

"You can certainly divine well," replied Carmen ironically, "since you can discover in the hearts of slaves that they pine for liberty."

"You avow it then?" cried Michel le Basque. "You suffer much here—you find me a pitiless master? True! what can a grey-haired buccaneer appear to you? Nothing but a kind of savage beast!"

She made no reply, and Michel continued:

"We may know how to fight and to conquer, but we know not how, like the young planters of Cuba and Hispaniola, to deck our hats with feathers, our fingers with rings, our hair with perfumes, and to parade in idleness all day, offering scented bouquets and sugared comfits to ladies fair—poor wretches that we are!"

Donna Carmen still remained silent, but her lips formed themselves into a sarcastic smile.

"If we adventurers know not how to pay compliments," added the provoked buccaneer, "we know how to give orders to our slaves. Ebony-skin, bring me supper!"

As she calmly obeyed, he followed her into the tent, calling to Joachim, who at that instant appeared, to come and turn round the grindstone for him, whilst he sharpened his hatchet. A few minutes afterwards, a smoking quarter of wild-beast's flesh, enveloped in banana leaves, was placed on the table by the young Spaniard. As she stood awaiting his further orders, he noticed a large tear roll down her cheek, and, half-repenting of his previous rudeness, he said in a gentler tone;

"Come, sit down there, Senorita!" and he pointed to a square velvet-covered stool, that contrasted strongly with the dark and smoky tent. "Sit down beside thy master; I permit thee." Carmen did not move, and knitting his thick eyebrows, he exclaimed, "I order thee!" but still she remained motionless.

"What means this disobedience!" he angrily demanded, rising to his feet.

"Chance has rendered me your slave," replied Donna Carmen, in a calm and dignified tone, "but it has not made me your equal or your companion. I must submit to whatever misfortune fate has in store for me, but I would despise myself, if, by an act of my own will, I accepted such favours."

"Sit thee down!" cried the exasperated adventurer, "with good will or by force; for sit down to table you must."

"I know you have it in your power to kill me," she replied unmoved, as he advanced towards her.

Agitated by an ungovernable fury, but hesitating nevertheless between his anger and his love, Michel cast a glance around him, like the baited bull, irritated by slanging banderillas, who

rolls round his blood-shot eyes to determine which enemy he shall attack. That glance lighted on Joachim, whom he had charged, in the mere wantonness of power, to continue turning the grindstone, but who had suspended his task to gaze intently on this scene. A fearful smile of vengeance lighted up the countenance of the buccaneer.

"Wretch! idler! scoundrel!" he cried furiously; and seizing the hatchet that lay at his feet he swung it rapidly round his head, and launched it with all his force at the young man.

But fortunately rage had distracted his usually unerring aim, and the hatchet flew whirling through the air, to bury itself in the trunk of one of the trees to which the tent was attached. Joachim moved not a muscle, but kept his eyes fixed on Carmen, who uttered a cry of horror and fell on her knees, stretching out her arms beseechingly towards the buccaneer. Michel had already repented of his violence, but unwilling to show this, he said roughly,

"Resume your task, boy! 'Twas well you stirred not, or you might have come in the way of the axe."

"As for myself," returned Joachim, "strike me when and how you will; but take care——"

"What! dare you threaten me?" interrupted Le Basque, seizing a lash that lay near him, and advancing towards the young man.

XXXII.

THE SEIGNEUESSE.

"SIXER when has Michel le Basque made himself an executioner?" interposed a voice at this moment.

All turned to the entrance of the tent, and beheld there a woman strangely apparelled, who had been a witness of the preceding scene. The tallness of her form rendered more conspicuous its thin and wasted appearance; her pale features were an expression of haughty melancholy. Her garments were at once sordid and sumptuous. She was enveloped in a mantle of coarse, white woollen stuff, beneath which might be discerned a sort of bodice of black satin, fringed with broad lace, all torn and patched. Strings of pearls were twined amidst her hair, already silvered with the snows of age; a diamond ring shone on one of her slender fingers; on her breast hung a golden locket, enclosing two locks of auburn hair, which she from time to time raised to her lips by a convulsive and almost involuntary motion.

"The Seigneusesse!" exclaimed Michel le Basque, as he turned towards this singular woman, whose reproof had been pronounced in grave and measured accents.