

A noise foreign to the raging of the storm awakened me, and half rising, I listened, and distinctly heard the sound of human voices, and then a loud, boisterous laugh.

I was at once upon my feet, for I knew that I was in a dangerous neighborhood, as highway robbers were well known to infest that portion of the country.

Standing erect upon my rocky couch, a glimmer of light shone through the wall, and in an instant I had placed my eye there, and discovered through a window, that had been two-thirds closed, a sight that did not reassure me as to my safety.

The ruin had been built in the shape of a cross, the upper end resting upon a hillside, and approaching, as I did, from that side, I had entered the inclosure or square formed by the two upper ends.

The two corners of the cross forming the wings of the structure had prevented my seeing the longest and largest part of the ruin, and the vault, or chamber, where I was domiciled for the night, was the very centre of the square where the four wings met, hence through the barricaded window, or rather, small aperture, I could see into a large room, and therein sat a dozen rough looking men engaged in a midnight carousal.

Arms lay upon the table, blankets were spread about upon the stone floor, and the chamber was dimly lighted by half a dozen small tapers, aided by a sickly looking fire that burned in one end of the large hall.

"I want no liquor, I say, I have had enough, and will have a cup of coffee—*Delita, Delita,*" the wild looking scamp who was speaking as I gazed through the opening, rapped loudly upon the bottle before him with his dirk.

"I am coming," answered a sweet voice in Spanish, the same language the man had spoken.

"Hasten, then; I wish you to make coffee for me;" and as he spoke, a girl of fourteen came forward, and stood where the light fell full upon her.

A sweet, childish face, lit up by large lustrous eyes, and crowned by masses of raven-black hair, which were in strange contrast to the paleness of her countenance; a girlish figure, neatly but poorly clad, stood before me, and astonished me as much as if a beautiful apparition had entered the ruin.

"There is no water here, *senor*; I shall have to go the spring for it."

"Curse you why do you not keep water ready for use? Go, and the storm without will punish you for your negligence; and see that you hasten," brutally said the bandit.

"Si, *signor*," and the sad eyes glistened for a moment, and then a sigh escaped the lips, as the lovely girl turned, and throwing around her a thick mantle, seized a pitcher, and walking towards the dark portion of the hall room, disappeared.

I had noticed, as I approached the ruin, a small spring, covered over with a stone roof and had also remarked a path, looking as if often used, leading therefrom toward one end of the rocky old pile, and I felt convinced that it was to this spot the maiden was coming for water; so wrapping my military cloak around me, and buckling on my belt of arms, I hastened towards the spring.

The storm was still raging, though I could see indications of its breaking away, and the darkness was great, but still I managed to trace out the beaten path, and soon found the spring.