

The first victims of the movement I have described were those in the front fighting Hualpa. No time for preparation : with shields on their arms, if footmen, on their horses, if riders,—a struggle on the verge, a cry for pity, a despairing shriek, and into the yawning chasm they were plunged ; nor had the water time to close above their heads before as many others were dashed in upon them.

Cortez, on the further side, could only hear what took place in the canal, for the darkness hid it from view ; yet he knew that at his feet was a struggle for life impossible to be imagined except as something that might happen in the heart of the vortex left by a ship foundering at sea. The screams, groans, prayers, and execrations of men ; the neighing, snorting, and plunging of horses ; the bubbling, hissing, and plashing of water ; the writhing and fighting,—a wretch a moment risen, in a moment gone, his death-cry half uttered ; the rolling of the mass, or rather its impulsion onward, which, horrible to think, might be the fast filling up of the passage ; now and then a piteous appeal for help under the wall, reached at last (and by what mighty exertion !) only to mock the hopes of the swimmers,—all this Cortez heard, and more. No need of light to make the scene visible ; no need to see the dying and the drowning, or the last look of eyes fixed upon him as they went down, a look as likely to be a curse as a prayer ! If never before or never again, his courage failed him then ; and turning his horse he fled the place, shouting as he went,—

*" Todo es perdido ! all is lost ! Save yourselves, save yourselves ! "*

And in his absence the horror continued,—continued until the canal from side to side was filled with the bodies of men and horses, blent with arms and ensigns, baggage, and guns, and gun-carriages, and munitions in boxes and carts,—the rich plunder of the empire, royal fifth as well as humbler dividend,—and all the paraphernalia of armies, infidel and Christian ; filled, until most of those who escaped clambered over the warm and writhing heap of what had so lately been friends and comrades. And the gods of the heathen were not forgotten by their children ; for sufferers there were who, snatching at hands offered in help, were dragged into canoes and never heard of more. Tears and prayers and the saving grace of the Holy Mother and Son for them ! Better death in the canal, however dreadful, than death in the temples,—for the soul's rest, better !

Slowly along the causeway, meantime, Alvarado toiled with the rear-guard. Very early he had given up Leon and Mesa, and all with them, as lost. And to say truth, little time had he to think of them ; for now, indeed, he found the duties of lover and soldier difficult as they had been pleasant. Gay of spirit, boastful but not less generous and brave, skilful and reckless, he was of the kind to attract and dazzle the adventurers with whom he had cast his lot ; and now they were ready to do his bidding, and equally ready to share his fate, life or death. Of them he constituted a body-guard