

Poetry.

A PATERNAL EXHORTATION.

Written for the ONTARIO WORKMAN.

Think not my son your lot is hard
Because you for your bread must toil,
In labor life has its reward;
Not so in idleness and spoil.

What though the wealthy idler boast
His golden toys and gay attire,
And vainly tell how much they cost,
While gaping imbeciles admire.

If place him with the workingman
On some lone island wild and waste,
Where each must find, as best he can,
A living suited to his taste.

Where with the axe, the spade and hoe,
Each must endure his bill of gains,
Then art and industry will show
To whom real dignity pertains.

There having done so work for hire—
Not knowing how to till nor plant—
With all his gold and rich attire,
The titled cipher pines in want.

Meanwhile, at labor's magic touch
The frowning forest smiles serene,
And to the workingman—as such—
Presents a joyous homestead scene.

God said, when man he issued forth,
"Go, social and industrious be,
Reclaim and fructify the earth,
Which I for heritage give thee.

On labor shall thy race depend
For comfort, health and length of days;
Should one to idleness descend,
All must be injured by his ways."

And nature proves in every land
A constant working Deity,
Without the labor of whose hand
The universe would cease to be.

Hence workingmen of soul and creed,
Alone conserve the grand design
Of nature's mighty Architect—
The world is theirs by right divine.

While he in idleness who lives,
Whatever the title he receives,
No dignity to nature gives,
But founds a pedigree of thieves.

And who so fills a regal seat,
Pope, Sultan, Emperor, or King,
Midst all the pagantry of State,
At best is a dependant thing.

Whose gaudy robes and sumptuous board,
Brought from the merchant's farthest ken,
With all extortion can afford,
Must be supplied by workingmen.

He cannot spin, he cannot weave,
Nor till, nor plant, nor sow, nor reap,
Hence must take charity or alms—
His wealth's but poverty asleep.

Then glory in the rank you hold,
And in your sphere rise if you can,
Scorning the influence of gold—
Be great, but only as a man.

N'er deign your fellow to enslave,
Be chaste and temperate withal.

Then though by potentates outlawed,
You live—and die by priests unshriven—
Your course on earth men will applaud,
And angels smile on you in heaven.

CHARLES STEWART.

Galt, June 10th, 1872.

Tales and Sketches.

RACHEL AND AIXA;

OR,

The Hebrew and the Moorish Maidens.

AN INTERESTING HISTORICAL TALE.

CHAP. VIII.—Continued—Aixa, the Moorish Maiden.

Notwithstanding his self-possession, Esau could not refrain from betraying a sentiment of surprise and admiration at surveying the interior of this wonderful Alcazar, into which few men of his race had had the privilege of penetrating. They first crossed a yard, paved entirely with white marble, in the middle of which a large reservoir, four feet deep, displayed its limpid waters, encircled by a border of roses, myrtle, and laurel. This yard was surrounded by light arcades formed of fine open sculpture, like lace, supported by ariel colonnades of marble.

They entered the grand saloons, where the eye of Esau was dazzled with the floorings of cedar and "larch" wood, by cupolas of a half globe, the stucco of which was streaked and painted azure, green, and red, so as to cause a reflection like the vaults of stalactites, by grottoes, by arcades, by arabesque panels with gilt capitals, and ornamented network covering the walls like the inextricable webs of spiders.

More than once Mohamed allowed a sigh to escape him. It was his ancestors who had built that magnificent Alcazar, and now it served as a fortress to Christian kings.

They at length arrived at a yard, or rather small interior garden, the soil of which was composed of yellow sand impregnated with water incredibly fertilizing. A vine sprang from the crevices of the wall, and attached its tendrils to the branches of orange trees. The red flowers of the pomegranate were seen amid the prickly blades of the aloes and cactuses, and the white flower of the jasmine sprang up beside the laurel. It was completely an African vegetation.

A gallery which led to the women's apart-

ments was supported by columns of marble, the staircase leading to which was inlaid with arabesque tiles. Mohamed was approaching this staircase, when a Nubian slave, whose white turban contrasted strikingly with his ebony face, came out of a room, the door of which was covered with vine branches that twined round the columns, and kneeling before the king, said: "Dread the Princess Aixa has just left the bath, and reposes in the bathing saloon."

Mohamed stopped undecided; then, having attentively regarded the calm and proud countenance of Esau, he made a sign to the slave to open the door of the Hall of Baths, which was of cedar wood carved in lozenges. The slave silently obeyed.

The Jew boldly entered, with the King of Granada, that sacred place which his presence profaned, the wonders of which the owners of the Alcazar, their wives and children, alone were permitted to admire. He remarked at the entrance a slab of white marble, pierced with small holes, to permit the escape of the smoke from perfumes that burnt under the flooring. The lower part of the hall was mosaically paved with glazed tiles, bordered with fillagree of moulded cement, the variety of which was as extraordinary as that of the fossils of the ocean. The roof was covered with Damascus stucco, formed in large moulded plates, and so artistically joined, that fantastic arabesques, with texts from the Koran, and other inscriptions in Arabic characters, appeared to be sculptured in bas-relief. In the middle of the hall was a marble basin, ornamented with an elegant vase, from which issued a jet of water. Alcoves furnished with divans, covered with cloth of gold, ran round the walls, and balconies for singers and musicians were elevated fifteen feet from the ground.

As to the baths, large vessels of marble in a single piece were placed in intercal grottoes, the low vaults of which allowed the light to enter through the open work of the rosettes and stars that ornamented the building. Such was the bathing saloon, erected for the celebrated favorite, Maria de Padilla.

Notwithstanding his boldness, Esau could not suppress a sensation of misgiving and embarrassment when the door of the hall closed behind him.

The daughter of Mohamed was reclining on a couch of gold brocade, wrapped in a tunic of fine white wool, and covered with gauze veils. She had not deigned to turn her head, but lay with closed eyes, while a white slave fanned her with a fan of apertum, embroidered in silk and gold. But when she heard the heavy tread of the Jew, so unlike the light and agile steps of her women, she uttered a shriek of surprise and terror, and rising with a sudden bound,—"Is it you, my father," said she to Mohamed, "who have permitted a stranger to follow you in here?"

"This man comes to reveal secrets to us which must be known to no one else, and in this city and in this palace, which now belongs to Christians, this Hall is probably the only place where we have not to fear the ears of a spy."

"What secrets has the sovereign of the Alcazar to learn from a vagabond, who doubtless reckons on our credulity to fill his empty purse?" replied the Moorish princess in an imperious tone.

Esau coolly contemplated the favorite who had taken the place of Maria de Padilla. Aixa was handsome, but of an original and stern beauty. She was really the Arabian type in all its amplification. She had large, wide-open eyes, and under their thick and arched brows they appeared formed of mother-of-pearl and jet. Her forehead was high, protruding, and polished like ivory. The rather sudden bend of her chin, her teeth (somewhat pointed) of dazzling whiteness, with a fine, thin, almost aquiline nose, all combined to give her physiognomy a wild and somewhat masculine expression. Her lips, the carnation of which was bright as the flowers of the pomegranate, contrasted admirably with her complexion, the golden-tinge of which would have fascinated a poet or painter. Her feet were small, and her hands delicate, but her arms and shoulders had not yet acquired the roundness of form which, according to Oriental taste, is the perfection of beauty. Her waist was small, and her figure tall and supple, though, when not roused to action, she indulged to excess in the indolent languor which so peculiarly distinguishes the ladies of high caste in the East.

Rising, she advanced towards Esau, almost irritated at his silence and the bold confidence of his air.

"Speak, and speak the truth," said she, laconically.

"Noble lady," replied he, "I bring you news from the army of Don Pedro."

"If thou speakest truly, be welcome," she answered. "Say, is the king victorious? Has he repulsed that band of adventurers and brigands who think themselves an army? Has he beaten the bastard and Captain Bertrand before the walls of Burgos?"

"The king quitted Burgos without attempting to defend that city, which has since surrendered to Don Enrique," answered Esau.

"Thou deceivest me!" exclaimed the lady. "It is impossible!"

"Alas! madam," returned the Jew, "I saw the eight principal citizens of the city hand over the keys of the eight gates, at the end of their lances, to Don Enrique. They had travelled a distance of four leagues to lay them at his feet."

"And the faithful people of Burgos have followed the example of those traitors?"

"They received the surrender with loud acclamations of joy, after the archbishop, at the head of the clergy, had harassed them. All the ladies of the city appeared at the windows and balconies to witness the more glorious splendor and lustre of the new king."

"The new king," repeated Aixa. "But he is not so yet?"

"He had himself crowned King of Castile at Calahora," said Esau, calmly.

"A folly for which he will pay dearly," returned Aixa, "if this story be not a tissue of lies, if thou hast not made sport of my grief and credulity. But Don Pedro—"

"He has taken refuge in Toledo," replied Esau.

"Ah, I comprehend why," said Aixa, quickly; "the walls of Toledo cannot easily be bitten through by the teeth of these adventurers, and the citadel is well fortified. Thou sayest Don Pedro has taken refuge in Toledo. Refuge! yes, as the eagle takes refuge in its eyrie to await the fit moment for pouncing on its prey. There he will appeal to all his partisans; he will wait for the auxiliary Moors of my father, his faithful ally."

Thus speaking, she became animated, and looked like a warrior whom the sound of the trumpet calls to battle.

Esau admired this ardent, passionate, and fierce nature, and resumed—"Alas! I am compelled to deceive you, noble Aixa; the usurper has already marched on Toledo."

"And probably Don Pedro opened the gates to him with his own hands?" said she, ironically.

"Don Pedro fled from Toledo as he had fled from Burgos, because he saw himself abandoned. He lost in a battle, or rather in a skirmish on the borders of the forest of Cardona, his last partisans, and Toledo, the rich and powerful Toledo, surrendered to Don Enrique."

"That is a vile calumny!" exclaimed Aixa, her eyes on fire, and her lips trembling. "My father," she continued, "let them arrest that man, he is a traitor come to Seville for the purpose of spreading terror and alarm. According to him, Don Pedro has all at once become a coward, has been conquered by his brother without having struck a blow! Have that wretch punished by my Nubians, and he will confess that he is an emissary of Don Enrique; and that all he has uttered is nothing but cunning falsehood."

"Patience, my daughter," said Mohamed, without being moved, "it cannot be long before the truth be known; the events this man relates are certainly strange, but they are not impossible. Don Pedro would not submit to be the crowned slave of his nobility; and all the nobles hate him as their mortal enemy. The swords that ought to have defended him may have turned against him. What interest has this traitor in deceiving you with so much anger, to come and announce this sad news to us? If he had been sent by Don Enrique, he would not have asked to speak to us privately; he would publicly have proclaimed the disaster of my unfortunate ally in the streets and market places of Seville."

"Your daughter accuses me with the precipitancy natural to a woman," said Esau; "you, my lord, speak like a man whose brow has long borne the weight of a royal turban. I have not come to Seville to spread a puerile and false report. I have hastened, at the risk of my life, to warn you of the danger, and summon you to the assistance of Don Pedro."

"The Prophet yet protects us," said Aixa, quickly, "since he has permitted you, my father, the bravest warrior of our tribes, to assemble your five thousand guards, and to enter Seville with them this day."

"Five thousand guards!" exclaimed Esau, affecting a joyous surprise. "It will be the salvation of Don Pedro; it will form the nucleus of an army at the head of which he will no more run the risk of the misfortune which befel him yesterday, that of being taken prisoner by a band of English freebooters."

"The king, a prisoner, Don Pedro fallen into the hands of adventurers!" cried Aixa, with emotion. "And thou relatest this with as much apathy as if it were the capture of a common soldier by a band of robbers!"

"Thanks to Heaven, and the efforts of his foster-brothers," resumed Esau, "the king escaped with the female prisoner, for whose sake he had so foolishly risked his liberty."

"A female prisoner!" exclaimed the favorite, whose eyes flashed like lightning. "What dost thou say?"

"You know, madam, that Don Pedro is generous and gallant," answered the Jew; "well, he wished to release a victim from the fangs of the bulldog of Brittany; he succeeded, but not without difficulty and danger."

Aixa fixed a threatening look on Esau. "Who is that woman?" she demanded, in a sharp loud tone.

The renegade perceived that he had made a good hit. "That woman," he replied, "is the daughter of Samuel Ben Levi, the treasurer of Don Pedro."

"Oh, a Jewess!" said Aixa, contemptuously, while her ruffled features suddenly regained an expression of serenity.

"Yes," resumed Esau, "if I had not to-day obtained the honor of seeing the noble heiress of King Mohamed, I should, without scruple, have declared that Rachel is the handsomest of the daughters of Spain."

Aixa trembled with wounded vanity and passion.

"She is named Rachel—this beauty—"

resumed she, "and Don Pedro, did he regard

her much? Did he speak often to her? Did he remain long near her?"

"She owes not only her liberty, but her life to the king," answered Esau. "For her sake he was, during some hours, the prisoner of Captain Bertrand, to save her, he nearly perished himself in the tower of Cardona."

"Strange, strange," murmured the favorite, "a king to form the interests of his crown to save a vile creature, whose very existence is a matter of indifference to anybody. And thou sayest she is handsome? Oh, I am curious to see this extraordinary beauty."

"You will soon be gratified, madam," replied Esau, with an ironical smile; "for the king purposes to bring her with him to Seville."

"To Seville?" exclaimed Aixa, haughtily, "darest he to bring her before me into this palace? I will not suffer it. You, my father, if he forgets that I am of royal race—if he fears not to commit his outrage—you will assist me to avenge myself. We will abandon the ingrate for whom we have sacrificed our treasures, and the bravest of our warriors. While I am in the Alcazar, no other woman shall enter it, except as a slave devoted to my will and pleasure. If that Jewess be handsome, have I suddenly become ugly? Am I not also young? Is it at the moment when my father hastens at the head of five thousand cavalry to the assistance of the King of Castile, that I am to be compelled to quit the Alcazar, in order to avoid meeting an unworthy rival? Now, messenger of misfortune, tell me, dost thou think Don Pedro really loves this Jewess?"

"I am ignorant whether he does or not," replied Esau, still calm; "I have related to you all I have seen and all I know. To reach you, I have braved even fatigue and danger. I have nothing more to tell you."

"But what motive has led thee to act thus?" demanded the Moorish impetuously. "Is it cupidity that has made thee so zealous in my service? Dost thou wish to carry away gold from the Alcazar, or art thou instigated to all this by hatred and revenge?"

"You wish to know the truth, madam," said the Jew, sadly. "Why should I hide it from you—I love Rachel. This is all my secret. I love Rachel; and it seems to me that I should prefer seeing her dead at my feet, to seeing her the wife or mistress of any other man, were he even the King of Castile himself. Have you now faith in my fidelity? Who, for the sake of a paltry recompense in gold, would have exposed himself to the danger, the outrages, the insults, to which I have been obliged to submit, before I could penetrate into this hall? My life is in your hands, noble Aixa; you hold it as the guarantee for my honesty. If I have deceived you, it will be easy for you to punish me."

Esau had not lowered his eyes before the piercing gaze of the favorite, who, satisfied with this scrutiny, answered, "Thou speakest boldly, stranger, but I believe in thy sincerity, and I trust thou art not a liar. Turn, turning to Mohamed, 'the man who has rendered me this signal service must not remain in the Alcazar, subject to the recognition of this insolent Rachel and Don Pedro.'"

"My daughter," answered Mohamed, "Abul Hagig will guard him in his tent, from whence, if we want him, he can immediately be summoned."

"It is well," said Aixa. "Go, loyal servant," she added, turning to Esau, "await my father in the court of the inner garden; he will shortly rejoin you there."

Esau, bowing respectfully, retired, will satisfied at having filled the heart and mind of the favorite with suspicions and misgivings that could not fail to stifle the rising love of Don Pedro for the young Jewess.

Meanwhile, Aixa had remained alone with Mohamed, giving free scope to the expression of her jealousy and resentment. "Well, King of Granada," said she bitterly, "you have heard—what think you of the incomprehensible levity of this prince, whose humble vassal alone you are? you, a descendant of the Prophet, and I, your daughter, his favorite. A strange favorite—the puppet of his caprices rather. To-day, queen of the palace, to-morrow, perhaps degraded below the women who wait on me. Is this, then, the lot for which you destined me, my father?"

"Child," answered Mohamed, "dost thou believe I remain calm during the storm, because I keep my thoughts to myself, instead of allowing them to burst out in vain words, that I am a coward or an imbecile, void of all consolation and prudence? Be patient, and you will be powerful."

"Patient?" exclaimed the impetuous Morisca, "oh, I have been patient too long! When you acknowledged the sovereignty of the King of Castile, and commanded me to appear unveiled before this infidel prince, was I not patient? When you joyfully heard him declare himself dazzled by my beauty, you exacted that I should smile at the avowals of his love; I obeyed, though not without anguish and remorse. You anticipated that I should exercise over him the same influence as Maria de Padilla, and thus become the shield of our brethren at the coast of Seville. For this purpose I feigned to forget my faith in the prophet—I feigned to forget my family and my name, and to think only of the King of Castile."

"Well," answered Mohamed, "hast thou not seen him at thy feet, mild and submissive as a child?—that prince who is said to be so terrible."

"Yes, my father," said Aixa, "and it rejoiced my heart, notwithstanding my humiliation and disgrace, to see our conqueror, that

formidable Christian, submit his will to the caprices of a Morisca. But this empire has been brief and feeble. My dreams have vanished too quickly. Like you, I hope that Don Pedro would have been won to marry me, and that I should have been crowned the Christian Aixa, and thus we would have shared a faithful ally. But all these hopes have proved vain and empty. What I thought I had secured, I have heard no word and a suspicious when, trusting with foolish credulity to his apparent affection, to the tender epithets he lavished on me, I spoke to him of marriage, he answered me with an insulting smile. But when I hinted at abjuration, his countenance became inflamed with passion. The sutor was transformed into a master. With haughty manner and angry voice, he bade me never again broach the subject; adding, that although he forgave me this first offence, he would not tolerate another, but would send me back to Granada, where renegades might be easier found than in Seville. This, my father, is what we have gained by the sacrifice you have exacted from me."

"But thou hast done well to show thyself patient, Aixa," returned Mohamed. "Misfortune humbles and lowers the proudest heart; better and higher days dawn for the children of the Prophet, thanks to the intestine wars of the Christians. Hereafter it will not be for us to entreat Don Pedro to accept our alliance in order to save ourselves from ruin, but we shall accord it to him as a condition for the safety of his crown. We shall have the right and power to impose our own conditions, and, if he will not see the sceptre break in his hands, he will be obliged to accept them."

"Yet in this hour of distress he ventures to defy me," said Aixa. "He is going to bring this miserable Jewess into the Alcazar."

"What signifies her entering the palace, Aixa," urged Mohamed, "if she be obliged to quit it immediately in shame and disgrace? As a condition of our alliance with Don Pedro, I will exact his secret abjuration, and he will obey. I will insist that he deliver to my guards four cities of Arralusia, and he will deliver them. As to the Jewess, Rachel, he will send her again to the house of her father. Oh, the time has arrived for the children of the Prophet to reconquer what they have lost!"

"Yet," interrupted the favorite with a doubtful and incredulous air, "if the king should not consent, like Count Julien, to sacrifice his religion and his country to revenge—"

"If he carries his pride and obstinacy so far as to refuse my alliance at the price I set upon it," answered the King of Granada, "I will treat with his rival, and the ambitious Don Enrique will joyfully receive my advances."

"We understand each other, my father," said Aixa, "and I can now await the arrival of the King of Castile with a calmer countenance and a less troubled heart."

Mohamed embraced the haughty favorite, and retired to repose beneath the brilliant-colored tent that his guards had prepared for him, in the middle of the camp, near the Jaen gate.

CHAPTER IX.—The Morisca and the Jewess.

The following morning, Mohamed at the head of two thousand cavalry, advanced to meet the king; and in fact, as Esau indicated, met him, accompanied by the beautiful Jewess, and escorted by his foster-brothers alone, some leagues from the city.

These devoted young men, though they could not prevent the cries of "Long live Don Enrique!" resounding in the ears of Don Pedro during the journey, yet took care that no outrage should be offered to the unfortunate sovereign; none attempted to arrest him, and make a merit of his capture to the conqueror.

As to the king himself, he did not exhibit any humiliated feeling, nor abate in the least the dignity of his mien and bearing. Strong in his sense of right, he was as calm and as proud as in the days of his prosperity. He seemed to forget the loss of his fairest provinces; in order to gaze on Rachel, hidden though she was beneath a large brown woollen cape, and on whom the foster-brothers darted every now and then dark and angry looks.

When Don Pedro saw the King of Granada and his brilliant squadrons advancing, he did not exhibit any particular emotion, but waited till his puissant vassal and ally had dismounted and rendered him homage, then casting a glance of satisfaction and confidence on the Muslem guards, he said, "To Seville to-day, brave Moor; but if it please Heaven, we will soon leave it again to give battle to the bastard usurper."

The King of Castile, surrounded by his Arabian auxiliaries, had re-entered his good city of Seville, without appearing to observe the furtive glances, and the low murmurs and imprecations of his Christian subjects.

The King of Granada, on his side, did not venture to make the least observation on the subject of the young girl, to whom Don Pedro performed the office of esquire as scrupulously as he would have done to a queen.

When they had dismounted in the outer court, the king observed to Mohamed, with an air of surprise, that Aixa had not yet appeared before him.

"She awaits you in the belvedere, sire," answered the Moor; "for she desires to meet you alone."

At these words, which were pronounced with a significant coldness, the daughter of Samuel stopped suddenly, confused and trembling; but Don Pedro took her hand, and drew her forward with gentle violence.