

"I am going ashore for a few hours. I have business of importance in the city, and I must attend to it to-night."

"You had best not go. It is a dangerous step, and should you be recognized, your life is the forfeit," was the reply.

"I must risk it, at any rate, Pedro! Attend thou to the ship in my absence; and should I not return by morning, know that your words have proved true; but I fear no danger," said Gonsalvo.

At nightfall, a boat put off from the vessel's side—Raynard Gonsalvo, the Christian captain, being its only occupant—and pulled rapidly towards the shore.

An hour later, as Zoraida Hassan was sitting in her apartment, her faithful tiring-woman came in, and gave a note into her hand.

The lady opened it, and a flush of pleasure shot athwart her cheek.

"Whence came this?" she asked, eagerly.

"A messenger brought it to the castle gate, and bade old Gomez, the porter, summon Lady Zoraida's maid," said the girl; "then, giving it into my hands, he bade me hasten with it to my mistress."

"'Tis strange!" said the lady; "but listen, good Alfreda. You are discreet, and I need your aid. The letter comes from Raynard Gonsalvo, the handsome young Christian officer whom I met on the Plaza a month ago, and who afterwards sang beneath my window. His vessel lies in yonder bay, and he comes hither with messages to my father from King Alphonso for the surrender of Cadiz. But this appeal has been rejected. The Moor will never yield to the Christian without a deadly struggle. My father has given orders for the city to be put in a state of defence, and we shall resist to the last. But the young Christian emissary is noble and generous; he would save me from the fate of war. In this letter, he bids me meet him, an hour hence, in the castle courtyard, that he may decide upon a place for our safety. Were I to tell this to my sire, his proud heart would rebel, and he would forbid the meeting; for he would never accept his life at the hands of the Christian. What think you,

Alfreda? Would it be so very wrong for me to meet this noble stranger, and, at least, thank him for his interest in me?"

Alfreda understood all at once. She herself had a lover, and she read the cause of the lady's interest in this stranger.

"Nay, my lady," she said, "I cannot see the harm of your meeting; and if you have aught of fear, I will accompany you, dressed in the attire of a page. You remember, my lady, how I masqueraded it at the last festival."

The evening shadows lengthened over Cadiz. Above the beautiful city the white moon shone in loveliness, and silvered with splendour the scenes below. It shone upon the broad Plaza, now filled with crowds of anxious, excited men, their hearts gloomy with forebodings for the fate of the town—over lowly cottage, stately palace, and far out upon the dark blue waters of the sea.

In the castle court-yard of Achmet Hassan's stately abode, Raynard Gonsalvo, the young Christian, awaited the Lady Zoraida; and hither the lady and her maid hastened at the appointed time, Alfreda, attired as a page, and Zoraida in her usual evening dress.

"He is not here, Alfreda!" said the lady, as, glancing around, she saw the court-yard was deserted save by herself and her page.

"Mayhap the Christian's heart has failed him," said the girl, "and so he comes not to keep his word."

"Nay, but he will come!" said her mistress. "Ah, I hear his step even now!"

Here the young officer advanced from an angle of the wall, where he had been hidden by the deep shadows, and came towards them. Alfreda drew back, and leaned against the wall; while her mistress observed with a sly glance the approach of the young Christian.

Advancing towards Zoraida, and removing his hat, Gonsalvo raised her extended hand to his lips.

"Beautiful Zoraida, I thank you for this interview!" he said.

"And I will not fill it wholly by telling of the love with which you have inspired me. I come now to proffer my aid for your safety in the coming