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CONSTANCIA DE GONSALVO;

OR, THE TRUE HEIRESS. A TALE OF SPAIN.

(From the N. Y. Metropolitan Record.)

The weather was as sullen and scowling as I, suffering from a thin pair of trousers and the hardest trotting brute a man ever bestrode, speedily became; and to this I attributed the sense of dismal apprehension which, for no definite or tangible reason, darkened over me as we approached, towards three in the afternoon, the dwelling of Juan Alvarez.

Half an hour's smart trot brought us to a turn in the rout, from which the east bank of the Guadalquivir and the road along it could be seen for a considerable distance. This was the way Katerina was to come; and we moved on more slowly and cautiously, keeping as much as possible within the shadow of the wood on our left.

consent of Alvarez, who rode by his side, and might easily have struck his arm up had he so willed, levelled a pistol, fired—the explosion, and a piteous scream from the unfortunate girl as she toppled over the crag into the river, mingling with the fierce execrations of myself and the greater part of the soldiers with whom I rode, who were by this time close upon them.

At the distance of about four miles from the scene of the frightful tragedy we had so unexpectedly witnessed—for no one who saw the shot had the slightest doubt that the girl was killed—we came up with and captured the two ruffians, who were immediately bound and placed apart. Peremptory orders were given neither to speak nor answer any questions that might be put by them; and Lieutenant Davilla, was about to give the word advance, when I rather angrily intimated, that as there could be no further pretence for detaining me, I must be set at liberty forthwith.

We reached Sevilla on the third day of that detestable journey, from the effects of which I did not thoroughly recover for a fortnight. The Captain General whom we found there was pleased to express a polite regret for the unpleasant duress I had been subject to, excusing it, however, on the plea of necessity; pleasantly adding, that in the interest of justice it was necessary that I should remain for some time longer under the surveillance of Lieutenant Davilla, who would treat me with every civility and consideration consistent with not permitting me, on any pretence, to communicate, even by letter, with a living soul.

His expostulations, like my own, were only laughed at, and we both perforce waited for such explanation as time might bring of the extraordinary treatment to which we were condemned. It was not long before I pretty well guessed the motives of all this precautionary rigor. Neither of the prisoners, I heard from the lieutenant, who was tolerably communicative in some respects, had made any revelation beyond a declaration by Alvarez that the fatal shot was fired without his consent, and appealing with well-simulated pathos to all men who were fathers on the impossibility of the crime with which he was charged.

was on my mind not the faintest doubt that whoever or however the terrible announcement made to the miserable man, that he had in very truth been an accomplice, inore or less active and consenting, in the murder of his own daughter—of that Katerina whom it was so easy to see he loved with such entire and passionate affection—the tempest of remorse and agony by which he would be convulsed and torn must rend asunder all disguises, sweep away all deceptions, however cunningly contrived; and that especially the man by whose hand Katerina had actually fallen, would be instantly denounced, and the fraud with regard to Luisa, by which the assassin's family, if not himself, might thereafter profit, would be exposed with vengeful promptness.

This, however, was clearly not the opinion of Lady Inez and her counselors; and it was soon, moreover, quite plain to me, that the object of the investigation going forward was, but in a very inferior degree, the conviction and punishment of Katerina's murderers, even as regards the officials, high and low, of the Sevilla Chancilleria. The chief aim manifestly was to obtain judicial proof that Luisa was the legitimate Gonsalvo heiress, and this purpose was, I must say, worked out with equal skill, audacity, and perseverance. They examined me very slightly with respect to the shooting by the Guadalupe, but with elaborate minuteness as to the conversations I had with Alvarez relative to the Senor de Gonsalvo, with a view, it seemed, to show the animus of the Confederates. Jose Perez was brought from Madrid for the same purpose, and deposed to the conversation on the Puerta del Sol, already given.

At last I was informed that most of the preliminary forms having been gone through, the trial of the prisoners was about really to commence, and that myself and other witnesses would be present to hear our evidence read over, that it might be confirmed in the presence of the accused. I do not know whether this is the ordinary mode of judicial procedure in Spain, and I am the more inclined to doubt that it is, from what subsequently occurred, leading to a suspicion that the chiefs of the Chancilleria had been induced, in order to gratify a lady possessed of great influence at head quarters, to vary somewhat the mode of trial.

The Hall of Justice at Sevilla is, or was, a large heavily-fitted place, impressing one with a solemnity and awe that hardly required to be increased by the grave and imposing costume of the principal officials, and the black velvet hangings and other mourning paraphernalia, set up in memory of the late King Ferdinand. There was no public, properly so called, only about twenty or thirty persons beside the witnesses, and all, I observed, admitted by special favor; amongst whom Lady Inez de Calderon and the Captain General were conspicuously placed. Myself, Jose Perez and Pedro—who whispered that he also had been imprisoned from the moment of his arrival in this incomprehensible city, who or what for he could not even guess—sat together, and were presently cautioned by a black-browed alguazil, who had just before been beckoned to by the presiding judge, not to speak one word except in answer to such questions as he, the president might himself put to us; the said alguazil taking his seat in our midst for the purpose, I presumed, of enforcing, if necessary, the command of which he was the bearer. By and by, my coat collar was seized from behind and shaken violently, a proceeding but confusedly interpreted by the hardly recognisable tones of Senor Manuel's voice—so fear suppressed, yet fierce, angry and indignant were they: 'Ha, ha! I say, Senor Inglese, John Brown, Englishman—these three words comprised my friend's entire stock of English, and were not brought into requisition except when he was extremely angry and inclined to be impertinent—'you are in the hole yourself, are you! I am glad of it with all my heart; and, I say, my friend, you may take that account for the journey to Madrid to those who showed you the picture, for, by San Jago

'Silence, silence! That way, sir!' called out our alguazil friend, at the same time pushing Senor Manuel with some violence in the direction indicated by his staff aimed fist. The poor man, whose face was purple with rage and perplexity, did as he was ordered; and I observed him a few minutes after seated, nearly opposite, and every now and then indulging in a pantomimic demonstration, which, except in its expression of fury and bewilderment, was altogether unintelligible to me.

The prisoners were at length brought in separately, and placed at a barge-covered railing, and the questioning process by the president commenced after the reading of the depositions, during which the witnesses stood erect, and once more declared, with the right arm raised and pointing upwards, that we had spoken the truth as in the presence of God and his saints. Antonio de Gonsalvo was the first interrogated.

He answered in substance, that the pistol had gone off unintentionally; that he had merely meant to frighten the girl; and no one could more lament the fatal result than he did. 'Had it, indeed, been the young person known as Katerina, who was reported to be the heiress of the Gonsalvo property?'

He was stopped by an exclamation of rage from Senor Manuel, which brought upon that witness an instant sentence of removal to a distant part of the sala, with the intimation, that if he presumed again to offer the slightest comment upon what was said, he would be immediately sent to prison.

'Had it been,' resumed the prisoner, 'the young person known as Katerina, who, it was asserted, had claims, whether ill or well-founded was another matter, to the Gonsalvo estates and honors, there might have been some color for the heinous but utterly unfounded crime; but under the actual circumstances, none whatever existed.' A meaning smile glanced, as the accused spoke, towards the Lady Inez and the Captain General from the president's judge, but no commentary in words followed the coolly audacious statement.

It was soon Juan Alvarez's turn, and after much inconsequent interrogatory, to which he mainly replied—exhibiting all the while an affectation of intense grief—that whether the pistol was discharged by accident, as he believed, or by design, he, Juan Alvarez, was entirely innocent thereof; his sole purpose in galloping towards his daughter (whose strange position and action, in making signals to somebody on the river, he had, from accidentally passing that way, beheld with astonishment) being to inquire the meaning of such conduct—the real business of the audiencia commenced.

'The time is at length arrived, Juan Alvarez and Antonio de Gonsalvo,' said the presiding magistrate with grave solemnity, 'when it was necessary that I should inform you both, that we are aware of a circumstance which entirely destroys the very slight plausibility of your statements. You, Alvarez, attempted to substitute your own child for the one placed in your charge?'

'Ha!'

'Ay, now, that is a natural movement and expression. This cheat Antonio de Gonsalvo discovered, taxed you with, and finding further deception vain so far as he was concerned, you agreed with him to confine Luisa in some remote place, by virtue of your usurped authority of father; or—and this, from what subsequently passed, has a more horrible likelihood—you finally, perhaps reluctantly, consented to a darker purpose?'

'Never, never! I swear by the holy saints!' exclaimed Alvarez, whose features, like those of De Gonsalvo, were changing to the hue of ashen. 'Never, I swear!'

'Listen, unhappy man. I have another and much more terrible revelation to make; she whom you met, at whose life your confederate in crime levelled his murderous pistol—with your consent, I can hardly doubt—was in very truth your own child, Katerina, who?'

A wild frenzied cry from Alvarez interrupted the magistrate. But for the flashing eyes, from which lightning had seemed to leap as the president's words fell in thunder upon his brain, one might have thought the wretched man had been suddenly changed to stone, so white, rigid, motionless, were his aspect and posture. I glanced towards De Gonsalvo. He also was strongly agitated, but in a much less degree of course, and was wiping his clammy forehead with a handkerchief. At last he said, after three or four efforts which had died upon his parched and twitching lips: 'It is a trick, Juan—a trick, he assured.' Alvarez heard him, turned slowly round, and fixed his burning eyes for a few moments upon De Gonsalvo's face, then closed them, and pressed the palms of his hands forcibly over the lids, as if to calm himself, and rally his bewildered faculties by the extrusion of exterior objects. 'You know your daughter's writing?' said the president, after a lengthened and unbroken silence. De Gonsalvo, I should state, had been removed in obedience to a sign from the judge.

The question was repeated three times without eliciting an answer. At last an attendant alguazil shook the prisoner roughly by the arm, and repeated it in a harsh, menacing tone. 'Yes—yes,' Alvarez slowly said; 'I do.'

'Then read this letter, and convince yourself of the truth of what you have just heard.'

A letter—one from Katerina to Alfonso Manuel, detailing the scheme arranged with Luisa for a change of dresses—was handed across the court, and placed in the accused's hands. He glanced at the lines, shuddered, the paper dropped from his nerveless grasp to the floor, and he said, faintly: 'I know the character.—It is Ka—hers. Read it for me; my eyes dazzle.'

His request was complied with. During the reading, it would have seemed, from the long-

drawn agonising groan which accompanied it, that a sword was passing slowly through the body of the writhing wretched man, whose head had sunk down upon the railing in his front.—'There was another long oppressive pause terminated by the president saying: 'I will remove any doubt that may yet linger in your mind. If the project mentioned in the letter had not been persisted in, you would have met Luisa, as you believed you did, instead of Katerina. Let the former lady be brought in,' he added with a sign to an attendant, 'and confronted with the prisoner. Now, Juan Alvarez, look up, and disbelieve if you can the evidence of your own senses.'

As the president's voice ceased, and amidst a breathless stillness, the prisoner's head was gradually raised and directed towards that part of the hall where the swinging of a door and the shuffling of feet announced the entrance of the new comer. A recoil, but much weaker, of the terrible cry which the first intimation of the truth had wrung from Alvarez, proclaimed his recognition of the supposedly slain Luisa. It was followed by a convulsive but vain effort at articulate speech, and the next moment he had fallen across the railing without sense or motion.

The sitting of the tribunal was immediately suspended and the prisoner removed, and a buzz of excitement pervaded the auditory for perhaps half an hour, when the president resumed his seat, and the murmuring hum of voices subsided once more into profound silence, to hear a communication read by one of the officers who had gone out with the accused. Juan Alvarez, it was formally stated, had volunteered, the instant he was restored to consciousness, to make a full confession upon all matters connected with the present inquiry. Antonio de Gonsalvo had discovered the fraud with respect to Donna Constancia, and a scheme had finally been matured for the disposal of that young lady, who was to have been taken and kept out of the country by her reputed father. For doing so, Alvarez was to have received a very large reward, with which, he said, he believed the Senor Manuel could have been induced to consent to his son's marriage with Katerina—a union which he, the deponent, believed to be necessary to her happiness. The firing of the pistol had been wilful, malevolent, the words used by the Gonsalvo, as he drew the trigger, having been: 'She shall not escape by—, let the consequence be what it may.' As to the description of the child's person on the parchment, which it could be seen had been written in a separate paragraph, apart from the body of the writing as it were, an alteration had been effected in the following manner by one Pasco, a singularly skilful calligraphist, residing at Lagos, in Algarve, Portugal.—He had carefully pumiced out the original words, and written those descriptive of Katerina over them. But he, Pasco, had told deponent that, if the super-writing were carefully removed, and a moderate heat applied to the parchment the original words would distinctly reappear. Thus was the substance of the confession; and it may be as well to state at once, that the experiment suggested was afterwards successfully performed, and Luisa's right to the name of Constancia Isabella de Gonsalvo, and the solid appurtenances thereto belonging, established beyond question.

The agitation which followed the reading of Alvarez's confession was of an altogether exultant kind with nearly all the persons present, and it certainly could not be denied that the affair had been cleverly managed; but with one, and more especially poor Pedro, whose grief for the fate of Katerina was bitter and vehement, the feeling was a very different one; so much so, that when the Lady Inez—sweeping triumphantly past, accompanied by her niece, who looked, I was perfectly shocked to see, radiantly, proudly happy—requested me to call on her the next day, that she might, in some degree, compensate me for the inconvenience to which I had been put, the choking emotion of anger I felt would, I am pretty sure, have been expressed in very unwise words, but that the great lady was gone before I could fashion the indignant rebuke which trembled at my heart into articulate utterance.

Senor Manuel's morose peevishness jumped better with my irritated humor; and hearing that, like myself and others, he was at last released from surveillance, I waited, with weeping heart broken Pedro, for him in an anteroom, through which he would necessarily pass. Nor had we long to wait; he came up very quickly, his features still swollen and spotted with angry dismay.

'Ha, ha!' he burst out again the instant he caught sight of me—'you, Inglese, John Brown, Englishman! you have been shut up, too, I hear; and by San Jago! I am glad of it; with all my heart.'

'You are disposed to be insolent, Senor Manuel, I am not at all in the mood to brook it patiently. So terrible a catastrophe should, one