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THE LISBONESE.

By the Author of "The Provost of Bruges."

It is many years ago, yet the recollection is in my mind as fresh as the occurrences of yesterday. I was standing on the terrace in front of Greenwich Hospital, looking at the wrecks of the gallant fellows who had, for so many years, borne their country's flag through "the battle and the breeze," now hobbling about with such limbs as fate had left or the doctor supplied them; and exercising all my ingenuity to trace, through their quaint sober uniforms and venerable grey hairs, the fiery heroes of a thousand combats. The struggle in the Peninsula was then at its height, and a vessel with Portuguese colours was passing up the river. I made some remark on the subject to an old pensioner who was standing by me. He was a very old man, with a quiet expression of benevolence in his face, and something in his manner that seemed to stamp him a shade above the common sailor.

"Ah, sir!" said he, "I have seen strange things in the country she comes from! I was at Lisbon in the great earthquake in fifty-five."

"Indeed!" said I. "That was an event not to be forgotten."

"It was, sir; but from more causes than the earthquake,—to me, that is."

"How so?" I inquired.

"Why, you see, sir, it's quite a story; but, poor thing, I like to talk about her; so, if you'll sit down on this bench, you shall have it from first to last."

"As I told you, I was in the city when the earthquake began, and a terrible thing it was to be sure. The houses swayed up and down, just for all the world like a ship at anchor in a heavy swell; and then it got worse and worse all down they came, first one, then another, then a whole street; and the poor creatures ran out by thousands, and the walls full and buried them, and the earth opened and swallowed them,—and the noise was like that of the last day—crashes of ruin and destruction—shrieks, groans, and prayers, all mixed up in one horrible din, till you could not tell which was loudest. Many a voice was then lifted to heaven that never prayed before,—and the un-answered prayer was buried with them in the openings of the earth or the ruins of the houses. Some went mad and stood and laughed as the roofs nodded above them,—and the laugh was stopped as the prayer had been; some stood still with children in their arms, hugging them to their bosoms with their heads bent over them, till they found a common grave. And then the fire began; for tapers at the altars, and the lights in the houses set to whatever fell on them, till a thousand flames completed the horror of that dreadful day.

For my own part, staggering along the heaving streets, at every other step, thrown on the ground, with brand stones rattling round me on all sides, I scrambled. I did not know where. It was not exactly fear, for a sailor, you know, sir, is not used to lose his bearings from such a cause; but the darkness, and the dust, and the smoke made such a confusion, one born in the world could not have found his way, to say nothing of a stranger. However, as I was saying, scrambling to make my way somewhere, any where indeed where there was air and no houses, I ran against a lady with a child in her arms. She was young, and as beautiful a creature as I ever saw. I cast my eyes on her. She hurried past me, and, at that moment, the earth gave a shudder, and I heard a sound louder than all the uproar. I thought it must be the earthquake, and turned round; when I found the earth had split in a chasm between us, even on the very spot where, a moment before, we had both been standing; and there

she was, balancing upon the brink of it, with the child held up above her head. The ground was crumbling under her, but where I stood it was still firm. I held out my arms—she said something to me in Portuguese which I did not understand, but I knew she was asking me to take care of the child; and I told her I would—I swore it! Nature, you know, sir, is alike in all languages—so she understood me, and giving one wild kiss to the little one's lips, with desperate strength she threw it across the chasm. She saw the child was caught in my arms, and she clasped her hands and threw up her beautiful eyes to heaven, when a fresh shake of the earth tumbled down a large building behind her, and she rolled with it into the yawning gulf—never to rise again in this world. Perhaps you may imagine what I felt—what I did I do not know; but, after an hour of wandering and escapes more than I could count, I found myself in the open country, and, for the present at least, safe. I went on my knees to thank God, and bade the little creature do the same; but she did not stir, and, as I laid her on the grass, I found a deep wound on her head, and the blood clotting her long beautiful black hair; but still she breathed. To make short of a long story, we got at last on board the ship again, and the doctor, after examining the wound, said there was no harm done, and that she would soon be as well as ever.

"She was a lovely little girl of about six years old; and as we were to sail directly, they wanted to send her ashore again, to try if any of her family could be found. But I thought of the vow I had made to her poor mother, which I am sure she understood; and I determined not to part with the sick wounded little thing, that I loved now as if she had been my sister; so I spoke to the captain, who was a very good man, and, moreover, had children of his own, and he agreed to let me take her to England with us. Well, sir, home we got, and it was astonishing how soon the little darling began to speak English. You could see she liked it, bless her! And now, as she was a young lady,—for she said her father, who had died about a year before, was Don somebody or other,—it was such a long name we never any of us could speak it, so we told her to call herself Jackson, which is my name; but, somehow, she always liked her long Portuguese name best, so you see, sir, how early prejudices grow—in foreigners, that is to say. Well, as I said, seeing she was a young lady, and we had undertaken her education, I thought we ought to do it as genteelly as we could; so I took her to a cousin of mine who kept a public house in Wapping, a very nice motherly woman—poor Sally!—she's dead and gone too, long ago!

"Well, sir, she treated her as if she had been her own child; and because she thought the company of the house was too rough and rude for her, she sent her to a very genteel boarding-school in Mile End, and it was wonderful how the little thing took to her learning; so that when I came back from my next voyage, she could not only speak English quite well, but read any book she saw. And there I found that with her little pocket money she had bought Portuguese books, and, at all her spare time, used to be poring over them, instead of playing like other children. Poor thing! it was the only tie that was left between her and her native land; for it is a strange thing, sir, but I've often found foreigners, even Frenchmen, love their own country just as well as if it had been old England!

"Well, sir, years passed on, and she was sixteen, and a sweeter or more beautiful creature you never set eyes on. She was as kind and gentle as an angel, and so fond of me! and I am sure I loved her better than my own life,—not in the way of sweetheating, for though I was a pretty looking fellow enough then, nobody could forget for a

moment that she was a young lady. But then I had saved her life, you know, sir,—and we used to talk about her poor mother that was gone; and then she made me learn a little Portuguese that she might speak in her own tongue to me; for her father's land seemed always uppermost in her thoughts. At last I joined a merchant ship that was to sail for Lisbon, and then the long-nursed wish of her heart came out, and she begged so hard to go with me, that I could not find courage to refuse her, but got her a passage in the vessel. And oh, sir, the grief that there was among the women when she went! You know, sir, they are kind, soft-hearted creatures, and I thought they never would have done crying. However, go we did, and a very pretty voyage we had.

"When we came in sight of Lisbon, I shall never forget how the poor dear looked! She was as pale as a ghost, and trembled all over; and while her eyes seemed to devour the shore, her lips were white, and quivering, murmuring Portuguese words, that I could not catch the meaning of, except now and then her mother's name. Well, sir, to make short of it, we landed, and I got leave to go with her over the town, to see if we could find any body we knew. Poor dear, I thought she would have fainted when she set her foot on the land, she trembled so; for she was a weak delicate little creature. But oh—what a change we found since we left there! Where the earthquake had been, there was the grand Black Horse Square, and all the straight regular streets that the marquis of Pombal had built, and we did not know where we were. However, she soon began to ask, and found that her uncle, Don —, confound his long name, I never could think of it, and I am sure it is not worth remembering—but he was living in a grand house they pointed out to us—so there we went. Well, sir, we found him with a parcel of fine servants round him, but we did not care for that, and we told him who we were; and,—would you think it, sir?—he would not believe us! The fact was, it did not suit him to believe us; for, supposing her dead, he had seized on all her property, and was enjoying it. So the old scoundrel called us impostors—called me and his own brother's beautiful child impostors, and threatened to send for a constable! You may guess my blood began to rise, and as for her, poor thing! she stood speechless and trembling; for, in her innocence, she had never dreamt of this, nor, to tell the truth, had I either. Well, just at this moment a great old mastiff dog came into the room. 'Oh, Basto!' cried she, bursting for the first time into a flood of tears, 'I am sure you don't forget me!' Would you believe it, sir?—the old brute looked at her and growled—did not know his old master's child! No English dog would have done that, sir! However, she was so overcome at the sight of her father's old dog, that she threw her beautiful body on the ground, and clasping her white arms round the beast, hugged him to her heart. He bit her, sir! I can hardly speak it—but he bit her! I saw his teeth enter her soft flesh—I saw the blood trickle down! I can't tell you, sir, what I felt at that moment. Even after all these years my blood is in a boil talking of it. I flew at the beast, and before you could count two, dashed his brains out.

"The old Don swore in Portuguese—I stormed in English. It was well some of the servants got between me and him. I believe I knocked down two or three of them, but I don't know. I caught the darling up to my arms, for she had fainted, and I carried her to the ship. We put her to bed, but nothing could recover her from the shock. There was all her little dream of ten years gone in a moment—and so cruelly gone too! She was struck to the heart. She lay quite still and noticed no-