

spoke to her in lover's phrase, she laughed, though not understanding a word, and bade her slaves stay with him.

Last man in the column was Leon, brave gentleman, good captain. With his horsemen, he closed upon the artillery.

"Friend," he said to Mesa, "the devil is in the night. As thou art familiar with wars as Father Olmedo with mass, how readest thou the noise we hear!"

The veteran, walking at the moment between two of his guns, replied,—

"Interpret we each for himself, Señor. I am ready to fight. See!"

And drawing his cloak aside, he showed the ruddy spark of a lighted match.

"As thou seest, I am ready; yet"—and he lowered his voice—

"I shame not to confess that I wish we were well out of this."

"Good soldier art thou!" said Leon. "I will stay with thee. *A la Madre todos!*"

The exclamation had scarcely passed his lips when to their left and front the darkness became peopled with men in white, rushing upon them, and shouting, "Up, up, Tlateloco! O, O *huilones*, *huilones!*"*

"Turn thy guns quickly, Mesa, or we are lost!" cried Leon; and to his comrades, "Swords and axes! Upon them, gentlemen! *Santiago, Santiago!*"

The veteran as promptly resolved himself into action. A word to his men,—then he caught a wheel with one hand, and swung the carriage round, and applied the match. The gun failed fire, but up sprang a hissing flame, and in its lurid light out came all the scene about; the infidels pouring into the street, the Tlascalans and many Spaniards in flight, Leon charging almost alone, and right amongst the guns a fighting man,—by his armor, half pagan, half Christian,—all this Mesa saw, and more,—that the slaves had abandoned the ropes, and that of the gunners the few who stood their ground were struggling for life hand to hand; still more, that the gun he was standing by looked point-blank into the densest ranks of the foe. Never word spoke he; repriming the piece, he applied the match again. The report shook the earth, and was heard and recognized by Cortez out on the causeway; but it was the veteran's last shot. To his side sprang the 'tzin; in his ear a war-cry, on his morion a blow, and under the gun he died. When Duty loses a good servant Honor gains a hero.

The fight—or, rather, the struggle of the few against the many—went on. The 'tzin led his people boldly, and they failed him not. Leon drew together all he could of Christians and Tlascalans; then, as game to be taken at leisure, his enemy left him. Soon the fugitives following Alvarado heard a strange cry coming swiftly after them, O, O *huilones!* O *huilones!*"

* Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conq.

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