

ver? No! no! Avoid this spot, I beseech you, Carmieu! Quick! ere it be too late; for I already feel dark shades passing over mine eyes."

"You suffer, then!" exclaimed Carmen.

And, mounting the waggon with an effort, she placed her trembling hand on the bound wrists of the prisoner. As she did so, she felt a burning tear fall upon it, and with much emotion she continued:

"Joachim! the courage of a woman may quail before the gleam of steel, or the flash of fire-arms; she cannot prevent her blood freezing, her face growing pallid, her eyes closing in terror. But sometimes, where the courage of the most resolute man recoils, her soul is firm and undaunted. Joachim! my pride has wronged you much; but I now expiate my fault; we shall live or die together!"

"Alas!" said the young adventurer, mournfully; "why will you perish by me? I would else have died so happily in the sweet knowledge of your love."

The young Spaniard smiled.

"Ah! that angelic smile will soon vanish in mortal pain and anguish," added Joachim, despairingly. "Oh! my hands are heavy as lead, and cold—cold as death."

Donna Carmen set herself eagerly to untie and break with her delicate fingers, the cords whose tight pressure had so swollen the hands of the adventurer. Then, kneeling before him, she undid those which were tied round his feet.

"Now that you are free, Joachim!" she said, proudly, yet affectionately, as she rose to her feet, "embrace your wife! for, before Heaven I swear that I will never have other spouse than thee!"

The young man looked to her with an air of doubt and hesitation, not daring to believe the transporting declaration; but ere the deep blush that crimsoned her cheeks had died away, it was recalled by the passionate ecstasy with which he clasped her to his heart.

"I am too happy now to die!" he exclaimed, as their souls mingled in that first embrace.

"If happiness has restored you sufficient strength," she replied, "we shall soon be far from this fatal spot. Gongora, our old boatman, has become, since he escaped at the pillage of Rancharin, one of the principal fishermen at San Fernando. He is thoroughly devoted to me, and his barque will transport us in a few hours to the Hatto where first you learned to love me, Joachim!"

An hour afterwards, they were on the sea, and the adventurer had recovered sufficiently to aid Gongora in manning the barque. A favouring breeze brought them, ere next morn, to Rancharia; and there, where their misfortunes had com-

menced, were they also destined to come to an end.

## LVI.

### THE CLOSE.

Six months had elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter, when, one afternoon towards sunset, Donna Carmen, attended by a few negroes, awaited the return of Joachim from the chase, in the open glade where they had first seen the Leopard. In the centre of this clearing, on the spot then occupied by the *boucan* of the adventurer, two tombs had been raised, which contained the mortal remains of Melchior Requien and of Margaret the Seigneuresse.

Carmen listened anxiously to the varying sounds that rose from the forest, and at times sent some of her attendants to watch the coming of her husband. At length the merry sound of a hunting horn was borne to her ears on the breeze, and a bright smile lighted up her features. The sound approached, but she had time to assume a calmer demeanour ere Joachim de Cossé, clad in a rich hunting-dress, entered the clearing, followed by half-a-dozen huntsmen, and a pack of dogs.

"Thou here, Carmen, at this hour!" he cried, with surprise.

"I was uneasy at thy long stay," she replied, with a look of affection; "and I came to await thee here, knowing that every day thou passest a few minutes in this glade."

"Art thou jealous of the dead, dear girl?" he asked, with a melancholy smile. "I am indeed later than usual," he continued, more cheerfully. "I thought I heard in the forest the shout of the buccaneers, and an involuntary curiosity drew me in search of them."

"Ah! thou hast not forgotten thy life of wild adventure," rejoined Carmen. "Thou wouldst see again thine old friends of Porto de la Paen."

Before Joachim could reply, a mournful cry was heard close at hand; and as all stood listening in surprise, a wain and meagre figure, in the dress of a buccaneer's attendant, rushed into the clearing and threw himself breathless at their feet.

"Help! help!" he gasped; "have pity on me, good strangers! I am a Spaniard—save me from the pirates!"

Joachim and Carmen regarded him at first with looks of compassion, but suddenly both started back with an appearance of aversion.

"Fray Eusebio Carral!" exclaimed Joachim.

At this name the wretched man lifted his eyes, and an expression of surprise and of hatred passed over his features, as in his turn he recog-