

A ROMANCE OF SPAIN.

In Purchena Malec waiteth—gates are closed—portcullis down—

Longing to obtain some tidings from Galera's leagured town.

And one day amid his council, formed of many a Moorish chief,

Thus with sighs proclaimed his wishes—thus expressed his bosom's grief:

"Much I long to know the tidings from Galera's leagured town,

Whether its strong walls are standing, or have tumbled headlong down.

I will give, as wife, my sister, her the beautiful and small,
Unto him who seeks Galera, and returning tells me ail.

"If 'tis taken, or not taken—If 'tis hopeful, or appalled,
For within it dwells my sister, she who is Maleca called—
She, of Grenada's maidens, fairest, brightest, gentlest one,

There is visiting her kindred—would to heaven she ne'er had gone!"

Then a Moorish youth advancing, spoke with rapture in his eyes,

"I will go upon this journey for so great and fair a prize.
Seven long years I've wooed thy sister, with a fond and faithful love—

Ah! how faithful and how tender, let this hidden picture prove!"

Then from out his breast the picture forth with trembling hands he drew,

And the fair face of the maiden flashed upon the gazer's view—

Flashed, as doth the star of evening through the rosy twilight skies,

With the beauty, and the candour, and the magic of her eyes!

And the Moorish youth retiring waited for the dawn of day,

Then from out Purchena sallied on a steed of dapple-grey.

On his feet were yellow buskins, all with silken sandals twined,

Shield and spear he bore before him, and a short sword hung behind;

And a firelock hung suspended from his right-hand saddle-bow,

Which the Moor, in fair Valencia, learned to manage long ago.

Forth along thy wild Sierra through the dusk he wandered thence,

Fearing not the Christian forces now that Love is his defence.

When at length the sun had raisen o'er the morning vapours damp,

In the fields about Huescar he beholds the Christian camp.

For the night he waits in Orca, there conceals his dapple-grey,

And through darkness to Galera by a footpath takes his way.

From the clouds the rain was falling—from the heavens the snow came down,

In the pitchy dark of midnight did he reach the fated town;

Ruined walls were strewn around him, bloody corpses strewed the ground,

And the house of his Maleca cannot in the dark be found.

Oh! the anguish of that moment! Oh! the bitterness to wait

Till the slow-returning daylight would reveal the fair one's fate.

Is she dead? or rudely captured by some ruffian soldier's horde?

She, the beautiful and gentle—she, the worshipped and adored?

When at length the dawn of morning glimmered through the lonely street,

To the house of his beloved turned the Moor his trembling feet:

In the court-yard Moorish corpses, men and women blocked the way.

And, oh! bitter, bitter sorrow? there the fair Maleca lay:—

Like a lily in a garland twined of dusky Autumn flowers—
Like a silver birch-tree shinning in the midst of gnarled bowers—

Like the young moon's pearly crescent, seen beside a rain-filled cloud—

Thus the fair, the dead, Maleca lay amid the swarthy crowd!

Then the Moor, with tears down pouring for this foulest crime of crimes,

Pressed her in his sad embraces, kissed her lips a hundred times—

Cried aloud, "Oh! cruel Christian, thou who quenched this beauteous sun,

Dearly, dearly, by Mohammed, shalt thou pay for what thou'st done."

Then he hollowed out the narrow house, where all that live must dwell,

Piled the cold earth on her bosom, took his long, his last farewell,

Smoothed the ground around, lest prying eyes the new made grave might trace,

Then inscribed their names together on the white walls of the place.

From that mournful scene departing, slowly, sadly turned the Moor,

Found his steed again at Orca, passed unnoticed and secure,

Reached Purchena, when to Malec he revealed his tale of pain,

How he found Galera taken, and his beauteous sister slain.