

THE VILLAGE GARRISON.

It happened, in the course of the Thirty Years' War, that Gonsalvo de Cordova, who commanded the Spanish troops then overrunning the Palatinate, found it necessary to possess himself of a little walled village, called Ogersheim, that lay in his way. On the first intelligence of his approach, all the inhabitants fled to Manheim; and when Gonsalvo at length drew near, and summoned the place to surrender, there remained within the walls only a poor shepherd and his wife, the latter of whom, having that very morning brought a little infant into this world of misery, was unable to leave her bed; and her husband, of course, staid with her.

The anxiety and distress of the poor man may be more easily conceived than described. Fortunately, however, he possessed both courage and shrewdness; and, on the spur of the moment, bethought himself of a scheme to give his wife and baby a chance of escape, which, after embracing them both, he hastened to put into execution.

The inhabitants, having run off in a tremendous hurry, had left almost all their property at his disposal; so he had no difficulty in finding what was necessary for his purpose, namely, a complete change of dress. Having first accoutred his lower man in military guise, he tossed away his shepherd's hat, which he replaced with a huge helmet, "a world too wide;" he buckled a long sword to his side, threw a goodly cloak over his shoulders, stuck two enormous pistols in his belt, and, putting on boots so thick in the soles and high in the heels, that they lifted him about half a yard from the ground, he fastened to them a pair of those prodigious jingling spurs which were the fashion of the time. Thus accoutred, he forthwith betook himself to the walls, and leaning with a pompous air on his sword, he listened coolly to the herald, who advanced to summon the village to surrender.

"Friend," said our hero, as soon as the herald concluded his speech, "tell your commander, that though I have not yet made up my mind to surrender at all, I may possibly be induced to do so, provided he agrees to the three following conditions, in which I shall make no abatement whatever. 1st, The garrison must be allowed to march out with military honours; 2nd, The lives and property of the inhabitants must be protected; 3d, They must be left to enjoy the free exercise of the Protestant religion."

The herald immediately replied, that such proposterous conditions could not be for a moment listened to; adding, that the garrison was known to be weak; and concluding by again demanding the instant surrender of the place.

"My good friend," answered the shepherd, "do not be too rash. I advise you to inform your ge-

neral from me, that nothing but my desire to avoid bloodshed could make me think of surrendering on any terms whatever; and please to add, that if he does not choose to agree to those I have already stated, he will gain possession of the town only at the point of the sword; for I swear to you, by the faith of an honest man and a Christian, as well as by the honour of a gentleman, that the garrison has lately received a reinforcement he little dreams of."

So saying, the shepherd lighted his pipe, and puffed away with an air of the most consummate nonchalance. Confounded by this appearance of boldness and security, the herald thought it prudent to return, and state to Gonsalvo the demands which had been made. The Spanish general, deceived by this show of resistance, and being unwilling to waste either men or time in reducing this paltry town, resolved to agree to the conditions offered, and, followed by his troops, approached the gates. This lenient determination was announced by the herald to the shepherd, who only vouchsafed to say in reply, "I find your commander is a man of sense." He then left the walls, let down the draw-bridge, deliberately opened the gates, and allowed the Spanish troops to pour into the town. Surprised at seeing no one in the streets but a strange looking fellow, whose caricature of a military costume hung over him like patchwork, Gonsalvo began to suspect treachery, and seizing the shepherd, demanded to know where the garrison was.

"If your highness will follow me, I will show you," answered the rustic.

"Keep by my stirrup, then," exclaimed Gonsalvo; "and on the least symptom that you mean to betray me, I shall send a bullet through your heart."

"Agreed," said our friend. "Follow me Spaniards! for I swear by the word of an honest man and a Christian, as well as by the honour of a gentleman, that the garrison will offer you no injury."

He then placed himself by Gonsalvo's stirrup, and, followed by the troops, passed through several silent and deserted streets, till at length turning into a narrow lane, he stopped before a mean-looking house; and having prevailed on Gonsalvo to enter, he led him into a small room, where lay his wife with her little boy beside her.

"Noble general!" he said, pointing to the former, "this is our garrison; and this," he added, taking his son in his arms, "is the reinforcement of which I told you."

Aware now of the real state of matters, the absurdity and cleverness of the trick, moved even Spanish gravity, and Gonsalvo gave free course to his mirth. Then taking off a gold chain which decorated his own person, he passed it round the neck of the infant.

"Permit me to offer this mark of esteem," he said, good-naturedly, "for the valiant garrison of