

Literature, &c.

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From Graham's Magazine.

TO THE PAST.

Wondrous and awful are thy silent halls,
O, kingdom of the past!
There lie the by-gone ages in their palls,
Guarded by shadows vast,
There all is hushed and breathless,
Save when some image of old error falls,
Earth worshipped once as deathless.

There sits drear Egypt, 'mid beleaguering sands
Half woman and half beast,
The burnt-out torch within her mouldering
hands
That once lit all the East;
A dotard bleared and hoary,
There Asser crouches o'er the blackened brands
Of Asia's long-quenched glory.

Still as a city buried 'neath the sea
Thy courts and temples stand;
Idle, as forms on wind-waved tapestry
Of saints and heroes grand,
Thy phantasms grope and shiver,
Or watch the loose shores crumbling silently
Into Time's gnawing river.

Titanic shapes with faces blank and dun,
Of their old godhead born,
Gaze on the embers of the sunken sun,
Which they misdeem for morn;
And yet the eternal sorrow
In their unmonarched eyes says day is done
Without the hope of morrow.

O, realm of silence and of swart eclipse,
The shapes that haunt thy gloom
Make signs to us, and move their withered lips
Across the gulf of doom;
Yet all their sound and motion
Bring no more freight to us than wraiths of
ships
On the mirage's ocean.

And if some times a moaning wandereth
From out thy desolate halls,
If some dim shadow of thy living death
Across our sunshine falls
And scares the world to error,
The eternal life sends forth melodious breath
To chase the misty terror.

Thy mighty clamors, wars, and world-noised
deeds
Are silent now in dust,
Gone like a trembling of the huddling reeds
Beneath some sudden gust;
Thy forms and creeds have vanished,
Tossed out to wither like unsightly weeds
From the world's garden banished.

Whatever of true life there was in thee
Leaps in our age's veins;
Wield still thy bent and wrinkled empery,
And shake thine idle chains;—
To the thy dross is clinging,
For us thy martyrs die, thy prophets see,
Thy poets still are singing.

Here, 'mid the bleak waves of our strife and
care,
Float the green fortunate Isles
Where all thy hero-spirit dwell, and share
Our martyrdoms and toils;
The present moves attended
With all of brave and excellent and fair
That made the old time sglexid.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

From Graham's Magazine.

THE DEATH OF CORDOVA.

A SOUTH AMERICAN STORY.

In the veranda of a beautiful villa, overlooking the Rio Cauca, was seated a young man in the undress uniform of a military officer. Certain insignia upon his dress indicated the rank of a general, and his air and bearing evinced a man accustomed to receive prompt obedience. In his handsome, though bronzed, countenance, might be traced those lines that indicate noble and generous sentiment, and in the quick flash of his dark eye there was something that spoke the true soldier of liberty.

"We have introduced the young general, Jose Maria Cordova—the gallant Cordova—whose fame at this time filled the hearts of his countrymen, and whose valiant conduct on the fields of Junin and Ayacucho had won for him a reputation, that promised to be yet as bright and far more enviable than that of the 'Liberator' himself.

He was at this time (1829) military commandant of his native province, Antioquia, and beloved by the people of every caste and color. On a small table of braziletto, lay a number of open despatches, in the perusal of which the young officer seemed deeply engaged. It was

still early in the day. The sun had shown his golden orb over the central cordillera, and was pouring his rays into the fertile valley of the Cauca. Birds of brilliant plumage fluttered through the lemon groves around the villa, and time and again flashed their bright wings into the veranda itself, while their musical notes mingled with the *patriota* song of the muleteer, as he wound his way up the distant mountain, or the chorus of the Chino slave, whose wild and melancholy voice came quivering over the far fields of cacao and coffee. Far down the river the cross and spire of Santa Fe, shooting up from the glowing embrace of a tropical forest, flung their shadows out upon the quiet bosom of the stream, and the whole scene, earth, sky, and forest, breathed forth the assurance of tranquillity and pleasure.

Cordova seemed insensible to the beauties around, and was evidently engaged with matters of importance, for he did not notice the entrance of as lovely a being as ever came forth to breathe the soft air of a southern morning. Casting a look at the young officer, the lady perceived that he was busy, and, silently gliding across the veranda, she bent over the balustrade and gazed upon the river. She was exceedingly beautiful, with the dark complexion of her clime, and she wore that fixed and half-matronly expression that distinguishes the young wife. And such she was—the lately wedded bride of the gallant Cordova.

In this case, if ever,

"Mated hearts were mutual bound."

Both natives of this fair valley, they had long loved each other. The handsome person and generous mind, but above all the growing fame of the young soldier, had early won the heart of the beautiful Madelina, and she too was the heroine of her own circle, and the proud beauty of many a brilliant ball-room.

It was thus when Cordova departed for Peru to assist in expelling the tyrant from his last foothold on the soil of liberty, and when he returned, crowned with glory, and his name was echoed from lip to lip, the richest rewards of his toils and triumph, and that which he most prized, was the hand of her who had so long been the idol of his heart.

The spot where the links of love had been riveted was the villa in which we have first found the wedded lovers—the residence of Madelina's father—and here, with his young bride, was Cordova for the present remaining.

Half leaning over the balustrade, through the leaves of the orange-trees, Madelina looked out upon the river. The mighty Cauca, bearing on its waters rich grains of gold, rolled silently toward the sea—flocks of water-fowl, with bright plumage, either floated along on its bosom, or were winging their way to some far shore—and round a distant bend the *barco chato*, laden with the fruits of the soil, and freighted for the ports of the Magdalena, came sweeping along on the quivering current, while the blade of the boga's oar flashed brightly against the sunbeam.

But the young wife heeded not these things, her thoughts were otherwise engaged; for at intervals she would steal a glance at the countenance of Cordova, and when she perceived the cloud gathering upon his brow her own looks grew sympathetic and sad.

Several minutes had passed in this way when Cordova, seemingly actuated by some disagreeable intelligence conveyed in the despatch suddenly sprung from his seat, and, with a look and action that evinced a high degree of anger, tore the paper in fragments and flung them upon the piazza; then, striding to the end of the veranda, he looked steadily in the direction of the town.

He had not perceived Madelina, who now glided up, placed her hand gently upon his shoulder, and, like an angel of peace, softly enquired,

"Cordova?"

"Ah, Madelina! I did not perceive you—sweet girl, why do you look so serious? it is a smiling day, is it not?"

She made no reply, but pointed to the fragments of the torn despatch, on one of which was legible the word "Bolivar."

"True, Madelina, it is the signature of the tyrant."

"The tyrant, Cordova?"

"Aye, Madelina, the tyrant—it is time he was known by his proper title, and I am sorry that he has done so much to merit it."

"But what has he done, Cordova?"

"Done! everything that a despot dares—but you, Madelina, in common with most of your country-women, have been accustomed to look upon the Liberator as a true patriot, a soldier of liberty, and so does the world at large—hitherto he has played the tyrant under a mask—his fame, like a vast but luminous cloud, overshadows the land, and under the halo of that glory he has hidden his true heart—the friends of liberty have long been jealous of this mighty soldier, and they who have dared to question his course have been marked as fit victims for exile and execution."

"Is he not our Liberator—the achiever of our independence?"

"A thousand others would have guided the ship to its destined port, and not have asked one hundredth part the reward which he now exacts from a too grateful people."

"And what does he exact, Cordova?"

"Nothing less than absolute submission to his will,—you, Madelina, can know little of his actions, concealed as they always are under the most specious pretences—but listen, he has trampled upon the old constitution—his satellite minions have prevented the Congress of Oeuna from forming another—he has banished tried patriots on the most frivolous pretence, and by this despatch, the fragments of which

are at my feet, I read that Santander, the brave and true friend of liberty, has been condemned to death!"

"Santandar condemned! and on what pretence, Cordova?"

"He is charged with being privy to a conspiracy, that had for its object the assassination of the tyrant."

"His assassination?"

"Aye, and well had it been for poor Colombia that it had succeeded—but these brave sons of freedom have bled for this attempt to rid their country of her enslaver—look here, Madelina," said the young husband, picking up one of the fragments of the torn despatch, "these are men whose aim was high and noble, else they never would have stooped to use the knife of the bravo—these names have never yet been associated with worthlessness or guilt."

Madelina took the paper and read over the names of fourteen young men who had been shot in the *Plaza de Bogota* on the charge of conspiracy. Most of them were distinguished in the history of their country's revolution, or belonged to families of distinction in Colombia. When she had finished reading, she turned toward her husband, who had gone to the entrance of the piazza and stood gazing intently upward.

"See, Madelina!" cried he beckoning her to the spot and pointing toward the summit of a neighbouring mountain, "there is a fit emblem of this native tyrant."

The young wife looked in the direction indicated. A huge vulture, the Condor of the Andes, had sprung from eyrie on a steep crag of porphyry, and was sweeping down towards the valley. On the opposite bank of the river a flock of small merinos were quietly browsing on the side of a green hillock. Perceiving their well-known enemy, that was now wheeling above them at a rapidly diminishing elevation, the terrified little animals ran to and fro around the hillock, while a few more wary than the rest scampered off to conceal themselves in the thick underwood of a neighbouring forest. The younger ones of the flock, however still dashed madly and headlong from place to place, uttering wild bleatings at each nearer swoop of the rapacious bird, and dreading every moment to feel his talons in their flesh. The condor had now reached within less than a hundred feet of the earth, his huge body and raven black wings covering the whole hillock with their shadow. Several of the little creatures, exhausted with running and weakened by the intensity of their terror, had fallen fainting on the grass, and the vulture was stretching forth his bare and horrid neck to seize upon a victim, when the report of a musket, followed by a cloud of blue smoke, rose from a small clump of tagua-trees on the right, and a man, in the dress of a peasant cazadore, suddenly stepped out from the leaves. But the monster bird did not fall, as the hunter had evidently expected. He had been struck by the shot, however, for at the report he had dropped at least, from his elevation, and then, with an effort which danger had produced, stretching forth his broad wings in tremulous and feeble flight, he betook himself to the nearest crag, there to perish from the wound which he had received.

Cordova and Madelina had watched the whole scene with intense interest. When the vulture disappeared from their view, the young officer turned and for a moment gazed tenderly on the face of his beautiful wife, then, as if nerved by some deep resolution, he clutched his sword, and, striding into the piazza, muttered firmly to himself,

"It must be done!"

But the ear of an anxious wife was not distant, and he was overheard. Quick as thought the face of Madelina, beautifully imploring, was at his shoulder.

"What must be done, Cordova?"

"The tyrant, Madelina—the tyrant must be struck!"

"Dearest Cordova, your looks almost terrify me!"

"Fear not, sweet girl, but listen—it is time you should know what by to-morrow's sunrise will be no secret in Antioquia—your brother, myself, and our friends throughout the province, have sworn to restore the old constitution, or die in its defence, to-night is fixed for the rising, and, should we succeed, the friends of liberty over all Colombia will flock to our standard, and the tyrant's power will be speedily prostrated, but should our enterprise fail, the omen of this foul bird tells me that still the despot shall be bereft of the power to enact further ill. To-night Madelina, at the hour of—Ha! What means this? Soldiers and not of my battalion! and that villain, Lara, at their head. Good heavens! can we be betrayed? Go in, Madelina, go in!"

The young wife, with a look of deepest anxiety, disappeared within the door.

The clear notes of a cavalry bugle sounded through the trees, and a troop of dragoons, headed by an officer, in the uniform of an aide-camp of Bolivar, galloped up to the gate. The officer dismounted, and, walking into the veranda, presented General Cordova with a sealed packet, which the latter opened and read.

When he had finished reading, he drew his sword, and, turning the hilt forward, presented it to the aide-camp, acknowledging himself under arrest, at the same time requesting a moment to take leave of his wife. The officer took the sword, muttering some hypocritical phrase about "disagreeable duty," for he was one of Cordova's bitterest enemies, while the latter withdrew to take leave of his beautiful wife.

We will not lift the curtain from the scene of their parting—we shall not describe the anguish that accompanied that wo-breathing word, *farewell*. Suffice it that Cordova in a few minutes returned, and, mounting a horse provided for him, rode off along with the dragoons in the direction of Santa Fe.

After they were gone, a lovely female leaned from the veranda, and with tearful eyes, watched the windings of the road leading to the town. The loud beating of her heart prevented her from hearing the tramp of the retreating cavalry. When they had passed the last visible point on the road, the weeping wife knelt down upon the piazza, and, holding a crucifix to her lips, wafted to Heaven a prayer for her husband's safety. God was her only comforter!

It was still early in the day when the troops that attended Cordova entered the suburbs of Santa Fe de Antioquia. They were here joined by a regiment of soldiers just arrived from Bogota. As they neared the piazza, loud shouts of acclamations were heard, as though coming from a vast crowd of people, and at intervals, above the din, cries of "viva el Libertador!" "viva Bolivar!" The inhabitants of Santa Fe had just received the news of the attempted assassination of the supreme chief, and, knowing nothing of the merits of the case and caring little, were publicly rejoicing for his deliverance. The piazza was filled with people, with here and there groups of soldiers, who, released from duty, were enjoying themselves among the citizens.

When the troops of Bogota entered the square among the foremost of which rode General Cordova, the cries of acclamation were redoubled, and "viva el Libertador!" "viva el Codovar!" filled the air mingled with loud and enthusiastic cheers. All at once several officers were seen hurrying away to the main barrack, and, after a short interval, a trumpet in the same direction called the straggling troops to their quarters. In five minutes the provincial soldiers had disappeared, and the square now held the regiment of Bogota, surrounded by a dense multitude of people. The regiment halted, and for several minutes there was a deep and ominous silence, broken only by the low murmur of inquiry, when all at once a strong voice called out from the crowd,

"Cordova is a prisoner!—rescue—to the rescue!"

A wild burst of indignation broke forth, as though a new mind had entered into that moving throng—the cries of "rescue—rescue!" arose on every side, and a rush was made to the houses for weapons. Already missiles had been thrown at the regiment of Bogota, when the trumpet sounded from the Calle del Rio, and a party of Cordova's own cavalry galloped into the square; they were soon followed by a large body of infantry, who had suddenly organized at the barracks, calling out "Viva el Cordova!" "Muerte al tyranno Bolivar!" Cordova, taking advantage of these movements in his favour, suddenly wrested his sword from one of the dragoons who guarded him, and putting spurs to his horse, galloped to the head of his troops. The action was followed instantaneously by an attack upon the regiment of Bogota, who were soon routed, many being killed, while the remainder were taken prisoners. Cordova then addressed his troops and the assembled citizens exposing the conduct of Bolivar, and ended by declaring for the constitution, which the dictator had abolished. He was answered by deafening shouts and cries of "Viva la constitucion!" "Muerte al tyranno!" and the effigy of Bolivar was publicly burned on that same pavement, that but an hour before had resounded with the tread of thousands triumphing on account of his safety.

On the evening of the same day, Cordova sat with his young wife in the veranda of her father's mansion. He had come to bid her farewell ere he should put himself at the head of his now revolutionary army. The troops of the dictator would soon be in the field to oppose him, and it was necessary that no time should be wasted. It was his last interview with Madelina. They knew not this, though both felt a strange foreboding for the future. But he was a soldier, and she a soldier's wife, and the parting words that mingled with her tears were—

"Go forth, and may the God of battles watch over you!"

One last kiss—one last wild look, and the young soldier, springing into his saddle, was soon lost in the fading twilight. It was his last look indeed. He never saw that lovely form again!

Three weeks after, and on a plateau of the Andes, two armies were marshaled in battle array. The soldiers of both wore the uniform of the republic of the Colombia, but far different were the causes for which they were about to contend. Along the lines of one army passed the shouts of "Viva la constitucion!" "Viva la liberted!" while on the other side rose the solitary war-cry of "El Libertador!"

On one side were the soldiers of liberty fighting for the charter which guaranteed that liberty, and which had been so basely wrested from them; on the other side, but unfortunately far the stronger, were the hired minions of a tyrant fighting for his glory alone.

The leader of the republican army, as the reader will have guessed, was the gallant Cordova. Opposed to him was a brave man fighting in a bad cause.

We will not describe an engagement, that for its numbers, was the most desperate ever fought, but pass at once to the closing scene.

The republican army, inferior both in numbers and discipline, were totally defeated. Cordova, with a few brave patriots, took re-