Poetry.

EIGHT HOURS.

The following piece of poetry is going the rounds of the American press, apropos of the Labor agitation in that country.

We mean to make things over;
We're tired of toil for naught
But bare enough to live on—
Never an hour for thought;
We want to see the sunshine,
We want to smell the flowers:
We're sure that God has willed it,
And we mean to have Eight Hours.
We're summoning our forces,
From shipyard, shop and mill—
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,
Eight hours for what we will!

The beasts that graze the hill-side,
The birds that wander free,
In the life that God has meted
Have a better lot than we.
Oh, hands and hearts are weary,
And homes are heavy with dole—
If life's to be filled with drudgery,
What need of a human soul!
Shout, shout, the lusty rally,
From shipyard, shop and mill;
The very stones would cry out,
If Labor's tongues were still!

The voice of God within us
Is calling us to stand
Erect, as is becoming
The work of his right hand.
Should we to whom the Maker
His glorious image gave,
Cower, the meanest of his creatures—
A bread-and-butter slave?
Let the shout ring down the valleys,
And echo from every hill—
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,
Eight hours for what we will!

Ye deem they are feeble voices
That are raised in Labor's cause?
Bethink ye of the torrent
And the tornado's laws!
We say not Toil's uprising
In terror's shape shall come,
Yet the world were wise to listen
The monitory hum.
Soon—soon its deep-toned rally
Shall all the nations thrill—
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,
Eight hours for what we will!

From the factories and workshops,
In long and weary lines,
From all the sweltering forges,
From all the sunless mines,—
Wherever toil is wasting
The force of life to live,—
Its bent and battered armies
Come to claim what God doth give.
And the blazon on its banner
Doth with hope the nations fill—
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,
Eight hours for what we will!

Hurrah! hurrah! for Labor,
When it rises in its might!
It has filled the world with music;
It shall fill the world with light!
Hurrah! hurrah! for Labor!
It is mustering all its powers,
And shall march along to victory
With the banner of Eight Hours!
Shout! shout! the echoing rally,
Till all the welkin thrill—
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,
Eight hours for what we will!

Tales and Sketches.

RACHEL AND AIXA;

OR,

The Hebrew and the Moorish Maidens.

AN INTERESTING HISTORICAL TALE.

CHAPTER I.—*The Renegade.*

Of all these princes, respecting whom historians have held such divided opinions, probably there is not one whose real character is so difficult to estimate fairly as that of Pedro the Cruel, or, as others style him, Pedro the *Justiciero*, the King of Castile; for, by one or other of these two surnames have his enemies and friends handed him down to posterity, in consequence of the many acts of cruelty which sullied his reign, and the stern severity with which he vindicated the laws of the realm.

According to many of the writers of that period, his father, Alphonso XI., was privately married to Leonora de Gusman, by whom he had several children; and thus they endeavor to substantiate the claim of the first-born, Don Enrique, Count of Trastamara, to the throne which Pedro occupied after his father's death, the legality of the private nuptials being denied by the nation at large. However, be that as it may, one thing is certain, that the unfortunate Leonora de Gusman was imprisoned and put to death by Donna Maria, the Queen Dowager, in the dungeons of Talavera. At her death four sons were still living, viz., Don Enrique, Don Fadrique (grand master of Calatrava), Don Sancho, and Don Tello.

This cruel and impolitic act was speedily followed by the open rebellion of a host of dissolute and discontented nobles. The tie of friendship previously existing between Don Pedro and Don Enrique was now snapped in twain, and the latter headed the rebellion, declaring that he did so only to avenge his mother, and withdraw the king from the baneful suggestions of his perfidious counsellors; but when, shortly afterwards, Don Pedro abandoned his wife, the noble Blanche de Bourbon (whom his enemies accused him of subsequently destroying), to follow Maria de Padilla, and added to his crime that of murdering the Grand Master, whom he suspected of intriguing with the unhappy queen, Don Enrique no longer hesitated, but developed to the utmost the ambitious projects which lurked in his soul.

Strong in the promised aid of the grandees and the Church, he aspired to the crown, and soon gained over to his side the Court of France, still enraged and indignant at the tragic fate of Blanche de Bourbon.

At that period France swarmed with all the disbanded soldiers and vagabonds of Europe; armies of marauders, composed of English, German, Flemish and Navarese, were scattered over the country, pillaging the towns and villages, wasting the substance of the nobles by fire and sword, and only sparing their lives in order to obtain the goodly ransom which their friends or vassals were able to raise for them; in fact, the Peace of Brittany, signed between England and France, had only converted the opposing armies into a band of allied robbers; nothing was sacred in their eyes; they rode on horseback into the churches, ate at the altar, and drank from the consecrated chalice. The edicts of the King of France, Charles V., were only ridiculed, and it seemed impossible to prevent the entire and immediate dissolution of the Empire.

At this important moment, the wise and politic Bertrand Dugueselin, the great captain of his age, suggested to the king the idea of employing these adventurers in a crusade to avenge the death of Blanche de Bourbon, his sister-in-law. It appeared that little short of a miracle could induce these licentious bands to quit the fertile soil of France, yet Bertrand easily accomplished it. He proposed to the several captains that they should all unite as free companions, having himself for their chief, and set out to enrich themselves with the spoils of Spain, by assisting Don Enrique against his brother Don Pedro, the renegade, the protector of Jews and Moors; nor was the wily Briton wrong in thus addressing himself to the cupidity and vanity of these freebooters. The principal chiefs, Hugh of Calverly, Matthew de Gournay, William Huet, the Green Knight, John d'Evreux, and Tom Burdett, instantly promised to unite and march under his banner, and soon after they delivered up to the king all the fortresses, cities, and castles in their hands, marched to Avignon, obtained by force a papal bull of absolution with a gift of 100,000 livres, and thence directed their steps towards Spain, recruiting themselves on the road with all those isolated and ferocious robbers whom the regular soldiers termed in derision the "late comers."

A month had scarcely elapsed after their departure from Avignon ere the Count de Tastamara had caused himself to be crowned King of Castile, and had taken possession of Burgos, pursuing Don Pedro, who fled towards Cardona, whence he hoped to reach Seville, intending to defend himself in that city to the utmost.

Such was the state of affairs at the time our story commences.

The day after the surrender of Toledo, about four in the afternoon, a small band of fugitives were slowly wending their way through the bye-paths of the immense forest of Cardona, whose weary length stretched far and wide on every side, presenting to their anxious gaze nothing but a mass of tangled woods, whilst their ears were ever and anon startled by the cries of wild beasts or the hissing of the deadly serpent, aroused by the unaccustomed footsteps of man. The scarlet mark affixed to the breast and back of most of the travellers, together with the horn in their caps, proclaimed them to be Jews—those distinctive badges, without which any Christian would have been privileged to kill them, could not even then be laid aside. A deep silence was observed by all, the most fearless only venturing to cast, from time to time, a hurried glance behind. Occasionally, as the howling of the denizens of the forest grew louder and nearer, a plaintive wail escaped from the litter borne in the midst of the party, and once a small white hand drew aside the curtain, and a sweet voice murmured, "My father, my father, you are still near me, are you not?"

"Silence, my daughter," softly answered the eldest of the fugitives, a venerable Jew, with a long silver-white beard, "silence; and above all, let none see you. Remember, we are not alone in the midst of our brethren; there are those here who are not of us; and the law commands that the women of our race permit not themselves to be seen of any but their kindred."

The only answer was a gentle sigh, and the silence became more and more profound.

The *gonims* (as the Jews termed all those who differed from them in religion), did not appear to feel any desire to see the beauty hidden in the litter, as they employed themselves in cleaving with their hatchets the thickets and briars which obstructed their progress. At length the green underwood which had impeded them ceased, and the travellers found themselves in front of a small river that intersected the forest. The fugitives stopped, not a little surprised at this new obstacle to their progress, but the Christians, who were all on horseback, set spurs to their horses, and then plunging into the stream, and bravely stemming the current, were soon on the other side, when, without listening to the cries and lamentations of the poor Jews, their riders spurred onwards, and were speedily lost in the prolonged depths of the forest.

The Jews, who at first were struck dumb with consternation, now made the forest echo with their cries and groans. The elder, who appeared to be their chief, tore his beard with anguish, crying, "Alas! what will become of us? those traitor gonims abandon us! they who had promised us their valiant assistance! Woe unto us! woe unto me should my beloved daughter fall into the hands of the Infidel! God of Zion, turn this abomination from thy children! If the mantle which covereth my Rachel be torn away, then are we lost!"

"Dost thou not tremble for other treasures, Samuel Ben Levi?" said a shrill voice beside him.

The old Jew started, trembling with fear and surprise at the sight of a young man, who over his Jewish robe wore the tabard according to the ordinance, but whose physiognomy did not bear that expression of suspicious humility and servile cunning so peculiar to the race of Jacob. His complexion, though rather pale, was remarkable for its clearness; the Andalusian sun had not yet tanned it. His noble features, his long blond hair, his deep blue eyes, with their keen and rapid glance, added to his lofty stature, and an air of haughty superiority in all his gestures, endowed him with a sort of imposing aspect. The most casual observer could not have mistaken in him an energetic descendent of those northern Goths who had twice conquered Spain.

"You here! you here!" cried Samuel, trying to bend his head until it nearly touched the ears of the mule. "Is it possible? How very imprudent! Alas, I tremble for you!"

"Say for thyself, Samuel, and for thy treasure," replied the disguised Christian, smiling; "for all thy treasures, acquired Heaven knows how, are here, are they not?"

"No, signor, you are mistaken," replied Samuel, "but ——"

"But you are yourself running a great risk," said his companion; "if by chance any one recognises you. Think how the companions of Bertrand love *marabolins* and pretty girls; besides, that litter!"

"Softly, softly, I entreat," whispered Ben Levi.

"Don't alarm yourself, my good Jew," replied the Christian, "our state is not altogether desperate; hold—look!" and he stretched his hand towards the river, where the old man beheld a tolerably large boat gliding along, with only one person on board, who seemed to be rowing in their direction.

The rower was tall and robust; his broad shoulders, his black curly hair, sinewy neck, and aquiline nose, together with his large brilliant black eyes, all proclaimed him a son of an Eastern race. He wore only a pair of light linen trousers and a miserably tattered jacket, with the sleeves turned up to the elbow, in order to allow his brawny arms full play. When the boat was but a little distance from the shore, he suddenly stopped rowing.

A ray of hope now gleamed in Samuel's eyes. "Well, ferryman," cried he, "why dost thou not advance? what is thy fare?"

"I will not ferry you over to the other side, either for gold or silver," said the rower, with a careless air.

"What!" exclaimed the astonished Jew, "art thou mad? Is it not thus that thou gainest thy bread?"

"You are not travellers," said the boatman, "but fugitives."

"Fugitives, I acknowledge; but will you not have compassion on us, who have been already plundered both by Gascon and Navarese soldiers?—poor Jews, without a real."

"Your lie, worthy sir?" interrupted the boatman, "you are the prince of the Jews of Castile."

"Thou deceivest thyself—thou deceivest thyself, indeed, friend!"

"You are the rich treasurer, Samuel Ben Levi, one of the favorites of Don Pedro; and to assist whom would be treason, said the inflexible boatman.

The alarmed Jew now dismounted from his mule, and tearing his hair, knelt on the bank of the river, crying aloud, "Have pity on us! have pity on us!"

"Not if you were to kiss the crucifix to soften me. I shall remain faithful to the King, Don Enrique. As for thee, the disbanded soldiers will catch thee, and punish thee for thy wealth, under pretext that thou hast profaned sacred rites, and crucified Christian children. Oh! rely on it, they will find fitting arguments."

"Alas! what crime have I committed?" said the treasurer, with grief.

"Art thou deaf, Samuel; have I not already told the?" replied the boatman. "Thou art a Jew—thou art rich—are these not crimes?" Then, he added with a bitter smile, "Those ruffians will condemn thee for this, and all thy amulets will not save thee. It is in vain that thou hast attached to thy robe slips of parchment covered with verses of the sacred Talmud!"

"Ah, well, be it so," said Samuel, with a despairing gesture; "What is life, now, to me. Listen, Christian, take the money and the jewels; take all that I hoped to save; take my life, if you will; only transport that litter to the other side of the river without raising the curtain."

"That litter!" repeated the boatman, surprised. "What can it contain more precious than thy treasures or thy life?"

"It contains my blood—my life itself!" exclaimed the treasurer; but it is my life full of bloom, and beauty, and youth; not this humble and attenuated phantom, dried and wasted by years, whose faltering voice now addresses you."

"What mean those strange mysterious words?" exclaimed the rower with restless and eager curiosity.

"Ah me, I may well give my cheek to the smiter," said Samuel; "well may I fear to spend a single coin to buy myself a new robe, I who am only fit to suffer insult and misery, and to be trodden under foot; but my daughter, she who is to me as the thrice sacred ark—if a gonim were only to touch her veil, I, who have such a horror of sword and dagger, I would slay him!"

"Oh, oh! what warlike frenzy has seized the now, old Samuel," interrupted his blue-eyed companion.

"I would surely kill him!" continued the Jew, "even should I, like the Rabbi of Jaen, be hung by the legs for dogs to fatten on my carcase!"

"They would fare but poorly, and deserve as much pity as thyself," said his companion, sneeringly.

"Should I," continued the old man, without noticing him—"should I even feel the fire all ready kindled to consume me ——"

"What! thy daughter here?" cried the boatman, visibly agitated. "Rachel, the child of thy old age, and thy darling—she whom thou lovest as Jacob loved Benjamin?"

"What!" exclaimed the Jew, "thou knowest her name! Oh! thou wilt have pity on me. Thou canst not but know how beautiful, chaste, and innocent my Rachel is—thou must have heard how her father never could refuse her slightest whim, even as a child!"

The boat now neared the shore, and Samuel continued, in a lower and more plaintive voice, By my tribe I am honored as a patriarch, and a king. Rachel never suspected the degradation and abasement of her father; she knows not the servile condition of her race; and she could never submit to be treated as a slave; a single look of contempt, the slightest insult, and she would die of grief and shame."

"Your daughter is, then, really here?" repeated the boatman, more and more agitated. "Take care that thou dost not deceive me, Father Samuel!"

"I swear it, Christian, by the beard of the Najid!"*

The ferryman reflected a moment, whilst the wretched Jew awaited, in an agony of terror, his decision. At length he said, "Listen, noble gaon; the truth of what thou advancest must be proved to me. I demand that she herself ask me for a passage, and that thou permittest me to kiss her forehead."

Samuel Ben Levi uttered a shriek of indignation. "Never, never, vile gonim! Never has one of your race seen the lustre of her eyes, blacker than the dark night itself. Rachel is like a precious pearl in the depths of the sea. I keep her sacred from the gaze of any, and thou wouldst——"

"Refuse me this fare and I leave you to the tender mercies of the soldiers of Hugh de Calverley, who will soon be here. They will not be content with one kiss. You will be lucky, if that Captain or Bequs de Villaine condescends to make her his favorite servant."

"Hear him, merciful Heaven!" cried Samuel, covering his eyes with his hands, as though he expected the thunder to crush him who proffered so horrible an alternative.

"The beautiful Rachel will make a charming handmaiden for the 'late comers' and other wretches from over the mountains—her white hand will daintly pour out the red wine for those gallants, and her sweet voice sound most melodious to their ears!"

"God of Zion!" interrupted the miserable Jew, "do I not hear the distant trumpets of the French echoing through the forest?"

"Time passes rapidly, Samuel; thou wilt long repent this bargaining for the salvation of thy daughter. Wilt thou be less alarmed at my proposition, when I tell thee that I already know the lovely Rachel?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Jew.

"Fright has disturbed thy vison, Samuel, or thou wouldst long since have recognised thy former apprentice, Esau, who served thee as faithfully as Jacob served Laban. Grief cannot so much have altered him as to have rendered him a stranger in thine eyes?"

The countenance of the treasurer immediately brightened, and he fixed on the boatman a look full of curiosity and affection. "What! Esau?" said he, in a voice that expressed both trouble and surprise, blended with a strange mixture of reproach and confidence. "Is it thou whom I see?—thou, who deserted me, without once communicating with me since? Ah, how uneasy have I been at thy absence, wicked youth! And what hast thou become? Rachel, too, will be glad to see thee—thou, who always caused so much disturbance in my household. She knew thy rough, unruly temper, but she dreaded it not; for, with a word, she made thee smile, spite of thy frowning brow. Come here; open the litter, quick! We are thy kindred. Thou shalt speak to the veiled beauty, and then thou wilt ferry us over."

"Stop, Samuel," said Esau, in a harsh voice; "you forgot that Rachel refused to marry a mere dependant like me."

But Samuel, without listening to him, opened the litter, muttering, "It is that wicked youth who has already annoyed me so much. Rachel, my dear daughter, wilt thou not readily pay his service with a kiss, should he snatch us from the clutches of the disbanded soldiers?"

During this speech, the boatman stood trembling and gazing on the young Jewess, who leant forward out of the litter, and though covered from head to foot in a mantilla, the sparkle of her bright eyes seemed to dazzle him like the sun's rays. He brought his boat to the shore, fastened it, and then leaped on the bank, without daring to advance towards the litter; then he said aloud, "Perhaps the daughter of Ben Levi holds me in aversion and disgust!"

"Esau," said the Jewess, in a silvery tone, "you are still the same, ever mistrustful and suspicious. I only see in you the companion of my childhood and the friend of my father—be welcome. Why should you hate me because I was sincere with you? How could I love you?—a passion of which I was ignorant, and which did not exist in my heart."

"I submitted to your will, Rachel," answered Esau; "I fled, for I could not endure the torments of my soul—to live near you, to breathe the air which surrounded you, and was perfumed by your breath; I felt myself consumed by your friendly words, and by that angelic smile, which was heaven itself for me. And now, Rachel, may I, dare I, hope that this icy barrier exists no longer?"

For an instant the Jewess remained mute; at length she murmured, "You will ever be my friend, Esau; the memory of you will associate itself with my earliest joys and my sweetest impressions."

"And nothing more!" said he, morosely. "Will you ever be inexorable? tell me at least, Rachel, whether your heart be still free, or does it incline towards another?"

He could not perceive the color which flushed the cheek of the young Jewess; but he remarked the alteration in her voice when she answered him. "These are strange and bold questions to put to a young maiden, Esau. I have not yet so far sounded the depths of my heart."

Samuel shuddered at perceiving the deep frown which darkened the countenance of his former apprentice.

"Listen not, take no heed of the foolish caprices of that young head," said he, mildly; "the thought of marriage will come to her quickly enough, and thou must not speak to her about it just now. Thou knowest her timidity and sensitiveness—be prudent; give way to the humor of the moment, and thou wilt obtain thy desires; but this is not the time to talk of weddings. First of all, take us safely away from this terrible forest."

But Esau, plunged in reflection, scarcely seemed to notice him.

"Dost thou wish," said Samuel, trying to smile, "dost thou wish thy affianced to fall into the hands of freebooters and robbers?"

Esau gazed steadfastly upon him, without appearing to notice him; and the French trumpets sounded nearer and nearer.

The young Jewess extended her hands towards the ex-apprentice of her father, saying to him, with emotion, "Esau, must we then only behold you again as the prophet of evil and ruin? Have you no pity for the sufferings of the aged man who nurtured you in infancy? Can you calmly see Rachel, the daughter of Ben Levi, become the prey of stranger robbers?"

"Ah!" said Samuel, dejectedly, "thou art no longer the son of my adoption—the Esau of former times?"

"Alas! I do not even recognise myself," said Esau, looking from the father to the daughter. "You, Rachel, have made another being of me; once I had a heart full of noble sentiments; I was mild and humane, charitable and devoted to my kindred; but, since I left you, only hatred and contempt for mankind have filled my breast; I have endeavored to stifle my regrets in dreams of ambition; and I have sacrificed to empty and sounding baubles all the virtue of my youth."

"Thou ambitious! thou, a Jew!" said Samuel; "thou, whom any creditor may sell as a slave! thou, who canst not practice any trade! thou, who canst not be either lawyer or physician! thou, who art entirely at the mercy of any gonim justice of the peace! Thou art mad, boy!"

"Silence, Samuel," cried Esau, sternly, "thou knowest not to whom thou speakest; and, if I thought that any here would betray me ——" and he cast around him a look of menace.

"Unless thou art become Grand Treasurer of the White Companions," resumed the obstinate old man, "I do not see how a Jew ——"

"A Jew! I am no longer a Jew," interrupted Esau, while a dark scowl passed over his features."

A shriek of horror escaped from Ben Levi, and Rachel recoiled within the litter, as though trying to escape from some noxious reptile which had suddenly surprised her.

"Thou, Esau! thou! hast thou become an apostate and a traitor?" said the treasurer. "Art thou one of those minims whom the treatise *Avoda Zara* commands us to throw into the wells where the gonims dwell? Oh, it is impossible!"

But the silence of the boatman too surely proved the truth of his words; and, seating himself on the banks of the stream, Samuel said, "I have nothing to ask of him who has denied his God."

(To be continued.)

* Najid was the Hebrew title of the Chief Jew of Castile.

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250 Communists who have been sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, and have since their trials been confined in fortifications on the Isle of Aix, started to-day for New Caledonia, in the South Pacific Ocean, to serve out their sentences.

Mr. Issac Butt, member of Parliament for Limerick, has written a letter on Home Rule. He asks for an Irish assembly in which Home Rule shall be fully represented. He approves a plan for fraternal union between Ireland and England, guaranteeing the authority of the Crown, and draws outlines of a federal union which, he says, will be a satisfactory settlement of relations of the two countries.