

he addressed them; but though he sought all others, the homage of his heart was rendered alone to Isadore, and he still contrived to keep up a secret correspondence with her. Months thus rolled on, full of painful suspense to the young lovers, and the time was fast drawing near for Ponce de Leon to claim his bride. The preparations were already commenced for the magnificent bridal, and the whole court rung with the balls, the jousts, the fêtes, which were to be got up in honour of the joyful occasion, and all seemed delighted to pour into the ears of the unhappy lover all that could be gathered of the coming festivities. He was even asked to write an epithalamium, to be sung by the young men and maidens of the court, on the nuptial eve. Maddened, as the time drew near for her marriage, by the fear of losing her, Camoëns determined to risk the king's anger, and seek an interview with Isadore. He had read her anxiety and continued affection for him, in her pale cheek, and the evident distaste with which she heard any allusion to the arrival of her betrothed. He therefore wrote and implored her to see him. The night on which he wrote was to be one of the grand entertainments when all who claimed the rank of nobility were admitted to the palace, and he thought in the throng they could escape observation; and if he could see her only for a few moments, he trusted to make some arrangement with her.

Camoëns received no answer to his urgent request, and, distracted by the fear that his note had fallen into wrong hands, he waited with feverish impatience for the opening of the evening festivities. The time came at last; the ample halls of the palace were filled with guests; bright eyes sparkled, and small feet sprang elastic, to the sound of the merry castanet, and the light guitar. The hours were winged to all but Camoëns, who saw them passing away without any opportunity being offered him of speaking to Isadore. He almost began to despair, for he had not the courage to seek her openly, when a general movement in the company, caused by the entrance of a troop of bolero dancers, brought him for a moment to her side.

"Isadore," he said, "will you not grant my prayer?"

"Hush," she murmured, "we are observed; but watch your time, and when I drop this orange blossom, follow me."

She turned from him, and he soon saw her conversing with the queen. Leaning against a pillar, Camoëns watched her every movement; and, at last, when the king led his fair queen to the upper part of the hall, where, from an elevated position, they could view the dancers grace-

fully wreathing themselves with flowery garlands, and twining in all the mazes of the coquetish Lusitanian dances, he saw Isadore, with one quick glance at him, break from her bouquet a sprig of the fragrant orange; then, quickly turning round, she glided out of the door which led through an arched colonnade to the Queen's garden. Waiting a few moments, which seemed ages to his impatient spirit, that his immediate following might not excite suspicion, Camoëns passed out into the corridor, which was quite deserted; catching up a cloak which lay upon one of the low seats, he hastily threw it over his shoulders, that he might be a little disguised.

The moon shone down on a scene of quiet loveliness, forming a strong contrast to the garrish, glittering, noisy one he had just quitted. The fragrant orange-groves, their yellow fruit gleaming in its beams; the water sparkling up from the fountain which threw its jets high in air, and caught them in a carved basin, to be sent up again in shining diamonds; but neither the beauty of the scene, which at another time must have rivetted the poet's fancy, the rich perfume of the laden air, nor the harmony of the birds, for one moment occupied the thoughts of the young lover. He paused only to catch the faint rustle, which any ear but his would have taken for the waving of the leaves, but which he knew to be the heavy folds of the cumbersome court dress of Isadore. A gleam, too, of the white satin caught his eye, contrasting with the dark foliage, and on he sped, hardly daring to breathe. He gained upon the flying figure, but still she paused not, except to cast a hurried glance behind her; and then to press on with more energy. Perplexed by this strange manœuvre, and fearing he was deceived, he ventured to speak:

"Isadore, Isadore, is it you? Stop, I entreat; we are losing precious time."

At the sound of his voice she paused.

"Ah, Luis, is it indeed you? Your cloak deceived me; I feared my absence had been perceived, and my considerate royal cousin had sent some one to see that no harm came to me; but I thank the Holy Virgin I was mistaken."

"And now Isadore, we will sit down in the shade of this cork tree, and I will tell you why I have sought this dangerous interview."

"Dangerous indeed; I tremble for your safety, dearest Luis; for myself I fear naught; the royal blood flows in my veins, and Emmanuel dare not harm me. But you! oh, he would slay you, did he find you here."

"I have come to ask, Isadore, if you will not end this fearful suspense, by at once becoming mine?—place it beyond the power of your kinsman to separate us. It is presumptuous in me, I