

# The St. Andrews Standard.

PUBLISHED BY A. W. SMITH.]

IN VARIIS EMENDUM EST OPTIMUM. - CIO.

[12s 6d. PER ANN. IN ADVANCE.]

No 17]

SAINT ANDREWS, N. B., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 1859.

[Vol 26.]

## A Spanish Story.

### THE LAST OF THE QUESADAS.

It may be that the domestic life of Spain is, in the aggregate, as civilized and common-place as that of Great Britain; but certain it is that incidents therein are not unfrequently brought to light which more resemble creations of the Radcliffe school of novelists, than the sober realities of the actual world. Of this kind is the recent story of Garcilas de Quesada, a young Catalan gentleman, which, in its material parts has been judiciously verified by the Spanish tribunals.

Garcilas de Quesada was, it seems, the sole surviving representative of a long line of ancestors, whose historic glories reached as far back as the days of Pelayo, and the first efforts to rescue Spain from the Moslem yoke, originating under that renowned leader, in the Montanas de Asturias, of which birthplace of Spanish independence the founders of the Quesada family were natives. Unfortunately, the heritage bequeathed the last of the race by eleven hundred years of glory, consisted of little more than the intense family pride engendered by those historic centuries, and an ancient castle, near Cordona in Catalonia, which time and violence had reduced to pretty much the condition of its owner—a gloomy, repellent ruin. The naturally arrogant disposition of the young man was fostered and inflamed by the teachings of his mother, who died a few months after he attained his majority; and it was said to have been early determined between them, that unless the young Garcilas could espouse wealth in his own rank the superb line of the Quesadas should end with him, whilst yet unmingled with and uncontaminated by the common yam of plebeian life. His preposterous arrogance gave birth, after a time, to an immitigable hatred of one particular person; chiefly, in the first instance, because of the afflicting illustration which the position of that person afforded of the wiser course pursued by his family, the De Velascos, who, in the matter of patrician pretence, might have held their heads as high as the De Quesadas.

Jos de Velasco, on succeeding to his inheritance, having found himself, like many other Spanish hidalgos, and even grandees, of modern times, without the means of supporting his hereditary rank, at once resolutely brushed aside the cobweb prejudices that would have barred his path to fortune through the avenue of trade, and engaged, with remarkable energy, in the salt manufacture carried on in that part of Spain. Success rewarded his exertions, and his visible sign of deepened, by contrast, the gloomy aspect of decay and ruin presented by the formerly palatial residence of the Quesadas. The ancestral mansion, once in as dilapidated a condition as the hereditary De Quesada "castle," was thoroughly restored, furnished and decorated, the menial establishment, which had dwindled to two or three ill-paid, ill-servitors, was recruited up to a handsome complement; Senor Velasco's children,—he had dropped the *Don* and the *De*—were carefully educated; and when his son, Alonzo, returned home in 1847 from the university of Toledo, he was pronounced by general consent, to be the handsomest, best-dressed, best mounted, and altogether the most generous and accomplished caballero of the neighborhood for many miles around. For this young man, Garcilas de Quesada, conceived from the first a violent dislike, which the passing years bringing increased sunshine and splendor to the Velascos, and only clouds and gloom for him, exasperated to the deadliest hate. It was also said, that de Quesada had been for a time shaken in his resolve of perpetual enmity, except under the before-named conditions, by the charms, personal and pecuniary, of Teresa Velasco, and that he attributed the repulse that had met his consoling advances to wards a *metalliance*, as he deemed it, with a family whose head had degraded its escutcheon by stooping to the status of a salt-contractor—to the opposition of the young lady's brother; his personal pride causing him no doubt, to ignore the possibility of Teresa Velasco's declining the honor of his hand by her own choice. Some heedless expressions reported to have been made use of by Alonzo relative to the moth-eaten dignity and poverty-stricken pride of his sister's rejected suitor, confirmed this impression, and led, moreover, to a duel with swords, in which Garcilas de Quesada was worsted, and owed his life to the forbearance of his triumphant adversary.

For about three years after this, no further intercourse took place between the young men Garcilas de Quesada during that period being rarely seen out of his crumbling castle, where he dwelt in idle seclusion, his sole attendant one Gil Polo, who was born bred, wedded, widowed and hoped to die and be

buried within the now much circumscribed precincts of the domain. At length, in the early part of 1850, when in his thirtieth year—a circumstance occurred which drew him forth once more into the thinly scattered society of the neighborhood.

This was a confident rumor of the approaching marriage of Alonzo Velasco with Isabella Rios, a lady he had met with in Madrid, and to whom, as being neither distinguished for wealth nor birth, the elder Velasco and his wife had strongly objected, till subdued into acquiescence by the passionate solicitations of their son, who loved the beautiful Andalusian with a fervor remarkable even in the love-disposing clime of Spain. It was, as the sequel proved, the knowledge of this fact which determined and hastened De Quesada's reappearance in the tiny world which circled his solitude. He was kindly received by the Velascos, who had never borne him serious ill-will; and had it been otherwise, his changed appearance, indicative not only of feeble health, but in the gray sprinkled hair and stooping form, of premature old age, must, in generous minds, have converted any adverse feeling into kindness and compassion for one so early and untimely wrecked in the voyage of life. Isabella Rios had arrived at Cordona, on a visit to a relative, before the parental obstacle opposed to her union with Alonzo Velasco had been removed, and there it was since settled she should remain till the magic power of the wedding-ceremonial enticed her to a permanent home in the comparatively splendid abode of the Velascos. Garcilas de Quesada met her there frequently in the interim; and although he could not avoid being struck with her singular loveliness, he paid her as afterwards remembered, but scant attention except when Alonzo was present, and then, as it seemed, merely by way of complimentary admiration of the enchanted lover's choice and taste. He and Alonzo Velasco soon became exceedingly intimate—so much so, that De Quesada consented to officiate as the bride's father at the marriage, which it was arranged, should take place on the 12th of May, 1850.

The bridal-day was distant only about a week, when thunder fell from the brilliant unclouded sky. The Velasco family, the Lady Isabella Rios, Garcilas de Quesada, who had joined them about half an hour previously, Dr. Zorilla of Cordona, and others, were enjoying themselves *afresco* in front of the family mansion, with song and dance, when Alonzo's horse galloped up to the gate, covered with foam, panting with exertion and riders! The alarm and commotion were instantly great. Alonzo, who had set out early in the morning to transact some business for his father at a salt establishment near the Albufera de Valencia, had been expected to return several hours before, and it was now, of course, apprehended that some terrible accident had befallen him. But a few minutes had elapsed ere Senor Velasco, Garcilas de Quesada, Dr. Zorilla, and several other gentlemen, rode off in anxious quest of the missing horseman; but the morning dawned upon their fruitless search, no tidings whatever having been obtained of the unfortunate cavalier, except that he had left the salt works in time to have reached his home at least two hours before his horse arrived there. Quesada's house or castle was about a league distant from the residence of the Velascos, and not far out of the track the searching party had been vainly exploring; and he proposed that they should rest there awhile before resuming their inquiries. The invitation was accepted the more readily by the grief-bowed father and his friend Dr. Zorilla, that neither could divest himself of a haunting suspicion that Alonzo had met with foul play at the hands of De Quesada.

Nothing, however, was observed in that gentleman's dreary abode, nor in the stolid, careless aspect and demeanor of its only other inhabitant, Gil Polo, to strengthen the suspicion. De Quesada himself appeared to be much and naturally affected by the distressing catastrophe; and before long, it was generally concluded that the young Velasco, though an excellent rider, must have been thrown from his horse, and hurled down one of the narrow and unfathomable fissures of the Sierra over which he was passing. For, after all, argued the Velascos with their more intimate friends, and notably with Dr. Zorilla, what adequate motive could there be to prompt a man, himself apparently on the verge of the grave, to the commission of so foul a crime? There was no question now of the hand of Teresa Velasco, who had been long since married, and settled in a distant part of Spain; De Quesada was not in love, it was quite clear, with Isabella Rios; and it was surely hardly creditable that the slight quarrel which had occurred three years previously, could still rankle with such deadly power in his breast as to urge him to avenge the fancied wrong of insult he had sustained by murder!

This reasoning was scarcely satisfactory, especially to Dr. Zorilla, who thought he could read De Quesada's mind and disposi-

tion much more accurately than the others; but days, weeks, months passed away without throwing the faintest light upon the matter, till near the middle of October, when a strange freak of De Quesada's, viewed in connection with subsequent information, revived, and in some degree gave form and color, to the strong though undefined suspicions of the Velasco family—with whom, by the way, Isabella Rios had, since the mysterious disappearance of her affianced lover, constantly resided. Garcilas de Quesada, who had shrunk back to his former gloomy seclusion, all at once startled his neighbors by issuing numerous invitations to a grand gala, to be held at his residence on the 17th of October, in celebration of the inviter's thirtieth birthday. The Velascos excused themselves; but the invitation was accepted by a considerable number of persons, who reported that the festival had been a joyous one—had gone off with much eclat, and must have cost the giver at least a half-year's revenue. This unaccountable extravagance on the part of an impoverished and dying man would perhaps only have lived in gossip of a few brief days, but for the receipt of a letter from an acquaintance at Madrid, enclosing a paragraph, dated about a fortnight before, and cut out of the *Heroldo* newspaper of that city, which set forth in stately terms, that the for some time contemplated marriage between Don Garcilas de Quesada and the beautiful Senora Isabella Rios, would, it had been decided, be celebrated on the 17th of October! The lady's correspondent added, that several paragraphs, to which she had given no credence had previously appeared in the same paper, hinting, not at all obscurely, to persons acquainted with the parties, at the probability of the event at least positively announced. The writer was desirous of ascertaining if the statement enclosed—a very surprising one to her—was correct; and if so, she of course congratulated her charming friend upon the alliance she had contracted, all the more cordially, if the paper was also right in stating, that Don Garcilas had lately succeeded in a large property, and had quite recovered his health.

A tumult of wild conjecture, doubt and apprehension arose in the minds of those to whom the letter was read; and one suggestion, half hinted by lady Isabella, and grounded upon the coincidence of the day of marriage named by the *Heroldo* with that of the gala day given by De Quesada, struck them all as at once so likely and terrible, that Senor Velasco's first impulse was to set forth immediately and procure judicial assistance, to break into and ransack the suspected residence. A few moments of calm reflection, however, sufficed to show him that he had no tangible grounds, or at least, none that the law would hold valid, for preferring such accusation against De Quesada, whose shield of nobility, rusted and worn-eaten at it might be, still presented in Spain a strong defense against any but the weightiest charges and the clearest proofs.

The family were still anxiously pondering the most advisable course of action, when Dr. Zorilla was announced. Before the newcomer, who appeared much excited, could open his mouth, the letter which had created such a panic was thrust into his hand, and his opinion thereon eagerly requested. Dr. Zorilla's agitation visibly increased as he read; and he had no sooner finished his perusal of the important missive and enclosure, than he exclaimed: "This but confirms my apprehensions; and I have to inform you, that whatever guilty knowledge Garcilas de Quesada may possess relative to your son's death or captivity, will in a few days be buried with him in the grave. He burst a blood-vessel in the lungs, on the night, I am told, of the grand gala, continuing to the doctor, breaking in upon the clamor of surprise which arose from his auditors, 'but I was not called in till this morning, when I at once informed him that nothing short of a miracle could prolong his life beyond twenty-four hours. His pallid features,' added Senor Zorilla, 'flushed hotly, with a sort of fierce dismay as I spoke; and after a few moments of dumb bewilderment, he said, in a faint, struggling voice: 'If that be so, I must bear my doom as I best may. In the meantime, do you, doctor send me the strengthening cordial you spoke of as quickly as possible, and return yourself as early in the evening as you can.' I obeyed him in both particulars; and when I again saw him, I found that he was sinking even more rapidly than I had anticipated. It seemed to me,' added Dr. Zorilla, speaking with slow and significant emphasis—'it seemed to me, judging by his strangely excited manner and a few incoherent words he muttered, that he had in the brief interval since I left him, finally accomplished some great purpose—perhaps if I said great crime! I should be nearer the truth.'"

"Santa Maria!" exclaimed Senor Velasco, "what terrible meaning is shrouded in your words?"

"He is now entirely alone," continued

Dr. Zorilla, with the same significance and solemnity of tone and manner, having, which is not the least curious part of the affair, just sent off Gil Polo to execute a trifling commission at a distance of some twenty leagues; and he has requested me to bring him, without delay, a monk in priest's orders from the convent of Los Apostoles, to whom, under the secret and impenetrable seal of confession, he will doubtless reveal, for his soul's health, what we are all so anxious to be informed of. I need hardly go so far as Los Apostoles," added the physician, with slow, emphatic emphasis, "for what with the moribund's fading sight, the gloom of the death-chamber at this hour of the evening, and myself being the only attendant, the Senor Velasco himself might officiate as confessor without fear of detection."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Senor Velasco, crossing himself, and sternly regarding the tempter, who, having served in the French army during the war of independence, was suspected to be something of a heretic, or *esprit fort*—Heaven forbid that I should commit such sacrilege! But it occurs to me that Gil Polo, who, I suspect, will not be seen in this neighborhood again, ought to be secured."

Dr. Zorilla readily approved of the suggestion, and remarked that it would be as well to bring him at once into the presence of his master; "for be sure, Senor Velasco," added the physician, "that if you ever obtain a clue to the fate of your son, you will do so this night."

The conference immediately broke up; Senor Velasco, followed by his wife and daughters, hurrying off to arrange for the instant pursuit of Gil Polo; Isabella Rios accompanied the physician. "You, lady, I perceive by the flashing of your eye just now," said Dr. Zorilla in a low voice as they passed along the corridor, "do not, although a very devout Catholic, deem it sacrilege to further the justice of God?"

"I do not," replied Isabella Rios, "especially as it is possible that I may discover that—that—I hardly dare breathe the hope that trembles at my heart."

"That you may discover," said the physician, "if you have firmness enough to stifle all emotion that may betray you till you have heard De Quesada's confession to the end—that Alonzo yet lives, and how he may be restored to the world and you! That is quite a possible result—mind, I say possible only, for I have strong misgivings. Still, if you are the brave girl you appeared to be a few minutes since, you will not shrink from the venture."

"I will not shrink," responded Isabella Rios; "and adamant shall not be firmer than I, till all is revealed. But pray," she added quickly, "step into the courtyard and request Senor Velasco to bring me a true priest with him to the castle. We shall have either failed or succeeded by that time, and De Quesada's soul must not flit unshrined to the judgment."

Dr. Zorilla smiled, but performed her bidding; and they were soon on their way to the presence of the dying man, the physician silently determining for his part to try what effect a threat of the garrotte, coupled with a knowledge of who had been confessing his master, might have upon Gil Polo.

But for the pale, uncertain starlight which served to define the shadows of the cumbersome furniture of the apartment in which Garcilas de Quesada was breathing out his last of life, and the white face of the dying man himself, Dr. Zorilla and his companion would have had no other guidance than the faint voice of the sufferer to his bedside. "The glare of a lamp," said the doctor in a sufficiently loud voice, "would pain the eyes of my patient, and your mission, reverend father, does not require one." He then left the room, and descended the stone stairs with a sounding step, as if to assure the patient that he was alone with the confessor.

The dying man did not speak, and the impatient listener repeated the first words of the Confiteor, as a suggestive invitation to commence. "True—true," muttered De Quesada, "the purpose for which you are here, reverend father, admits of no delay."

"Confiteor Deo omnipotenti"—Ah! it is long since I repeated those words. "Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, beatus"—Memory is failing me as well as sight. "Deo, Father, say the words, I will repeat them after you."

This was done, and the confession went brokenly on. After relating much that the reader is already aware of, relative to the insane hatred he bore Alonzo Velasco, he said that his burning thirst for vengeance during the three years he feared it unattainable had, he now felt, dried up the fountains of his life. "Mine was not," he continued, "a hatred that merely compassing his death would satisfy. I wanted to inflict a dire vengeance than that; and his unbounded love of the beautiful Isabella Rios at last afforded me the means. You start with horror, reverend father, at this avowal, and it is nothing compared with what remains to be told. Yet Holy Church can, we know, at the last

moment, if the confession is unreserved—the

penitence—Ah, what means that noise?" The lady's quicker ear had caught the sound distinctly; it was her father's voice in contention with some one—Gil Polo probably. It ceased almost instantly; and De Quesada proceeded, but with a hurried incoherence which showed that partial delirium already affected his brain. "Yes—yes, as I told you, I invited Alonzo Velasco to leave the road and rest here. He little suspected the potency of the pleasant wine he drank, nor how, when he awoke hours after, it had come to pass that he had exchanged the bridal chamber for a stone dungeon—that he was bound in stronger fetters than his lady's arms."

"Does he yet live?" burst from Isabella's

lips in a tone which startled the dull ear of the dying man, and he strove to raise himself in bed, but failed to. "Live!—live!" he muttered, falling helplessly back upon the pillow; "yes, to be sure—at least he did a few hours ago. I would tell you, but it grows colder—darker—colder!" The voice ceased, and Isabella eagerly applied a cordial

al Dr. Zorilla had furnished her with to the lips of the expiring wretch. It revived him and after a few moments, he faintly resumed: "You could hardly believe, reverend father, that the newspapers Gil Polo took him to read should have plunged him into such agonies of rage. The *Heroldo*, I had contrived, should say that I was about to marry the beautiful Isabella. He seemed at times to have gone permanently distracted—mad; I, unobserved, looking on delightedly while. Ha, ha! that, if you like was revenge!—What was I saying? I recollect. He began to doubt the truth of the newspaper paragraphs—to hope, almost believe, they were inventions; and then it was I played the master-stroke. The newspaper announced our marriage—our marriage?—Isabella Rios' and mine; and I took care that the rejoicing revelry should convince him that it

announced the truth. Father, his fury was sublime in its wild extravagance, especially, oh especially when, at the chime of midnight the loud music played the bridal air you wet of appropriate to the departure of the wedding guests. He leaped, danced, raged, and I too, leaped, danced, and raged, with sympathetic delirium, till my senses utterly failed me, and I reeled and fell down a flight of steps, bursting a blood-vessel, which at once destroyed the feeble hope I had till that moment entertained of prolonged life."

"Wretch! fiend!" shouted Isabella Rios, unable to control her emotions, which was of the less consequence as De Quesada relapsed immediately after he ceased speaking into partial insensibility. "Yet answer—does he live? or are you in deed as well as in thought a murderer?"

Quesada faintly answered, "A murderer! why yes, if the poison I poured into his water to-day can kill—"

The lady's convulsive scream was echoed by the loud voices of several persons hastily ascending the stair. Presently, the door was flung violently open, and gave to view a spectacle so startling as to cause De Quesada to spring up in his couch with renewed life. "Alive!" he gasped—"alive!" as his fascinated glare rested upon the attenuated, corpse-like features of Alonzo Velasco, visible in the light of the torches held aloft by his father and Dr. Zorilla.

"Yes, alive!" fiercely responded Zorilla; "the pretended poison this fellow, Gil Polo, procured you, was, luckily for his neck, as innocent as water; and—"

"Silence!" interrupted the priest brought by Senor Velasco, as he stepped forward and elevated a wooden crucifix before De Quesada; "an immortal soul is passing. Look upon this emblem of the Eternal's mercy," he added, addressing the expiring sinner, "and breathe—think of but one prayer to God." A gleam of intelligence seemed to flash from De Quesada's darkening eyes, and a half smile parted his lips: the next moment he had fallen back upon the pillow—dead!

The midnight ruffians of New York have recently adopted a new plan of assault upon victims. The Tribune says that the ruffian pulls off one of his boots, the soles and heels of which are full of nails, and standing alongside a stoop or fence, or leaning upon the shoulder of an accomplice waits the approach of his victim. The unsuspecting citizen comes along, and perhaps gives a passing glance at the man, who pretends to have injured his foot: he has hardly passed passed however, before the ruffian springs forward and deals him a severe blow over the head with his boot, knocking him senseless upon the pavement. The robbery is then committed, and the unfortunate man left on the walk. Should a policeman chance to come along before a robbery has been committed, the ruffian pretends to be lame from a sprained ankle, and limps along the walk in his stocking foot.

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