

1171
HEROIC TIMES IN OLD PERU

By Angélica Palma

Translated by Alexandra K. Anderson

1

AN EVENING AT HOME

"We offer Thee, O Lord, three Padrenuestros for the dying, for those traveling by land and by water, for the blessed souls in Purgatory and for those in mortal sin. Padre nuestro.....

The voice of the old lady rose thin, slow and a little tremulous. In the chorus of responses different accents were blended: the full, mellow tones of her daughter, the lilting notes of the pet child Rosario, the robust, almost harsh voice of her son-in-law, the youthful one of her grandson, and the subdued murmur of the slaves..... For, according to the custom in every well-regulated household, the slaves took part in the daily Rosary. Chief among them was Ña Chomba, a negress born fifty years before in the newly founded home of doña Trinidad. She had grown grey in the service of nurse to children and grandchildren and enjoyed many privileges.

The family of don Rodrigo de Hinestrosa held their prayers only in the dining room, where the principal wall space was occupied by an oil painting, done in Quito, of San José, Patron Saint of the good couple.

CO-AP2

Caj. 5

Doc. 201

Fol. 71

-2-

And a good couple they certainly were: don Rodrigo, honorable to the last degree, prodigally generous, stubborn and hardheaded, as behooved a legitimate Castilian; and Juana Rose Centeno, his worthy wife, a beautiful Creole, whose age, scarcely over forty, was at least sixteen or eighteen years less than that of her stern husband and señor.

In homage to the precedence of age, the heads of the house ceded the privilege of conducting their pious devotions to the mother of the señora, Mama Trini, as she was called not only by her grandchildren but by all relatives and acquaintances not too old to use the title.

Slowly crossing herself, Mama Trini repeated the last Gloria Patri, and the long drawn out Amen had not been finished by Na Chomba, when don Rodrigo, raising his strong and hairy right hand to compel silence, gravely said:

"A Padrenuestro and an Ave Maria for the return of peace to our unfortunate country and a complete triumph for our Lord and King."

Did all those present join in that petition? It would be difficult to say. Rosario shaded her large, wide-open eyes with her dainty hand, the better to concentrate on the prayer, and her brother Fernando bowed his taciturn young head. Their father looked at them and was satisfied by their religious attitude.

Heroic Times in old Peru

-3-

The last prayers of the Rosary were given to the demand for peace. The slaves went away to their divers tasks, leaving only Chomba, who moved to and fro in the room, setting the table for supper. Don Rodrigo, following the thread of his thoughts which, no doubt, had wandered during his devotions, now said:

"I believe that at last our supplications may appease the just, divine wrath, and that we shall shortly enjoy the blessing of tranquillity. Our good cause gains ground; there is no doubt about it; recovering the Forts of Callao promises us a speedy victory."

"Nevertheless," timidly argued Fernando, "it is sad that we should owe advantages to treachery."

His father looked at him with an expression of mingled surprise and anger.

"No one should form a hasty judgment," he said severely. "Causes and the details of deeds must be understood; but with these evil winds scattering liberal ideas and impiety, everybody feels authorized to discuss and pass an opinion on the most serious things. Even this sniveling boy, who does not yet know enough to keep his nose clean, presumes to contradict his father. If, at thy age, I had shown such impudence....."

"Rodrigo", interrupted Juana Rosa, tactfully endeavoring to defend her son, "thou knowest full well that in our home we all share and respect thy opinions; and we desire with thee, an end of all these confusing plots and terrible outbreaks that keep us with the creed on our lips. Madre mia de los Dolores! There is not a tranquil moment! But now I want thee to tell me frankly, as thou art in the bosom of thy family and not a word of what is said here will ever go beyond these four walls. Thou, who art a loyal man, art thou pleased at what those sergeants did? Those... what do they call them?"

"Moyano and Oliva", put in Fernando softly.

"I will tell thee, woman!" replied don Rodrigo, somewhat perplexed, without looking at the boy. "I will tell thee. As to whether I am pleased at their deed, as we understand please, of course I am not. But if we look at things carefully; if we consider that those men have repented of rebelling against their legitimate sovereign, and that to them we owe the liberation of Casariego and other good soldiers, infamously imprisoned by the insurgents, and that with support of the Royal Felipe we can regain dominion of the sea, insure the return of the viceroy to Lima and expect to see an end of so many calamities and the restoration of things to their natural state, we must be pleased at what those men have done..And leave them to God and their conscience."

"But do they not say", asked the grandmother in a quavering voice, "that that man Bolivar was suspicious of the garrison in the Forts and thought of changing it?"

"He changed the Vargas Battalion for that of Rio de la Plata, which accomplished the feat. God blinds those He wishes to lose". answered her son-in-law tersely.

Señor de Hineztrosa was a native of Burgos and belonged to a noble family. He followed the career of an Artilleryman and arrived in Peru, with his company, in the last days of the Eighteenth Century. Fine looking, valliant and extremely elegant; gay without being depraved, it did not take him long to make friends in Lima. And by frequenting many respectable houses where, in the contemplation of attractive, marriageable girls, his sight was refreshed, he began making plans for the moment of settling down.

That moment was hastened by meeting a countryman of his, a well-to-do merchant who had a fine business establishment in the Calle de Valladolid, and beside it a dwelling so spacious that it afforded comfortable quarters for himself and wife, his children and grandchildren and many servants of divers classes and colors. The merchant's name was Pedro Centeno and his only unmarried daughter Juana Rosa, was a girl of seventeen, very modest and well brought up and as lovely as a graceful young pine tree.

As for the Captain, when he met the maiden it was a case of love at first sight; to Centeno and his wife, a son-in-law of honorable lineage, who stood well with the Viceroy and his superior Officers seemed very acceptable; and as for Juana Rosa.....

Who was going to consult the feelings of such a doll-baby? There were her father and mother who knew what was good for her; and their knowledge gave her a husband twice her age, with whom she ought to live happily unless signs were deceptive.

When they had been married a few years and their first-born, Rosario, was very small, don José de la Pezuela arrived in Lima to reorganize the Artillery Corps. For that purpose the Viceroy Abascal, ordered the construction of the Fort and Cuartel of Santa Catalina, and Hinestrosa took a very important and active part in all that work, being rewarded by promotion to Commandant.

Overwork, the wear and tear of his years, no longer few, and his former mode of life which, if not hard had at least been irregular, brought on serious disorders in the health of the Commandant. His wife, backed by the rest of her family, urged him to ask for retirement, and don Rodrigo, although gritting his teeth at the necessity, had to give in, as he was convinced that a worn out body was more fitted for sedentary occupations than military duties.

His father-in-law then made him a partner in the business and at his death left him manager; for he had no male heirs and Hinestrosa inspired him with more confidence by his honesty and attention to work than the husbands of his other daughters. After bitter quarrels and filing protests against the will before the tribunals, the senior members of the family resigned themselves to champing at the bit and to maintaining the outward appearance of peaceful relations, which latter were enlivened at times by not

too kindly gossip and the exchange of witty inuendos, savoring of pepper or aloes, according to whether the condiment was administered by feminine or masculine hands.

Don Rodrigo, installed in the Valladolid house with his mother-in-law, wife and their two surviving children, attached no importance to the garrulous complaints of his in-laws. He had more serious worries. Evil winds were sweeping his distant native land. It had been convulsed since the beginning of that turbulent, masonic Nineteenth Century by struggles against foreign invasion and the no less sanguinary strife among her own children, who were divided into two irreconcilable bands, fighting either to retain absolutism or to secure the triumph of liberal ideas. And more disquieting yet did Hinestrosa find conditions in the land of his children, the sole one of the vast South American territories which still belonged to Spain, and which now, through the bad example of its neighbors and an overwhelming advance of innovating principles, was in great danger of being lost to the Mother Country.

Hinestrosa would not admit that such an unheard of thing could happen; it was absurd, contrary to all laws, divine or human. If the whole world had not turned itself into a madhouse, ~~the~~ ^{he} argued, *that* Peru, the richest colony, the center of exclusive aristocracy, the headquarters of loyal forces, would continue to shine as the most highly prized glory of the Crown and, at no far distant time, would play the part of a faithful watch dog, who assists the shepherd in bringing back to the fold lambs that have gone astray.

-8-

But even that fatal separation had come to pass. How many anxieties: how much destruction! The revolutionary spark had been smothered a thousand times but it blazed up again as many more. The country was impoverished and exhausted by loss of blood. Demoralization was spreading. Old Castilian titles favored the cause of emancipation and ranking officers of the Royal troops, striving for personal promotion, fomented disunion in their ranks and headed mutinies in the Cuartel. Aznapuquio!... Don Rodrigo never could recall that name without shame and impotent wrath. Pezuela, his noble chief, humiliated; and the viceregal authority, representing his Monarch, in the dust; while he was unable to lend a hand and even deprived of the desperate consolation of being killed fighting against the insurgents. Several times he attempted to go back into military service. But his precarious health obliged him to spend part of each year in the Sierra and he decided that a vigilant master would be more missed in his own house than an ailing soldier in the King's Army.

He had entire confidence in his wife, but only while he was at her side to act as her guide and oracle. Separation was dangerous. Women are turncoats and fickle by themselves (he thought) and their very weakness was easily attracted by the lure of change. Who could be certain that Juana Rosa, without thinking, without calculating the consequences, might not open the windows of their house and let in the outside air to pollute the atmosphere?

-9-

And, worse than all, that young boy was growing into manhood at a time of disorder and unrest. What course would he take if left without any other guide than bland feminine tutelage? He needed the salutary fear of his father, who was ready, with a firm hand, to straighten the sapling shaken by contrary winds. No: Señor don Rodrigo de Hinestrosa, Commandant of Artillery, the place for you is not behind the cannon; but in the city of revolutionary uprisings, in the home where your presence will check the menace of evil.

The night advanced; and from the ornate clock in its wooden case inlaid with mother of pearl, came a whirring sound, and a little bird appeared on its dial accompanying the sharp stroke of the bell nine times with its "cu-cu". Chomba placed on the table cups of fragrant Cuzco chocolate for each one and trays filled with hot biscuits and rosquetes, the latter just bought from one of the rosqueteros who went about the streets of Lima at those hours, carrying lanterns and rending the quiet of the silent city with their cries. Don Rodrigo seated himself at the head of the table, between the two señoras, blessed the food, and dipped a spongy Tarma biscuit in the steaming liquid. Rosario, seated beside her grandmother, pointed to a cup of chocolate with distaste.

"Take some, child, it is very nice" ..the old lady said to her.

"I am so tired of it; I prefer.....Chomba, isn't there any champuz?"(1)

"For thee, my precious, there is whatever thou wouldst like", answered the servant who was permitted to "thee" and "thou" her masters.

"I want champuz too, Chomba", said Juana Rosa.

"A fine pair of epicures, mother and daughter!" exclaimed don Rodrigo. "Instead of that stuff which only soils your stomachs, you ought to take your good cup of chocolate as I do. It is nourishing and delicious."

"They are silly creatures and only make themselves ridiculous", commented Mama Trini. "On the other hand, Fernandito always took whatever was given him, since he was a baby, poor child. And when he was alone with me here, he went through terrible things. Dost thou remember the year twenty-one, my boy?"

"Yes, Mama Trini" replied the young man, lapsing again into a moody silence, with his eyes fixed on the table cloth.

The two señoras felt sorry for him, thinking him cast down by his father's scolding. But that gentleman, satisfied at the effect of his lecture, wished to strengthen the impression already made and began recalling the black situation of Lima at the time mentioned by Mama Trini. The city blockaded by land and sea; short of food, paying beforehand for the crime of opening her doors to the outlaws commanded by San Martin.

Don Rodrigo thanked God that he, himself, did not see it. At the beginning of winter he had been obliged to set off for the Sierra, accompanied by his wife and daughter, but Mama Trini, who had stayed to take care of the house and her student grandson, never would forget it, "Eh?"

Who never did forget it (and that entered not into the mind of Hinestrosa) was Fernando. While his father, in his harsh voice, anathematized the mistakes of some and the rebellion of others who opened the doors of the capital to the Army of the Andes, the boy lived over again the fevered excitement of those wonderful days. It had permeated to the depths of his infantile soul, uprooting (without his knowledge) hereditary tendencies, and tormenting his adolescence with the agitating germination of new seeds. The father went on repeating what he had said many times before and the son, not listening to him, saw once more the splendour of that 28th day of July, when he had managed to escape from the house and reach the Plaza Mayor, thanks to the connivance of Chomba, skilled by long experience in pulling wool over the eyes of Mama Trini.

An enormous multitude, eager and excited, had filled the Plaza, and up on the Cabildo balcony, appeared the hero. Fernando had eyes only for him. The boy did not notice the mass of people crowding him nor did he realize that Chomba, by force of elbowing and pushing, saved him from being suffocated. He only saw San Martin:

-12-

his lofty stature, his serene brow and the noble austerity of his bearing. The hero spoke. With a clear, firm voice, he proclaimed Independence. And then, putting his very soul into his words, he cried:

"Viva la Patria! Viva la Libertad! Viva la Independencia."

"Viva!" replied the delirious multitude a thousand and one times. Fernando felt he would never tire of crying "Viva!"

He had reached home thoroughly done up and his frightened grandmother had put him to bed and filled him with sudorifics. Behind her back, Chomba motioned him to keep quiet by putting her finger to her thick lips. When they were alone, she whispered in his ear:

"Take care! Not a word must escape thee! If the señor found out what we have done..... poor us!"

And so, under the suggestion of fear and the exalted memory of that magnificent event, cherishing a secret too weighty for his budding strength, Fernando reached puberty, breathing in the atmosphere of his country at war, which stirred his nerves and tortured his spirit, still semi-dormant in its infancy but longing to awake to life.

Don Rodrigo did not dream of what was passing in his son's restless thoughts and much less did he imagine that anyone could agitate his dainty, pampered Rosario. He sent them to bed with his blessing and then shut himself in the conjugal bed chamber with his wife, to be at once reproached for scolding their son.

Heroic Times in old Peru

-13-

"You see now, the poor boy looked as if he scarcely knew what had happened to him. Even if he did act foolishly, he is still only a child and thou art too harsh with him."

"No. I will not have him kept in cotton batting as thou and his grandmother would like to do. Men should be treated like men from babyhood and, besides, the boy is passing through a dangerous period and he must not be neglected in the slightest or allowed to speak presumptuously. He is not bad, I know that, but he must be kept from becoming so and be made to understand that, if he goes astray the least bit, his father is here to put him back on the right path."

"It will not be necessary, he is a good boy. By now they both must be tucked in between their sheets. Poor little souls."

"God make them saints!" muttered the Commandant as he got into bed.

The presumptive innocents were not reposing as tranquilly as the sweet optimism of their mother imagined. Rosario, who shared the room with her grandmother, entered it followed by Chomba, going to see if her mistress needed anything. The negress helped the señora to undress, then bustled about the room a bit, chattering incessantly and when bidding them goodnight, she said to the young girl:

"Hasta mañana, child, dream of the Angels." and slipped a folded paper under her pillow.

-14-

Rosario shut her eyes so that her grandmother would think she was asleep and listened intently for the slightest sound. She heard the old lady sigh, cough and open the night stand.

"Lord, why are old people so wakeful?" she thought, impatiently. From the dining room came the metallic voice of the cuckoo, half past ten. The señora sneezed.

"How much longer, Dios mio? said the girl to herself.

At last there was silence. Rosario, with infinite precautions, sat up in bed. On top of a swell-front chest of drawers a feeble lamp burned before a Mater Dolorosa in a crystal globe, scarcely giving enough light to show the grandmother's face, but she hadn't moved for some time, she must have gone to sleep. Timidly the girl put back the bed clothes, drew out her bare legs, stepped on the rug and leaned her head forward to see better. The señora was reposing peacefully. So the grandchild, clutching in her hand the folded paper which Chomba had slipped under her pillow, moved cautiously towards the chest of drawers and, by the faint light which hardly reflected on the seven little daggers piercing the breast of the Virgin, she read the letter which began thus:

"Idol of my heart...."

Fernando had not even undressed himself. Shut up in his room and sitting down on the bed, he waited a long time; at last a light tap came on his door; opening it without making any noise he saw Chomba standing there, barefooted and half undressed. She handed him a key and disappeared in the darkness. The boy put out his candle and followed her.

Like shadows they crossed the back patio filled with passion flowers and jasmines and when they reached the entrance to the alley, through which the slaves went in and out, the negro stopped to listen. Fernando drew back the latch of a hidden door and went out. The night breezes refreshed his burning face, he locked the door behind him with the key given him a few moments before and walked up the street, feeling hurried and nervous as he peered into the darkness.

11

GROPING IN THE DARK

As the boy's good luck would have it, he met no patrolman to stop him or carry him off to the Commissariat, which would have subjected him to the terrible consequence next day of having his father learn about his escapade. Recent political events had left the police force in such a lax state that Fernando was able to traverse the long distance he had to go without serious hindrance. His worst fright was in the street of Los Naranjos, where he saw a patrolman pacing towards him from the opposite direction. They would have met face to face, but the boy hid himself around the corner of the Convent, in the shelter of some overhanging willow boughs. The patrolman passed on down the street and the young man continued on his perilous way. Finally he reached an enclosed garden and walked for some distance pressed against the wall. On the summer night air was borne to him the perfume of orange blossoms and chirimoyo blooms.

A ray of light and sound of carousal came through a half-shut door that looked like a hole in the wall. After a moment's hesitation and doubt, Fernando pushed it open and entered a room with adobe walls and a brick tiled floor. In its center a gay young mulatto girl and her beau of like color were shuffling about, an old negro man was playing the guitar and another was beating time on a box, while a chorus of discordant and drunken voices sang:

"Acurrucutú paloma,
Zamba color de canela,
boquito de filigrana,
arza y toma." (2)

The majority of the revelers paid no attention to the unexpected stranger, they were too deeply under the potent spell of their native liquors- pisco, chicha and guarapo. Three or four, looking at him, whispered together and one of them, a lively mulatto boy very little older than Fernando, got up and made a sign for the young gentleman to follow him. They went through two tumble-down rooms and out into the garden. The moon, which had been veiled in heavy clouds until a few minutes before, now shone resplendantly.

"Young gentleman," asked the mulatto, "Why did your honor come in by this door?"

"I do not know; those directions were given me; perhaps I misunderstood."

"It doesn't matter much, they are all so drunk now that they didn't notice; but the other gentlemen entered through the house of the patron."

"Are they in the house now?"

"No, here in the arbor. Doesn't your honor hear their voices?"

"Yes, and I also see the arbor. Thou canst go."

The servant went back and Hinestrosa, now alone, unconsciously slackened his pace; he was not quite sure why he had come or who he would see. A casual encounter with an old friend of his

family, estranged by the unkind edict of don Rodrigo, had told him about these meetings two days before; not making a definite engagement for him to come but suggesting it in a confidential and tempting manner, as man to man, which elated the fevered imagination of the youth all the more. Paternal vigilance, continuous and domineering, was becoming oppressive; it seemed as if his house would fall in and smother him; in defiance he had stolen cautiously away tonight, and now that he was here, he hesitated.....Why?..... Perhaps after all he was only an inexperienced boy as his father said!... Begone childish fears! Forward!

In the rustic arbor overgrown by honeysuckle, intensely fragrant in the warm night air, around a table, lighted by tallow candles, sat six men. Two were dressed in military uniform and the younger of them, seeing Fernando who entered saying "Good evening", beckoned to him with a gesture of pleased surprise, saying "Sit down here", and made room for him on the bench beside him. The others returned the salute of the youth and, taking no further notice of him, went on talking.

"We do not exaggerate"-said a man of fifty years, round faced and clean shaven- "the situation of our cause is grave, but it is not hopeless. The loss of the Forts signifies an important setback; agreed; but what caused it? Simply the disgust of the troops at not receiving their pay and at the despotism of their commander Martinez. Put into plain words it was a vulgar barracks mutiny".

19

"To outward appearance, Marques," answered the friend of Fernando, "but if there had been nothing behind that Necoochea would have succeeded in making an agreement. The Godos (Spanish ^{Loyal} ~~Conserva-~~ ^{ists} ~~tives~~) have undermined very skilfully there, they have worked like clever sappers, intelligent enough to take advantage of the impatient ones who are tired of suffering penalties, and the dissension among others, which in reality constituted our gravest danger, and will end by landing us all in the trap."

"You paint it very black, Aguilera", replied the gentleman called Marques, the owner of the house to be seen dimly through the trees in the moonlight. "We have no reason to despair while we hold Lima."

"Yes," answered Aguilera bitterly, "Lima defended by Torre Tagle, a badly disguised Godo."

"If it only were Riva Agüero!"

"Another just such", responded Aguilera to his companion at arms.

"No. Riva Agüero represents the pure Peruvian character confronted by the absorbent tendency of Colombia."

"There is where we are mistaken and wrong", said Aguilera earnestly, "we Americans mistrust each other instead of forming a union free from jealousy. The Colombians hold a grudge against the Argentines, we suspect first one then another...."

Heroic Times in old Peru

-20-

"And facts justify us." remarked a Priest still young and very carefully dressed. "Bolivar puts Alvarado in command of the Plaza of Callao and he is pursued by the bad luck of Torata and Moqueguá, which now seems likely to overtake the Liberator himself

"The Liberator will soon overcome bad luck and escape intrigues if we help him. Meanwhile, time flies, the situation grows more serious and the Government remains indifferent."

"Indifferent? And the decrees of the Minister of War? And the orders of the President?"

"Lukewarm sop", insisted Aguilera. "Nothing is done, no resolute attitude is taken. And we ourselves, what are we doing? Meeting in the house of our good friend the Marques de la Vega del Genil, almost secretly, as if Laserna were in the Palace instead of Torre Tagle. If a patrolman passes along the front, he will see a tranquil and silent dwelling; if he goes by the side, he will hear echos of the carousal with which the patron allows his slaves to celebrate their Saint's Day. He would never suspect that in an arbor in the garden the Marques and other patriots like him and the Government were talking their throats dry for the good of the Country.... because that is exactly what we are doing to improve things: talking."

"Well then, do something yourself." responded the Marques, annoyed. "Suggest something effective."

21

Heroic Times in old Peru

-21-

"Let us join together unanimously, with one accord, and each undertake the service best fitted to him. You, Marques, bring pressure to bear on Torre Tagle and Berindoaga and induce them to withdraw the munitions of war from Lima before Canterac seizes them. You, Father Calvo, influence Congress.."

"Do not be a simpleton", said the Marques. "Canterac is not coming to Lima. Would he commit the blunder of abandoning his present position? That would be very bad strategy."

"That means", said Aguilera, piqued, "that on my return to Pativilca I must tell the Liberator that nobody in Lima would help me fulfill the commission with which he honored me."

"Aguilera", said an old white-haired gentleman, seated next to the Marques, "you are a Peruvian like ourselves, and you must see that we ought not to throw ourselves blindly into the arms of Colombia."

"We shall be drawn back into the arms of Spain when we are scarcely out of them", murmured Aguilera sullenly-"Oh! These suspicions and jealousies among brothers!"

"But do you believe that our dear neighbors are helping us for the sake of our beautiful face?"

"They are helping us for their own convenience, I know that. If Peru does not throw off the yoke of Spain, the independence of the whole Continent will be endangered. But we will lose all we have gained if we thwart the plans of the Liberator. We must follow him or commit suicide. That is our dilemma."

Heroic Times in old Peru

-22-

The discussion continued in this tone for a good while. Fernando listened in silence, greatly surprised and somewhat confused. Father Calvo seemed more inclined than the others with Aguilera's ideas and he assured him that they were shared by a great many members of Congress, among whom he promised to support them strongly. The principle thing, he said, was to free themselves from the secular yoke; but they must not be looking into the future while the present was submerged in ruin, for the present must be saved at all cost, if it still could be done.

"It can be done" affirmed Aguilera, rising to take his leave.

Still talking, the members of the party crossed the garden, the Marques de la Vega del Genil and the white-haired señor entered the house and the others went out on the street and took their several ways.

"I am going to walk home with thee", said Aguilera to Fernando, taking his arm. "With a Captain of Hussars there is no danger of being molested. How didst thou manage to get here?"

"Without any difficulty", replied the boy shortly.

Aguilera was amused at the youthful petulance which implicitly rejected any offer of protection. Looking at Fernando with a smile he started to say something in affectionate jest, but the prematurely serious face of the young man, now grown almost as tall as himself, drove all thoughts of jesting from his mind.

Heroic Times in old Peru

-23-

"I have been terribly worried about thee ever since we met yesterday in the Alameda de los Descalzos. I almost repented of having been so explicit and increasing thy disquiet. But the pleasure of meeting thee again after such a long time and being able to talk freely as man to man, seeing that thou shareth my opinions, unloosed my tongue and led me to tell thee everything: the object of my coming to Lima, what I think of the present situation and these meetings (perhaps useless) where Vega del Genil.

"The meeting tonight surprised me, I confess" interrupted Fernando. "I thought there would be decision, enthusiasm, that I was going to hear fervent phrases that would kindle my spirit.

"We are passing through a moment of discouragement, better times will come; they must come, Fernando, and soon. That is certain and sure. Our victory has to be complete. The Independence of America is a law of history to be fulfilled as inexorable and exactly as the laws of nature are obeyed. As night follows day, this long period of slavery must be succeeded by liberty! We are forces working in the dark: weak if divided; all powerful if united! And almost without realizing it, we are preparing in the shadows, despite our struggles and sufferings, for the apparition of light. Our eyes shall see the splendour! Have faith!"

Fernando, thrilled by the contagious enthusiasm illuminating the eyes of his companion and vibrating in his virile voice, began to chant the Hymn of Alcedo at the top of his lungs

Heroic Times in old Peru

-24-

"Somos libres: seámoslo siempre!"

(We are free: we always shall be!)

Aguilera, brought back to reality at once, made him stop, laughing.

"Hush, boy! Don't raise a scandal or wake up the city-not yet!"

"The city has no right to slumber peacefully when I cannot sleep. Juan Maria, they say that at my age insomnia is unknown. They lie! If I fall asleep for a moment, I wake up in a terror, as if some one were calling me or going to seize me; I know not what. And since thou hast told me so much....."

"I have added fuel to the flames, I see that.... and it almost pains me to kindle civil war in thy home."

"That war has been kindled a long time, Juan Maria, only it burns underneath like a little flicker under a brush heap. Even my mother and grandmother who, in good faith, believe that they think as my father does, feel, in the depths of their hearts, that they are Peruvians. And Rosario and I, know that we are. My father is suspicious, especially of me.. for at times I cannot keep silent. Words escape me which displease him, not so much for what I say as what he imagines they imply. Thou must understand. He is a Spaniard of the old regime, a blind absolute monarchist, and his spirit is exasperated and wounded by the contradictions and hostility which meet him, openly among his friends and

-25-

concealed at home. At times he says the only remedy for the situation is to sever connections here and take us all to Spain."

Aguilera stopped suddenly.

"To Spain? All? The whole family?" he asked startled.

"That is his desire and, from his point of view, he is right. But it is very difficult, there are many hindrances. However, he is stubborn and if he really sets his mind to it, he will either overcome the obstacles or jump over them."

"Go to Spain.....Leave here..." repeated Juan Maria.

"Yes, leave here, the others, nobody knows when; I, very soon."

"Thou?"

"I, with thee or where thou orderest me to go, where the combat is: to fight for my Country!"

The Captain stopped again and placed his hands on Fernando's shoulders. They looked fixedly in each other's eyes, their faces pale in the moonlight: Fernando's expressing enthusiasm and decision; Juan Maria's doubt and anxious enquiry. As they started on again, Juan Maria said:

"Thou canst not imagine what an enormous responsibility this is for me."

The boy smiled maliciously and this time it was he who assumed a protector's attitude, patting the Captain's shoulder.

"Yes, I know, I am not such a child, and I believe my sister will approve of my going with thee."

-26-

Juan Maria, nervous and surprised, broke out in questions.

"But art thou sure? She told thee? What? When was it?"

"Thou shalt hear. A few evenings ago I was desperate, my life at home is impossible; so much opposition, such utter subjection. However, it is not worth while thinking of what will so soon be over. I was forbidden to leave my room, to speak to anybody, an isolated prisoner- understandest thou? But Rosario, as soon as my father left the house, came to me; we talked together a long time over our affairs; at first we were very sad, but afterwards we were laughing. When I am with Rosario I always laugh. As I had my suspicions I spoke of thee, and....."

"And?" eagerly asked Aguilera.

"Nothing. She confessed everything to me: that she receives letters from thee, that she loves thee and, as soon as we conquer the Godos, that she is going to marry thee even if the whole world opposes it."

"Give me an embrace, boy!" exclaimed Aguilera, radiant, and almost dancing as he hugged him. "And what more?"

"What more?" asked Fernando amazed, who considered the subject quite exhausted. "Why, nothing more! Tell me now, shall I go with thee or wilt thou await my coming at the Headquarters of the Liberator?"

Heroic Times in old Peru

-27-

"My dear fellow, I cannot answer thee yet. I must think it over and make some plan, but I give thee my word that, in a short time, I will help thee to get away. And I will arrange to send thee word."

"Yes, thou hast a reliable messenger."

"Don Rodrigo, who hates me now," said Aguilera pensively-- "how will he feel towards me if he discovers that I have robbed him of his son?"

"It will show him that thou canst take something of more interest"..said the boy laughing with the merciless inconsistency of his age.

Fernando was transfigured, his dark face flushed, his teeth gleamed in his laughing mouth, his eyes scintillated, and his voice expressed a new animation. Nobody, seeing him, would have taken him for the same bashful youth of unfriendly countenance who, a few hours before, had unwillingly muttered Gloria Patri and Ora pro nobis. Aguilera had to reiterate his promise several times and even sketch a plan of procedure, before the boy was satisfied, and he even insisted that they go on talking when they had reached the Calle Valladolid.

"No, no, nothing would induce me to talk here", said Juan Maria, sadly looking up at the house of his sweetheart, now inexorably closed to him like a Paradise Lost. "I will go

Heroic Times in old Peru

-28-

and thou must enter very quietly, through the alley, and may thy good star save thee from any dangerous encounter."

Fernando shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. A soldier of Peru feared nobody, not even the Commandant of Artillery, don Rodrigo de Hinestrosa, himself, the terrifying incarnation of paternal authority. He wanted to say so to Juan Maria, but the young officer was now lost in the darkness, arrogant and grave in his Hussar's uniform.

The boy had to content himself in silence and, recovering prudence, he opened the secret door. All was quiet, nobody to be seen in the alley, the back patio or his own room, where he finally arrived safely, shutting himself in where he could do as he pleased and feel at home. "We are free: we always shall be!" And he got into bed, this time to sleep for many hours that restful sleep of a weary pilgrim who, after long, anxious search, has found the right path.

Heroic Times in old Peru

-29-

1 1 1

CHILDHOOD

The father of Aguilera was an Army Officer from Andalusia, more heroic than fortunate, who died quelling a revolt in Huamanga which was later found to be connected with the conspiracy of Aguilar and Ubalde. His widow was left sick and prostrated by the cruel blow and she and her little Juan Maria had no protector except her husband's much older brother, don Cesme. He, in company with don Pedro Centeno had amassed a considerable fortune by selling prints, percales, chintzes, Castilian beiges, the famous, many threaded cloth of Segovia and Filipina silks. The good señor shouldered the burden of his sisterinlaw and small nephew without the slightest hesitation and, as his Christian matrimony had not been blessed with fruit, he and his consort fairly lost their heads over the little orphan, as restless and naughty as any other of his age; but so lively, affectionate and cunning that it was impossible to deal severely with him. Through their indulgence his mischievous pranks were allowed to go beyond all endurance, which, to be perfectly truthful, was just what might have been expected.

-30-

Don Cosme Aguilera and Misia Benita, his wife, were so enchanted with the child that they made him the subject of serial stories, told for the benefit of their friends, each installment of which contained the varied repertory of his graces and deviltries, and they always ended the narrative by producing the hero himself for fuller delectation of the public.

The house most favored by the infantile visits of Juan Maria was, of course, that of don Pedro Centeno where, from the beginning, the Hinestrosas were quartered. The two old men discoursed on politics and business as usual; the señoras chatted about their devotions, family affairs, domestic problems and neighborly gossip, while Juana Rosa, whose tender heart was touched by the misfortune of the young widow and her constant sadness, would carry her off to her own apartments of a recently married woman, to console and distract her. The child went with them, heralding his march with the sound of cornet and prancing upon an imaginary steed. Don Rodrigo, on seeing them arrive, would salute the mother and, turning to the little boy, would ask him:

"And what dost thou propose to ~~be~~ when thou art grown?"

"A General!" invariably replied Juan Maria.

"Well then, my General, go you to the back patio to drill your troops, for we cannot stand your noise here."

-31-

"Chomba, look after the child", ordered Juana Rosa.

"Don't give too much trouble, my life", recommended his mother, not venturing to ask the impossible.

Juan Maria never forgot his plays in that back patio, whose walls were a mass of climbing Bride roses, ever blooming Jasmine and Passion Flowers (which latter blooms inspired gallant comparison to the mysterious eyes of Creole beauties). Chomba would sit down on the ground and watch the boy for a moment and then go off to her work, leaving as substitute her son, a small negro of twelve years who, pretending to let the little fellow have his own way, taught him new and risky tricks, making him promise, on sacred oath, that he would not tell on him. The young negro was soon convinced that "Master Juan Maria" was no tell-tale, and to that early faith in his gentlemanly honour, the little boy owed the delight of new and charming amusements: setting bonfires in a corner of the kitchen; spending breathless hours watching a mouse hole, until the tiny beast emerged and he could grab it and carry it off tied to a string to frighten the servants; making raids on dove cote and chicken house, where he incited revolutions of terrified birds and fowls; and, best of all, running away to the big corral and riding a real horse.. .. O, supreme delight!

Heroic Times in old Peru

-32-

At first Chomba's son led the steed by the bridle, but Juan Maria, strong-headed and audacious, soon got rid of his squire and, holding on by the horse's mane, galloped around the large corral, shrieking in triumphant glee. Once the animal threw him over his head, but the boy did not mind it. Neither was he frightened when, on a memorable occasion, don Rodrigo unexpectedly appeared. That gentleman was enraged at seeing the horseman, whom he instantly dismounted, and he wished to hold the little negro responsible for the outrage. But Juan Maria cried out: "It isn't his fault; I ordered him to bring me to the corral," with more arrogant assurance than the Prince of Asturias himself. Don Rodrigo had to content himself with sending "that spoiled brat home to worry his own family"; and by expressing, in plain language, his opinion of the lax discipline of don Cosme and the child's mother- in which his wife joined him for once.

Soon the visits of Juan Maria grew less frequent; his mother became worse day by day and, in order to give her a rest, he was sent to school. On holidays he was carried to the Hinestrosas, but now his arrival did not cause so much commotion for there was a person in the family who claimed his whole consideration- the baby granddaughter. While she was in the cradle or being carried in arms, he noticed her

-33-

very little, but as soon as she could run about, she rose many degrees in his estimation.

Perhaps the protective affection Juan Maria felt for the tiny thing came from gratified vanity at the admiration he inspired in her. As for the baby, when he was present the rest of humanity ceased to exist: her parents, Mama Trini, Chomba; all were unnoticed. Juan Maria was her prime favorite: inventor of charming games and owner of splendid treasures which he kept pulling out of his small pockets. That they were shapeless from so much handling only enhanced their interest. The boy swelled visibly before the joyful amazement he called forth and his fertile imagination supplied new ways of provoking her laughter, hand clappings and caresses. That was his manner of responding to the passion of which he was the object and which enraged don Rodrigo.

"See to it that this little rascal does not teach the child badness for us," he would mutter; or when chiding his wife he would say, "The fault is all thine that thy daughter is so spoiled, for allowing her to play with that bad boy". But it would never do to fall out with the Aguileras by shutting their house to the boy and after all he did not give them cause for quite such extreme measures. So Hines-trosa ended by yielding to his wife's reasonings who, on her part, could not help being captivated by the boy's grace

Heroic Times in old Peru

-34-

and loving condescension to her small darling.

However, as they grew older, their relations changed somewhat. Juan Maria took perverse delight in making Rosario angry and she, although crying and fretting at his teasing, never wanted him to leave her. On one occasion he had exasperated her to such an extent by making promises which he instantly broke that she became furious and with all the strength of her five years, she dug her finger nails into his face. The blood spurted out and she broke into sobs, frightened almost out of her wits. Juan Maria magnanimously consoled her by insisting that the scratch did not pain him. How could such a big boy as he, be hurt by a little girl like her? The convincing reflections and cajollings of her friend calmed the child who, in spite of compunctions, vaguely felt proud of finding herself capable of inflicting pain on a being so far superior

Thus passed the happy, carefree childhood of Juan Maria and puberty was approaching without his light-hearted gaiety being disturbed by family clouds. His mother, weaker each day, semi-reclining on a divan in her bedroom, passed hours of suffering and her palid face was animated only when she had her boy beside her and could smother him in kisses and tender words. Juan Maria could not remember ever having seen his mother happy, and so he grew accustomed, with filial egotism, to seeing her sick and sad. His old uncle and aunt had grown to love their

Heroic Times in old Peru

-35-

delicate and submissive sister-in-law like a daughter, but could find no means of restoring her health: physicians, quack doctors, household remedies, prayers; they tried everything and all proved useless. Don Cosme thought of something more radical- change of climate- and consulted the physicians on the advisability of a journey to Spain. They approved, recommending some city of mild temperature.

"Of course," answered the old man well content. "I will take her to my old home, to my Andalusia, and there we shall see what can be done. Málaga, Cádiz, Almeria..... there are many good places to choose from."

Don Cosme had been dreaming of going back to his native land for a long time. America was getting to be uninhabitable. It seemed as if a demon of rebellion had stirred up malevolent winds and turned the vast territory, enriched by all the gifts of nature, into an enormous battle field. Not even the most peaceful soul could live tranquilly. He had thought only of working honestly, without meddling in any of the opposing political parties; but, like everybody else, he had a soul in his body, and he could not tolerate, in his presence, abuses and tirades against the rule of his Mother Country and defamatory attacks on his King and Lord. He would have to go away. To Spain! To Spain! He and his wife wanted to pass their last days in the land where they

-36-

were born and educate Juan Maria there, to make him a true son of Spain, like those who in good old times knew how to die for their King and their religion. To Spain! To his glorious Spain; vanquisher of the French invader! What was there to keep them in Peru? Neither family ties, since they would emigrate all together, nor business interests, for they could be wound up in three days.

The three days imagined by the good señor were complicated many times over. Separating his capital from that of Centeno; liquidating accounts; drawing up powers of attorney for the administration of properties that could not be sold, a multitude of details and endless work delayed him. And also he was detained on more than one occasion by the ill health of his sisterinlaw. So, much against his will, Aguilera's stay in Lima was greatly prolonged.

Juan Maria also wanted to get away. He could already picture himself on board, pacing the deck from stem to stern, standing beside the captain on the bridge to watch the ship's management or tangling himself in the rigging or climbing the masts with the sailors, for he intended to join in the most varied nautical labors. That he could miss anything he left behind, never occurred to him: neither the orchards where he played hockey and stuffed himself with oranges, granadillas and lúcuma plums; nor the shady school; nor the Alameda de

-37-

los Descalzos, where he was accustomed to lay in a supply of chorolques (a fruit whose shiny, black balls made excellent marbles), nor the house of Hinestrosa, nor the cunning little Rosarito. No, he wanted new things and delays irked him.

The only person delighted by postponements was the invalid. "I want to die in my own country", she said in strict confidence to Juana Rosa when they were alone together. And in her own country, in the sweet city of her birth, she did die: almost unperceived; half reclining on her divan, dressed in white and gazing at the little son nearby who was amusing himself by packing a portmanteau for the desired journey, unaware of the fact that his mother had embarked on the mysterious voyage of eternity.

Soon afterwards the Aguileras set sail for Spain, but treading the deck, the adolescent youth in deep mourning thought no longer of watching navigation or furling sails. He only knew that the barque, on its gallant way, was bearing him farther and farther from the land where floated the melancholy spirit of his mother.

IV

YOUTHFUL FERVOR

When don Cosme first arrived in Cádiz, he was as merry as a cricket, going into raptures over the advance of progress at one place, and falling into tender reminiscences further on when coming upon some little park where he once played as a boy, or an iron-barred window- the scene of his first flirtation- then breaking into joyful exclamations on meeting an old friend. But as time went on, a shadow crept over the radiant landscape which his imagination had painted from memory during the long years of absence; and the deserted country beyond seas took on that romantic enchantment always lent by distance. In truth the good, simple, methodical merchant could not escape from his human inheritance of everlasting nostalgia, which injects a dash of poetry into the most prosaic of men.

At evening social gatherings or while taking long walks with their friends in the morning sunshine through Calle Ancha and Plaza de San Antonio, the Aguileras began to extoll the excellencies and beauties of distant Peru. The mild climate in such a province; the fertile soil in another; the mineral wealth of some other; the delicious fruits,

wonderful cooking, luxury of dress, faithfulness of the slaves, and the kindness of the people: all were expatiated upon with as much homesick enthusiasm as had been lavished, a short time before, on the anticipated joy of returning to their native land.

Never would they have left Peru- they explained- if the revolutionary fever which had created such havoc in the rest of America had not begun there. Unfortunately Spain had not altogether escaped from the infection of pernicious changes. They had suspected as much from letters, newspapers and reports of travelers; but now, seeing things for themselves, they realized that the harm had been greater than they could have imagined. And at this point, all the old people joined in a general wail of complaints and comparisons between the Cádiz of their time and the present city. First it had been despoiled by foreign heretics, then invaded by the French (the English helping to defend it), a few years before, when they used to sing that song

"Con las bombas que tiran
los fanfarrones
se hacen las gaditanas
tirabuzones." (6)

And then in 1812 the wretched Cortes issued that Liberal Constitution.

To these common grounds of discontent deplored with their contemporaries, the Aguileras added others of a most personal nature which were, perchance, the principal cause of their unrest. They were finding themselves out of place in their own country. Long absence had uprooted them from their native soil, for they had shaped their lives and watched the years roll by to the rhythm of distinctly different customs. Their few old friends who were still living (those girls who went to school with Benita and the bad little boys who ran away with Cosme to cut up capers in the Shipyard), after the first moments of effusion and the mutual exchange of long repertoires of "Dost thou still remember?" or "Hast thou forgotten?"- stood looking at the South Americans not knowing what to say and not understanding what the travelers said to them.

Something else pained the Aguileras deeply. They were realizing that their friends were all in the long ago; and this sensation of remoteness overwhelmed them when they met the children of some companion of other days and greeted them with: "I was an intimate friend of thy deceased father", or an emotional: "I grew up like a sister with thy poor mother- God rest her soul!-" for the young people responded in phrases of vague politeness which revealed the impassable gulf of indifference stretching between them.

The same conditions that disillusioned and depressed his uncle and aunt produced an opposite effect on Juan Maria. Though Cádiz was saddened for them by the shadows of their home-sick old age, it was bright and blooming in promise to the lad in the dawn of his young manhood. The old people had grown more kind and generously indulgent with the years, and their petted nephew was allowed to enjoy the pleasant life of a rich youth, without any obligation on his part except the congenial one of dedicating a few hours each day to study. And this taste for learning facilitated his entry into the literary circles for which Cádiz had been noted since the beginning of that century, when the Academy of Belles Lettres was founded, through whose halls, as beardless youths, there strolled the afterwards celebrated orator don Antonio Alcalá Galiano and the no less famous don José Joaquín de Mora, who, as time went on, figured so prominently in Peru.

The old people were delighted to see their boy developing into a man, so fine looking and elegant, forming friendly relations with other distinguished youths who were introducing him into the best society of Cádiz. The city, "all white and glistering", owed her name of "The Silver Cup", not only to external cleanliness but rather more to the beautiful manners of her sons and the culture and comforts of domestic life which, for that period, were extraordinarily advanced. The inhabitants of Cádiz boasted vaingloriously that not even the Royal City and Palaces were

fitted out with as fine mahogany furniture, solid silver and choice crystal and tableware as their homes had; and that nowhere could be found such good taste in dressing as their native city. And they claimed that the fine courtesy and kindly hospitality for which they were noted, resulted logically from these material advantages.

Contemplating Juan Maria, so handsome, studious and well-connected socially, came to be the only solace of don Cosme's failing years. As the indispositions of age caused him to lead a very secluded life, and as he had always been a man of scant intellect and narrow outlook, he now saw only the superficial brilliancy and never suspected those hidden tendencies which would have much disturbed his innocent satisfaction. For that well-bred society of Cádiz and the student gatherings were fairly seething with flaming passions and daring ideas. These were not apparent to don Cosme's feeble vision and before they could burst into the light of midday, a merciful death carried away the excellent old gentleman, saving him from seeing his nephew drawn into the center of what he would have characterized as a malignant whirlpool.

Poor doña Benita was indeed bereft. Deprived of the protective shadow which had been thrown across her pathway by the devoted companion of more than half a century, she was plunged into a solitude of soul and body which proved too great for her feeble strength and she passed gently from this world soon after the death of her husband.

All this happened as the year 1819 was drawing to a close and Juan Maria, although sincerely grief-stricken for he was neither ungrateful nor lacking in affection, found himself soon consoled by the natural guerdon of his twenty charming summers. For the joys of youth were much enhanced by the complete independence from material cares afforded by his handsome inheritance. And these attractions, together with the ardor of his young blood, not only made Juan Maria an object of attentions and demands of various kinds but inclined him to accept everything and go everywhere, seeking to satisfy the restless curiosity agitating his spirit.

Among other interests, of course, those of a sentimental nature entered into his life and as the young Creole erred on the side of precocious audacity rather than backward timidity, he had not been in Spain long before rumors reached don Cosme's ears of flirtations in polite society as well as certain adventures with one of those sirens of tempting gestures and roguish tongue. Such passing fancies aroused Juan Maria like the rising sap of springtime effects the tree or gives to the bee a desire to sip honey from divers blossoms, until he knew the sweet torment of a more ardent infatuation which presented great obstacles.

The woman who inspired this passion had the suggestive name of Araceli, and Juan Maria saw her for the first time one night when he was under the spell of never-to-be-forgotten emotions.

The struggle between Liberals and Conservatives or Absoluteists, was then inflaming the atmosphere of Cádiz and also heating the dreaming head of the young man from Lima. But while his companions were saying, "A constitution or death!", he, filled with love for his distant native land, cried out to himself, "Give us independence or death!"

Everything contributed to strengthen his faith in the realization of an ideal liberty. Many months before an army had been assembled to be sent out to America but its departure had been delayed, and he felt sure that this failure to embark the troops was owing to the opposition of the soldiers and even a good part of the officers against undertaking the chimerical venture of trying to continue an empire which was no longer possible.

Count de La Bisbal, Commander of the Forces and Captain General of Andalusia, allowed months of his administration in Cádiz to pass without hurrying up the embarkation of the troops. This was either because he feared an uprising or that he was also under the influence of being converted to the new ideas, which led him to tolerate the secret societies then beginning to make their teachings felt. They were kept as much as possible in the dark but their members were uniting into a vast confraternity, all working incessantly to overthrow old ideas of government. And Aguilera, who was almost hypnotized by the

Order of Free Masonry, rejoiced with pride that two men who had given the strongest impulse to this reform, were, like himself, Americans. They were the glorious Venezuelan Miranda, who founded the Grand American Lodge in London, and that of Lautaro or Caballeros Racionales in Cádiz; and Olavide, the genial Peruvian, who established the Junta of South American Cities and Towns in Madrid. The seeds sown thus were bearing fruit not only in the New Continent, already liberated in its greater part, but also in the Peninsula itself, where, in 1812, the Liberal Cortes assembled, among whose members figured with great triumph such Americans as Morales Duárez and Mejia Lequerica.

Juan Maria, somewhat melancholy on account of family sorrows, decided that he was surfeited with diversions and light pleasures and that he ought to dedicate his time to higher things. The first step towards such ends was to join the Masons. And setting himself to work, it was soon accomplished. On the night of his initiation, he left the Lodge elated and nervous and he kept running over in his excited mind the suggestive scenes just enacted. He recalled his entrance into the hall, with his eyes bandaged, walking between two brother probationers. He heard again the blows of the gavel announcing their arrival, the voice of the Grand Master putting them through the questions of the ritual, and his own responding with an energy that surprised even himself.

Then, when they uncovered his eyes, he saw the hall was filled with people of very high position, some of whom he never could have expected to see in such a place. There were military men and laborers as well as the companions of his merry social circle. All were his brothers: members of the vast family which he had just joined, vowing, on taking the first grade of initiation, to fight unceasingly for the Independence of America. He hoped to advance much in a short time and soon to make his profession of democratic faith by passing into the second grade. Afterwards..... On the wings of ambitious patriotism the fancy of Aguilera soared. He saw himself a Knight Errant of the Red Cross, a leader in the free and prosperous republic which he would help to make of Peru. Such plans and dreams filled his mind as he walked through the solitary streets of Cádiz, lighted by a magnificent moon.

All at once the door of a house opened and in it appeared a woman wrapped in a velvet cloak. She was bareheaded, her hair combed after the fashion of the Empress Josephine, caught high on her head with little curls falling on both sides of her forehead and face. Between long eyelashes her almond-shaped eyes shone. On seeing her Juan Maria stopped short, quite enchanted. She looked at him also and smiled. Was that smile meant for a temptation, a jest or a promise? The youth could not find out then because just behind her came a man of advanced years who, took her by the arm, piloted her across the street and knocked on the door of a house opposite. When the door was opened they both went inside.

Spying around the house, Juan Maria noticed dim candle-light shining from a balcony on the second floor, and across the window pane, he perceived a feminine silhouette; then somebody closed the wooden shutters and all was gloomy darkness. He raised his eyes to the sky and found the moon had gone behind a cloud.

Early next morning, he began making enquiries about the unknown charmer and trying to find some way of meeting her. He learned that she was married to a Naval Officer, fifty years old, who was on shore duty because after taking unto himself a wife young enough to be his daughter, he gave up going to sea, being reluctant to separate from the apron strings to which he was tied.

Notwithstanding marital precautions, the gallantry of Aguilera and his tenacious siege overcame the resistance of the lady, who was bored by her monotonous and repressed life and thirsting for novelty. The lover's liberal bounties secured him valuable assistance, even within the besieged fortress, and despite the old husband's vigilance, Juan Maria and Arceli met almost daily in an appointed place and seasoned the rapture of their passionate interviews with the spicy salt of anxious fears lest they be discovered. In the arms of that ardent and experienced woman of thirty, Juan Maria forgot how much of his love was intoxication. But when alone, he reproached himself for running the risk of exposing to an outraged husband's vengeance the life which belonged to his subjugated country.

The saving solution was in flight; but flight with her. Juan Maria found himself capable of any gigantic effort except the superhuman one of separating from Areceli, and he told her so in stirring tones, proposing numberless projects, all most illogical, for their going away together to America.

She promised to elope with him whenever an opportune time presented itself, meanwhile, was it not true that he was playing a very important role in Cádiz, where the majority of people were conspiring to depose Ferdinand VII and reestablish the Constitution of 1812? Would not this new promulgation insure the Independence of America? And Juan Maria, who was enduring a fevered existence of danger and mystery, between his illicit passion and the secret meetings of the Masons, enhanced by their theatrical ritual, relieved the nervous tension from which he was suffering by confiding to his lady love all that he considered safe to tell, since it was already known to many others. Areceli listened and, at intervals, casually questioned him on certain details.

It was whispered about everywhere during those days that before long the troops quartered in several Andalusian cities would proclaim the Liberal Constitution. Among these were the soldiers stationed at the port of Santa Maria and when their Commanding Officers, awaiting word from Cádiz, were drilling their troops as usual at a place called Palmar, in order not to arouse suspicion, they were surprised by Government forces from Jerez and Cádiz, commanded by Count La Bisbal, whom they had believed to be a supporter of the conspiracy.

Although, so far as word of mouth went, the conspiracy had been kept secret, the public suspected the Governor of being among those implicated in it. But when the news spread that his forces had suppressed the uprising, a rumor was circulated that a complicated plot of espionage had been carried on in which the most important role was played by a woman.

This rumor reached the ears of Aguilera who was down-cast and out of sorts not only on account of the political disaster but also because his mistress was absent, her tyrannical husband having taken her to Seville where he was ordered on some commission.

One afternoon Juan Maria was commenting bitterly on the events and gossip then rampant with a member of his Lodge when, to his joyful surprise, he saw his rival, the Naval Officer approaching who passed saluting Aguilera's companion. Then Areceli must have returned to Cádiz. But why had she not let him know? Whyt hadn't she found some way of communicating with him? *it did not matter as* However, he would soon see her and everything would be cleared up.

On the contrary, everything quickly became darker. Juan Maria's friend, pointing out the husband carelessly, said:

"Rumor says that man played a brilliant part in this business."

"He?" asked Juan Maria stupified, "But what part could he play?"

"I do not believe he had anything to do with it, but they insist everywhere that he used a certain designing adventuress, who gave him part but not the exclusive benefit of her charms. And under his directions she gave a love potion to a young gallant who was implicated in the plot so that his tongue would unloose. In that way she discovered our secret."

Aguilera was completely overwhelmed. Had he been made an involuntary informer against his cause? A ridiculous pawn in the tragic farce? Impossible!

This last word was spoken aloud, surprising his friend.

"But my dear fellow, why impossible?"

"Why, because that man is married. I have seen him with his wife who is so young and beautiful one can be sure he takes care she does not deceive him."

"Married? No such thing! He was, I do not know how many years ago but his wife died and now he consoles himself with the companionship of easily purchased beauties. They say he used one of them as a Government agent in the business which ended so sadly for us at Palmar. But, I repeat, in my opinion it is not so and my reasons are these....."

He began explaining details but Juan Maria did not hear one word he said. He was thinking only of how he could get away without arousing his friend's suspicions, in order to find the perfidious deceiver and wring a confession from her.

But he never saw her again. All efforts to find her proved in vain. And after numberless investigations the conviction was forced upon him that he had not only been betrayed but probably sold as well. That Areceli was not the Naval man's wife he soon discovered and consequently he realized that he, and not the supposed husband, had been duped. Instead of being a seducer, he had been seduced. What he could not bring himself to believe was that she would have used their love to ferret out his secrets and exploit them.

In order to end all doubts on the question he went to Seville. But no better luck attended him there. Indications were vague and though several clues were followed up they furnished no new information. In spite of all this he did not neglect his political obligations. Following the instructions of his Lodge in Cadiz, he got into touch with General Riego, whose troops still resisted being sent to America. Juan Maria astutely encouraged their rebellion but knowing how necessary it was for him to avoid being suspected, he gave up his frequent trips from Seville to Utrera and installed himself in the latter town, putting up at the house of some workmen.

His daily life was, apparently, so idle and careless that police vigilance was lulled but he kept in secret communication with General Riego, who was preparing for the movement which took place in Cabezas de San Juan on January 1st, 1820. This frustrated the expedition to America

and Aguilera's object was achieved. But the primordial end of the rebellion and the real purpose of the Spanish Liberals, was even yet far from being realized. Aguilera felt he could not abandon Riego, so he remained at his side for a few months, until when the Constitution of 1812 was proclaimed in divers parts of the Peninsula, Ferdinand VII had to champ on the bit and restrain his tyrannical impulses. However he gave them loose rein three years later, when, aided by the hundred thousand sons of San Luis, he once more imposed absolutism on his country.

Taking advantage of the respite given to the Liberals by Spain, Juan Maria, fearing it would not last, decided he would go back to America. Nothing more could be done in the Peninsula. The illusions he had built on Free Masonry were vanishing, for the spirit of fraternity which permeated that Order did not seem elastic enough to include American affairs in the important value they attached to those of Europe. If he were good for anything better than to be the instrument of an intriguing woman, he would prove it in Peru. In the Peru from whence he heard voices calling him: one, the blessed memory of his mother; the other a manly longing to possess a country: a country of his very own- and free!

V

CUPID PERVERSE

Rosarito entered the drawing room with her arms full of flowers and began arranging them in vases and pottery jars, made of a sweet-scented earth, called búcaros. One of these she filled entirely with bride's roses. Her mother always chided her for preferring them, saying that Mosquetes, as she insisted on calling them, were not choice flowers. But to the maiden there were no others more beautiful: none so white and fragrant, none shaped so daintily or clustered in such tiny bouquets, as bride's roses. It may be, perchance, that she loved them not so much for their form and perfume as for their name.

In the summer midday heat the drawing room seemed like a potporri. In the vases and búcaros were ever-blooming jasmine and bride's roses from the back patio, and distributed in crystal bowls, a floral offering from the Monastery of La Trinidad, gave out the mingled scent of many flowers. Arabian jasmine of penetrating perfume, spicy blossoms of the Capulin cherry, and golden flowers of the aromatic Myrrh. Rosario could not seem to finish her labors. She came and went from one end of the large room to the other, straightening a branch here and stooping over a bowl further on to bury her little nose in its mixture of blossoms as if she wished to saturate herself in the pungent fragrance.

In her white batiste dress, with its short waist and full skirt, her arms and neck bare, and her dark hair hanging loose, still damp from a recent bath, delicious in her fresh and innocent grace, Rosarito seemed like some nymph of Spring who had mischievously strayed into that austere saloon. Perhaps she thought so herself, for she smiled coquettishly at her own image reflected in the great gilt-framed mirror that hung from the ceiling almost to the marble console, incrustated with Mother of Pearl.

A knock on the glass door leading to the patio interrupted her contemplation; the girl started towards it but stopped half way. Her mother did not like her to open doors when anyone knocked. God knows who it might be! Perhaps a robber or a bandit! Girls should never expose themselves; slaves were for such things, they could see who it was and tell their mistress, and if it were a visitor, she would receive them in the drawing room, while her children peeped behind the cracks.

Through the glass Rosario could see the tall figure of a gentleman. Was it not failing in kindness to leave him there in the patio, in the midday sun, while she went to another part of the house and ordered a servant to admit him? The reasonable and right thing would be for her to invite him in to rest and then send word to her elders who, being in the midst of their siesta would know nothing about it; and even if they did know! Sooner or later she must do such things; and after all the lion was never so fierce as he was painted. Animated by these reflections, Rosarito opened the door, and the gentleman standing there took off his hat and bowed reverently.

"Come in sir," she said, as any well-brought up girl would do.

Now they were both in the drawing room and the girl had lost her tongue. The gentleman looked at her, looked and smiled, without saying a word. And it seemed to her, standing there before that glance and smile, more felt than seen, that waves of fire were rolling over her burning cheeks. At last she gained courage to raise her sweet black eyes to the visitor.

"Rosarito," he murmured taking one of her hands, "is it really thou?"

The maiden answered by nodding her head and her curious eyes asked the question which her lips did not dare utter.

The visitor understood for he laughingly enquired:

"What! Thou dost not know me? Think well and thou wilt remember."

Rosario examined him carefully, her timidity almost gone. Had she by any chance ever seen this fine looking young man who wore with so much elegance his well cut trousers and close fitting blue frock coat with its silk lined tails? She tried to study his face. A stiff, high stock gave greater force to the strongly marked features, and the hair growing back from the forehead accentuated its height; his hazel eyes were darkened by very black lashes and brows, his nose was aquiline, his lips thin and red, his skin warm-toned and clean-shaven except for little, well-trimmed side whiskers that stretched to the top of his ears. A merry and affectionate smile lit up the manly face and made it seem almost tender. That

Chap. V - 4

smile was what revealed him to the young girl and she smiled quite trustingly in return.

"There now!" said the pleased young man, "Thou hast not forgotten Juan Maria?"

"I do not know how I could recognize you after so many years; it seems to me I only guessed who you were."

"You?" protested Aguilera, "That I shall never consent to on any condition. We must be thee and thou to each other as when thou wert a little girl and we played together. Dost thou remember, Rosario? How pretty thou wert! I did not think then that thou couldst ever be any prettier, but now I see my mistake. Thou art a perfect beauty, child."

"Juan Maria!"

"How I have wanted to see thee! How much we have to talk over! Come, let us sit down."

Leading her to a sofa he sat down beside her. Rosario let him do so, a little surprised at the confident assurance with which the recently arrived visitor conducted himself in another person's house, and a bit worried for fear her parents might appear, but so dominated by the new sensation of a tête à tête interview with a man that she had not the will power to interrupt it.

"When I thought of returning to Lima, it was meeting thee again that most attracted me."

(Although this was not true, Aguilera was so persuaded it was when he said it, that the unconscious lie really amounted to a truth.)

Chap. V - 5

"And thou? Didst thou sometimes think of me?"

"Many times. I never played with anybody as with thee; and at times I was very bad; I remember that one afternoon I gave thee a tremendous scratch."

"Tremendous it must have seemed to thee because it afflicted thee so. How much I had to do to console thee!"

Rosarito probably had not forgotten those consolations for she blushed. Aguilera, seeing the sudden color in her cheeks, was a little confused, and to relieve her embarrassment he enquired for the family; then she wanted him to tell her about his travels; but though they pretended to talk about general things, the conversation always returned along the path of their personal reminiscences.

"I remember" - said Aguilera - "the last time we played together; it was the evening before my poor mother died, and no doubt that is the reason why every detail is so clear in my mind. When the bell rang for prayers we were obliged to go in but as soon as thou couldst escape to the back patio, thou madest signs for me to follow thee. Thou wert only half a yard high, and dressed in white as thou art now; a climbing rose had just bloomed, the breeze moved its white sprays and it seemed to thee that they were calling thee but thou couldst not reach them, so I lifted thee up in my arms to gather them. Dost thou remember?"

"Yes; they were bride's roses like these" - the girl answered, pointing to the cluster she was wearing.

"Bride's roses!" repeated Juan Maria slowly, looking at Rosario so intently that she rose to her feet in confusion.

Chap. V - 6

"My parents do not know thou art here and they will be so glad to see thee."

"I also wish to see them, please tell them," replied Aguilera without the least jot of enthusiasm.

"No, I cannot tell them," answered the girl, brought back to reality. "What would they do if they knew I had received a visitor alone? They very seldom call me when anybody comes. They say that young girls should be in their own rooms, occupied in their duties, and not in the parlor with formal visitors."

"Could I ever be a formal visitor to thee, Rosarito?" questioned Juan Maria, who listened to her with as much enchantment as if she were a lovely little warbling bird.

"To me, no." answered the girl quickly. "But it remains to be seen what they may say. Goodbye for now, and remember when they call me in, thou must salute me as if thou hadst not seen me and even show surprise at finding me so grown up. Take care, don't forget."

"Rely on me," responded Aguilera, reluctantly letting go her hand which he had held since she started to take leave of him.

And that was the first secret between Rosario and Juan Maria.

The family received him with open arms; Mama Trini exclaimed in amazement to find him a man, as if it were something exceptional and unexpected. Juana Rosa was much moved, imagining how delighted his poor mother would be if she could see him; and

Ayacucho

Chap V. - 7

don Rodrigo gave him an unmistakable proof of his pleasure by presenting the two children; then Aguilera, obeying his gracious instructions, expressed his astonishment to find them so grown up. They invited him to luncheon on the next Sunday.

"Without any ceremony whatever, quite informally" - added Juana Rosa. "So that thou canst feel like a child again and once more taste our native dishes. Perhaps thou art not so fond now of Causa as we call Chomba's Potato Salad."

"Poor Chomba! I have not had time to ask about her. How is she? Very old?"

"Almost the same," answered Mama Trini. "Thou knowest that colored people change little and seldom look old."

"Then, she must make Causa as well as ever and that wonderful stew we call Chupe, and anticuchos and delicious little yuca tarts," went on Juan Maria, with the interest of an epicure.

"And what can you tell me of her son? What awful mischief we used to get into together!"

"He drives our chaise now; we married him last year to Goyita; don't you remember her? A little mulatto girl who took care of Rosarito. They have a baby six months old; he is blacker and uglier than his daddy."

"But very cunning," put in Rosarito, who had scarcely opened her lips.

After the lunch on Sunday, followed by a drive through the Alameda de los Descalzos, in the chaise driven by his old tutor in mischief, Juan Maria often visited the Hinestrosa house, if not

Chap. V--8--

with the assiduity of his childish days, as he would have liked, as frequently as good manners allowed. The ladies received him with much affection, especially Mama Trini, who, knowing how fond he was of good things to eat, always gave him a cup of mazamorra, (9) or a plate of cocoa-nut preserves or frijoles, cooked as only Chomba knew how to do, besides sprinkling his handkerchief with Cologne and making him take a handful of fragrant mixtura (10) to put among his clothes. Juana Rosa was also kind but maternal discretion soon made her watchful.

"Look here, Rodrigo," she said one night to her husband, "I warn thee in time so that thou canst not pretend later that I am a foolish mother or that my mind wanders and I cannot see what goes on. Juan Maria does not come here just to be coming. I think he loves Rosarito."

"Don't be silly, woman! Such a young man of the world is not going to notice a child he saw in her cradle."

"What has that got to do with it? O, thou thinkest everybody is going to see the girl with thine eyes and look on her as a little child. But thou dost not realize that at her age I married thee."

Don Rodrigo was a bit perplexed.

"Thou lackest not reason," he finally confessed, "Time does fly and we must think of marrying the dear child off. Juan Maria would not be a bad parti."

"She may not realize anything about it at present but I have eyes and I notice that Rosarito is always going to the kitchen lately to learn how to cook nice things."

"What nonsense women think of!" grumbled her gallant husband. "How could the girl do these things with a double meaning? That would be past all reason! She has to amuse herself in someway; at times it is embroidering silk flowers, again it is cooking or taking care of the plants; but she is not capable of such grown-up thoughts; nor would I allow it. Thou mayst be right in suspecting that Juan Maria has marrying in his head. And if he uses his judgment, what woman could be better suited to him than this girl whom he has known since a baby and who has been well reared, with the example of Christian parents? And I will not deny that he would be an acceptable son-in-law to me. Don Cosme had his nest well feathered and he must have left the boy a fine inheritance. Moreover, I think he has good habits, though of course he is not a saint; boys must be boys; but he is honorable, good looking and brave beyond a question. There is only one thing that worries me."

"What is that?"

"His ideas. I fear he may allow them to stray in pernicious channels which are contrary to the good of the country and will lead him to ruin. Whoever saw a land in such a condition? It is an abominable shame and outrage."

"Thou art beside thyself with suspicion, Rodrigo. Juan Maria grew up far from Peru, in Spain itself!"

"That gives me no confidence. Perdition abounds there as well as here. However, the thing for me to do is investigate the matter and find out what can be depended on; while thou, fail not to guard the little girl for me every minute."

Hinestrosa had suspected that his young friend might be an insurgent in disguise before his wife hinted the amorous intentions of Aguilera to him. At first he repudiated the idea as an offense against his better judgment. Later on he formulated numerous reasons to contradict it: Juan Maria, the son of a faithful soldier of the King, who died defending the Royal cause; the descendant of several generations of loyal Spaniards; reared a Christian and educated in holy horror of rebellion and in submission to his natural Sovereign and Lord; such a young man could not be apostate to the wholesome principles instilled into him from childhood.

These arguments don Rodrigo had gone over in his own mind and now he repeated them to himself since Juana Rosa communicated her suspicions to him. But the more apparent and convincing realities confronting him every day, began to destroy his faith in their logic.

There was Torre Tagle conspiring in Trujillo! Was not a man of his ancient lineage and high position more bound by obligations of honor and allegiance to the King than a young man like Aguilera? And Riva Agüero, who was being concealed and assisted by his uncle the Marques de Aulestia; and the Marques de San Miguel, who, like many others, had run away to enroll in the ranks of San Martín, whose outlaw troops held Lima in oppressive siege!

And what about the Cabildo itself? The same petition for pacific agreements had been presented to Laserna that had been presented to his predecessor Pezuela. And it was signed by personages such as Díaz de Rávago, the Counts of La Vega, del Ren and San Isidro, as well as the officials and officers of Cantabria! Why should Aguilera be a better Royalist than all those fine gentlemen... or than the Viceroy himself? Yes, even Laserna; for it was at least a culpable confession of weakness on the part of Laserna to write the communication whose contents had been confided to Hinestrosa by a high official of the Palace, wherein on March 7th, the Viceroy wrote the Minister of War that the capital was blockaded by sea and by land and surrounded by towns in a state of insurrection; that he was endeavouring to draft negro slaves to increase the Army; that there was no Navy and nothing could be done

Chap.V..... 12 ...

unless ships were sent over from Spain, for if he could not dominate by sea, he would be forced to retire to the interior and that "undoubtedly there was a general tendency among both inhabitants and soldiers to independence", and that the enemy was making rapid progress.

Hinestrosa learned of the contents of that note with rage and sorrow. It was indeed a sad reflection on the situation and in order to keep the painful matter secret, he did not speak of it even to his wife. Neither did he mention it openly to Juan Maria. But he did comment on certain points touched by the Viceroy, which were generally known, in the young man's presence without receiving any definite opinions from his listener. Now, thinking of him as a possible son-in-law, don Rodrigo reflected on the situation. Whenever he and Juan Maria conversed together they discussed, as was inevitable, the burning questions of the day; but neither from the boy's answers nor from his comments could Hinestrosa ascertain positively his private opinions.

The truth was that Juan Maria was making every effort in the world to keep his thoughts to himself and also to maintain secrecy about his work of raising a company of guerrillas and his correspondence with the Headquarters of San Martin because the discovery of these things would cost him his liberty

and also banish him from the home of his promised wife. For such was Rosario now, without the knowledge of her family or any official sanction- just in the sweetest secrecy.

As we have said, Aguilera continued to frequent the Hinestrosa house although striving, vainly of course, to conduct himself in suchm manner that he would not arouse suspicions. For that reason, when he found himself alone with the elders, he would leave in a bad humor. But, on the other hand, if good luck arranged that Rosario was left under the care of her grandmother, the young man could not contain himself for joy.

With no other chaperone than Mama Trini, who noticed little and was most benevolent, far from her severe father and doting mother who felt it her duty to keep after the girl with advice and prohibitions, Rosario displayed her natural grace and girlish gaiety without fear of censure. Aguilera amused himself by vexing her and provoking her piquant and ready wit. She lent herself to the game with coquetry, perhaps less unconscious than the young man imagined. Mama Trini, who was enchanted listening to her pet, pretended to be scandalized.

"Child, be not so bold! Thou art possessed of an imp. I cannot imagine who thou hast taken after!"

"After my Mama Trini of course", answered her grandchild hugging the old lady almost to death.

"Stop, stop thou little devil, thou wilt break my spectacles," said Mama Trini. wiping her glasses and putting them safely away in her sewing basket. "Ay! It is tired I am of laughing so much at thy foolishness!"

And sometimes Mama Trini became so worn out with these jokes that she went to sleep sitting comfortably in a corner of the sofa, with her head bowed on her breast. In the opposite corner sat Rosario and Juan Maria placed his chair as near her as he could, very softly. Then our two lovers, playing with tempting fire, laughed no more that day. But O, how they did talk! Juan Maria whispered a long time with his lips almost glued to Rosario's ears and, perchance, they ventured to touch her blushing cheek. Although her words were few, she also must have said something of ineffable sweetness to him, for happiness was painted on his transfigured face.

Despite Juana Rosa's suspicions, believed by don Rodrigo to be exaggerated, she never learned of these interviews. But she smiled sadly when she saw her daughter turn the color of a rose beneath Juan Maria's ardent glances.

"That boy is head over heels in love and Rosarito knows it, even if her father does think it impossible. The poor man cannot seem to realize things. But what I do not like about Juan Maria is that he does not come to time and declare himself. I am tempted to help him along."

Ayacucho

Chap.V... 15 ...

This she proceeded to do very tactfully but to her astonishment Aguilera did not respond. His first impulse, on hearing her insinuations, was to make a clean breast of it and confide everything in her, gratefully and gladly. But a bitter thought, touched with remorse, held him back.

"What can I say? what can I offer?" he asked himself. "My life is not my own. When the sun rises each morning I do not know whether the evening will find me in prison, from whence I may be dragged to the gallows or on march to camp, where an enemy's ball may make an end of me. I have been a criminal brute not to keep my love for Rosario silent. Poor little girl."

Juan Maria had been convinced that Areceli's treachery rendered him immune to love. And he was so sure that in future, women could never mean anything to him but a pastime or passing pleasure, that his only thought in connection with them was that sometime he might take his revenge on the one who had betrayed him by deceiving some other woman. So, wrapped in such thoughts, he did not realize how the virginal charms of Rosario were taking possession of his soul and making him her abject slave. Forewarned by cruel experience against women schooled in the art of passion, he was disarmed in the presence of innocence, and at first he thought his feeling for Rosario was only the protective tenderness he would feel for a younger sister.

Chap. V..... 16

When he finally looked straight into the depths of his heart and realized how things were, he still had time to fly but he was no longer able to give her up. When alone, he reproached himself severely for being such a selfish coward and so lacking in gentlemanly honor, but when beside Rosario, in the familiar circle, basking in her loveliness and smiles, or when he divined her presence rather than saw her slender form behind the window bars, in their brief nocturnal trysts, arranged by Chomba, there was nothing in the whole universe for him but the divine madness of his love.

Stern reality soon showed him that there were many unpleasant and disquieting things in the world. Chief among them just then was Hinestrosa's forbidding aspect, growing worse day by day. And his searching questions struck terror to Juan Maria's heart. He would have already gone on his annual little trip into the Sierra (he explained), if the bushwahackers marauding along the roads had not prevented; not on his own account but his wife's, for she always accompanied him on these curative peregrinations. At any rate, he would start off before winter set in, for the Viceroy had offered him a safe escort.

Talking all this over one evening in an intimate after dinner chat, Juan Maria was thinking what happy times he could promise himself when, as on other occasions, Rosario had been left with her grandmother during the absence of her parents.

He was aroused from his dreams by don Rodrigo saying:

"If my health would permit me to wait, I should take good care to rout those fascinating Guerrilla bands! In a few months not a trace would remain of such bandits, nor any of their kind, even the aristocrats mixed up in their party. But as soon as Seone and the Marques de Valle-Umbroso reach Spain and are able to explain the situation of Peru to the King, with the authority of eye witnesses, His Majesty will equip a fleet of vessels and send out forces strong enough to suppress all this revolution and definitely reestablish order. Why dost thou shake thy head, Juan Maria? Dost thou not agree with me?"

"No, don Rodrigo. I have just come from Spain where I lived many years and I know how things there are. These agitations in America which make you so indignant, are all over the Peninsula. They are as strong if not stronger than the King; and His Majesty finds it more important to dominate the agitations in his own house than those outside."

Don Rodrigo brought down his fist with a resounding blow on the table and in a haughty, arrogant voice exclaimed:

"I should like to believe that I misunderstand thee, Juan Maria! And that on referring to the King, thy distinction between 'the agitations in his own house and those outside', thou art thinking only of terrestrial distance. But at the same time, I cannot help connecting certain rumors current about thee with my own observations and I fear the expression which has just

"escaped thy lips is proof evident that thou art a deserter!"

Juan Maria had scarcely uttered the words which so enraged Hinestrosa before he would have given worlds to recall them. He had been anxiously groping in his mind for an explanation that might avoid the break now imminent; but when Hinestrosa in an indignant and almost insulting voice called him a deserter, he realized that the inevitable had happened. Striving to control his excitement, he replied:

"Why should you call me a deserter, don Rodrigo? I am a Peruvian."

"Exactly for that reason", cried Hinestrosa, beside himself, "Because thou art a Peruvian, thou art a vassal of the King of Spain. My own children are Peruvians too and I would rather see them dead than on the road to perdition where thou art headed. No! I want no deserters in my house!"

Aguilera rose from the seat he had occupied so many times at that familiar table and replied sadly:

"Señor Hinestrosa, I never expected to leave this house in such manner, for I have loved it like my own home since childhood. That love will never change and whatever comes, you can all count upon me."

The two señoras raised their sorrowful eyes to don Rodrigo, imploring him to make some explanation or utter a word that might stay the young man's departure. But steeling his

Chap. V. ... 19 ...

heart against them, the señor replied sarcastically,

"What a valiant protector!"

Juan Maria fixed one last look on the heartsick face of Rosarito and, after bowing profoundly, walked out of the dining room. As he was crossing the patio, he heard the choleric voice of don Rodrigo shouting the order:

"Stop that weeping, silly girl!"