He was evidently a man who would hesitate at no crime and shrink from no infamy. Nor was the general appearance of his person any more prepossessing than the expression of his countenance. On his head he wore an immense *sombrero* which half concealed the baleful visage beneath. His long body and slender legs were clad in a greasy tunic of faded velvet and knee-breeches so thoroughly worn and weather-stained that it would have been impossible to determine the material. From the knee down to the ankle his legs were bare, the feet being shod with sandals of untanned skin. In one hand this strange personage held a small tambourine, and across his shoulders hung a cross belt with a guitar attached. A second belt sustained an immense sword with a rusty steel hilt.

A greater contrast than that offered by the companion of this queer being could hardly be imagined.

She appeared to be at the most eighteen or twenty, judging by her *contour* and by the lower part of her face, the upper half of which was hidden under a thick lace veil.

It would be difficult to conceive anything simpler and yet more graceful than her costume. Her Mexican tunic of semi-transparent material, cut low in the neck and with very short sleeves, fitted closely to a slim and delicate waist around which was drawn a scarf of crimson crape. Below this a short muslin skirt embroidered with flowers reached to a knee that was perfection itself, leaving bare a divinely turned leg and a little foot worthy of Cinderella, shod in a delicate white silk slipper with a crimson rosette. Her hair hung to her feet in two heavy plaits, tied with pink ribbon, and on the left side of her gracefully poised head a rose nestled amid the folds of her veil, through which could be distinguished the flashes of two bright black eyes. On her left arm lay one of those mandolines with which the pictures of Vanloo have made us familiar, on which she carelessly struck a few strains with the rosy fingers of her right hand. In all the movements of the young girl there was an indefinable charm which it is impossible to describe—a chaste, yet voluptuous grace which was incomprehensible in one of her calling.

In the meantime the man had struck an attitude. With the right leg thrown forward and his left hand resting on his hip, the elbow on a level with his shoulder, he made a ridiculous show enough. Putting on the hideous grin which did duty in the place of a smile he slightly threw back his *sombrero*, and striking a single note of warning on his tambourine, began in a hard hoarse voice.

"Senores, hidalgos, and gentlemen, we are about to have the honor and pleasure, the *senora* and myself—your very humble servant—of charming your ears with our incomparable notes. The *senora* here, who is known as the Song-bird of Havana, and I—your humble servant—whom people call the Sweet Singer of Cuba, will reproduce with tambourine and mandoline accompaniment, the newest Spanish *seguedillas* and the latest songs from the French Opera. If you wish it, *senores*, hidalgos, and gentlemen, the *senora* here will execute to the castanets the dance known as the *bolero* of Seville, and I—your very humble servant—will imitate the song and cries of well known birds and animals. Now then, *senora*! One, two, three!"

Saying this the one-eyed stranger commenced a measure upon his tambourine. The Song-bird struck in with the mandoline and the two united their voices in a *seguedilla*. The man's voice, we have said, was hard and hoarse when he spoke, but strange to say when he broke into song it changed into the clearest and most melodious tenor. As for the young girl, her singing was beyond praise. The *seguedilla* was followed by an *arietta* sung by the girl alone to a mandoline accompaniment. Then came a quaint queer song, the words of which were unintelligible and the air unknown, but into which the singer threw so much passion and pathos

that the ill-looking gamblers to a man burst into applause.

When the *senora* had duly acknowledged the *bravos* of the crowd the man stepped forward and gave his promised imitations of the cries of the birds and animals of the island. He met, however, with but slight encouragement. Everyone in the audience was too impatient for the *bolero* to pay much attention to his mimicry.

After a few minutes' intermission the dance commenced. While the girl laid aside her mandoline and adjusted the castanets, her companion took up his position. As he struck the first note on his tambourine the girl bounded into the centre of the circle formed by the admiring audience, and rattling her castanets broke into the voluptuous movements of the dance. When she had finished, a thundering *encore* burst from the crowd. Bowing in token of submission to the wish of her audience she took out the rose she had worn in her hair and detaching one of the petals placed it inside one of her dainty slippers, and recommenced the *bolero*. When she had finished she again slipped off her slipper, and held up the rose-leaf as fresh as when she had plucked it from the flower. With this the performance closed amidst the most frantic applause.

When the noise had subsided, the one-eyed man lifted his *sombrero* and ceremoniously bowed towards the four corners of the room.

"Senores, hidalgos and gentlemen," he exclaimed, "since we have been fortunate enough to succeed in pleasing amateurs of such taste and enlightenment as yourselves, we must look upon this day as the happiest of our lives. Our feeble efforts have been already too highly paid by your applause. The success we have obtained is indeed far above our merits; your approval is of more value in our eyes than all the wealth of the universe. But alas! gentlemen, one must live. The *senora* here and I—your very humble servants—are not ashamed of our honorable poverty, and we shall be proud to receive from your noble hands any acknowledgment of our humble efforts. Now then, *senora*! one, two, three!"

The *senora* slipped her castanets into the pocket of her skirt, and producing from the same receptacle a small tin basin, glided among the admiring crowd. Without uttering a word, she presented the basin to one after another of the audience. The performance had met with such favor that the gamblers were more than usually generous. A rain of reals poured into the bowl, and before the *danseuse* had made half the round of the spectators it was full. Returning to her companion, who had eagerly watched the contributions as they poured in, she emptied the basin into his hat and returned to complete the collection.

The young officer was still standing by the counter, where the croupier was putting up the stakes in *rouleaux*. As the dancing girl approached them, the Frenchman dropped three shining gold pieces into her basin. Astonished at such unwonted generosity, the girl paused and fixed her large shining eyes upon the young man's handsome face. Then slightly bending her head, with a bewitching smile she raised his hand and pressed it to her lips.

(To be continued.)

"MY WIFE."

"She's a very nice woman, my dear Mickleberry, a very nice woman indeed," said Mr. Partanbridge sagely, "but you allow her to dictate too much. For instance, my wife should never tell me not to smoke in the drawing-room on account of the curtains."

"It does turn 'em yellow," observed Mr. Mickleberry thoughtfully.

"Granted; but what becomes of your conjugal superiority? And then you didn't buy that corner lot because she advised you not. What is a woman's judgment worth in a matter of business like that, Mickleberry?"

"Mary knows more than half the men going," parenthetically asserted Mr. Mickleberry.

"Excuse me, Mickleberry, but you don't keep her in her place. Don't the Scriptures expressly say that woman is the weaker vessel? I should like to see Mrs. Partanbridge venture to differ from me!"

Mr. Mickleberry looked admiringly at his big friend.

"How do you manage it, Partanbridge?" he questioned, a little timidly.

"Tact, my dear fellow—tact, dignity, supremacy. I wouldn't have mentioned it, if circumstances hadn't pointed directly to the fact, but you are getting henpecked, Mickleberry. Everybody notices it. You must gather up the reins of domestic management—you must assert yourself."

Mr. Mickleberry laughed.

"But what is the use of asserting myself?" he asked jocosely. "Everything goes on like clockwork at home; Mary always meets me with a smile; she spends money sensibly, and never asks me for an unnecessary penny."

"Does she tell you how she spends it?"

"Not always, but—"

Mr. Partanbridge interrupted his friend with a groan.

"O, these women, these women! I should like to see my wife buying a silk dress, as Mary did last week, without first consulting me!"

"But she had saved the money out of her housekeeping funds."

"Then, my dear fellow, it's a sign that you give her too much money for housekeeping.

Put her down—draw the purse-strings a little tighter."

Mr. Mickleberry looked uncomfortable. "I—I should hardly like to do that, Partanbridge."

"You'll never be master in your own house until you do."

Mr. Moses Mickleberry went home and told his wife all about what Partanbridge had said. Mary laughed and colored, but she was a little angry withal.

"I wish Mr. Partanbridge would mind his own business," said she. "I'm tired of hearing about 'my wife'! She must be a poor spiritless concern."

"Partanbridge is a man of great ability," said Moses gravely.

"Fiddlestick!" said Mrs. Mickleberry. "A regular hon-hussy—a thorough-going Miss Nancy!"

"I'm sorry you feel so about him, my dear," said Moses; "for he doesn't like the place where he is lodging now, and I told him he might occupy our spare room for a few days."

"O, I've no objections to that," said Mrs. Mickleberry composedly. "I'm always glad to entertain your friends, my dear, even if they are not the most agreeable people in the world, and I dare say I can get along with Mr. Partanbridge for a few days."

"You're a little jewel, my dear!" said Moses, and he forgot all Partanbridge's insinuations at once.

Mr. Partanbridge came, bag and baggage, and took possession of the "spare room" in the Mickleberry mansion as importantly as if he had been the Grand Turk. And thenceforward "my wife" began, figuratively speaking, to trample Mary Mickleberry into dust.

"My wife" spent no money; "my wife" went nowhere; "my wife" would sooner cut off her hands than go to a woman suffrage convention; "my wife" was not literary, but spent her days doing housework, and her evenings mending stockings. She held her husband in salutary awe, never spoke when she wasn't spoken to—in short, knew her place.

"And how did you manage it, Partanbridge?" asked Mr. Mickleberry once again, in the admiration of his soul.

Mr. Partanbridge waved his hand loftily. "Mickleberry," said he, "there are some things that can't be expressed in words."

"Fortunately," put in Mrs. Mickleberry, who was sewing away as vigorously as if every stitch was an unuttered protest.

"And," went on Mr. Partanbridge, as if he had not heard the interruption, "it is woman's duty to listen, to submit, to keep silence."

"There goes the door-bell," observed Mrs. Mickleberry. "Will you go, Moses? It is Bridget's evening out."

"My wife," commenced Mr. Partanbridge, "would never have asked me to perform so mental an office as—"

He stopped short as a loud masculine voice was heard in the entry below stairs.

"Does Job Partanbridge lodge here? Yes? O, all right—tell 'em to bring the trunks; and you, cabman, a shilling's enough fare. You'll get no more out of me! Clear out, and let 'em hear no more of your grumbling! So he's here, is he? A pretty chase I've had after him!"

Mrs. Mickleberry looked up at the blanching countenance of Mr. Job Partanbridge in surprise and bewilderment.

"Who can that loud-voiced woman possibly be?" she asked. "Surely there is some mistake."

"N—no," quoth Mr. Partanbridge, with chattering teeth; "it is—my wife!"

"Mrs. Partanbridge? Can it be possible?" and hospitable little Mary Mickleberry dropped her work and hastened to greet and welcome her new guest, the paragon among women, the meek and lowly and well-trained wife of the doughty Job!

Mrs. Partanbridge came into the room with the tread of a giantess and the aspect of an Amazon. She was a tall large woman, red-faced and resolute, with the faint shade of a moustache on her upper lip, and a deep voice like that of a grenadier; and she wore her cloak as if it had been a man's overcoat, the two sleeves tied round her neck, while her sailor hat would have been a snug fit for her husband.

She sat down at Mrs. Mickleberry's invitation, with a force that made the chair crack and tremble in its every joint and thrust out her feet.

"Pull off those goloshes!" said she to Job, and the husband promptly went down on his knees to perform the behest. "Not so rough; you're as clumsy as ever, I see. And now tell me why you didn't send the money for me to join you before?"

"I—I couldn't spare it from my business. Drusilla, my dear," stammered Job, growing scarlet.

"Hang up my cloak to dry, and get me a footstool for my feet," commanded Mrs. Partanbridge. "Look sharp about it, too! Well, I've borrowed five pounds from Cousin Underhill, and I've come on on my own hook. I'm tired of being poked away in the country while you're playing the fine city gent, and I'll not stand it any longer. Besides, I wanted to attend a Woman's Suffrage Association, and I'm a member of the Sedleyville Branch of Female Voters. You've got a nice house here, ma'am," turning to Mrs. Mickleberry. "I might have had a house of my own, if Job Partanbridge had used common sense in his business affairs, and listened to my advice a little."

"Drusilla, my dear," interrupted Mr. Partanbridge, but his wife darted a leonine glance at him.

"Job Partanbridge, will you hold your tongue,