

CHAPTER II.

"Alas! on Tago's hapless shores alone,
The Muse is slighted, and her charms unknown,
Unheard, in vain their native poet sings,
And cold neglect weighs down the Muse's wings."

"I CANNOT take it, Cheyti; why do you tease me with your potions? they will do me no good," said a poor sufferer, who was feverishly tossing upon his bed of straw, seeking rest but finding none. As he spoke he pushed aside a small glass which was held to his lips by a hoary-headed black.

"It do massa good," said he, still urging it upon him; "massa no quiet, no sleep, no take this."

"The sands are almost run, why seek to stop them?" replied the sick man. "Oh that the golden bowl were indeed broken, and the silver cord loosed, then should I forget the world which has so forgotten me."

"Massa live to shame the world, and to be great man once more," said the faithful black, though the tears swelled to his large eyes, as he gazed upon the emaciated face which he knew could never again wear the hue of health; "but massa will take this, must for poor Cheyti's sake. Cheyti no sleep if massa is in pain." Again he put the glass to the lips of the sufferer, who, making a great effort, swallowed the mixture; then, with the tenderness of a woman, the black shook up the rough pillows, smoothed the thin sheets, and placed his master in the easiest position the narrow, comfortless bed would allow. He then busied himself in various little offices about the apartment. It was one of the humblest of those hovels which shock the traveller, when seen as in the cities of the old world, side by side with the gorgeous palace or lofty hotel. It was low and narrow, its mud floor damp and rough; the pullet on which lay the sick man was raised from the ground by a few planks laid on blocks of wood; a stool, and one comparatively easy chair, a table on which were a few books, and a curious Indian desk, composed all the furniture of this sordid apartment.

The black, Cheyti, as the sick man had called him, was not an African negro, nor a Moor, but had the air and complexion of one of the inhabitants of the islands of the Indian ocean. The draught he had given his master seemed to compose him, and his breathing became regular and heavy, like one in a sound sleep. Being assured that he was so, Cheyti began to metamorphose himself. He took off the handkerchief that bound his head, combed out the long white hair, which fell around his face and shoulders, a strange contrast to the bronze hue of his skin; he put on a small cap, and some additional garments, took

one more look at his master, then bandaged his eyes as if blind, and taking a heavy staff to lean upon, he passed out of the door, exchanging the quick light motion with which he had moved around the sick-bed, for a heavy, dragging step, and, counterfeiting perfectly the guarded and fearful walk of the blind, he slowly made his way to the Alameda, or public promenade. It was just the hour when, their siesta over, the young and old, the stately don, the bright-eyed maiden, and the cross-eyed duenna, the handsome cavalier, and the poor but proud beggar, saunter forth to regale themselves in the shaded walks of the Alameda. The black threaded his way with cautious steps till he found himself at the entrance of the promenade. Here, leaning against a tree, he stood listening to the passing footsteps, the light laugh, or the merry jest, and inhale the fragrant breath of the orange-perfumed breeze. His appearance soon collected a group about him.

"Ah, Cheyti," said one of them, "'tis many days since you were here; where have you been?"

"Poor blind man's dog sick, dead; Cheyti mourn for him; Cheyti no like to come without his dog."

"Well, well, sing for us some of your wonderful songs, and we will give you money to buy another dog."

"Give money first; sound of it make Cheyti's heart glad; he sing de better."

The crafty black had learned by experience, that many of his listeners dropped off at the close of his song, forgetful of the reward promised him. Taking the cap from his head, one of the company passed it round, and a few reals were gathered and placed in his hand. It was a larger sum than usual, for all had been touched by the pathos of his manner when he spoke of his dog; a gleam of satisfaction shot across his dark visage, as he counted the coins, and placed them carefully in his bosom.

"Now for a song, Cheyti; give us one of Camoens's."

The ballads and sonnets of this ill-fated poet were now extremely popular, though he himself was quite forgotten; indeed it was supposed he had died far from his native land.

With a clear and musical voice the black commenced his song, his imperfect pronunciation of the Portuguese language, so far from taking away from the harmony, seeming to add to it, and his rich voice rose and fell, echoing through the groves of the Alameda, and collecting about him most of the loiterers. He sang again and again, till twilight began to darken over him, and then, having received a few more silver coin, he turned away, hobbled through the crowd, and was