

THE WORKING MAN.

Let him speak—though his hand be rough,
And his language be uncouth;
He's kept in silence long enough,
And we need the rugged truth.

Let him speak, as he steps to wipe
The sweat from off his brow;
He has much to say, the time is ripe,
And the world will hear him now.

He has not learned your polished speech,
Nor the logic of your schools,
Nor does he hide what he would teach
With the rhetoric of fools.

His sentences are short and sharp,
And are truths to freemen dear:
The fool may sneer, the rich may carp,
It is now their time to hear.

He has fought the battles—worked the mines—
The rich have had their say,
Have made the laws and built the shrines,
And he has had to pay.

Let him speak, he has earned the right:
Let despots now be still!
Let freemen rise in freemen's might
To do the people's will.

Tales and Sketches.

RACHEL AND AIXA;

OR,

The Hebrew and the Moorish Maidens.

AN INTERESTING HISTORICAL TALE.

CHAPTER II.—The Veiled Maiden.

Esau, having approached the litter, said to the maiden, who still retained her veil, "And you, Rachel, are you, too, going to curse me? Do you, too, despise me?"

Rachel remained silent. Esau felt the contempt which her silence signified; and, unable to restrain his rage, he exclaimed, "Know you not that I can destroy you? that it is in my power to deliver you over to those ferocious and licentious soldiers, and who then will defend you from their insults? Will they feel pity for your tears, or respect for your prayers? will your palpitating bosom, your pale face and trembling form excite their compassion; or will a proud and haughty gesture command their obedience? No, no, those gallant knights are not what you imagine. They will but mock you with praises of your beauty, to which your fears and tremblings will add an additional charm in their eyes. They are not like the weak and foolish Esau who worships you."

Rachel still remained as cold, as silent, and as immovable as a statue. "And your father," continued Esau; "doubtless it will be pleasant in your eyes to see that venerable old man tossed and buffeted about by that abandoned crew, to see him dragged forth by his white beard and cast, amid brutal jests, into the river!"

"Recreant!" murmured the young girl, "such crimes as these are not done for your sake I became the thing I am, a minion, a vile apostate, odious to myself and contemptible to others; I believed you ambitious, Rachel, and that you despised the humiliated Jew in me; I thought that you loved to hear of chivalrous exploits, and I knew that a Jew must ever remain obscure, trodden under foot never to rise either by courage or genius. The Jew must suffer insult, but not complain; obedience—obedience is his only part—the virtues of the Christian are worse than vices in the Jew. Of what avail was my secret love, if the flame which consumed me was never to be acknowledged?"

Just at this moment the trumpet of Don Enrique's troops rang through the forest with a fearful distinctness; but not one of the poor fugitives turned their supplicating glance upon Esau, nor could he catch any sign of emotion from the young Jewess.

"Oh, hear me, Rachel!" resumed he, overcome with grief, "hear me, and you will pity me. I was not born to weigh and pile up pieces of coin; the clinking of gold does not light up my eyes with a greedy joy like those of your father, who calls them his poignards of revenge for the Christian. I love the clash of arms, the clanking of armor; I have tried them on my robust limbs; this arm has struck sparks of fire thick as hail from the battle-axe and sword—and then—and then I thought if Rachel saw me, perhaps she too might love me."

The man in the tabard looked on with a mocking smile, and scarcely removed his eyes from the litter, as though he wanted to pierce through the veil which enveloped the Jewess. Several times his hand played with his belt; and although he did not hear the words of Esau, yet the insolent demeanor of the man seemed to irritate him much more than any of the other fugitives. Seeing that Rachel persisted in her disdainful silence, he advanced softly behind the renegade, and heard him thus end his amorous invocation: "Yes, Rachel, I knew that your heart elevated you above the prejudices of our race; and when Samuel has gloated over the sight of some poor Christian debtor on his knees imploring mercy, with the sobs of his wife and the tears of his children, I only felt humiliated at the sad triumph; and when I dreamt of Christian knights, unhorsed and biting the dust, who should ask their lives of the Jew Esau, I could not resist the influence of such a dream. When a Jew, all that impetuous ardor was useless; whilst a Jew, it was criminal and rebellious to be ambitious; I

panted to become a Christian; and, Rachel, I succeeded beyond my hopes. I am certain of wearing the spurs of knighthood when Pedro the Cruel is driven from Spain."

At these words the man in the tabard smiled insultingly. Esau turned round sharply, his eyes gleaming with rage, just as the French trumpets resounded so loudly that the Jewess and all the fugitives started up.

"Ah, Rachel, did you hear that?" exclaimed Esau.

"What, then, is the important office entrusted to you by the rebel Enrique?" said Rachel. "Is it that of stripping and giving up helpless fugitives?"

Esau recoiled as though an enemy's gauntlet had struck him full in the face. "I serve my master," said he, stammeringly.

"He who disowns his God, will not hesitate to betray his master," replied the Jewess.

"Be not thus implacable, Rachel; forget not that it was for your sake that I sought to become the most powerful, courageous, and wealthy of our race: I sought power and glory only to lay them at your feet; I, whom so many dread to meet, I am weaker than a child before you;" and thus speaking, he leant against the litter.

But the Jewess, stretching out her hand as though to repulse him, exclaimed loudly, "Approach me not, thou apostate! approach me not! I pity thee."

The whole frame of the wretched man vibrated with anguish; and scalding tears, which he in vain attempted to hide, flowed down his swarthy cheeks.

"Come, father," said the young girl, "let us retrace our steps; let us seek some other ford; only let us leave that accursed man!"

Samuel and his followers drew near as though about to depart; but Esau, stepping forward, exclaimed, "You depart not, most worthy children of Israel; have you not heard that I am the servant of the King Don Enrique?"

"Of the rebel king!" cried the man in the tabard.

"Of the true and legitimate King of Castile," repeated Esau; "and I will compel you to remain my prisoners. If you, Rachel, had given me your hand in friendship, I would have saved all; but you have recalled me to a sense of my duty. I owe no allegiance to King Pedro, to that tyrant whose throne is steeped in blood, and whose favorite is Samuel Ben Levi!"

"Silence, silence, Esau, I beseech," said the old Jew, casting his wild and troubled looks upon his companions.

"Think you," said Esau, crossing his arms contemptuously, "that I fear speaking the truth. One would imagine, Samuel, from your pale cheeks that you were about to prostrate yourself at the feet of Don Pedro in his regal courts, or that you were listening to the last groans of Don Fadrique, as he was struck down by the mace-bearers of his brother in the court

A nervous tremor shot through the frame of the fair young man, and, probably, his passion would have burst forth, had not the old treasurer replied, "King Don Pedro is now unfortunate, Esau, and have you so little generosity as to insult the wounded lion?"

"You are right, Samuel," resumed the renegade; "and, after all, what does it signify? In the crimes and quarrels of kings the people are destroyed, as the moth is consumed by the burning taper; let us rather think of your safety; I am not very exacting as regards ransom. Let Rachel allow me to kiss that hand, which formerly used to be interlaced in mine; let her still call me brother, and I will save you. But no! she is cold and insensible—she has forgotten all. Tell her, Samuel, that she is my prisoner; that I alone can save you all. Oh, Rachel, Rachel! oh, my sister! say that you do not despise me!"

"Renegade!" answered Rachel. Esau recoiled as if struck by an arrow.

"You shall see, proud one, that I am something more than renegade," cried he.

"An executioner, probably," replied the young girl.

"Alas! thou art thinking of thyself," sighed Samuel; thou forgettest thy companions in misfortune."

"Hold thy tongue, old dotard," said the young man in the tabard, softly; "thy daughter has good blood in her veins—faithful and loyal blood—and is a noble creature. But remember that I am still one of thy servants—the page of the noble and beautiful Rachel—it is a character that will please me well."

"Descend from your litter, Rachel," said Esau, coolly.

The Jewess did not stir.

"Must I use force to make you yield to my prayer?" said the renegade.

"Obey, ungrateful girl!" said the old Jew;

"It is I, now, who command thee. One of our servants is waiting to assist thee."

Here the young page advanced, his eyes flashing and his hair dishevelled.

"Come, young man, do thy duty," said the old treasurer, "assist thy mistress, and be ready to row vigorously across the water with our friend Esau Manasses."

The page approached the litter, but the renegade, with a determined air, pushed him aside.

"Let not the hand of any man but myself touch that young maiden," said he; "no one but myself shall have that privilege. Learn

how little you dare resist me, and that I have a mission from Don Enrique to arrest all partisans of Don Pedro, and even the Don himself, should I be so fortunate as to meet with him. As to those who may denounce him or give him up, they may be assured of a right royal reward."

"What, from the usurper himself, I suppose," said the page, jeeringly.

"Yes; and look at the price Esau Manasses pays for his spurs," added the Jewess.

Esau could no longer contain himself, but lifted his hand to strike the page, who avoided it by jumping aside, exclaiming, "Say but the word, my mistress, and I will hurl this Hercules to the bottom of the river, to make food for the fishes."

The young girl, alarmed at the prospect of a contest between such unequal adversaries, descended from her litter, and, throwing back her veil, the combatants caught sight of her beautiful features.

She was the noblest, chastest creature the imagination of the poet could picture; her olive complexion, clear and beautiful by daylight, received but a deeper tinge from the shadowy eve; nothing could be softer or purer than the perfect oval of her countenance; her large eyes sparkled under the fringed eyelashes, whilst the arched eyebrow canopied the whole with a bewitching beauty; there was an irresistible charm and attraction in those large, bright eyes which seemed to subdue all they looked upon; and her hair, of that golden tinge so dear to the painter, seemed to entwine itself around her forehead with the soft, wavy motion of a serpent; rows of costly pearls, fastened by large gold pins, served to ornament and give to the beautiful head a character at once imposing and attractive; the ample veil which enveloped her yet allowed the small hand and slender wrist, encircled by massive bracelets, to be perceived. A sculptor would have almost worshipped such an apparition, scarcely believing it to be real.

At the sight of her, Esau forgot his anger, and the page, his threat. She seemed like an angelic visitor, whose mission was to restore peace.

The eyes of the handsome Jewess and those of the attendant page met. Both experienced an emotion almost electric—the daughter of Samuel suddenly became pale, as she perceived before her a being evidently of a superior order, and such as she had only met with in her dreams. Her whole frame was agitated with joy; and it seemed to her that the hour had now arrived when she might be permitted to love.

The ardent and excited looks of the page, who did not seek to disguise his feelings, were remarked by Esau Manasses, who, resting upon the oar, the only weapon he retained, disdainfully said to him, "How now, thou too zealous servant, dost thou deem that thou canst stay my arm; thou, whom my mere breath would destroy!"

The page frowned, and his eyes sparkled with rage as he placed his hand on his belt; but, at this moment, Samuel Ben Levi cast upon him a look full of supplication; and then, as though remembering himself, he said, "Come, thou disobedient boy, art thou going to quarrel with our deliverer? Will thou never be wise? It is just like young apprentices, to be always playing with swords and daggers instead of considering their master's interest. Esau was much more useful than thou; thou art only fit to deck thyself with plumes and velvet, and then ramble through the city in quest of adventures. Verily, I lost much by the change! Now that thy master is old, thou no longer fearest him."

"Yes," resumed Esau, "this youngster needs a lesson to make him a little more humble. Your servants have become much too bold, and too little respectful towards ladies, Samuel. What should hinder me from giving this young gallant over to one of our Captains, who are but little inclined to jest?"

"And to which of the captains would you give him, Esau?" asked Samuel, with an assumed indifference.

"To Captain Coupetete, worthy Samuel; of all who have been entrusted to him, not one has ever complained of his treatment."

Samuel started at this reply, and turning to the page, who maintained his resolute and determined air, said, "Come, my lad, ask Esau to pardon you this folly."

"Ay, and quickly too, or my patience may soon be tired out," added the renegade.

"Beg that man's pardon, never!" exclaimed the page; but just at that moment, Rachel, who had kept her eyes constantly fixed on him, whilst leaning against the litter, now moved gently towards him. "Ask it, for the love of me, I entreat you," she murmured, "for he is pitiless."

"I did not mean to offend you," said the page, after a pause, at the same time turning pale and lowering his eyes, as though to hide their flashing fires.

Esau cast upon them a suspicious look; then, with a sardonic smile and curled lip, he muttered, "Ay, she speaks to him as though he were her idol; she thinks of nothing else; shall I allow them to depart together? impossible!" then, raising his voice, he said, "Valiant champion of the ladies, I am certain that it is not courage, but weapons, that you lack to avenge my insulting conduct; for a mere goldsmith's apprentice you are rather spirited. Well, I will be generous for once; in my boat there are some swords—dare you test their temper?"

With alacrity the page stretched out his

hand to Esau, replying, "Willingly." Esau rushed to the boat, scarcely able to dissemble the joy he felt at this opportunity of destroying his rival.

CHAPTER III.—The Exchange.

Upon seeing the intention of the page, Samuel immediately approached him, saying, "What! are you going to waste time in a contest with that miserable varlet, whilst hours are passing, every moment of which is more valuable than the costliest diamond in the crown of Castile?"

"Silence, you will betray yourself," said the page; "and then it will be said that there is not left a single man in Spain faithful to the true king."

"Oh, decline this unequal combat," replied the Jew, "Esau possesses Herculean strength."

"And am I, then, a mere child, incapable of handling a Toledo blade. Believe me, I shall vanquish him as easily as David overcame Goliath; and I rejoice to think that I shall spill the blood of one of those hated rebels and traitors who would betray their lord and master."

"Yes, and your victory will be the ruin of us all, and secure the triumph of our enemies," added the treasurer. "Time flows on like the waves of that river—the French troops are approaching nearer and nearer. The Gascon and English marauders are seeking to surprise us, and deliver us up alive to Don Enrique."

"Alive! thou deceivest thyself there," said the page, somewhat agitated. "Listen, Samuel; as to the handling of a sword or battle-axe, I fear no one in Spain. Don Enrique himself, although reckoned expert, has always been overcome by me in the Alcazar; as soon as this apostate giant is disposed of, I will leap into the boat and row in such a manner as shall carry thee and thy daughter to the other side, long ere the arrows of the English archers can reach us. Once at the sheep-folds, my old nurse Palona and my foster-brothers will give me an asylum, and assistance. A truce to sermonising, Samuel; imagine yourself at a tournament, where your beautiful daughter is the queen!" and he graciously bowed to the fair Rachel as he uttered these words.

But the damsel was pale; her heart was oppressed with an indescribable weight, and the heavy tears involuntarily trembled on her eyelids. "Serrant of my father," she said, with agitation, "fight not, I command you; and you ought to obey your master's daughter. The use of these deadly weapons is familiar to the ruthless Esau, and what can courage prevail against his strength and experience in arms?"

The page gazed at her with intense admiration, and seemed moved with the earnest interest she felt in his fate.

In the meantime Esau advanced towards him; seeing which, Samuel cried out angrily to the page, "I don't like braggadocios and quarrellers; do you hear, boy? If you persist in brandishing swords and knives, instead of making omelettes, I shall not let you off at once, and then you may seek your living where and how you can."

"Well, minion, are you ready?" said Esau, offering one of the swords.

"You hear that my master forbids it," said the page, with some embarrassment.

"Oh, oh!" retorted the other, "you are then much bolder with the tongue than with the heart and hand. Well, I thought better of you."

"I have sworn obedience to those who keep me—"

"Yes; and you are glad of having taken such an oath. Well, well; all cowards are boasters and quarrel-seekers," said the renegade, sneeringly. "True, you are daintily formed for a lady's page; moreover, you have a woman's heart, and not a man's; fierce and brave when swords are in their scabbards, but when they glitter in the sun, then thou hidest thyself behind thy mistress's robe. Listen; thou hast just now grievously insulted me, and thinkest thou that thou canst intrench thyself behind the words of thy master? No, no! I must teach thee better, and inflict a merited chastisement; ay, make thy shoulders acquainted with the pommel of my sword."

But at the instant that Esau was going to put his threat into execution, the young Jewess, who observed the flash of rage in the page's eyes, advanced, and placed her small hand on the renegade's arm; this caused him to tremble like a leaf, and he let the sword fall to the ground. Rachel, at the same moment said, in those silvery tones which always overcame him, "I hope you will pardon the young man."

"It is for his sake then, Rachel, that you speak to me, and even entreat me. I owe to him this happiness; it is for that pert coward that you are afraid, and for him you deign to touch the arm of the man who is odious to you. I pardon him then for your sake. His cowardice has also dispelled the strange suspicion with which his audacity had inspired me. I began to be somewhat mistrustful of so fiery and imperious a Hebrew servant, not having been accustomed to find such daring amongst my former brethren."

"Thanks, Esau, and now let us go, for the soldiers of Don Enrique will speedily be here."

"Let them all go," exclaimed the renegade, "excepting you, beautiful Rachel; you must remain under my care," and he convulsively clasped between his hands those of Rachel, who turned deathly pale.

Quick as lightning the page snatched up the sword that had fallen at Esau's feet, and exclaimed, "Defend yourself, braggart!"

"Ah, art thou aroused from thy cowardice,

minion?" cried the renegade; "be it so; to arms, since thou wishest it, and I prefer it." Then, turning towards Rachel, he added, "It is not I who disobey you."

The page stood on his guard, and following the custom of those days, he brandished the sword over his head, with an agility that Esau little expected from his delicate though well-proportioned limbs. The expression of reluctant submission the page had hitherto preserved towards Samuel, gave way to the haughty and vindictive mien of an outraged warrior, who finds an opportunity of avenging himself, and who is determined to use all his skill and prowess to triumph in a righteous cause.

"Fly!" cried he to the treasurer; "fly, all of you, whilst I engage this hunter of fugitives—this traitor fattened on human gore! Save your daughter, Ben Levi, and gain the opposite shore, where you and your followers will be safe."

"Ah, thou deceivest thyself!" exclaimed Esau, drawing his sword, and pointing to the opposite bank; "look! look!"

The fugitives turned their eyes in the direction indicated, and saw with horror, thick volumes of lurid smoke rising above the trees, and, believing themselves lost, they uttered the most fearful shrieks and lamentations.

"The late comers are avenging themselves," cried the renegade, triumphantly: "see, they require warmth, and a burning forest alone can satisfy them."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the page, "what will become of the poor old nurse, who doubtless has no other defender than that idiot, Pierce-Neige."

Esau stood contemplating the scene with much anxiety; but suddenly turning towards Samuel, he inquired, "How long has this bold youth been in thy service?"

"Only a few days," replied the Jew, lowering his eyes to avoid the searching glance of his old apprentice.

"He is very rash for a mere dependant, and one who wears the red badge."

"He is not more so than thou wert, my son."

"Ay, master, but he is by far too ready with the sword for a Jew."

"Verily, Esau, thou couldst easily give him a lesson in that."

The latter reflected for some moments, and then added, "Does thy daughter know him, Samuel? Lie not to me; I am one of you, and can read the meaning of those downcast eyes, and that wrinkled brow too plainly."

"Rachel has seen him to-day for the first time, my son; he was not admitted like these into the apartments of our women. Thou wert privileged as the son of my old friend, Manasses," replied the treasurer. "This I swear, on the Book of the Law; and as for him, he but caught a glimpse of her through her veil as she descended from the litter."

"No matter," said Esau; "it is dangerous to have such very handsome retainers in a house where there is so much beauty. Hear me, minion," continued he, addressing the page, who remained motionless and horror-stricken at seeing the horizon gradually assume a more reddened hue. "Knowest thou not that in time of peace to spill the blood of a Jew entails a penalty of forty-eight deniers; but, in time of war, no notice is taken of it."

The fair-haired youth, awakening from his stupor, burst into a strange laugh, and holding out his left hand to Esau in mock supplication, he said, "And for the blood of a renegade, how much will thou give me, Manasses?"

"Wretch!" growled the apostate Jew, "thou hast pronounced thy fate!" and he rushed on him with his ponderous sword; but a shriek of agony from Rachel so startled the enraged Esau, that, in his hesitation, he missed the blow which would otherwise have fallen on the page, who, perfectly collected, appeared to brave him even to aggravation.

The silence that ensued was so profound that the heavy tramping of a horse was distinctly heard advancing towards them. The head of Samuel Ben Levi dropped on his breast, and the young Jewess exclaimed, "Esau, Esau, are you a traitor? Have you forgotten how many years you broke unleavened bread with us? Have you forgotten all the past, that you can yourself deliver us into the hands of our enemies? See, the breath from their horses' nostrils is already wafted to our faces. How much longer can you possess the power of saving us?"

"True, true!" muttered Esau, who grew more and more uneasy as he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs still more clearly. "You must leave without delay; but I too must be with you. My presence alone could protect you in the midst of that band of French marauders—that pest with which the Bulldog of Brittany has cursed us!"

"How now!" shouted a rough voice from the skirts of the forest; "these are words which sound strangely to a Frenchman's ear, my boy!" and the speaker, a dismounted knight, emerged from the deep glade, leading a jaded and worn-out horse by the bridle.

This intruder had by no means a prepossessing appearance. He was habited in an old, worn, black leather surcoat, such as those used by the lower grade of officers of that time, and a huge steel battle-axe suspended from his neck appeared to be his only means of defence. His sorry equipment gave him rather the air of a licensed brigand than that of a knight, in spite of his brilliant helmet, the vizor of which was raised, so that his large round face, flat nose, grey eyes, and brown bristly hair, were distinctly visible. His limbs were remarkably