Card Drawing

By GERALD GRIFFIN

"Is this my welcome home?"—Southerne.

The first gray light of the winter daybreak was streaming through the single pane of glass which was set in the mud wall of his apartment, when the voice of an acquaintance roused him from his short sleep. For a few moments after he woke, he felt as if nothing had taken place out of the usual course of events, and proceeded to make the necessary preparations for the seal-hunt.

"We've everything ready," said the man, "the canoes are at the Poul a Dhiol, (The Demon's Hole, near Loup Head) an' we're goen to have some fun besides with Lewy Madigan, the publican o' the Bee-hive, that's comen wit us—an'—whisht! Is there any body there wit you?"

"No."

"Bekays I met Dorgan now an' a strong party, goen to Ennis, where the assizes are held this week. They say he won't call any witness, an' wants to be tried as soon as they can."

Pryce dropped the net which he had taken up, and remained silent for a moment. The consciousness of his situation came rushing at once upon his mind, and he remembered with terror the vow of disclosure which he had made in the night. He now stood, however, in very different circumstances; the cheerful daylight was about him, he felt secure in the possession of excellent health and he half resolved in his own mind to postpone the fulfilment of his promise for some time yet.

Before he left the house, he took a small iron pot filled with potatoes, washed and ready for boiling, which he proceeded to hang on the fire. "Yes—that't what I'll do," he said within himself—"what fear is there o' me now? Sure it's time enough to think about it yet."

A singular accident made him alter this opinion. At the moment that he spoke, a large stone, unfixed by the hand of Time from its position in the roof of the wide chimney, fell within an inch of his forehead, and dashed the vessel to pieces between his hands. If it had only held its place one second longer, his brains would have infallibly suffered the same fate. He started aghast with the conviction of a present and powerful Providence. What security had he now?—what was the use of the ingenious scheme which he had contrived to preserve his life and escape all suspicion, when it was no more within his own power than if he were already at the tree?

As they proceeded together toward that part of the cliff at which their canoes (a light boat, as ancient as the days of Ollam Fodhla, constructed of horse skin, which is used by the fishermen on those coasts) were moored, Kinchela ventured to hint a sensation of his remorse to the rough fellow who accompanied him. The latter happened to be one of those cold ruffians, whose crimes are the offspring of interest and not of passion, and who was alike incapbale of wanton cruelty or of merciful forbearance. The suggestion filled him with rage.

"That I may be happy, Kinchela," said he, "but you're just what I always took you for. You wor the cruellest savage among us at the time—an' now I'll lay my life you'll be the fusht to split."

"Well, howl your tongue, Fed, an' we'll say nothen more about it. Only I wisht I could avoid the double murder, any way."

"What, murther is it, man? E' what nonsins you talk! Sure you know yourself, if Dorgan was there he'd do the very same—an' 'twas only to get the start of him you did."

Kinchela did not pursue the subject farther, although the reasoning of his companion did not fully satisfy his mind that Dorgan deserved hanging for being liable to temptation. They had at this moment reached the brink of a long line of rocky cliffs of considerable height, the bases of which were in many places hollowed out to a considerable distance inland. They continued their course over a turf mountain on which the signal tower was placed in a most commanding situation. Its surface was covered with a short scanty moss that afforded pasturage to a number of sheep; while, at another season, it might have furnished the whole country with mushrooms. The broken jags and edges of the great cliffs at the head soon began to make themselves visible. The first on which they arrived presented a broken descent some hundred feet high, at the base of which lay a sloping ledge of rock, against whose jutting and uneven sides the bright green waves of the Atlantic lashed themselves (on more boisterous mornings than the present), as if chafing at the stern and fixed rebuke which this gigantic natural boundary opposes to their fury; sometimes rushing fiercely up its sides, and leaving their white and foaming waters in the narrow crevices of crag, from which they are seen descending again in a thousand milky streams. They tried to descend here, but found it dangerous; that part of the recess which, seen from a little distance, appeared to be sufficiently broken and slanting, proving, when they came near it, much more closely allied to the perpendicular. A little farther toward the Head, however, they chanced upon the Poul a Dhiol, or Devil's Hole.

It was a recess of gigantic size, formed in the solid cliff by the beating of the waves, if not originally so moulded, or left as a relic of chaotic matter, unsubdued to the form and uses to which the great mass of the material, of which this beautiful globe of earth and water is compounded, has been reduced. This recess ran at first into the land, and then some hundred yards to the left, as it was viewed from the water.

Perceiving an easy mode of descent, Kinchela and his friends made good their entry into the infernal palace, and were stopped about half way down by an enormous rock, which lay across the glen, and seemed to allow no hope of proceeding farther. Acquainted, however, with the facilities of the descent, they entered a small aperture left underneath. The spectacle which the Poul a Dhiol presented when viewed from beneath this arch-way was grand and striking, as well as singular in the highest degree. Through the opening, as they looked upward, they could see the cliff heads piled together to the height of some hundred feet, leaving between the uneven masses of rock the wild and craggy space through which they had descended. Below them, at a depth of many fathoms, the ocean waves heaved sluggishly against the huge rocks, which were almost polished and rounded by the untiring dash of the waters. Passing from beneath the rock, the fishermen suffered themselves to drop with little difficulty to the next ledge, and running from one enormous crag to another down to the water's edge, began to make the necessaay preparations for their morning's sport, without stopping to indulge in any of the sensations of deep and trembling awe, with which the magnificence and grandeur of the scene, into the centre of which they had intruded, must have impressed the mind of a stranger. They stood in the midst of a vast natural hall, a few yards in width, and walled in on either side to the height of many hundred feet; the solid cliff on the landward side appearing directly to overhang their heads. Opposite, in a dark recess of the cliff, and placed on a ledge of rock at some height from the water, was a large crag, approaching in form to a lobster's claw, based on the obtuse end, which, from the singularity of its appearance, contributed much to the *bizzare* and fantastic grandeur of the scene. Looking toward the opening of the recess, they beheld the projections of three stupendous and overhanging cliffs, within the compass of a quarter of a mile; the farthest off being the land's end or actual Head on which the light-house was still flinging its fading beams against the morning splendour. Close to the opening was a lofty island, perpendicular at all sides, and circular in shape, of dimensions so circumscribed that it seemed to rise from the waters at the entrance like the remaining column of a porch. Its heathy and tabular summit was covered with sea-gulls, which kept wheeling and screaming perpetually among the crags and precipices. Close to the Head was a large insular crag, which rose even higher than the lofty cliff, from which it seemed at one time or another to have been separated, and formed a noble termination to this magnificent *coup d'œil*. The prevailing impression which the scene, contemplated from the place where the fishermen stood, was calculated to leave on an unaccustomed mind, was that of fear, and an anxious and almost tumultuous excitation of the spirits. There was an oppressive sense of confinement and insecurity, which repressed the struggling admiration that a spectacle of even interior power or sublimity might have awakened.

Several canoes were already made fast near the rocks, and a number of fishermen were seen in various clefts of the sullen crag, preparing their poles or wattles with bags of charcoal affixed to them, touching the use of which they furnish a rather whimsical account of the animal's nature. They say that the seal is very certain to lay hold of the person who first approaches him, and to retain his hold, until he hears the bone crack under his teeth. In order to deceive him in this matter, the fishermen extend a long pole with a bag of charcoal attached, which bag he crunches with a remarkably good will, while his enemies muster around and destroy him with staves. For the truth of this story we will not vouch, as it certainly is not very complimentary to the sagacity of the animal.

The groups of moving figures in the crags—the tossing of the light canoes beneath—the dreary waste of the now peaceful ocean spreading in the distance—and the uncertain morning light which at once shadowed and illumined the whole picture in the manner best adapted to aid the grandeur of effect which it was calculated to produce, might possibly have arrested, for a considerable time, the attention of persons more capable of appreciating its sublimity than Kinchela and his friend, who were too familiar with its beauties, and too deficient in refinement of taste to pause for a moment in their contemplation.

After they had descended, they were met by a man who appeared to have been expecting their arrival.

"I declare, gentlemen," said he, accosting them in the manner of a condescending superior—"I have been prefixed upon this rock the livelong morn, expecting your descension. That's a commendable canoe you have, Fed."

"Oyeh, wisha, middlen."

"Dear knows, it is. They say the sales are congregated in a very spontaneous manner under the cliffs, at Ballybannion this mornen."

"O enough, for sport, I'll be bound, Mr. Madigan," said Fed, who recognised at first sight, in the speaker, the accomplished inn-keeper of the Bee-hive, a man revered in the neighbourhood for his knowledge of English, and laughed at now and then for his cowardice. "You'll go with us, I suppose, sir?"

"I profess to you, my dear, I am onaisy in myself on the prospect of it. I should not admire much to be substituted under one o' them caverns, when the tide would be on the alert with me."

"O, no fear in life, sir. The wathur is like glass to-day. Come along, Kinchela. We'll just take one turn at the sales, an' then we'll go westwards a piece, an' get a feow bags o' the barnocks."

They put off, and the whole party were presently gliding under the cliffs at the Head, on their way to the caverns, each canoe being furnished with a lighted torch, to enable them, with greater facility, to explore the mazes of the gloomy subterrene, into which they were about to penetrate. As the first boats entered, it seemed to those who were following at some distance, and not yet near enough to distinguish the mouth of the cavern, as if their companions had discovered, and were prosecuting the way to the regions of those subaqueous sprites, who are supposed by the peasantry to people the vast palaces of the deep, and wear out their immortality in a fairy land more gorgeous than that to which the muse of Southey introduced the protector of his heroine. In a short time our acquaintances found themselves in the centre of one of those lofty natural halls; the roof, irregularly arched above, sometimes at the height of three, sometimes twenty feet, and glittering indistinctly in the light of the numerous torches which were also reflected from the face of the broken waters, with a splendour which presented a brilliant contrast to the dense gloom of the interior of the cavern, and which, of course, would have reminded the reader of Rembrandt.

"It is a speculation of uncommon perplexity," said Mr. Madigan, "those exuberant rocks overhead; I protest to you, I think they appear on the verge of suspense, as if they'd exterminate us all into a watery grave."

The canoes proceeded farther up the cave, until the dashing of waters, within a few yards of them, intimated their proximity to the ledges of rock on which the objects of their search were accustomed to secrete themselves at particular seasons, and where they frequently suffer their pursuers to approach them, without making any attempt at escape or resistance until violence had been actually offered. While they pursued their game in the interior, Madigan petitioned to be left on one of the outer ledges, unwilling to trust his English into the perils of the hunt; while Kinchela and his companion, perceiving that they might be spared from the party, left the cavern for the purpose of gathering barnocks (a shell fish which is here found of a prodigious size,) from the sides of a neighbouring cliff.

The cliff which they selected for this purpose was the Bellaun Rock; which presents, from the plainness and smoothness of its perpendicular side, a striking contrast to the rough and broken barrier, which opposes its irregular strength to the ocean on either side. It is one of the loftiest in the range, and as it affords no path or means of descent in any part, the fishermen are obliged to lower themselves by ropes to its centre, or to any portion of it on which the harvest of barnocks happens to be most plentiful. Kinchela and his friends made profit of the retiring tide, however, from their canoes, and then proceeded by land to Claunsevane, or the Natural Bridge, a piece of scenery with which we will conclude our rather copious sketch of the coast, and the omission of which would leave that sketch very incomplete.

They passed along a precipitous range of cliffs until they were made aware of the proximity of the place by the thundering of the waters on their left, although the day was calm rather than otherwise. They passed the Puffing Hole of Ross (one of those natural *jets d'eau*, which abound on the coast, and which are formed by a narrow opening, inland, over one of the caverns, into which the ocean waves rush with such fury as to force their way through the neck, and ascend to a prodigious height in the air above). In a short time they found themselves on the borders of the precipitous inlet of Claunsevane. It was a small bay with a narrow opening toward the Atlantic, and walled round at all sides by a rugged crag which rose to a prodigious height. Across an arm of this inlet was a narrow range of crag, connecting the cliffs at either side, having the bay on one side, and on the other a deep basin, into which the waters flowed through three natural arches formed in the solid crag. A very narrow pathway was made on the summit of this singular natural bridge, several hundred feet above the arches, the fall at either side, but especially that toward the ocean, being almost quite perpendicular. In the base of the cliff inside the basin were a number of small caves; and in another corner of the inlet a tall column of rock, not more than a yard, perhaps, in diameter, rose from the waves nearly to the height of the cliff, at a little distance from which it stood. This pillar, which is called the Stick, gives an air of uncommon wildness to the scene.

Kinchela having, with the assistance of his friend, succeeded in securing near the edge of the cliff a kind of rude windlass, for the purpose of enabling them to increase their store of barnocks, made fast their rope in the earth, and prepared to descend.

This was a feat which he had been accustomed to perform, almost daily, from his boyhood, and he never had, for one moment, felt a greater degree of repugnance or apprehension than he would have experienced in walking on the firm soil. But he was now an altered man, and he felt, as he put his foot in the loop which was made in the end of the rope, and grasping it with both hands, launched himself from the brow of the "pernicious height," a sensation of insecurity, and a sinking of the heart, such as he never before had felt in any situation whatever. He even wished that he had taken the precaution (though it would have had but a cowardly air) to secure himself to the rope by tying it to his waist; but it was now too late for reflection, and he had only to trust his customary chances for a safe return to the firm earth.

While he was occupied in filling his net with the barnocks which he struck from the rock, he suddenly heard a crackling noise above his head, and looking up, saw that one of the divisions or strands of the rope had given way, leaving the whole weight of his person on the faith of a single cord, not more than half an inch in diameter. He was now suspended in mid-air, more than a hundred feet from the summit, and saw, at a fearful distance beneath, the points of the rugged crag, around which the waters were now slumbering in almost a moveless calm. He feared to stir—to speak—to give any indication of his danger, lest it should only have the effect of making the latter more imminent. His limbs trembled, and became bathed in perspiration, while he cast his eyes on that part of the rope where there the fissure had taken place. He could almost, and only almost, reach it with his hand. Again all the horrors of the preceding night and morning were renewed, and a stupifying terror seized upon his brain. He ventured, at length, to give the signal, at which his companion was to draw him to the summit. While he was doing so, and while he yet hung suspended between the dreadful alternative of life or death, some of the canoes passed under him on their way from the caverns to their homes, and the fishermen, in their own aboriginal language, began to hoot and jibe him as they passed, making various allusions to his position in the air, and drawing analogies concerning the rope, the humor of which poor Kinchela was in no condition to appreciate. A cold shivering passed through his limbs, when he saw the feeble portion of it approach the rugged edge of the cliff; and here, as if for the purpose of increasing his agony, Fed stopped turning the windlass, and approached the brink with marks of alarm and astonishment.

"E', Pryce, man," said he, "do you see the danger you're in all this while? Sure there's the rope med a'most two halves of, above you. Sure if that broke you'd be ruined, man."

"Wisha, then, Fed, what news you tell! Is that the reason you stop haulen of it, in dread I'd have any chance at all. Murther alive, see this."

"I'll pull you up if you like, man, but what harm was there in me tellen you your danger?"

"All o' one 'tisn't too well I knew it. Pull away, an' *sonuher* to you."

Fed resumed his post at the windlass, and in a few moments after, Kinchela grasped the edge of the cliff; he succeeded in scrambling up, after which, without speaking a word to his companion, he flung down the net of barnocks, and fled, as if he were hunted by the fiends, in the direction of his mother's house; while his companion, after gazing after him and at the barnocks for a few moments, packed up their implements, and took to his heels, under the full conviction that the *phuca* was coming up the cliff to them.

"The Almighty is impatient, I believe," said Pryce, when he had reached his own door; "He will wait no longer. There is no use in my hoping to escape—I must do it at last; an' I oughtn't to be dragged and frightened into it this way, so that there'll be no thanks to me in the end."

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE BELL OF SANTA CLARA.

A STORY OF BUENOS AYRES, (1807.)

I.

For three days after the unconditional surrender of the English forces, the city of Buenos Ayres was given over to rejoicing. Te Deums and Masses of thanksgiving in all its churches and chapels were followed by popular feasts in the streets and plazas.

Spaniards and Criollo united in patriotic demonstrations. At every street corner boys were sending up rockets, beating drums, playing soldiers, shrieking snatches of patriotic songs, in fact, making as great a racket as if it were Easter Saturday, after the Misa de Gloria, and they were burning Judas.

The colored element celebrated in a more homely fashion the victory to which many of its race contributed, by much feasting and dancing to honor the happy "Sorteados," (after the victory sixty slaves, who formed part of the patrielos' forces, were drawn by lot, received their liberty and the thanks of the people) the sixty "Morenos" (negroes) who were adorned with the double aureole of freemen and heroes.

On the evening of the third day there was a lull—human nature clamored for repose, and as the last straggiers were leaving the Plaza—no longer the Plaza Mayor—but now, and forever hereafter to be called "Plaza de la Victoria," darkness and silence settled over the "heroic city."

Shortly after the Ave Maria, the doors of a fine mansion near the Cathedral were thrown open, and a broad bar of light fell across the narrow illpaved street, littered with orange and banana peels. The windows were protected by handsome iron gratings, the arched entrance opened into a marble-paved hall; negro servants in dark red livery were passing in and out the square courtyard beyond, where large tubs of amelias in full bloom were placed at intervals between the low heavy arches of the open corridor.

The Casa de Escalada was one of the notable edifices in the city, and the most charming interior in the Vice royalty of La Plata. A princely fortune, cultivated taste, experience of life in many lands, contributed to its material attractions, which were enhanced by the frank and gracious hospitality of its inmates.

Don Jose Escaladay Segurolas was a typical grand Seigneur, and his wife, Dona Catalina Lavalla y Oromi, a most beautiful woman beloved alike by rich and poor. One son, Geronimo, who bid fair to follow in his father's footsteps, and three daughters completed the family.

On the evening of July 10, 1807, Don Jose gave a terlulia (evening party) to his friends in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his marriage, it having been impossible to celebrate that event on the proper date, July 2, as the English troops were threatening the city. But now, thanks to the French Marine Liniers and his citizen troops to Puyrredon, the Adonis of La Plata and his wild horsemen of the plains, the invader had been obliged, after a crushing defeat, not only to retire from Buenos Ayres, but even to give up Montevideo; so there was leisure to honor all the family feasts so religiously observed by the Criollos then as now.

In an upper chamber of the Casa de Escalada, two young girls were putting the finishing touches to their simple but elegant toilets.

"Are you ready?" asked a voice from an adjoining apartment—the open door revealed an equally large but more simply furnished sleeping room.

"No yet, Cayetana. Lola's hair is not yet finished. Paca is very slow."

"Well, I shall go to mamma, she may want me—but don't be much l nger. You know we must not be lat ."

"How quickly Cayetana dresses! O Paca you've made me a fright," cried Lola, the younger girl, impatiently. "Go, you have no hands to-night," and the chinita escaped joyfully, for truth to tell, she was tired after the ball at her Aunt Azucena's, where she had danced till daylight with her cousin, one of the "Sorteados" and had no time to rest all day for every one of the servants was busy preparing for the evening entertainment.

"I never can get my hair done in time," and Lola pulled impatiently at her heavy braids.

"Wait a moment," answered Luisa, "I dress your hair in five minutes," and snatching up a towel she pinned it across her white dress, in lieu of an apron and took down the long coils of braided hair, which she deftly wound in soft masses round the small head, letting some dusky waves fall low over the temples and twining the ends of the coil in three curls falling over the left shoulder, talking as she worked of the days of peril they had passed.

"At any rate, we can keep the octave. Wait, let me raise it a little on this side. Now look."

"Oh, Luisa, you are a saint!" and Lola springing up gave her sister a hearty kiss. "I ve never had my hair so beautifully done. Yes, like all great feasts, ours has an octave, thanks to God, else we should have none this year. What a visperate—I shall never forget that sad first of July. I was so frightened. Were you not afraid they would take the city again?"

"Not at all! We knew the Patricians would conquer. Our soldiers have learned much in a year. There will never be another English invasion."

"Dear me, Luisa, you talk just like Harlos and Geronimo. I almost wish Leniers had kept them all prisoners, as he kept the others last year. It was such fun to hear those English officers trying to speak Spanish—and then, the mate! do you remember?" and she laughed gaily.

"Of course I remember I was in the sala (parlor) every evening. They were not so bad, some of them at least, but they could neither dance nor talk. I can't imagine why they—"

"Ninas, ninas, the Sena calls you," cried a little mulatto girl opening the door unceremoniously—and the sisters hastened to their mother, for a deference to parents was one of the most charming traits in the youth of that period.

The splendid apartments thrown open for the expected guests were soon completely filled.

The idolized Liniers—the hero of the "Reconquista," came to salute his charming hostess and murmur his felicitations to the "rose and rosebuds," including her lovely daughters in his courteous salutation. Dona Juan Purredon with his queenly sister Eliza, the fascinating Dona Dolores; Perdes y Oromi, with her dignified elderly husband; Dona Magdalena Segona de la Cerela, a stately matron followed by her two plain but amiable daughters, and her nieces, the "Graces," one of whom, the youngest, Remedios, met her fate, some years later—in the immortal San Martin—gay young officers of the pet corps the "Patricios," all came with kindest wishes and sparkling with to do honor to their distinguished host and dear Dona Catalina.

The grave elders formed a semicircle in which the place of honor was occupied by a vivacious old lady in black velvet, her abundant, showy hair half concealed by a black lace veil covering her head and shoulders and drawn close under her chin.

"Her beauty was a tradition in the court of the first viceroy thirty years ago," whispered a dame whose good looks were not improved by the broad black ribbon which was passed over her swarthy cheeks and tied under her capacious double chin. She confided to her friends that she was "agonizing" with toothache, but she would "not allow her sufferings to prevent her presence on this occasion."

"Well, that tradition had an excellent foundation in fact," was the unexpected reply. "Her family inherit her beauty—look at her grandson Don Jose and his children. I imagine she must have been like the nina Cayetana;" Don Bartolome saw in the wasted features and parchment-like skin of the nonagenarian vestiges of the beauty that had been.

There was music and dancing; couple after couple performing the stately minuet, and the graceful gavotte to the admiration of their elders, who were discussing in a desultory way the problem they had already debated so frequently during the last few days—the consequences of England's crushing defeat, and the honors and rewards Liniers must receive from grateful Spain.

Black servants carrying silver trays laden with cups of chocolate, circulated among the guests. Segunda, the daughter of Miss Remedios' maid, a buxom young mulatto, served the traditional mate (Paraguayan tea, when taken without sugar is called mate amarga—i. e. bitter) to her venerable mistress. Other chinitas presented brimming mates, the silver bombillas (a long silver tube terminating in a pierced bowl through which the beverage is sucked) moist, from their own pouting lips, to elderly guests, who preferred to suck mate amarga in the pauses of conversation, rather than partake of the more modern refreshment.

A youth with heavy black locks falling over his pale high forehead, recited an original poem of many verses in honor of the auspicious anniversary. Then another young gentleman, evidently of the new French school of thought declaimed some heroic lines in praise of Liniers and of the valiant Portenos, ending with an overwhelming apostrophe against the British Lion and the whole insular managerie, to the evident annoyance of (Rodriguez Pina was one of the patriots who hoped for England's health to throw off the Spanish yoke) Rodriguez Pena and his cousin, who are the "uncompromising friends of the English—in England," said Luisa mimicking her brother.

The younger ladies, fearing lest some other poetic or patriotic effusion might be forthcoming from the group of Patricios, talking politics, as was their wont, made a diversion by crowding round their genial host to ask a favor.

"Do Don Jose," they cried "do tell Cayetana to dance. We have asked her, but she is obdurate. Do tell her to dance a bolero.

At these words, many others, ladies and gentlemen, hastened to add their entreaties, and the pleased father gave his paternal command.

"My daughter, gratify our friends," and the smiling girl retired with a couple of her intimates to don the costume, ordered from Serville, expressly for this dance.

When she returned to the salon her beauty, enchanced by her exquisite toilet, brilliants blazing on her lovely arms and swan-like neck, superb pearls twined in her luxuriant braids, a murmur of applause greeted her; there was but one opinion:

"She is the most beautiful creature in the world," said one.

"Aye, and the happiest," said another.

"And one of the best," added the generous mother of two good, fat, commonplace daughters who were staring in round-eyed admiration at the lovely vision.

The graceful sweep of the swallow, the soft curves of the waves, the delicate lily swaying on its tender stem—each one compared her to what was more charming in motion, and yet no one could adequately express the idea her graceful movements inspired.

Her flower like face, starry eyes and dewy lips parted in a slight smile—the air of being uplifted, as it were, out of her surroundings, and unconscious of the admiration she excited, added to the charm of her presence. Those who saw her that night, when she danced her last "bolero," though neither she, not they, knew it then, carried her picture in their memory forever.

When the fascinating dance was ended, and the applause had partially subsided, General Liniers conducted the young lady to Misia Remedios, who embraced her, saying: "Not even the Duchess of Feria y Segovia in the Court of Charles the Third, danced the 'bolero' as well as you do. May God bless you and give you all happiness!" She made place for her favorite beside. "Rest awhile," she added, taking the girl's slender hand in her claw-like fingers, and resumed her conversation with an odd-looking old gentleman in a very full brown wig.

"Cayetana," whispered a tall, handsome young man, who had carefully edged his way between the dowagers' chairs and finally secured standing room at the end of the old lady's sofa. "I have news for you. Don Marcos has asked the Manchal to speak to your father."

"To speak to papa!" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, to ask for the hand of the incomparable Cayetana."

"Oh, Carlos!" and her lovely face flushed deeply, "why did you not tell him, tell him—"

"Cousin mine, what could I say to prevent him? I am sorry you are annoyed. I wish to prepare you. Don Jose will have a busy day to-morrow, for besides the Marechal who comes to ask for you, my mother is coming to ask for Luisa."

"I am so glad. Ah, Carlos, you and Luisa will be very happy."

"And you, Cayetana? I know there is no one worthy of you, but so many love you, and you remain indifferent. I told Marcos I hoped your father would not listen to him—for we did not want to lose our peerless Cayetana. But I wish you could look with favor on Candido; he is such a good fellow; there is no one like him in all the viceroyalty—and he worships the very ground you tread."

"I wish he would worship something else! I am very happy as I am and ask nothing better. When you take Luisa, some one else will come for Lola; Geronimo is sure to marry Victoria very soon, and who will be left but me to amuse papa and accompany mamma."

"Look," said a lady opposite them, "look, that is a pretty 'temporada' (flirtation) Don Cayetana has with his handsome cousin, under the old lady's nose."

"I suppose they'll marry one of these fine days. They'll make a handsome couple."

"How mistaken you are, Maria Elena," answered her friend, "she is only playing him off, against the Peruvian. Don't you see him over there, eating her with his eyes?"

"Ah, is that Don Marcos? Well, our Porteno young men are better looking. 'Tis said he is very rich. Misia Ana Lezica told me they knew his family in Peru; his father is a grandee. How old is Cayetana?"

"Over twenty; yes she was twenty last February."

"Is it possible? Well she ought to marry. There is Luisa coming up, and Lola too. Luisa's the same age of my Carmen, but she is plain. It will not be so easy to marry her."

"What heresy! mannta," cried a gay voice at her ear. "Dona Luisa is the most simpatica nina in Buenos Ayres," and the handsome Patrico smiled and wondered at his good mother's lack of judgment.

Misia Remedios soon tired of her companion's platitudes, and pressing Cayetana's hand, she murmured,

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