

upon the earth, so that no eye could penetrate its depths; and incertitude had probably, its effect on the imagination in enlarging its extent, and multiplying its dim horrors. They had all reached the interior of the recess, and, astonished at meeting with no resistance from one whose powers had appalled the hearts of the strongest and the bravest, they demanded of the guide if it were possible that Juan could have taken the alarm and contrived to make his escape. The Portuguese was not present to reply; but in his stead rose from among them the low deep tones of Juan's voice, and they beheld, opposite the entrance, the tall unbending form of him whom they sought, yet now trembled to approach. In his right hand he held a blazing torch, and while intense and overpowering consternation for a few brief moments rendered the besiegers powerless, he thus addressed them:—"Around you is traced the girdle of death;—this cave contains a train of more than sufficient power to destroy you were your numbers increased a hundred fold. Advance one step and I will hasten the glorious illumination that will mock the love-sick moon!" The colonel, apparently unintimidated by this threat, called on his followers to seize the assassin. Juan smiled scornfully as he shook off the rude hold of one of the soldiers, and dashed him senseless to the earth: then, with fierce and outstretched grasp, he seized the ladder from without and threw it down the dread abyss: when it had reached the lowest depths the faint and dull sound it occasioned tolled the death of hope in every manly breast, for it was the single fragile barrier between them and the grave. Again the avenging spirit spoke,—"Ye came in numbers to seize upon one whom you believed would fall an unsuspecting victim, therefore do I rejoice,—your own terrors have ever been the best ministers to my revenge. My undying hate would have scorned a more inglorious sacrifice when it was to be the final one. My prayers have been heard; for every hollow blast, every gentle breeze has been the herald of His will, and borne to me the sad lament of my vengeance! Will it be to ye consolatory to know that my own destruction is necessarily involved in yours?—No, no! for death is the only blessing left me after revenge; now that is ample I ask no richer crown,—myself will light my funeral pile."

His gigantic figure darkened the aperture and rose high above it; the bright yet fitful flame of the pine-torch only increased the gloom in the space beyond its immediate influence, and threw a red gleam over his own handsome animated features, while it served to display the ghastliness of despair which lived in every lineament of the young commander's countenance; his slight and

elegant, but somewhat diminutive figure, completing the awfulness of the contrast. The mass of heads beyond were all indistinct, or in obscurity; for the certainty of their impending doom had taken from them the power, as they saw the inability, of all opposition. Numbers availed them nothing, and merely increased the horror by multiplying the sufferers.—The train was fired,—yet, ere the beautiful serpent-flame had wrought the meditated run, one dreadful rush was made towards the aperture to attempt that desperate chance of escape. But Juan, merciless and immovable as his own rocky habitation, made himself a barrier of resistance that no union of effort could displace, during the fearful moment that intervened before the cave and its human prey were given to the elements. One mangled and mutilated wretch, hurled to an almost incredible distance by the force of the explosion, survived his companions a few hours to tell the dreadful tale.

A broken fragment, black, and scorched, and burnt, still marks the spot; and Portuguese guides, with scarcely suppressed exultation, relate to travellers the fate of the — regiment of French cuirassiers, and the Peasant of Portugal.

A CHAPTER ON BEARDS.

A PRODUCTION or deed which we deem meritorious, we frequently value in proportion as the world slight it. An author sometimes lavishes his regard on his least valuable production, for the same reason that a mother lavishes her fondness on her deformed or licentious son, because the world neglects or censures him. From this view of human nature results another remark. When we receive ample and reiterated praise for any quality, in the course of time the quality and the praise become less the cause of complacency, and we seek distinction in something which is either trivial, or foreign to our character. Thus a great general will sometimes pride himself more in laying his friends under the table at the bottle, than in driving his enemies from the shores of his native land; and a great legislator will sometimes feel more gratification in making a witty pun than in making a wise law. A king who reigned over a mighty empire ordered it to be recorded on his monument—not that he was a renowned warrior, and a mighty prince, but that he was a famous drinker. A lady, a queen who governed a fine kingdom, possessed a long beard, which she alike valued, and with as much hope of impunity you might have cut off a subject of her realm as a hair of her beard.

Contrast and novelty have a powerful effect on