

THE COLONEL'S STORY.

II.

"The pirate captain did not carry out his threat. He, as well as his crew, soon learned to look upon Villafana with superstitious awe. They treated him kindly but they kept him a prisoner. Where could they have found another physician like this strange, gentle, and fearless man? During two long years Villafana was compelled to live in the company of these outlaws; but all this time his influence over them was growing stronger every day and gradually detaching them from a life of crime. They had ceased murdering their captives; they gave up pillaging at last, and the captain, assembling his crew one day, announced to them that their association was at an end; he had resolved upon trying to lead henceforth the life of an honest man, and he urged them to do likewise. They landed on the coast of Mexico, and parted company. Villafana was free. He proceeded to the city of Mexico, where he commenced practising medicine. He soon became famous for his wonderful cures, and the eccentricity of his manner, which had become abrupt and wild. He would stop a man on the street and tell him: "You are sick, you have such a disease, swallow this and you will be cured." If the patient, frightened by the earnestness of his manner took the medicine, he was saved; if, repulsing him as a quack and a madman, he refused, he died.

Adventures of this sort led people to think the "mad doctor" as he was called by many, an adept in witchcraft; others believed that immaculate sanctity alone could perform such wonders. He was sent for by wealthy patients, who rewarded him liberally, but he sought the poor and unfortunate, and the gold taken from the palace was not long in finding its way to the hovel. Abstemious in his habits, always poorly clad, living in a garret, the benevolent doctor seemed to have constituted himself the disbursing agent of the rich for the benefit of the poor.

The good man, however, came near falling a victim to the superstition of the times. Returning home one afternoon after a toilsome day's work in the wretched jacales of the suburbs, he met a funeral procession on its way to the cemetery. In the old Spanish colonies it is customary to carry the coffin uncovered; the lid is put on only when the corpse is ready to be lowered to its last resting place. The body is usually decked in all the finery of this world; that of a child is crowned with flowers. I have seen one to which little gauze wings had been adapted; the cheeks were rouged, and the glassy eyes held open by artificial means. A numerous escort of children dressed in white walked on each side, strewing the road with cut flowers which they carried in small baskets. The people say that when an innocent child dies it is an angel returning to heaven, and there is therefore more cause for joy than grief. In this instance the corpse was that of a lovely girl upon whose radiant countenance the hand of death had but lightly pressed its mysterious seal. Villafana had stopped, and he awaited, hat in hand, the passage of the procession. As the coffin came abreast of him he gazed sadly at the youthful form so soon doomed to be turned to dust. All at once he started wildly, a cry of horror burst from his lips, and springing into the middle of the street, he confronted the astonished bearers. "Stop!" he cried—"on your lives stop! That child is not dead! Do you wish to bury her alive?"

The dishevelled hair and disordered dress of the doctor, his thin features bronzed by long exposure to the tropical sun, his dark eyes shining with a wild and mysterious light—everything about him gave him the appearance of a madman. The people attempted to drive him back, but he resisted, repeating aloud: "She is alive, I tell you! Would you commit a crime?"

Much confusion ensued, and Villafana would have suffered violence at the hands of the crowd had not the dead girl's father interposed. Overwhelmed with grief, he was following the dead body of his beloved child when his attention was roused by the tumult, and he heard the last words of the doctor. Rushing forward and forcing his way through the excited crowd, he caught Villafana by the arm. "Man!" cried the bereaved parent, "Man, what is it you have said? My Pepita alive? Answer! Do not trifle with a father's heart; do not awake insane hopes only to make my despair more bitter. Speak! On your life, is she alive?"

"Senor," replied Villafana, who had recovered his composure, "upon my last hopes of salvation I swear to you that

your daughter is at this moment alive. Take her back to your house, and, God permitting, I will restore her to your love."

"Come, then," said the old man, "bring her back to life and all my wealth shall be yours. But," he added, or rather hissed, "deceive me and I will tear out your heart."

Villafana shrugged his shoulders, and taking the poor old father's arm, walked back to the house where a weeping mother mourned the loss of her last born. The young girl was laid upon a bed and all the paraphernalia of death was removed by order of the doctor, who having despatched a messenger to the nearest pharmacy for certain drugs, carefully prepared a mixture. He forced a spoon between the clenched teeth of the girl, and poured in, drop by drop, a spoonful of the liquid. He then took his seat by the bedside, and having consulted his watch, addressed at last the unhappy father, who, silent and trembling with anxiety, had followed eagerly his every movement.

"Senor," said he, "in fifteen minutes I shall give her another dose, in another fifteen minutes with the grace of God she will revive." And taking a breviary, which he always carried with him, he commenced reading. A tomb-like silence reigned in the room. The eyes of the members of the family who had been permitted to remain, were fixed on the beautiful young face, which, cold and rigid as marble, looked still paler under the raven curls that crowned it. The nonotous ticking of a clock in an adjoining room was the only sound heard, keeping time with the throbs of the old Mexican's heart. The grief-stricken man was leaning against the wall at the foot of the bed. He too would have seemed dead but for the tremulous working of his lips. He was praying. But what is it that makes his eyes dilate and flash with mingled fear and hope? It is a mere fancy, an optical delusion, or has a fugitive flush colored the marble-like cheeks of his child? The doctor lays aside his book. Another spoonful of the life giving cordial is forced between the pale lips. Not a word is spoken. How slow the ticking of the clock! Surely another quarter is passed. Listen! That deep-drawn sigh came from the bed! Villafana's forbidding gesture checks the father, ready to rush forward. The old man falls on his knees, big tears course down his furrowed cheeks, his chest heaves convulsively, but not a sound is heard. Again! Again! The regular soft breathing is now audible to all. The beautiful head moves slightly, and the cheek, now tinged with life's blood rests on the pillow.

"Mama! Querida Mama!" The first word of the child awaking from her dream of death has been the name of the dear mother, who, still plunged alone in the darkened chamber, was not aware that her heart's treasure was restored to her.

The old father embraced Villafana's knee and offered him a fortune; every one blessed the strange doctor as the savior of Pepita.

"Give what you please to the poor," he said meekly, "I have been but the humble instrument of a merciful God; they are his children."

(To be continued.)

MR. HEALY, M. P., ON THE PAPAL RESCRIPT.

SOME INTERESTING HISTORY.

From the *Nation's* report we make the following extracts from the important speech lately delivered in Dublin by Mr. T. M. Healy, M. P., on the Roman Circular.—I presume, meeting as we do to-day for the first time after the recent declaration by the Irish Catholic members of Parliament in the Mansion House, in respect of the recent circular from Rome, that it would be supposed that some remarks on the subject should be made here to-day. I confess I myself approach the subject with some reluctance—first, because I imagine that to a large extent the effect of the declaration from the Holy Office has considerably worn off; secondly, because of the inherent difficulties in dealing with any matter of the kind by way of public address, to a mixed assembly. However, what strikes me in the first instance in relation to the matter is this—and it must be one which I think should give our friends in Rome cause—that the Pope would never have been appealed to by the British Government if the people in Ireland, in the first instance, had not made themselves formidable to the British Government (applause), so that the Papal