Hernando Cortez

A Story of The Spanish Conquest of Mexico.

By R. M. BIRD.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

The scene is laid in the Aztec capital. Don Amador, on of Cortez's knights, has been captured and is in the hands of a renegade Moor who is assisting the Mexicans. The final struggle between the Spaniards and the Aztecs is at hand.

The day that followed after the fatal victory of the pyramid, brought its battles like others. That day it became apparent that the last fiber which bound hope to the palace wall was about snapping—it was known to all that the Indian monarch was expiring. The prediction of Botello had made all acquainted with the day on which a retreat might be accomplished. That day was drawing nigh; but the impatience of the soldiers, and the anxiety of the officers to prepare, or, at least, to reconnoiter, the path of retreat, again drove them from their quarters. A weak but well chosen and trusty garrison was left in charge of the palace, while Don Hernando, with all the forces that could be spared of his reduced army, sallied from the courtyard, and fought his way to the dike of Iztapalapan.

In this exploit new difficulties were to be overcome, and new proofs were exhibited of the sagacity and determination of the barbarians. Besides the obstacles offered by the ditches, robbed of their bridges, the Mexicans had heaped together across the streets the fragments of their demolished houses, thus forming barriers, which were not passed without the greatest labor and suffering. Nevertheless, the Spaniards persevered, and not only gained the causeway, but approached nigh to Iztapalapan, before a Tlascalan messenger, creeping in disguise through the crowds of enemies, recalled them to the palace, which was furiously assailed, and in imminent danger of being carried by storm.

It is not to be supposed that this attempt on the great dike, and the return, were effected without the most bloody opposition. The lake suddenly swarmed with canoes full of fighting men, and when Don Hernando again turned his face towards Tenochtitlan, he beheld the causeway covered with warriors, who, besides disputing his passage with unappeasable rage, broke as well as they could the bridges over the sluices, seven in number, wherein were mingled the floods of Chalco and Tezcuco. His valor, however, or his good fortune, prevailed; and by nightfall he reached the square of Axajacatl, and fell with renewed fury upon the savages, who still struggled with the garrison.

Among the unhappy victims of the expedition was the knight of Calavar,—but how slain, or where entombed, no one could relate. From the day of the loss of his kinsman he had been reckoned by all entirely insane. He held communion with none, not even his attendants; but casting aside his abstraction, and resuming his armor, he was present in every conflict which ensued, fighting with an ardor, fury, and recklessness as astonishing as they were maniacal. All that was remembered of his fate, this day, was that, when at the farthest part of the causeway, the trumpets were ordered to sound a retreat, he was seen, without attendants, for they were wedged fast in the melee, dashing onwards amid the dusky crowds that came rushing upon the front from the suburbs of Iztapalapan. Cortes had, himself, called to the knight to return, and not doubting that he would extricate himself without aid, had then given all his attention to the Mexicans attacking on the rear. This was known; it was known also that Don Gabriel had not returned; beyond this, all was mystery and gloom.

Two hours after nightfall, and while the Spaniards were still engaged in close battle with the besiegers, who, this night, seemed as if their rage was never to be appeased, the cavalier, Don Amador de Leste, rested in his chamber, (the Moorish boy sitting dejected at his feet,) now starting up with cries of grief and impatience, as the continued explosions of artillery admonished him of the straits of his friends, and now, as these seemed to die away and be followed by silence, giving his mind to other not less exciting thoughts.

In the dead silence that followed, a sudden interruption in the cannonade, both heard rapid footsteps approaching the door, accompanied by smothered groans.

The page started—in an instant the steps were heard in the passage, followed by a heavy sound, as of a man falling upon the floor.

"Oh, God! my father! my poor father!" cried Jacinto, springing to the door.

He was arrested by the arm of the neophyte, who plainly distinguished, along with the groans that came from the passage, a noise as if the sufferer were struggling to his feet; and in a moment after, as he pushed aside the curtain, to go out himself, the slave Ayub, covered with blood, rushed by him into the apartment, and again fell prostrate.

"My father, Ayub! my father?" cried the page, kneeling at his side.

"Allah il Allah! praised be God, for now I am safe!" said the Morisco, raising on his arm, and, though his whole frame shook as in the ague of death, regarding the pair with the greatest exultation. "I thought they had shot me through the liver with a bullet; but, Allah be praised! 'twas naught but an arrow. Help me up, noble senor—Eh? ay? Trim the taper a little, and give me a morsel of drink."

"Thou sayest naught of my father, Ayub!" said Jacinto, eagerly and yet with mortal fear—for he knew by the gesture of Don Amador, as he ceased his unavailing attempt to lift the wounded man, but more by the countenance of Ayub himself, that he was a dying man.

"How can I speak without light?" cried the Moor, with a sort of chuckle. "Trim the torch, trim the torch, and let me see where these boltheads be rankling. Praise be to Allah, for I thought myself a dead man."

"Wilt thou not speak to me of my father?" exclaimed Jacinto, in agony.

"A brave night! a brave night!" muttered Ayub, fumbling at his garments—"Valiant unbelievers!—Praised be God—The Wali——"

"Ay, the Wali! the Wali, thy master!" cried Jacinto, his voice dwindling to a hoarse and terrified whisper;—"my father, thy master Ayub!"

"The Wali——Hah!" exclaimed the unbeliever, roused by the distant explosions;—"At it yet, brave pagans? Roar, cannon! Shout, infidel! shout and whistle; shout, whistle, and kill!—Save me the Wali, save me the Wali!"

"Oh, heaven, Ayub!—thou sayest nothing of him,—of my father!"

"They took him a prisoner—but we'll have him again!—Lelilee! Lelilee!—Strike fast, pagan!—A brave day for Granada!"

At these words Jacinto seemed not less like to die than the fugitive. But as he neither fell to the floor, nor screamed, Don Amador still held fast to Ayub, who was now struggling in the most fearful convulsions, and yet, strange to hear, still uttering broken expressions of joy.

"A prisoner, a prisoner!—A little drink, for the sake of Allah!" he cried, incoherently. "Ho, ha! one runs so far with a bullet in the liver! Now they are at it! now they are killing the great senores! now, they murder 'em!—Great joy! a great sight for a Moor! great—great—great revenge!—Many days agone—Great—great revenge! says the Wali—They killed my mother—Great revenge—great—great—Oho! great revenge for Granada!"——

With these accents on his lips, mingled with sounds of laughter, and horrid contortions of countenance, the infidel Moor, (for such was Ayub) sprang suddenly to his knees, and flinging abroad his arms, and uttering a yell of agony, fell back instantly upon the floor, quivered a moment, and then lay a disfigured corse.

"Dost thou see, Jacinto!" said Don Amador, taking the shivering boy by the arm. "Ayub is dead, and thy father a prisoner. If thou wilt save the life of Abdalla, the Wali, (I never before knew that Abdalla, though noble, was of this dignity—but this shall help me to plead for him;) get thyself instantly in readiness, and let us begone."

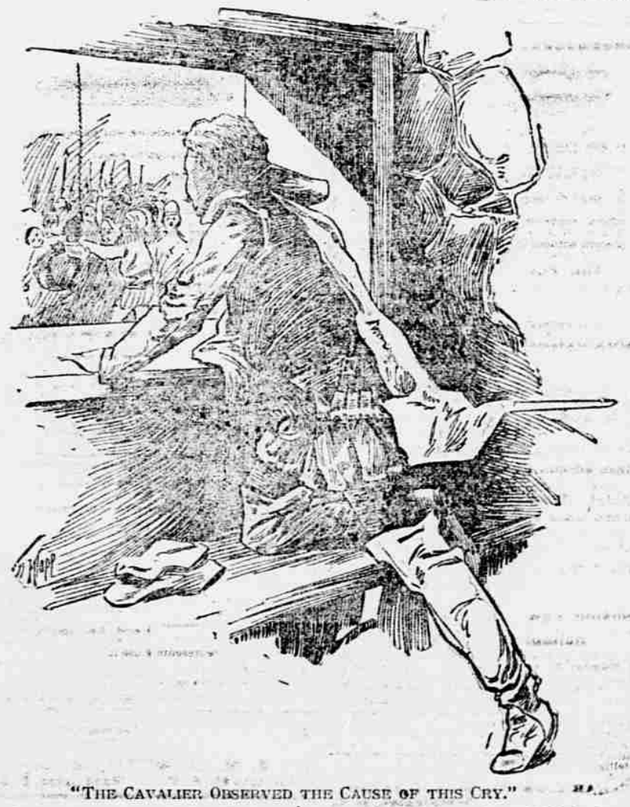
The page turned a tearless countenance on his patron, and replied, with a tranquility that seemed to come from desperation:

"I will go with my lord, for I have no friend now but him—I will go with my lord, to look upon my father's dead body; for I know the Spaniards will not spare his life a moment—I will go with my lord—and would that I had gone sooner! for now, it is too late."

As Jacinto pronounced these words, he began to weep anew, though hearkening passively to the instructions of the cavalier.

"If thou canst find me any plumes," said Amador, "fetch them to me straight; and if thou hast about the house any Mexican garment which thou canst wear, haste thou to don it. As for myself, I will first arm, and then robe me in the tunic of this poor dead misbeliever. Be of good heart, I charge thee—God will protect us."

"There are robes enough, both for my lord and me," said the sobbing boy—"and shrouds too—it is too late.—But I can die with my lord!"



"THE CAVALIER OBSERVED THE CAUSE OF THIS CRY."

"Why, that is spoken with more valor than I thought thou hadst," said the cavalier. "But bring me the robes, without thinking of thy shrouds; and be very quick, for I must have thee to buckle some of these straps of my jambeaux."

The page took up a little taper that lay near the flambeau, and shuddering as he passed by the body, instantly departed on his errand.

When the boy returned bearing a bundle of garments, and two or three such crests as were worn by the nobler Mexicans, in time of war, the cavalier had more than half-armed himself.

"What is that huge mantle thou placest upon the table?" he demanded of the page, without relaxing in his efforts.

"A tilmatli, or Indian cloak, large enough to hide my lord's armor," replied Jacinto, hurriedly. "If the Mexicans should see the gleaming of but a single link, death on the spot, or, still more horrid, on the pyramid, will be the fate of my lord."

"Now that I know that such would be the consequence of captivity," said the cavalier, fiercely, "I swear to God and St. John, I will die fighting—that is, if it please heaven, that I shall be struck no more blows that overpower without killing."

"And this great penacho," said the boy, "I will tie to my lord's crest, so that it shall entirely vail the helmet. I have fastened some of the red tufts among the feathers, whereby the pagans may think my lord is a war-chief and noble if they should see them."

"Of all boys that I have ever yet seen, thou art by far the shrewdest and wisest," said Don Amador with complacency, but without ceasing a moment to do on his armor. "What disguise hast thou provided for thyself?"

"A garment," said Jacinto, "which, being flung about my body and hooded over my head, will cause the Mexicans to think me a woman devoted to the service of one of their gods."

"A most damnable delusion," said the novice; "and I would thou hadst fallen upon some other device. But, perhaps, thou hadst no choice; and, now that I think of it, thy small stature, and very smooth and handsome visage, will, perhaps, suit this disguise better than another. If there be any sin in assuming it, heaven will allow the necessity, and forgive the commission. Quick, and don it, for I would have thee tighten these greave-straps, before I pull on my boots."

"It will but encumber me; I will fling it over me in the passage," said Jacinto, kneeling and endeavoring with an unsteady hand to perform the office required of him.

"Be of good heart, I charge thee, and tremble not. Thou art unused to this service; but think not, though thou beest the son of a Moorish Wali, of the noblest blood, that this duty can dishonor thee. I have performed it myself, times without number, to my good knight, Don Gabriel. I would thou wert somewhat stronger, though. Fear not to pull with all thy strength. I have shrunk somewhat with the fever—greatly to the disparagement of my leg—and the strap is of the stiffest."

"It is stiffened with my lord's blood!" said the page trembling more, but succeeding at last, in securing it. Then rising and knotting a broad and shadowy plume over his patron's helmet, so as, in a great measure, to conceal the gleaming iron, he assisted to fasten it. There remained nothing, then, for the cavalier, but to arrange the tilmatli about his person; a feat in which, with the aid of the page, he succeeded so well as quite to hide his martial equipments, without yet depriving him of the power, in case of necessity, of using the sword, which he held naked in his hand.

"Thy woman's weeds! Why dost thou hesitate, Jacinto?" he cried, prepared, and now eager to make his departure. "Thou thinkest of thy lute? By my faith, I shall be loath thou shouldst lose it, for much good has it done, and yet may do, to Don Gabriel. I will bear it under my arm."

"Think not of the lute," said Jacinto, sorrowfully. "What need have we now of music? It will but overburden my lord, whose hands should be free; and in mine, it would only serve to expose the deception of my apparel."

"Cast it aside, then; and now, in God's name, let us depart!"

Jacinto stepped, faltering, up to the body of Ayub, lying stiff and cold, the countenance illuminated by the slanting torchlight, still mingling a grin of exultation with the contortion of the death agony. A tear dropped upon the swarthy cheek, and a deep sob burst from the bosom of Jacinto when he gazed his last upon the dead Morisco.

"Why dost thou tarry to weep?" said Amador, impatiently—"Ayub was an infidel."

"My lord does not know how those who have not many friends can value the few," said the page. "This man was faithful to my father; and therefore do I lament him, as one whose loss is a sore misfortune; and infidel though he were, yet was he of the faith of my ancesters."

"Remember, however, that, while thou weepest over a dead friend of Abdalla, thou deprivest him of the services of a living one."

Thus rebuked, Jacinto moved rapidly into the passage, and flinging, as he went, the garment he held about his person, stepped with the cavalier into the street.

A thick scud, threatening rain, careered over the heaven, and the smoke of cannon, mingling with the mists of the lake, covered the city with a gloom so deep, that Don Amador could not easily distinguish the peculiar habiliments of his companion. Nevertheless, he could well believe that his appearance was that of an Indian maiden. He bade Jacinto to take him by the hand, adding an injunction, under all circumstances that might arise, to maintain his grasp. To this, Jacinto answered:

"Let it not be so,—at least, not until we are so environed, as to be in danger of separating. My lord must now consent to be guided by me." (He spoke with singular coolness, as if restored, by the urgency of the occasion, to all that self-command and discretion, which had so often excited the wonder of his patron.) "I will walk a little before; and if the people should approach, let my lord take no notice, but follow calmly in my steps, as though he were a great noble, disdaining to look upon his inferiors. Be not amazed at what may happen, and especially, do not speak a word until close by the Spaniards."

"Dost thou mean," said the cavalier, suddenly struck with the memory of the vision, not yet accounted for by the page,—"dost thou mean to practice any arts of magic? for if so"——

"I beseech my lord not to speak," said the boy, with a hurried voice; "for if a word be heard, neither valor nor magic can save us from destruction. By and by, my lord shall see the wisdom of this counsel; and all that is strange in its consequences shall be explained to him."

Thus speaking, Jacinto strode forwards, and Don Amador, wondering, yet yielding to his instructions, followed in silence.

The cannon still roared at the palace and the shouts of the infuriated combatants were plainly heard in the intervals of the discharges; so that, as the cavalier had hinted, there could be no difficulty in determining their path. Nevertheless, it appeared to him, that Jacinto walked forwards with the boldness and certainty of one familiar with the streets he was treading.

For a time, their course lay through a street entirely deserted; but, by and by, passing into one of greater magnitude, they beheld shadowy masses, now of single figures, now of groups, darting about, many of them with lights, as if flying, some from the scene of combat and others, like themselves, approaching it. It was apparent that this street was one of the four great avenues leading to the square of Axajacatl; for no sooner had the two Christians stepped upon it, than the sounds of conflict came to them with tenfold loudness; and they could behold, ever and anon, as the deadly discharges burst from the artillery, the flames flaring luridly up through the mists, like the jets of a distant volcano.

With the consciousness that he now trod a principal street, Don Amador became aware that he was, of a certainty, advancing full upon the mouth of, at least, one piece of ordnance; and, as Jaciato paused suddenly, as if dismayed at his peril (for at that moment a ruddy flame shot out of the mist, and a falconet echowed down the street), he approached the boy, and said:

"For thy sake, Jacinto,—(it does not become me to say for my own; though I confess some repugnance to advance thus on the cannon of my friends)—I should wish thou couldst find some other path, not so much exposed to be raked as this."

"Speak not,—we have no choice," muttered the boy. "But, God be thanked! the bullet that strikes my lord, will first pass through my own body."

This little expression of devotion was pronounced with an earnestness that touched the heart of the cavalier; and he was about to utter his satisfaction, when a gesture of Jacinto, who immediately began to resume his pace, warned him into silence. The usefulness of the caution was soon made manifest; for two or three Mexicans suddenly brushed by, though without seeming to notice them. An instant after, there passed several groups, bearing wounded men in their arms; and by and by, while every moment seemed to surround them yet more with isolated individuals, there came a party in some numbers uttering lamentations, as if over the body of a great noble. Several of these bore torches in their hands, wherewith they were enabled to descry the pair; and Don Amador's heart beat quick, as he saw three or four detach themselves from the group, and run forwards, as if to make sure of a prey. He grasped at his weapon, invoked his saint and moved quickly up to Jacinto, to give him what protection he could. But, at the very moment when he feared the worst, he was amazed to behold the barbarians come to a dead halt, and, at the waving of Jacinto's hand, part from before dim with countenances of reverence and fear. The same remarkable change was observed in those who composed the party bearing the corse, with the addition of new marks of homage; for, leaving the body in the hands of a few, they seemed about to follow the page in tumultuous procession, until he turned round, waving his hand again; which gesture, nearly all immediately fell on their knees, and so remained until he passed. All this time the wondering cavalier was conscious that he was himself unregarded.

Little by little, while the screams and cannon shots grew louder at each step, Don Amador perceived that the groups began to grow into crowds, and then into dense masses, every moment; while every moment, also, it became still more apparent that his guide exercised some powerful, though, to him, inscrutable, influence, over the mob; for, no sooner did their torches reveal his figure, than all were straightway seized with admiration, falling upon their knees, or returning on their path, and following him towards the battle.

The gestures of Jacinto served no longer to repel them; and in a few moments there were hundreds of men, their numbers increasing at each step, who pressed after him eagerly, though reverentially,—uttering, at first, low murmurs, and then, at last, shouts of joy and triumph. These reaching the ears and drawing the attention of others in front, they, in turn, added their respect to the homage of the rest.

However surprising, and, indeed, confounding, this notice, and these salutations, to Don Amador, they were far from agreeable; for the train followed so close upon his heels, that he dreaded, every moment, lest some derangement of his mantle or plumes might expose to their gaze the hidden ensigns of a Christian. Greatly was he rejoiced, therefore, when the steady and persevering advance of the page had carried him so deeply into the crowd, that it was scarcely practicable for more than one or two individuals at a time to look upon him, and quite impossible that the noisy train should follow. He ceased, therefore, to lament his proximity to the cannon mouths, which still, at intervals, flung death among the besiegers; for he thought that in that alone there was safety. His desire, in this particular, was soon gratified; for he was, at last, wedged, with the page, among a mass of men so dense and so disordered, that he no longer feared a scrutiny. He was in sight of the palace, his foot planted upon the square, and but a few paces separated from his friends and his knight.

In the flash of the arquebuses, but more particularly in the fiendish glare of the cannon, when disemboguing their contents upon the barbarians, he beheld the terraces covered with his countrymen, resisting as they could, and with every shot from the musket, every bolt from the arbalist, adding a life to the reckoning of their revenge, and yet fainting with fatigue over a slaughter which had no end. The square was filled with men, as with a sea, and when the fiery flashes of the ordnance lit it up as with a momentary conflagration, the commotion following upon each made him think of those surges of fire which roll in the crater of a volcano, and of the billows of blood that dash upon the shores of hell. A more infernal spectacle could not, indeed, have been imagined; and when the harsh yells of the pagan myriads were added, the tophet was complete, and man appeared, as he yet appears,—the destroyer and the demoniac.

This spectacle, however horrible it might have been to one accustomed to look upon man as the image of his Maker, and the blow struck at the life of man, as a stroke aimed at the face of God, had the effect to stir the blood of Don Amador de Leste to such a degree that, had he not been checked by the cold hand and the deadly pale visage of his companion, he would have followed the impulse of his valor, uncovered his weapon, and, shouting a war cry, dashed at once upon the throat of the nearest infidel. The look of Jacinto recalled him to his senses; he made him a signal to clutch upon his mantle and follow, and then plunged again into the gory crowd.

The tempest, both physical and mental, which beset all that rout of pagans, reduced the intelligence of each to but two objects of thought,—his enemy and himself. Not one turned to wonder or observe, when the strong shoulders—strong from excitement—of the cavalier thrust him aside, or the hard touch of an iron-cased elbow crushed into his bosom; nor perhaps, was a look cast upon the effeminate figure, that seemed a girl, at the back of this impetuous stranger. Thus, then, unresisted and disregarded, the cavalier made his way, step by step, taking advantage of every moment when the barbarians gave way before an explosion of artillery, or a charge of the garrison,—hoping, at each effort, to issue upon the open space betwixt the besiegers and the besieged, and, at each, arrested by a denser crowd,—speaking words of encouragement to the horror-struck page, for well he knew he might speak without fear in such a din,—and feeling, at each moment, his strength melting away, like burning wax, under the prolonged exertion. He toiled for his life, for the life of the boy, perhaps for the life of Don Gabriel; but human nature could not sustain the struggle much longer. Despair came to his heart, for he knew not how far he stood from the palace wall, and felt that he could labor no more. His eye darkened, as he looked back to Jacinto,—the boy was swooning where he stood.

"God be merciful to us both! But, at least, thou shalt die in my arms, poor boy," he muttered, making one more effort, and raising the page from the earth. "God be merciful to us,—but especially to this child, for he is sinless, and, I fear me, fatherless."

At this moment a dreadful scream burst from the lips of all around the novice, and immediately he felt himself borne back by the barbarians as they recoiled, seemingly, from a charge of cavalry. The thought was hope, and hope again renewed his strength. He planted his feet firmly on the earth, and with his elbow and shoulder dashed aside the fleeing pagans, pressed the senseless boy to his heart, raised his voice in a shout, and the next moment stood free from the herd, 10 feet from the muzzle of a cannon, from which the Mexicans had been recoiling. His eye traveled along the tube; the magician Botello stood on the broken wall at its side, and the linstock he held in his hand was descending to the vent.

"For the love of God, hold!" shouted the cavalier, "or you will kill Christian men!"

The match fell to the earth, and the cavalier sprang forward. But if his voice had reached the ears of friends, it had not escaped the organs of foes. A dozen savages, forgetful of their fears, sprang instantly towards him, endeavoring to lay hold upon him. A back-handed blow of his weapon loosed the grasp of the most daring, and the hands of others parted, along with the flimsy disguise of Jacinto. He left this in their grasp, tottered forward, and the next moment, as the cannon belched forth its death upon the pursuing herds, stood in the courtyard of the palace.

As the cavalier sprang among his countrymen, almost fainting with exhaustion, he loosened, with as much discretion as dexterity, the knot of the tilmatli, and dropped it to the earth, so that he might not be mistaken for a foe. The sudden gleam of his armor, and the sight of his wan visage, struck all those who had rushed against him with horror. Among the foremost of all was the man-at-arms Lazaro, who no sooner perceived that he had raised his trusty espada against what he doubted not was the specter of the novice, than he fell upon his knees, yelling aloud:

"Jesu Maria! my master! my master's ghost!" with other such exclamations of terror.

At this moment, the page revived in the arms of his patron, but only to add to the cry of Lazaro a shriek so wild and heart-piercing, that it drove all other sounds from the ears of Don Amador. The cavalier observed the cause of this cry, and again his eye lighted up with the fires of passion. A group of soldiers, agitated by some tumult, which had no part in the conflict around, stood against the palace wall, under a casement, from which was projected a bundle of partisans. Round this extempore gibbet was fixed a rope, one end of which being pulled at by those below, the cavalier beheld, shooting up above the heads of the mass, a human being, to all appearance, bound hand and foot; and in the blackened and horribly convulsed countenance of the sufferer, he perceived the features of Abdalla, the Wali.

With a bound, that carried him at once into their midst, and with a rapidty that prevented opposition, he rushed up to the wall, and before the Morisco was elevated above his reach struck the halter with his weapon. The Zegri fell to the earth;—the executioners looked upon the visage of his bold preserver, and being persuaded, like Lazaro, that the very ghastly apparition before them was nothing less than the ghost of an hidalgo, universally reckoned dead, they recoiled in affright. Before they had recovered from their confusion, the culprit rose to his feet, glared a moment on the cavalier, and then springing away, was instantly lost among the combatants. A wild and exulting cry of "Moro! Moro! Tlatoani Moro!" rose among the barbarians; and the Spaniards knew that their prey was beyond pursuit.

"Santos santissimos! Holy Mother of heaven! grace upon all, and Amen! if thou beest a living creature, speak,—or I will smite thee for a devil!"

These words came from the lips of Alvarado, who had himself commanded the body of hangmen, and who now, though his teeth chattered with terror, advanced his rapier towards the bosom of his late companion. As he gazed and menaced, Don Amador, yielding, at last, to the consequences of labors altogether above his enfeebled powers, sunk swooning to the earth; and Jacinto, rushing from the crowd, flung himself upon his body.

(To be continued.)

Marriage Customs in Northern Climes.

Quiver.

Wedding presents in Norway are not of the expensive but useless kind that they are with us. They consist of such things as pots and pans, plates and dishes, a feather bed, half a dozen sheep, a sack of potatoes, and so forth. Sir G. W. Dasent says that the Norwegians, in reference to marriage as to other matters, put their best foot foremost and try to make the most of things generally. A lad went out to woo a wife. Amongst other places he came to a farm house, where the people were very poor; but they wanted to make him think that they were well-to-do. Now the father had got a new arm to his coat. "Pray, take a seat," he said to the wooer; "but there's a shocking dust in the house." So he went about wiping all the benches and tables with his new coat-sleeve, but he kept the other behind his back.

The wife had one shoe much better than the other, and she went stamping and sliding with it up against the stools and chairs, saying. "How untidy it is here; everything is out of place!" Then they called out to their daughter to come and put things to rights; but she had got a new cap, so she put her head in at the door, and kept nodding and nodding, first to this side and then to that. "Well! for my part," she said, "I can't be everywhere at once." In this way the wooer was led to believe that he had come to a well-to-do household.

Many superstitions prevail in Sweden with regard to marriage. It is said that if a girl be fond of cats, she will not be an old maid, as we should say, but have a bright day for her wedding. The Swedish bride sometimes wears a coronet of myrtle, or, when that is not procurable, of colored paper. Here, as in Norway and other countries of Northern Europe, there is too much eating and far too much drinking at weddings. In Sweden the repasts on these occasions continue for hours.

When asked to take your place at the table, it is considered polite to make as stout a resistance as possible. During the repast a collection is made for the bride, and sometimes also for the poor of the parish. In Siberia there is a good custom that a bride, on coming to her husband's house, has to give a dinner prepared with her own hands as a test of the education she has received. If she succeeds in gratifying her guests, it is taken as a proof not only of the young woman's own excellence but also as a recommendation of her whole family by whom she was instructed so usefully.

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Poisonous Flowers.

Harper's Bazar.

It seems a shame to connect thoughts of poison with, for instance, such delicate and lovely things as that baby of the flowers, the snowdrop, as the narcissus with its delicious breath, as the hyacinth, and the jonquil. But one is obliged to see to it that the chidren do not put the bulbs of these flowers into their mouths. The oxalis, also, is not a safe thing to put between the lips; and all the lobelias will produce dizziness and general disaster. The monk's-hood, too, and the beautiful foxglove as well, are noxious affairs from which powerful drugs are obtained, more than a few drops of their extracts being usually a fatal dose. Certain of the crocuses, if eaten, even if nothing be swallowed but the juice, produce vomiting; the bulb of the intricately-beautiful lady's-slipper poisons externally as the noxious ivy, dogwood, and sumach do; the quaint old jack-in-the-pulpit, although not a garden plant, is another enemy to health and life; and so, also, is the marvelous Queen Anne's lace, which now and then will creep in through the paling and looks so enchanting when far and wide it embroiders field and roadside. The laughing little buttercup, that might be a drop of visible sunlight, is by no means as innocent as it looks; the cow in the pasture knows enough to avoid it; that, and all its cousins, the rich, profuse paeonies, the dazzling blue larkspurs, and the rest, are full of toxic properties. The oleander tree, that is set outdoors when Spring comes, and that lines the streets of various of our Southern cities, is another hive of deadly poison. The supurb catalpa tree, towering with its great leaves and its masses of white and fragrant flowers, is a charming thing in the garden, but its bark is exceedingyl injurious; and the laburnum, that looks like a fountain of gold leaping into the sun, is poison in leaf and flower and seed; and even the grass beneath it is best thrown away when cut, instead of being fed to cattle.

Bad Blood Is Curable

—and all its complications—so easily and cheaply. The blood is the life, and failure to correct its impurities leads to many sinister evils.

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purifies and invigorates the blood. It is the discovery of an old German physician—has been in use for more than a century.

No Drug-Store medicine; is sold only by regular Vitalizer agents.

Persons living where there are no agents for Dr. Peter's Blood Vitalizer can, by sending $2.00, obtain twelve 35-cent trial bottles direct from the proprietor. This offer can be obtained only once by the same person.

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References—Third Nat'l Bank, any business house in Dayton or Gen'l Agencies.

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We will give **$100.00 in Gold** to any *person who will arrange* the 16 letters printed in the square to the left *into three names* denoting **three well-known Generals of the United States Army** during the **Spanish War.** *Remember we do not want one cent of your money.* There is only one condition, which will take less time than one hour of your time, which we will write you as soon as your answer is received. In making the three names, *the letters can only be used as many times as they appear and no letter can be used which does not appear.* After you have found the *three correct names,* you will have *used every letter* in the sixteen *exactly* as many times as it appears. **The money will be paid July 15, 1899.** Should more than one person succeed in finding the three correct names, the $100.00 will be equally divided. **We make this liberal offer** to people with whom we have never before done business will take an interest in whatever future offers we may make. We wish to make a friend of every reader of this paper in the **United States and Canada. Try and Win.** If you make the *three names* and send them to us at once, *take chances* but what you will get the **gold!** Anyway, *we do not send any money from you,* and a contest like this is *very interesting.* As soon as we receive your answer we will at once write and notify you if you have won the prize. We hope you will, as we *shall give the prizes away anyway.* Do not delay. Write at once.

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Silver Cream Pitcher	3
Silver Sugar Bowl	3
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Zell's Encyclopedia. One large Vol.	4
Coin Silver Watch, open face, Standard American Movement, with $1 added	10
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G.A.R. Ring, Solid Gold	20
Grand Army Charm, Rolled Gold	2
G.A.R. Badge Charm, Rolled Gold	5
Any one volume of our great war books	1
Tea Set, Decorated, 56 pieces, with $1 added money	10
Dinner Set, Decorated, 84 pieces, with $2 added money	10
Bunting Flags. Club according to size	
Mining stock, five shares	5
Decorated China Clock	5
Combined pocket-knife, fork, spoon and can-opener	4
G.A.R. Sleeve Buttons, Rolled Gold Plate	3
G.A.R. Watch Chain, Rolled Gold	15
Ladies' G.A.R. Chain, Rolled Gold	9

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