

"I cannot promise you that, madam; it is rather too much," said the Captain.

"But I restore you without ransom to liberty."

"Duguesclin will never purchase his liberty at the expense of an innocent woman."

"Yet liberty is a valuable thing, sir," resumed the exasperated Morisca, looking steadfastly at Duguesclin. The veins of his forehead swelled, a martial smile lighted up his countenance, and his foot struck the ground as he eagerly listened to the wily Morisca. A sort of feverish ardor and impatience sparkled in his eyes.

Aixa thinking she was on the point of prevailing over him, continued: "Would not liberty be preferable to remaining here powerless, bound like a mummy in the bowels of the earth, whilst your comrades reap the glory of capturing Seville?"

Drops of perspiration fell from the forehead of Duguesclin. "Oh, yes, liberty is precious!" exclaimed he, regarding the Morisca already secure of her triumph, "so precious, that I wish to regain it immediately in order to take part in the assault."

"The wish of a prisoner, needs the power."

"What a brave man will he accomplish!" exclaimed Bertrand, breaking, with superhuman effort, the cords that tied his bleeding wrists; then springing towards the barrier he made the posts bend like reeds, and the water immediately rushed in, boiling like a whirlpool, and foaming as it dashed across the wreck of the sunken gate.

While the Morisca stood dumb with surprise before this unforeseen catastrophe, Duguesclin tore away one of the cross-beams that yet impeded the course of the water, and used it as a club to keep off the Moors, who endeavored to oppose his passage. But the latter were far from expecting this sudden outbreak from a man who had so complacently yielded to them, added to which they were so disagreeably surprised at the irruption of the water, that they were quite unprepared to offer any serious resistance to him.

Duguesclin sprang forward to the iron grating, and when Aixa, who first recovered herself, ordered her guards to arrest the prisoner, it was too late; the grating was closed on them; the key creaked in the lock; the knight was out of the snare, and he enclosed the revengeful Morisca with her turbaned servants in those caverns into which the water rushed furiously.

"What do you say now, madam?" demanded he, tranquilly putting the key in his pocket, and laughing so as to shake the vaults of the aqueduct. "Truly, fortune is very capricious! Just now I was your prisoner—at present, it seems to me you are mine."

"Release us, Sir Bertrand," cried Aixa, as she clung to the iron bars with a convulsive grasp, while the Moors uttered the most frightful howls.

"Gently, madam," resumed Duguesclin, with an ironical air; "behave with resignation; I should like, in my turn, to see you also meet your fate coolly."

"Peace!" she cried frantically. "All my treasures," she added, "to him among you who avenges me on that man."

The soldiers of Mohamed flung themselves on the grating, which shook a little under their desperate efforts.

The waters continued to advance, strange noises filled the caverns, and foaming waves broke against the bars of the grate.

"I am a woman," urged Aixa, at length, with a plaintive expression, "and it is the duty of a loyal knight to grant mercy to a woman."

"The woman who did not scruple to involve in her hatred all the inhabitants of a city," said the Breton; "the woman who could rejoice to see the eager lips of children in want of bread; she who could daily calculate the progress made by the famine; that woman deserves to suffer the agonies she would inflict on others."

The knight then turned away to rejoin the mules, when he heard a sharp noise, resembling that of a door that creaked heavily on its rusty hinges. Fearing some new surprise, he waited an instant for the explanation of the noise, but Aixa, who guessed the cause, began to laugh with savage joy, and cried, as she waved the torch she held in her hand, "I told you rightly, invincible captain, you will not get out of the aqueduct so easily."

"Who will hinder me?" asked Duguesclin.

"I will," answered the rough and hoarse voice of a tall man, dressed in a cloak of a reddish color, who advanced towards him from the end of the gallery; on his broad shoulders was slung a little barrel, while a bone rattle sounded at his belt.

"Who are you?" asked the knight with vague uneasiness.

"I am Esau Manasses," coolly replied the renegade.

"Esau," repeated Duguesclin, shuddering. "You know Esau, of whom I spoke to you just now," said Aixa, whose eyes sparkled with cruel joy; "my friend of the Lazaretto. You did not expect to see him so soon, eh?"

Duguesclin now retreated a few paces. "Cursed leper!" he exclaimed, "approach no nearer, or I swear that with this weapon I will kill thee like a dog." At the same time he brandished the formidable bar, which served him as a club.

"Advance, Esau, advance," said the Morisca, who feared that the knight would escape. "I need not tell thee how thou canst avenge me on this wretch of a man. But hasten, for the water increases."

The Moors, who could hardly resist the force of the foaming waves, with frantic despair twisted the bars of the grating, which now began to give way under their repeated and violent efforts."

"By the beard of Moses, one would say the bulldog of Brittany only barks so loud because he dares not bite," said the renegade, with a horrid grin; has he then guessed the vengeance I intend taking on him?"

"Advance not," repeated Duguesclin, still repulsing the leper with the end of the club.

"Once before," said Esau, stopping with his arms crossed before him, "after having humbled and insulted me in the presence of her I loved, thou didst refuse to fight with me; to-day it shall not be so; one of us must die."

"If I despised the challenge of a Jew renegade," returned Duguesclin, "of a wretched spy, by St. Ives, I shall not accept that of a leper!"

"Spy or leper," vociferated Esau, "it matters not, thou shouldst only behold in me the man whose honor thou hast trampled on."

"To me thou art no longer a man."

Esau uttered a furious shriek, and was about to spring on Duguesclin, who struck him on the breast with his club, so that he recoiled.

"Coward!" exclaimed he, "thou usest a giant's weapon against an unarmed enemy." And speaking thus, Esau threw back the cowl of his cloak and loosened his belt. Bertrand then perceived on the forehead and bosom of the renegade spots of a purplish red, the first symptoms of a disease that already circulated like poison in his veins; and he again recoiled in real alarm, as he would have retreated on the approach of a venomous reptile.

Fully to understand the involuntary horror the intrepid Breton felt at sight of Esau, it must be recollected that at that period the contagious presence of lepers inspired a dread and repulsive feeling, so much more general and natural from the belief that the disease was incurable. They were nevertheless protected by a sort of superstitious pity, and although banished from society, those who had not transgressed the laws (for criminals were sometimes condemned to confinement in the Lazaretto), and whose disease being inward, were termed white lepers, were allowed the privilege of begging in the squares and market-places, without distinctive sign except the rattle which announced their approach, and the little barrel filled with water to quench their feverish thirst. They thus succeeded in exciting the charity and timid veneration of the people who respected their hereditary suffering, as the Swiss respect the idiotism of those who are afflicted with ponderous wens, called *Coitres*, and the Orientals the inspiration of fools. Still the infection of their breath, as well as the contagion of their touch, was fearfully dreaded.

"They say thou art the most valiant of Christian knights," said the leper, seeing Duguesclin retreat before him; "I now proclaim that thou art the most cowardly. I tell thee to thy face, I, the Jew, the renegade, the leprous Esau, that thy courage is cowardice disguised."

The Breton heard this insulting language with the feeling of a man accustomed to dictate by word, gesture, and even look, to the most determined vagabonds of freebooters and Late Comers, while princes themselves bowed before his counsel.

"Thou hast gone too far, Esau," answered he, with affected *sang froid*, which belied his burning cheek and kindling eyes. "No human power can now save thee from my hands; thy leprosy shall no longer be thy shield. Thou shalt see if I fear anything in this world beside the anger of God, and my patron saint."

Throwing his club boldly behind him, he sprang upon Esau. After a struggle of some minutes, the water having rendered the stones slippery, they rolled on the ground, and so closely were they locked together, that Bertrand, who held the leper under him, could hear the cracking of his muscles and the grinding of his teeth.

In the meantime the Moorish guards had nearly wrenched away two or three bars of the grating. Aixa, who anxiously awaited the issue of the struggle, when she saw the renegade overpowered, exclaimed, "Bear up, Esau, yet a few minutes, and soon thou in thy turn mayest be without pity for the Christian."

The leper, encouraged by these words, suddenly raised his head, and endeavored to breathe his contaminating breath into the nostrils of his enemy; but the knight held his head aside, and forcibly pressing the shoulders and knees of his opponent to keep him on the ground, prevented him from moving, or succeeding in these attempts.

"Thou bulldog!" exclaimed Esau, "this time the victory will be more fatal to thee than the most woful failure. Overcome, annihilated by thee, I am yet the conqueror, for the leprosy will overpower thee in thy turn, and stretch thee on the earth more surely than the sword of Sir John Chandos, or that of the Black Prince himself."

"If thou hast a soul to save, which I much doubt," angrily replied Duguesclin, "it is time for thee to recommend it to God, Esau Manasses, for thou art about to die."

"To die," repeated the leper, scornfully, "lost thou think to frighten me with such a threat? Even so, it is better to die and return to the silent bosom of the earth, our natural mother, than to drag out existence in despairing misery."

Writhing in agony, Esau uttered a horrid shriek; gradually his voice became hushed, his muscles stiffened, and his head fell heavily backwards.

Duguesclin, instead of noticing the Moors, who were still eagerly trying to break through, soon contemplated the renegade with pity. "To kill a leper," said he to himself, with the superstitious faith of the times, "is to oppose the designs of God who has stricken him." He then dragged Esau by his garments and placed him against the wall. The leper re-opened his eyes and regarded the knight with astonishment.

"Hast thou the courage to touch me, Sir Bertrand?" said he, in a feeble voice, "I who have tried to do thee so much harm?"

Bertrand smiled; "I serve him who suffers as our Saviour teaches us by his example, without caring to know whether the sufferer wished me good or harm. I forget that thou hast been my enemy."

The grating now yielded a little further, and the Moors shouted with joy and hope.

"And in order to succour me, Sir Bertrand, thou forgettest thy danger," muttered Esau, with emotion. "If I had the strength I would kneel before thee as before an idol, but I am broken down with pain, fever and thirst."

"I will soon get you some drink, Esau," replied Duguesclin, advancing towards the barrel, which had rolled away in the struggle, as tranquilly as if he were doing the most natural and the commonest thing in the world.

"No, save thyself—flee while there is yet time," said the renegade. "The Moors are about to fall upon thee."

But Bertrand contented himself with picking up his club, and bringing the little barrel, he put it into the leper's hands, and assisted him to raise it to his lips.

"Do not hurry thyself, said he, calmly, "drink gently."

"Thanks, good knight," replied Esau, gratefully, while his eyes filled with tears. "I can drink very well alone; leave me, depart quickly, or thou wilt be the victim of thy mercy and charity."

"Why should I fear those miscreants?" said Duguesclin, "when God has given me courage to struggle against thee. Adieu, poor leper; if they were not there to help thee I would carry thee on my shoulders, for the water increases in the gallery of the aqueduct."

"Oh, sir! not one of those faithful believers of the Prophet will venture to touch me," said Esau; "but what matters that, let me die here."

"No!" exclaimed the Breton; then crossing himself, and lifting the leper on his broad shoulders, he sprang quickly forward, till he reached the staircase of the lazaretto.

"Blessed be thou, Bertrand, the most noble knight of France, for having had pity on a wretch like me," cried poor Esau.

But the Breton, without listening to him, hastened to rejoin his mules, for he heard in the distance the hasty steps and menacing cries of the Moors, led by Aixa, who were rushing to overtake him. He began driving the mules before him; thanks to the miller's costume there was no impediment to his extraordinary agility, and at the moment the guards thought of taking him, he gained the gate which gave him entrance to the city; then quickly drawing from his pocket the keys he had torn from the foster brother, he succeeded in closing the door behind him, although the Moors had furiously precipitated themselves against this last obstacle opposed to their vengeance.

CHAPTER XVIII.—The Bishop and the King.

On emerging from the aqueduct, the knight found himself in a narrow deserted street that extended along the embattled walls of the Alcazar, but he had scarcely advanced fifty steps before he met a patrol of armed inhabitants, commanded by Juan Diente, who approaching the Breton, said to him softly, "Custile."

The pretended miller scratched his head in token of embarrassment, then saluting the commandant, he endeavored to pass on, but the guard compelled him to stop.

"You cannot pass farther if you have not the counter-sign," exclaimed Juan Diente.

"In Heaven's name the best counter-sign I can give you is 'Flour,' for I believe it will be wonderfully understood by people like you, who have sharp teeth and empty stomachs."

"We perfectly understand that," said Juan Diente, "and as a proof we allow your mules and their burthens to pass without asking for the countersign."

They did not, however, lose sight of him till he came to the market-place.

There were here and there, at the corner of the streets, a few women extended under the shutters of the shops, holding screaming children in their arms, whom they no longer tried to comfort. They had all of them a fixed stare, frightful to behold, not a tear ran down their cheeks, pale and wasted with suffering.

All whom hunger had yet left upright, men, women and children, were assembled before the gate of the Alcazar, which they besieged with doleful lamentations and clamorous threats.

A thousand meagre arms were raised against the palace, a thousand hands convulsively wrung, appealing to the pity of Don Pedro.

In the meanwhile, Rachel, though still weak and suffering from the effects of her wound, had passed two sleepless nights in attendance on the sick and wounded. She had sold her jewels without regret; and all

her treasures had been sacrificed to purchase grain and flour.

At the curses the furious populace hurled against her, she experienced neither fear nor anger, but smiling sorrowfully, she murmured, "Poor people, they know not what I have done for them."

But the popular tempest continued to increase. All those wretches who were pinched by hunger, but who were prevented, either by fear, or by the remains of attachment to their king, from demanding the surrender of the city, sought a pretext for their complaints, and rendered credulous, suspicious, and cruel by their sufferings, eagerly seized on that with which the hatred of the Morisca had furnished them.

The secret partisans of Don Enrique, and above all, the agents of Augustin Gudiel, who had recently received the title of Bishop of Segovia from the Pope, and who was hostile to the vanquished king, as well as all the canons and priests of Seville, actively fomented these feelings. As soon as a single voice in the crowd had uttered the cry "Death to Rachel—death to the Jewess," it was like an electric spark running through the whole multitude, so eagerly did they repeat those savage words. "Death to the Jewess! Death to Rachel! Justice! Justice!" exclaimed the crowd with one voice, completely exasperated.

Don Pedro, from the commencement of the sedition, had been watching with Rachel at the top of the Alcazar. So long as the famished multitude confined themselves to complaints, howlings and menaces, he was contented to comfort the young girl, and to try to persuade her that the storm would soon be appeased. But when he saw the most enraged attack the gate of the palace with mattocks and pickaxes, while torches of resin flamed in the hands of others, he could no longer restrain his passion, and exclaimed, "They demand justice; well, I will give it them."

But the Jewess, seizing his hand, stopped him, and said, "They are poor people who suffer, Pedro. Why they are against me I know not. I love you; behold, that is my crime. But would you punish them because they deceive themselves in thinking me the cause of their misfortunes? Alas! their sufferings are but too real; they have become intolerable. I would not that blood be spilled for me. Our love does not please God, since he pursues it with so many calamities. Let me, Pedro, go and speak to them; when they see me confident among them, probably they will not believe me to be so great a criminal. I shall be able to find words to touch their hearts."

"Credulous child!" cried Don Pedro, "these people are a band of furious tigers! Will they listen to you? Could your voice soften and appease them? The Christian fanatics will strike thee, because thou art a Jewess; the cowards, because thou art defenceless; the old and single women, because thou art young and handsome; the friends of the usurper, because they know that in torturing thee they torture me, and that every blow that smites thee will reach my heart. The storm must be faced, Rachel, and this blinded populace must be dispersed by force."

He then advanced towards the door, but the young girl yet detained him.

"Thou art wrong, Pedro, they will hate thee," said she; "and until now not a cry has been raised against thee. If, in delivering myself to this exasperated people, I obtain from them one day of resignation and courage, my life will have been useful to you; and shall I not worthily have expiated the fault of my love?"

Don Pedro hastily disengaged himself from the grasp of the Jewess.

"Rachel," said he, almost sternly, "while I am king, I will not do the bidding of Don Enrique. These brawlers complain of hunger, well, let them leave the city; let them go and beg bread in the enemy's camp. Am I not the first to set them on example how to bear suffering? Have I larger rations than the lowest man-at-arms in the Alcazar?"

"Oh! Pedro, I tremble for thee. Do not go out of the palace."

"They will think I am afraid," answered he; "remain here, Rachel, and thou shalt soon see the storm subside."

He hastily descended into the court-yard, and ordered the gates to be thrown open. Then mounting one of the beautiful palfreys that Mohamed had sent him, and which his foster-brother, Blas, had saddled for him, without betraying the least emotion, he boldly advanced alone.

The furious and brawling multitude became calm immediately.

"Are you, then, traitors and rebels, people of Seville, thus to surround the Alcazar with imprecations and cries of death?" exclaimed the king, in an angry voice.

A tanner seeing no one dared reply, audaciously approached Don Pedro; "Sir King," said he, "we are not traitors—we do not lack courage before lances, arrows, swords and javelins, but we cannot bear up against hunger."

"Do you think then," resumed Don Pedro, in a gloomy voice, "that your king does not also suffer hunger?"

"Therefore do we love our king," replied the tanner. "We are only against those who give him bad counsel."

"Whom, then, do you accuse?" demanded Don Pedro, with affected calmness.

"The Jewess, Rachel!" answered the man of the people, boldly.

"Fools!" said the king; those who have

told you so, and spread reports against her, are liars and traitors."

All at once a heart-rending cry issued from the centre of the crowd. It proceeded from a woman with her hair dishevelled, her countenance distorted, her eyes fixed, and pressing in her arms her cold, inanimate child, who sprang towards Don Pedro, and holding up her infant. "Is this also a traitor," she said, "this innocent that has just expired? What harm had it done that it should die? I am a widow. Its father was killed on the ramparts in your defence, Sir King. He has been fortunate—he has not seen his child die of hunger."

Then followed a clamorous explosion, so confused, fierce, and rending, that Don Pedro quaked, notwithstanding all his courage. Against these lamentations, against this revolt of supplicatory voices, of countenances furrowed by hunger, force could not be used nor thought of. The mob surrounded him like an impenetrable wall, and he soon found himself the prisoner of his prostrate subjects, kneeling before him, but demanding with more and more determination the death of Rachel.

He preserved a disdainful silence, determined that they should tear the heart from his breast before the condemnation of his well-beloved should pass his lips. Suddenly the crowd gave way, and raising his eyes he saw a file of biers, on which were heaped a number of dead bodies barely covered with a winding-sheet, the stiff, lengthened countenances of which testified the frightful convulsions of their agony. It was the convoy of three noble families, whose houses had remained closed for two days. The Mayor of Seville had had the doors broken open by his alguazils, who found only corpses. Those proud nobles would not beg bread, and had preferred dying with the native stoicism of pride.

(To be continued.)

#### BADLY BEHAVED DONKEY.

There was an old man who always rode a donkey to his work, tethered him while he worked on the road, or wherever else it might be. It was suggested to him by my grandfather that he was suspected of putting it in to feed in the fields, at other people's expense.

"Eh, laird, I could never be tempted to do that, for my cuddy winna eat anything but nettles and thistles."

One day my grandfather was riding along the road, when he saw Andrew Leslie at work, and his donkey up to his knees in one of his clover fields, feeding luxuriously.

"Hello, Andrew," said he, "I thought you told me your cuddy would eat nothing but nettles and thistles."

"Ay," said he, "but he misbehaved the day; he nearly kicked me over his head, sae I pat him there to punish him."—*Ramsey's Scottish Characteristics.*

#### SHORT OF MEAT.

A Deacon being in a neighboring town on Saturday, fell in with a traveling minister and invited him to come to his town and preach next Sunday, and to his house to dinner. So Sunday morning the Deacon told his family that the minister would be there to dinner, and, as they were out of meat, told his hired boy to go to a certain place by the side of the road, and dig out a woodchuck that was supposed to have burrowed there, and they would have him for dinner. While the boy was digging away at the woodchuck hole, the minister came along on his way to preach. On seeing the boy thus digging, he hauled up and accosted him with:

"Well, my son, what are you doing there?"

"Digging out a woodchuck, Sir," said the boy.

"Why, but don't you know that it is very wicked? and besides, you won't get him if you dig for him on Sunday."

"Git 'm!" said the boy. "Thunder! I've got to git 'm; the minister's coming to our house to dinner, and we ain't got any meat."

#### ABOUT FROGS.

The editor of Harper's *Scientific Record* gives some credence to a singular statement from New Zealand. It is said that surface water is entirely gone from large tracts, sometimes covering 5,000 square miles, for months. The region becomes so utterly dry as to forbid the possibility, apparently, of any survival of frog life. And yet these reptiles seem to beat the cat for tenacity of life, for whenever rain falls sufficiently to fill the water holes, they are found to swarm with frogs, and this when immediately previous one might dig for ten or twenty feet without finding any trace of water.

A recent writer offers a solution. His statement is that on a recent tour he became alarmed for want of water; that a native called for help, went immediately to a dry water hole, found a crooked and indistinct track on what had once been land, and followed it up to the shade of a small bush. Here he commenced digging, and soon found a ball of clay about eight inches in diameter and quite dry on the outside; but when broken it was found to contain about half a pint of clear, cold water, in which a frog was biding his time, awaiting the rainy season. A number of similar balls were exhumed, and the travelers made free with both the water and the frogs. This is a marvelous story, and one may well wait for verification; and yet such a display of protective instinct is not more marvelous than many which are certainly known.