

of Jesus Christ—that He was God manifested in the flesh; that He was one with the Father; that He lived and died to redeem mankind from the curse of sin; that He died, the Just for the unjust to bring us to God; that He gave His life a ransom for many; that there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved; that if a man would live well, would live greatly now and open up an ever-brightening future, he must live by the faith of the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him.

CARMEN: A SPANISH STORY.

(Translated from the French of PROSPER MÉRIMÉE, of the French Academy.)

CHAPTER. III.

CARMEN'S HISTORY.

"I was born," he said, "at Elizonda, in the Bastan Valley. I am called Don José Lizzarrabenga, and you know Spain well enough, Monsieur, for my name to tell you at once that I am Basque, and of an old Christian family. If I take the *Don*, it is because I have a right to it, and were I at Elizonda I could show you my genealogy on parchment. I was intended for the Church, and made to study for it; but I profited little by the opportunity. I was too fond of playing tennis, and to that I owe my ruin; for when we Navarrese play tennis, we forget everything else. One day, in which I had won the game, a lad from Alava forced a quarrel with me: we seized our *maquillas*,* and again I obtained the advantage over him; but it obliged me to leave the country. I met a troop of cavalry, and enlisted in the regiment of Almanza. The men of our mountains quickly learn the military profession, and I soon became a corporal, and was promised the promotion of quartermaster, when, to my misfortune, I was placed on guard at the tobacco manufactory at Seville. If you have been to that city, you will have observed the enormous building beyond the ramparts, near the Guadalquivir. I still seem to see its gate and guard-house near by. While on duty, Spaniards usually sleep or play cards; but I am a true Navarrese, and tried always to be occupied, so I was making a chain with some brass wire to fasten my primer, when suddenly the soldiers said: 'There is the bell ringing; the girls are about to return to work.'

"There are four or five hundred women employed in this manufactory. It is they who roll the cigars in a great hall from which men are excluded, except by permission of the superintending magistrate of the police and municipal administration, because the women, especially the young ones, dispose themselves at their ease when it is warm. At the hour for the women to return after dinner, many young men assemble to see them go by, and to make them gallant speeches. There are few of these demoiselles who refuse a silk mantilla, and amateurs of this angling have only to stoop to net the fish. While the others were looking on, I remained on my bench near the door. I was young, was always thinking of home, and did not believe there could be any pretty girls not wearing blue petticoats and plaits of hair falling over the shoulders.† Besides, the Andalusian women repelled me. I was not yet accustomed to their manners, for they were always jesting, never a serious nor sensible word. I was intent on my chain, therefore, when I heard one of the young men of the city say: 'There is the *gitanilla*!' I raised my eyes and saw her. It was Friday and I shall never forget it. I saw this Carmen, whom you know, at whose house I met you some months ago. She wore a very short scarlet skirt, that displayed white silk stockings with more than one hole, and delicate shoes of red morocco, fastened with flame-coloured ribbons. She drew aside her mantilla, in order to show her shoulders and a large bouquet of cassia that was placed in the bosom of her chemise. She had also a cassia flower in a corner of her mouth, and she came forward, poising herself on her hips, like a filly from the Cordovan stud. In my country, a woman in this costume would make the people cross themselves. At Seville, every one paid her some merry and free compliment, to each of whom she replied, casting sidelong glances, her hand on her hip, audacious as the true gypsy that she was. At first she did not please me, and I resumed my work; but she, according to the custom of women and cats who do not come when they are called and only come when they are not called, stopped in front of me, and said in the Andalusian fashion:

"'Crony, will you give me that chain to hold the keys of my strong-box?'

"'It is to fasten my primer,' I replied.

"'Your primer!' she exclaimed, with a laugh. 'Ah! Monsieur is making lace since he has need of pins!‡ Every one present began to laugh, and I felt myself grow scarlet, but could find no word with which to answer her. 'Come, my heart!' she resumed, 'make me eight ells of black lace for a mantilla, pin maker of my soul!' and taking the cassia blossom from her mouth, with a twirl of her thumb she threw it just between my eyes. Monsieur it produced the effect of a ball striking me. I did not know where to hide my head, and remained motionless as a log. When she had entered the factory, I saw the cassia flower lying between my feet, and I do not know what possessed me, but I picked it up without being perceived by my comrades, and carefully placed it in my jacket. Folly the first!

"Two or three hours afterwards I was still thinking of her, when a door-keeper arrived breathless and with terrified countenance, who told us that a woman had been assassinated in the large cigar hall of the factory, and that the guard must at once be sent there. The quartermaster ordered me to take two men, and learn the truth of the affair. Picture to yourself, Monsieur, that, on entering the hall, I found three hundred women *en chemise*, or very nearly so, all screaming, yelling, gesticulating, and making an uproar that would not permit God's thunder to be heard.

* Iron-pointed staff carried by the Basques.

† Usual costume of the peasant women of Navarre and the Basque provinces.

‡ This play upon words is lost in English. *Epinglette* is a gun-primer, also pin-case; *épingle*, pin; *épinglier*, pin-maker.—Translator.

"At one side of the hall, stretched on her back, covered with blood, lay one of the women with an X gashed on her face by two stabs of a knife.

"In front of the wounded girl, who was supported by several of the best of the band, I saw Carmen held by five or six companions. Her victim cried out: 'A confessor! a confessor! I am dying!' Carmen uttered not a word; she clinched her teeth, and rolled her eyes like a chameleon.

"'What is it? What is the matter?' I asked, and had great trouble in ascertaining what had passed.

"It appeared that the wounded woman had boasted of having enough money to buy a donkey at the Triana market.

"'Indeed!' said Carmen, who a biting tongue; 'you have not, then, enough for a broom?'

"The girl, wounded by the reproach, perhaps because she felt herself to be open to suspicion on that score, answered that, 'not having the honour to be either a gypsy, or god-daughter to Satan, she was not learned in brooms, but that Mademoiselle Carmencita would soon make the acquaintance of her donkey when the corregidor should take her to ride, with two lackeys behind to drive away the flies.'

"'Very well, and I,' rejoined Carmen, 'will make drinking places for flies on your cheek, where I will paint a chess-board.'

"Thereupon, *vivi-vlan* with the knife with which she cut the end of the cigars, she began to carve the cross of St. Andrew on the girl's face. The case was clear, and I took Carmen by the arm.

"'My sister,' I said politely, 'you must follow me.'

"She darted a look as if she recognized me, but simply said, with a resigned air:

"'Let us be off. Where is my mantilla?'

"She placed it over her head so as to show only one of her large eyes, and followed my two men as gently as a lamb. On arriving at the guard-house, the quartermaster said that it was a serious matter and that she must be taken to prison, and it was again I who was to conduct her there. I placed her between two dragoons, and walked behind as a corporal should do under similar circumstances. We set off for the city, and at first the gypsy remained silent, but in the *rue Serpent*, with which you are familiar and which well merits its name from its windings, she begins by allowing her mantilla to fall that I might see her pretty, beguiling face, and turning towards me as well as she was able, said:

"'My officer, where are you taking me?'

"'To prison, my poor child,' I replied, as gently as I could, as a true soldier should speak to a prisoner, especially to a woman.

"'Alas! what will become of me! Seigneur officer, have pity on me. You are so young, so handsome.' Then in a lower tone, she continued: 'Let me escape, and I will give you a piece of *bar lachi* that will make you beloved of women.'

"This *bar lachi*, Monsieur, is the magnet with which gypsies claim that witchcraft is practised by those skilled in its use. Give to a woman a pinch of it filed to powder, in a glass of white wine, and she will no longer resist your love. To this offer of Carmen's I replied seriously as I could: 'We are not here for such idle tales; you must go to prison; such are my orders, and there is no alternative.'

"We men of the Basque provinces have an accent that enables the Spaniards to recognize us easily, but on the other hand, not one of them can learn to say *bai*, *jaona* (yes, Monsieur). Carmen, therefore, had no difficulty in discerning that I came from the provinces. You must know, Monsieur, that the gypsies being as it were, of no country, and always travelling, speak every language, and the greater part of them are at home in Portugal, France, the Basque provinces, Catalonia—everywhere; even among the Moors and English they make themselves understood. Carmen knew the Basque pretty well. '*Laguna, ene bihotsarena*, comrade of my heart,' she suddenly said to me, 'are you of my country?'

"Our language is so beautiful, Monsieur, that to hear it in a foreign land makes us start.

"I should like to have a confessor from the provinces," added the bandit sadly, in a low tone. After a moment's silence, he resumed:

"I am from Elizonda,' I answered her in Basque, much moved at hearing her speak my native tongue.

"'And I am from Etchalar,' she said, which is a territory four hours distant from my native place. 'I was carried off by gypsies to Seville, where I worked in the factory, to gain a sum wherewith to return to Navarre and be near my poor mother, who, as her support, has only myself and a little garden (*barratea*) with twenty cider-apple trees. Ah! if I were but at home in front of the white mountain! I have been insulted because I am not of this land of pickpockets, dealers in rotten oranges, and these beggars have banded together against me because I said that all their Seville *jacques* (braggarts) with their knives, could not frighten a lad of our country with his blue cap and *maquila*. Comrade, my friend, will you do nothing to aid your country-woman?'

"She was lying, Monsieur; she has always lied. I do not know if during her whole life that girl ever uttered a word of truth; but when she spoke I believed her; I was overmatched. She spoke halting Basque, and I believed her to be a Navarrese; her eyes alone, her mouth and complexion, should have proclaimed her a gypsy; but I was mad, and no longer capable of reasoning. I thought that if any Spaniards had ventured to speak ill of my country, I also would have stabbed their face as she had just done. In short, I was like a drunken man; I began to talk nonsense, and was very near committing follies. 'If I were to push you, and if you should fall, compatriot,' she resumed in Basque, 'it would not be these two Spanish conscripts who could hold me.' *Ma foi*, I forgot orders and everything, and said to her: 'Well, my friend, my country-woman, try, and may Our Lady of the Mountain help you!'

"At that moment we were passing by the head of one of those lanes of which there are so many in Seville, when suddenly Carmen turned, and levelled a blow with her fist full in my chest. I purposely fell over on my back, and with a bound she sprang over me and began to run, showing us a pair of legs as fleet as they were shapely. I raised myself up immediately, but placed my