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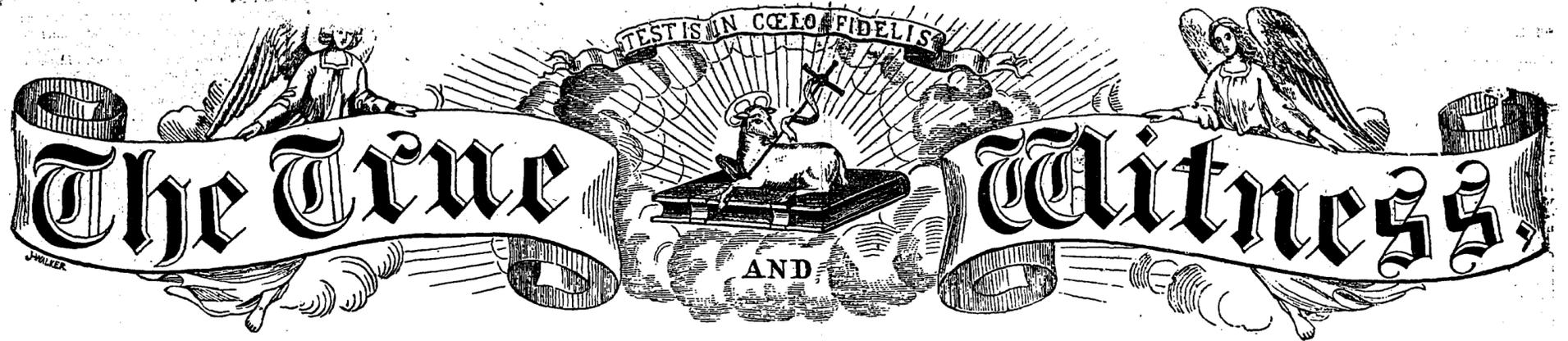
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CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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NO. 25.

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TALES OF THE JURY-ROOM.

RAMUS IN JUS.
PLAUTI: *Pomilius*, Act v.
Dogberry. Are you good men, and true?
Much Ado about Nothing.

BY GERALD GRIFFIN.

AUTHOR OF "TALES OF THE MUNSTER FESTIVALS," ETC.

THE FOREMAN'S TALE.

SIGISMUND.

Rosaura arrested her steps, however, on perceiving Astolpho, and concealed herself, while her heart burned with jealousy and anger, behind the arbour where the royal relatives were seated, while the conversation proceeded.

"Where the sun shines," said Astolpho, "no lesser luminary can appear, neither can darkness longer exist; but that you may be convinced that you alone reign within this breast, I will bring thee that portrait of which thou speakest. Pardon me, Rosaura," he added within his own mind, as he bowed and hurried from the arbour, but without leaving her keep their vows any more than I do mine to you."

The instant Rosaura perceived that he had left the garden, she presented herself before Estrella.

"Oh! I am glad to see thee," said the princess. "I was longing for a confidant, and to you alone can I entrust the secret which I am anxious to communicate."

"Madam," said Rosaura, "you may rest assured that your confidence shall be honored."

"The little time," said Estrella, "that I have had the pleasure of knowing you, you have by some means, of which I am myself unconscious, found the entrance to my heart. I will therefore confide to you what I have been anxious to conceal from myself. But this is it. My cousin Astolpho, (I said cousin, because there are some things the mere thought of which is as palpable as the utterance of others,) is about to wed with me, thus compensating by one felicity for a number of misfortunes. I showed some pique this morning, when I saw him, on account of a portrait which hung from his neck, and he, who is I am sure very sincere in his professions, has just offered to bring it to me. It would annoy me to receive it from his hand, and I must beg of thee to remain here and obtain it for me.—Farewell a little while. I say no more, for I know you are discreet and beautiful, and know I am sure, what love is."

"I would," exclaimed Rosaura, "that I knew it not so well, and she gazed at the princess with a look of deep sorrow rather than of envy. "But what," she continued, "shall I do in this strange situation? Does there exist in the world a more unfortunate person than myself? If I discover myself to him, Clotaldus, to whom I owe my life and safety here, will have deep reason for offense, for he advised me to expect redress from silence only, but what will my silence avail if he but chance to see me—my tongue—my voice—my eyes—may refuse to inform him, but my soul will contradict them all."

"At this moment Astolpho entered the arbour.

"I have brought you," said he, "the portrait which—but what do I see?" and he paused in deep and sudden confusion.

"Why does your highness start?" said Rosaura calmly. "What is it that surprises you?"

"You, Rosaura, here!" said Astolpho.

"I, Rosaura," she exclaimed, appearing surprised; "your highness must mistake me for some other lady. My name is Astrea—far too insignificant a person to occasion so much confusion to your highness."

"Nay, Rosaura," said Astolpho, "you have carried the feat far enough. I may gaze on thee as Astrea, but I will always love thee as Rosaura."

"My lord," Rosaura replied, still with the same air of calmness and surprise, "I do not understand what you have just said, and therefore, I cannot answer you. All I can say is, that the princess commanded me to wait your arrival here, and on her part to receive from you the portrait which you promised her. It is just I should obey her even in matters that jar with my own inclinations."

"How ill dost thou dissemble, Rosaura," said Astolpho, "notwithstanding all thy efforts."

"I wait for the portrait, my lord," Rosaura replied, extending her hand coldly.

"Well! well!" said the prince, since you choose

to carry on your dissimulation to the end, I shall answer you in the same manner. Go, Astrea, and tell the princess that I love her so truly, that I could not be satisfied with sending her merely the portrait she demands; I will do her a still greater pleasure, by presenting her with the original, which you can easily convey to her in your own person."

The taunt threw Rosaura off her guard. "I came here," she said, indignantly, "to receive a portrait, and although I could convey the original, which as you observe is far more precious, I should go slightly, to go without the copy; your highness will please to give it me, then, for I shall not leave this until I have obtained it."

"But how shall that be," returned Astolpho, "if I choose to keep it?"

"Thus, ingratitude," replied Rosaura, making a vain effort to snatch it from his hand, "no other woman I am resolved shall ever possess it."

"How angry you are," said the prince.

"And how perfidious thou."

"No more, my Rosaura."

"I thine villain—it is false."

The altercation had reached this point, when Estrella suddenly re-entered the arbour. "Astrea!" she exclaimed—"Astolpho, what is this?"

"Here comes Estrella," said Astolpho to Rosaura, who, after a moment's consideration, addressed the princess. "If you wish to know, madam," said she, "the cause of our dispute, it was this:—The prince has by some means obtained a portrait of mine, and, instead of delivering that which you commanded me to receive from him, he even refuses to give me my own. That which he holds in his hand is mine you may see if it does not resemble me."

Estrella took the portrait from the hand of the astonished Astolpho, and looking on it, said—"It is prettily done, but a little too highly colored; you have grown pale, Rosaura, since you sat for this portrait."

"Nay, madam," said Rosaura, suppressing a sigh, "but is it not vividly mine?"

"Who doubts it?" said she, handing it to her.

"Now," said Rosaura, darting a smile of malicious triumph at the prince, as she withdrew, "you may ask him for the other; he may give it to you more readily than he would to me."

"You heard what Astrea said," said Estrella, addressing the prince; "although I intend never again to see or speak to you, yet I will not, since I was so silly as to ask for that portrait, suffer it to remain in your hands."

Astolpho continued for some time in much perplexity. "Beautiful Estrella," he at length said, "I would gladly obey your commands, but it is not in my power to give the miniature, because—"

"Thou art a vile and unbecoming lover," replied Estrella, haughtily, "but I will not now receive it, for I would not thus remind myself that I stooped to require it."

Saying this, she withdrew, and proceeded in high indignation towards the palace, while Astolpho endeavored in vain to detain her. "By what enchantment," said he, "has this Rosaura so suddenly appeared to thrust me back from happiness—what wizard brought her here from Muscovy? Has she come to ruin me and me herself?"

We shall now return to Sigismund. During supper the attendants administered to him a second sleeping potion. A deep trance succeeded; during which, by the orders of the king, they restored him to his rude clothing, his dungeon, and his chains.

"Here," said Clotaldus, on beholding him once more stretched upon the sandy floor, "here, where it first arose, thy languishing shall end."

"Sigismund!—ha!—Sigismund!" exclaimed Clarin, who had accompanied Clotaldus, "awake, and you will find some change in your condition."

Clotaldus, who apprehended a man's indiscretion from Clarin, resolved to have him also shut up, and said to the attendants, "prepare a room for this gentleman, who can talk so loud in the tower, where he can entertain himself until his lungs are weary—Stay! let it be in the adjoining room—this is the man," he added, pointing to Clarin.

The attendants approached and seized him.

"Me!" said Clarin, quite surprised, "why so?"

"Because," replied Clotaldus, "my good Clarin, my cousin, my trumpet, you know some secrets, and sound a note too loud."

"But," said Clarin, "I never yet sought to kill my father, nor have ever I flung a man through a window; nor do I ever dream, although I may sleep now and then, and why should you shut me up like Sigismund?"

"Come—come—trumpet, come—Clarin."

"Do you call me Clarin? Nay! but I will be a cornet if you please, and then I shall be silent, for that is a vile instrument."

The attendants here dragged him away. Perceiving Basilus approach, whose curiosity had led him to witness the demeanour of Sigismund in his dungeon, Clotaldus pointed him out to the monarch as he lay stretched on the ground.

"Alas unhappy prince," said the king, "born in an unlucky hour. Approach, Clotaldus, and awake him, for the beverage he drank has deprived him of his vigor and his cruelty."

"Sire," replied Clotaldus, "he seems very restless, he dreams and speaks aloud; let us attend."

Sigismund here turned uneasily on his back, and murmured:—"He who punishes tyrants is a pious prince; let Clotaldus die by my sword, and let my father kiss my feet."

"He threatens my life," said Clotaldus.

"He wishes to humble me with the dust on which he treads," said the king—"but hark."

"Let me," continued Sigismund, "put forward upon the great arena of the world the valor that I feel burning in my veins, and let me slake the thirsty vengeance of my soul, by shewing the world prince Sigismund triumphant over his father."

At these words he awoke, and Basilus, wishing to avoid him, concealed himself in one of the adjacent passages of the tower. The astonished Sigismund stared wildly around him.

"Alas!" said he, "where am I—am I again the same—again do I behold my chains—art thou, oh hated tower, again my tomb. It is so—then what dreams have I had."

Clotaldus went towards him, and said, "ever since I left thee soaring in mind with the eagle, in whose track my poor brain could not accompany you, I have been absent from the tower. Hast thou been all this time asleep?"

"I have," said Sigismund, "nor can I say that I am now awake, for if that which passed palpably before me was nothing more than a dream, I may be dreaming still. If I could see while I slept, it may be that I sleep now while I see."

"What didst thou dream of, then," said Clotaldus.

"Since it was but a dream," replied Sigismund, "I will tell thee. I awoke as I thought from the sleep in which I was left by thee, and found myself lying on a bed, which by the rich variety of its colors might be compared to the flowery couch which the spring spreads upon the mountain. Here hundreds of noblemen came forward, bowing submissively, bestowing on me the title of prince, and presenting me with embroidered clothes and jewels.—My suspense was turned into joy, when thou camest unto me and saidst that though I had been in this condition, I was nevertheless the prince and the heir of Poland."

"No doubt you rewarded me well for my news," said Clotaldus.

"Not so well," returned Sigismund. "I was twice about to put thee to death as a traitor."

"What! did you treat me with so much rigor?"

"Ah!" said Sigismund, "I was lord of all, and I wrought revenge on all. A woman alone I loved, and this is the only feeling from which I have not yet awoke."

The king at these words withdrew altogether, and Clotaldus, addressing the Prince, said—"As we had been speaking of the eagle and of the empire of the earth, they haunted thee in thy dreams; and even in thy dreams it would have been well to have had some respect for him who reared and instructed thee, for even in sleep there is a pleasure in doing good."

"It is true," replied Sigismund, thoughtfully, "let me then represent this fierceness of temper—this fury—this ambition—in case those dreams should return, which they will surely do, for life is now nothing more. Experience tells me that all who live are dreamers, and death the voice that awakens them. The monarch dreams of changes of state and government, and of power and flattery, but his fame is written on the wind; death comes, and his pomp and royalty are crumbled into ashes; and yet knowing that death shall wake them, there are men who wish to reign; the rich man dreams of his wealth, that costs him many a tear; the poor man dreams of his misery, and frets at shadows; the ambitious man dreams of grandeur and self aggrandisement; the courtier dreams of rank and office; the injured man dreams of revenge; all, in a word dream of their several conditions. I dream that I am here loaded with these chains; and but now I dreamed that I filled a happier station; life itself is an illusion, a shadow, an empty casing; the happiest sorrow is but light, and the brightest joy but vain, for life is a dream, and there is nothing in it that can boast a foundation."

In the mean time poor Clarin paced the chamber in which he was confined in much peevishness and discontent.

"Here I am," said he, "confined in this tower for what I know I shall will they do to me then for what I do not know? I pity myself very much, and people will say that is very natural, and so it is; for what can be more mournful than for a man who has got such excellent grinders as mine to be left without a morsel to keep them in practice, while I am starving with hunger. Here, all in silence around me—me who can never close my lips, not even when I sleep—here am I, a soul fellow, without a companion—no, I tell you nothing, I have plenty; there are plenty of rats and spiders, pretty robins to chirp about my windows; my head is filled with the frightful visions that have been haunting me since I entered. I have seen spectres, ghosts, hob-goblins, elves and fairies; some mounting, some descending and cutting all kinds of strange capers; but what I feel most particularly is, that I am kept starved ever since I came here; yet I deserve all this, and more, for having kept a secret while I was a servant, which is the greatest infidelity I could be guilty of to my masters."

His soliloquy was interrupted by the sound of drums and trumpets outside and by the cries of a multitude of people, who were heard exclaiming, "here he is—this is the tower—let us dash the door to pieces."

"What's this," cried Clarin, "they are looking for me, there is no doubt of that, for they see here I am, and this is the tower. What on they want me for? Here they come. Hallo! there is a crush!"

At the same instant the door was forced from its hinges, and an armed mob burst into the room.

"That is he," said a soldier.

"It is not he," replied Clarin, who was apprehensive that they might not mean him kindly.

"Sire!" cried one of the soldiers, "thou art our prince."

"Yes, thou art our prince. We will not have a foreign king, while a natural one remains to us. Allow us to kiss your highness' hand."

At these words all shouted, "live our prince, long live our prince!"

"They are in earnest," said Clarin to himself. "I should wish to know if it be the custom of this country, to shut up a man every day in this tower to make a prince of him, and then bring him back to his prison again. Yes, there's no doubt of it, for I saw the same thing done yesterday. Well, well I shall play my part to-day."

"Sire!" said one of the soldiers, "we have all told thy father the same thing, that you alone shall be our king, and not the prince of Muscovy."

"What," cried Clarin, "were you wanting a respect to my father?"

"It was through loyalty for thee," said a soldier.

"Then," said Clarin waving his hand, "if it was through loyalty for me, I forgive ye."

"Come out and reign thy crown," exclaimed the people. "Long live Sigismund!"

Clarin hearing the prince's name, started in some surprise. "Sigismund they say," he repeated to himself, "but what do I care for that? Do I not know that they call every counterfeit prince, Sigismund?"

Sigismund, however, who heard his name proclaimed, called aloud from the inner dungeon, "Who called on Sigismund?" The soldiers hearing this voice, hurried Clarin into the next room, and beholding a man in chains, and so rudely

clothed, inquired in some surprise, "what man is this?"

"This man," said the prince, "is Sigismund."

"Sigismund!" exclaimed a soldier, turning hastily to Clarin—"then how hadst thou the audacity to call thyself by that name?"

"I call myself Sigismund?" exclaimed Clarin, "it is false, it was you who had the audacity to nickname me Sigismund."

"Great prince," said a soldier, addressing himself to Sigismund, "we find by the token that were given us, that thou art our lord sovereign. Your father, the great king Basilus, terrified by the prophecy, which says that thou shalt one day wrest the sceptre from his grasp, has resolved to rob thee of thy right and transfer it to Astolpho of Muscovy. For this purpose he assembled his court. But the people, have learned that they possess a native prince in thee, have refused to submit to the yoke of a foreigner; they have sought thee, therefore, in this tower, in the hope that thou wilt use their arms for the recovery of thy birthright—come forward then, for the plains beneath this mountain, a numerous army awaits to proclaim thee. Liberty attends thy coming. Hark, and hear her accents."

The cries of "long live Sigismund" had been gradually increasing, and now they were heard swelling like the roar of a winter ocean.

"Again," exclaimed Sigismund, "must I again hear those sounds, again must I dream of splendour and fame shall so soon fade. Must I again stand among shadows, and see majesty and greatness vanish before the wind. It must not be. Ye shall not see me yoked again to fortune's car; and since I know that life is but a dream, vanish ye shadows that pass before my troubled senses, forging a substance and a sound, which in reality ye do not possess. I wish not for false majesty, vain pomp, fantastic splendours, which at the first breath of morrow, will fly and disappear like the early blossoms of the almond tree, which the gentle breeze will scatter on the earth bereft of colour, beauty, brilliancy and fragrance. I know ye, and know further, that the same delusions pass over the minds of all who sleep. You can deceive me no longer, for I know that you are dreams."

"My lord," said a soldier, "if you think that we deceive you, turn thy eyes toward yonder mountain, and see the multitude that awaits thy orders."

"Aye!" said Sigismund, "that very thing I saw once as clearly and distinctly, as I now behold it, and yet I did but dream."

"Great things, my lord," returned the soldier, "are always ushered in by presages and those visions you speak of, where the dreams that foretold the reality you now behold."

"Rightly, thou sayest rightly," replied Sigismund, "and though they were dreams alone, there can be no harm since life is short, in dreaming once again, and dreaming with so much prudence and caution, that on my waking, I may find no cause for sorrow; knowing that I must wake at sometime, my disappointment will be less when that time arrives. And knowing that my power is merely borrowed and must be restored to its owner, let me use it worthily. Subjects!" he exclaimed aloud, starting to his feet, "I value your loyalty as highly as it deserves. In me you will find a prince, who boldly, and successfully, will free you from the foreign bondage which you fear. Sound to arms, and should I wake before this is accomplished, and before I have prostrated my father at my feet—but what do I say; my old passion has returned upon me; this is not right, it is not right to say it, even though it never should be done."

As he uttered these words, the shouts were again renewed, and Clotaldus hurried with a look of terror into the apartment. "What shouts are these?" he exclaimed; "I am lost. Prince," he added, throwing himself on his knees before Sigismund, "I am come to receive my death at thy hands."

"Not so, my father," replied the prince, "arise from the earth, for thou shalt be the guide of my inexperience in this warfare. I know that to thy cares and anxieties, I am indebted for my education."

"What say you?" replied Clotaldus, in astonishment, at the mild and sterner manner of the prince.

"That I am dreaming," replied the latter, "and that there is a pleasure in doing good even in dreams."

"Then my lord," said Clotaldus, "if it be thy intention to act according to the dictates of wisdom, let it not offend thee that I should follow those of duty. If you purpose making war on your father, I cannot aid you with my council, for he is my king. I am at thy feet; give me death."

"Willan," exclaimed Sigismund, "traitor and ingrate—but," he added, suddenly repressing his anger, "why do I speak thus, when I know not if I am yet awake. I must restrain this violence. Clotaldus," he added mildly, "I admire thy fidelity; depart, and serve thy king."

Clotaldus withdrew, bowing respectfully, and admiring the moderation of Sigismund, while the latter exclaimed, "whether or not, let me act as virtue directs. If these things be real, I shall have done much good, if otherwise, I shall gain friends for the moment of waking. With these words he departed, to place himself at the head of his troops.

In the meantime, Basilus and Astolpho, alarmed at the powerful insurrection which menaced the throne, had placed themselves at the head of a large body of forces and taken the field. Basilus was in the act of consulting with the prince on the best measures to be immediately adopted, when Clotaldus arrived, breathless and exhausted, at the royal tent.

"Clotaldus here!" exclaimed Basilus; "what then is become of Sigismund?"

The old man explained the circumstances which had taken place at the dungeon, and Basilus calling for his horse hastened to place his army in a posture fit to receive the insurgents. Clotaldus was about to follow, when Rosaura entered and detained him.

"Stay," she exclaimed, "and hear me for a moment. You know that I came to Poland poor and unfriended, until I was fortunate enough to obtain your protection. You commanded me to remain disguised at the palace, and to avoid the sight of Astolpho, but he has seen me, and so little regards

the promises he once made, that he is to meet Estrella this very evening in the palace garden. I have obtained the key, and by favouring your entrance that way, we may compel him to do me justice."

"It is true, Rosaura," said Clotaldus, "that since I first saw you, the interest you excited within me was such, that I would have given my life for yours, if the sacrifice was demanded. I had then resolved to compel Astolpho to fulfil the promise which he had made you, but our position has since been altered. Astolpho has saved my life, at the risk of his own, when I lay prostrate at the feet of Sigismund. I cannot therefore lift my sword against him, for it would be a detestable action."

"It is true," replied Rosaura, "that I owe you my life, yet I have heard you say, that he who lives under an offence, does not in fact live at all. Then if I still remain undressed, I owe you nothing and my life is my own. But if you will prefer your affection to your gratitude, I hope yet to receive it from you. Be liberal first, and then be grateful."

"Thou hast convinced me, Rosaura, and I will be liberal. I will give thee my fortune, with which thou mayest retire, as thy virtue is yet unspotted to a monastery. I behold my country distracted by civil feuds, and must not add to them. Thus I shall be loyal to my king, liberal to thee, and grateful to Astolpho; and I think I could do no more, Rosaura," he added speaking with much tenderness, "were I even thine own father."

"Were you my father," exclaimed Rosaura, with much indignation, "I might endure this insulting speech, but not otherwise."

"What then do you intend?" said Clotaldus.

"To redress myself," replied Rosaura.

"This is madness," exclaimed Clotaldus.

"Be it so," replied Rosaura, "it is a virtuous madness, and it shall be executed." Saying which she hurried out of the room, unheeding the efforts made by Clotaldus to detain her.

The drums were now heard at a distance, and Sigismund still attired in his dress, appeared in the adjacent plain attended by Clarin and the soldiers. A trumpet was heard, and Clarin addressing the prince, said, "I see yonder a courier, which, if I am not much deceived, bears a woman on his back—here she comes, beautiful as the bridal day. It is Rosaura," he added, with astonishment.

"She is restored to me," said Sigismund, with rapture. Rosaura at the same instant reined in her steed, and alighted.

"Gracious prince," she said, "you see before you an unfortunate woman who finds herself compelled to implore your protection, I find me thine ear but for a few moments, and thou shalt know why it is that I am compelled to trouble thee."

Sigismund waved his attendants to some distance, and requested Rosaura to proceed.

"I was born," she said, "of a noble mother, in the court of Muscovy; she doubtless was very beautiful for she was very unhappy. A jealous husband tortured her by unfounded doubts, and at length deserted her; I was the fruit of their unhappy union, and the heiress, if not to the beauty, at least to the misfortunes of my parent. Astolpho, the prince of Muscovy, forgetting the sacred vows which he once pledged to me, has come hither to Poland to espouse Estrella; thus have I been left, despised, contemned, forsaken, to mourn in secret the perfidy of the man whose promises I had too readily met by reciprocal vows of attachment. I wept over my forlorn condition in a lonely chamber, where no one entered to disturb me; one day my mother, Violante, suddenly broke into my prison, and finding me in tears, drew from me the secret of my desolation; she advised me to follow Astolpho to the court of Poland, and handing me the sword which I now hold, she bade me contrive to show it to the nobles of the court, one of whom would recognise it, and afford me protection. I obeyed her, and the issue proved her words true. All my modes of redress have, however, failed me, and I now throw myself at thy feet, to seek the assistance which is necessary to prevent the completion of my misery."

Sigismund heard this discourse with a mixture of surprise and sorrow.

"If this be true," said he to himself, "let memory depart, for it is not possible that a dream should comprehend so many things. What man was ever tortured by such a multitude of perplexing doubts. If that day of pomp and splendour was in reality a dream, how happens it now that this woman again appears before me, and relates so many perplexing things with such a scrupulous minuteness. It was no dream; it was reality. Is glory then so like a dream, that the happiest are shadows, and the briefest only real. How like the copy is to the original—Well then, since grandeur, pomp, power, and majesty, shall one day pass like visions, let me profit by the moment of illusion, and use them worthily. Rosaura is now in my power. I love her, and might make her mine forever. I can now dream of happiness, but for that dream I must forfeit my eternal honor. A happiness once passed, is but a dream we hold no more of, than the shadow that lingers in our remembrance. Then since I know that pleasure is but a beautiful flame converting into ashes the lofty mansions of virtue, of glory, let me only strive for that which is eternal; the happiness that never dies, and the greatness which never passes away. Rosaura thou art safe."

Saying this he ordered the drum to beat to arms, and prepared to give battle with his undisciplined troops, carefully avoiding Rosaura with his eyes.

"Does not your highness answer me," exclaimed the latter; "am I then rejected; you do not even look upon me?"

"Rosaura," said the prince, "I do not answer thee, because my deeds must speak for me, nor can I look upon thee, while I wish to preserve thy honor." Saying which he hurried out of the tent, leaving Rosaura more perplexed than ever.

Clarin remained until now at a distance, approached Rosaura, saying, "am I allowed to see you, Madam?"

"Ah! Clarin," exclaimed Rosaura, "where have you been?"

"Locked up in a tower," answered Clarin, "with death grinning in my face, and ready to die of vexation."

"Why so?" asked Rosaura.

"I knew a secret," said Clarin, "and had no way

CONTINUED ON SEVENTH PAGE.