

Literature, &c.

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From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

THE MATIN BELL.

A TRADITION OF PORTUGAL.

THERE were great rejoicings in the city of Lisbon when Denis of Portugal, the warrior and poet king, celebrated his nuptials with the young and lovely Infanta of Castile. The monarch's popularity was at its height; the multitude, who already conferred on him the title of 'Father of his people,' were roused to the most enthusiastic loyalty by the feasts and largesses bestowed on them; and the nobles, whose national pride was gratified by the alliance, found an additional source of satisfaction in their young sovereign's prudent dismissal of the Queen's train of Castilian attendants, which prevented the possible influence of foreign favourites—over one whose beauty and grace rendered it more than probable that she would become their ruler's ruler. At the Queen's request, however, a young page, whose insignificance appeared to make his presence or absence of little moment, was detained.

With all external circumstances thus conducing to happiness (for her royal husband was as courteous and accomplished as he was brave and politic), Isabella of Castile had just cause to rejoice in her brilliant destiny; and during the first two months of her residence in her new home, not a shade obscured its brightness. At the expiration of that period, however, her quick perception detected the one infirmity of Denis's otherwise noble nature. He was most painfully jealous. He could endure no rival in her thoughts, not even the natural and pious love of her kindred and her country. A cloud ever rested on his brow when she spoke to him of Castile, of her parents, of her younger and favourite brother; nay, when with the candour of her nature, she told him of her regret at parting from the friends and associations of her childhood, he had answered her with harshness. Isabella was very young, and very timid. From that moment she avoided all mention of her family and her native land, but by a natural consequence, they obtained a stronger hold on her memory and her affections. Fear of awaking her husband's displeasure on the Queen's side, and a jealous doubt on that of the king, that the marriage of policy had not given him the love he craved, produced a constraint in their intercourse which was painful to both; and Isabella, chilled by the want of sympathy with her feelings in all around her, sought it at length with her young countryman, the page Gonzales. He could talk to her of dear and distant Castile; he could sing the songs doubly sweet now to her ear from their association with the past. Whenever the young Queen sat alone with her ladies at their embroidery, the Castilian was summoned to beguile the time with his guitar, or with reminiscences of his royal lady's childhood; and this imprudent and somewhat undignified intercourse between the Queen and her attendant was partially excusable, from the fact that Gonzales was the son of a noble Castilian lady, to whom the care of his youth had been confided. He had been reared from infancy in her father's palace, and shared her own and her brothers' pastimes. And then Gonzales was so unlike the generality of pages! He was so gentle, so pious, so refined and humble in manner, that he found favour in the eyes of even the gravest and most prudish of the ladies of honour. He was of a slight delicate figure; and though very handsome, it was less the beauty of feature than of expression, which won the admiration, and even the affection, of those who gazed at his calm, thoughtful eyes and open brow. People in this evil world cannot, however, be more than ordinarily excellent, or more than usually beloved, without incurring envy; and the gentle virtues of Gonzales were not likely to make him popular with his wild young comrades, the pages of the palace. The greater number came to the conclusion that his true vocation was the cloister, and suffered him to pursue his own course with a contemptuous pity; but one, who was far before them in intellect and forethought, and whose future fortunes depended almost wholly upon the royal favour, beheld with all the bitterness of an envious and vindictive nature, the Castilian page.

Bernardo di Silva had wrought with unwearied diligence the notice of his Queenly mistress. She was devout: he became most earnest in his attention to her confessor; in his attendance at mass. His conduct was exemplary; his services performed with grace and never-failing care. Nevertheless he failed in his design: nature had not bestowed on him the power of winning love. He gained but a cold approval—the homage paid to the semblance of virtue—no more.

No marvel, therefore, that he hated Gonzales, and, with the inconsistency of our nature, looked on his unconscious rival as an enemy—as one who stole, from him the favour of his Queen. Of a more vindictive spirit than even the generality of his countrymen, he mentally resolved to avenge what he considered his wrongs on the young Spaniard; and the opportunity came at last. When is there ever an occasion wanting to do evil?

It was a bright autumnal morning; the Tagus glittered like liquid silver in the dazzling sunbeams, as Bernardo stood gazing upon its waters from the window of the queen's ante-

chamber. It was a scene to gladden the heart and raise the thoughts in devout gratitude to the Giver of the sunshine and the sweet air; but no joy, no peace was expressed on that young countenance, dark with unhallowed passions. He saw not the dancing stream, the clear and cloudless sky; he heard not the music of the far off lark, nor the glad voices of the boatmen: his mind dwelt only on the scene within the inner chamber which he had just witnessed—the queen and her ladies listening with approving smiles to Gonzales, as he sang to them a lay of his native Castile. And very sweetly came that voice and guitar of the page on his ear at that moment, as he sang one of the fine old ballads of the Moors; but the sweet tones were discord to the diseased mind of the listener. He was still wrapt in his web of bitter fancies, when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and turning with a start he beheld the king, whom he had believed absent at chase, standing beside him. Stammering an apology for not having seen the sovereign enter, Bernardo moved forward to open the door of the Queen's chamber, but Denis detained him, and in a low voice bade him follow him into the adjoining corridor.

'Who sings in the Queen's apartment?' was the king's instant question as they gained it.

'Her Grace's Castilian page, sire.'

'Does he often beguile her royal leisure in this minstrel fashion?'

'Ay, sire, whenever it pleases your majesty to hunt or ride abroad without the Queen.'

'Ha,' exclaimed the king, 'what sayest thou?'

Bernardo's quick eye marked that frown, and he saw at once the feasibility of the plan which had come to his thoughts, like a very inspiration of evil. He paused in affected confusion. 'Not exactly; that is—I pray your Grace to pardon me, the queen will be displeased,' he faltered.

'Displeased,' exclaimed Denis impetuously; 'and wherefore? Speak the truth, sirrah, without fear, and faithfully. This minion is, then, often admitted to the Queen's presence?'

'He is, my liege,' replied Bernardo, still with affected reluctance. 'Her Grace loves to talk of Castile with my comrade, he tells me.'

'To talk of Castile with him—to talk with her menial!' exclaimed the monarch angrily. 'By all the saints,' he continued making a move towards the royal apartment, 'he shall suffer for his presumption in daring to assert such a falsehood. Out of my path sirrah!' Bernardo, however, throwing himself on his knees immediately before his sovereign, implored him with well-foigned fear, mingled with seemingly honest boldness, to pause.

'Beseech you, sire,' he said, 'punish not my comrade without due injury. He is young; he hath had some cause for pride in our royal mistress's favour: beseech you turn not to his hurt the words I have uttered at your command. Expose me not to the Queen's anger.'

Greatly agitated, the king listened to him; but ere he could command his voice to reply, the now distant music ceased, and the page's step were heard in the antechamber. Denis motioned Bernardo to rise, and removing his hand from the hilt of his dagger, gazed sternly on the object of his wrath as he entered the corridor, who, surprised to see the king there, paused, and made his low and graceful obeisance. The young musician's cheek was flushed; there was a happy smile on his lip; and in his hand he held both his guitar and a small bunch of roses, which Denis at a glance recognised as the bouquet he had seen in the queen's bosom that morning. With a muttered ejaculation he turned from the boy, and then harshly desiring Bernardo to follow him, proceeded to his own apartment.

We will not repeat the conversation held there between the deceived sovereign and the deceiver. It will be sufficient to inform our readers that the art with which he wrought on the mental infirmity of the unhappy king was but too successful. Numberless unmeaning and trifling incidents apparently confirmed the slander. At Isabella's request, the page alone of all her suite had been detained in Portugal; and he had been her companion from childhood: these remembrances, and the young wife's own imprudence, were more than enough to confirm the ready belief of jealousy. Denis, enraged as he was, preserved, however, a lingering pity for his queen—a just sense of the injury public investigation or vengeance might do to his own honor—and charging Bernardo, as he valued the favour he thus far had deserved, not to reveal aught that had passed between them; he shut himself up in his chamber for the remainder of the day, and the page withdrew to meditate upon the singular and perfect success of his vindictive malice.

Twilight was fast deepening into night as Denis of Portugal, attended only by the page Bernardo, left the palace, and rode rapidly across the wide plain beyond the city walls. He urged his noble charger on with a mad speed, as if he sought by the rapidity of his motion to banish the terrible and agonising thoughts which filled his mind. They had proceeded to the distance of about a mile on their apparently aimless course, and Bernardo had begun to entertain serious doubts of his liege's sanity, when a sudden glare of red light broke on the gloom of the darkening sky. Towards this spot Denis at once turned, and in a few minutes reined in his steed beside a huge furnace, round which a number of powerful and swarthy labourers were moving.

One of them came forward as the horsemen paused, and asked in a rough voice 'their business.'

'Rather who are ye, and what do you here?' demanded the king sternly.

'Truly, sir Cavalier,' replied the man with a rude obeisance, for the majesty of the speaker's manners awed him, 'we are burners of lime for the new palace our good king is building.'

'Your good king will give you other fuel for your fire,' said Denis with a fearful laugh.

'Hark ye! I am Denis of Portugal, your king. To-morrow at day-break I will send you a trim page, throw him into your furnace!' A loud murmur of surprise and horror ran through the group as they rose from their attitude of rude homage. 'How! do you dare hesitate to do my will?' exclaimed the king fiercely. 'Take heed ye feed not the flames yourselves.'

There was a brief pause. 'Sire,' said the first speaker at length, 'we are poor but honest: our office is to burn lime, not men; beseech your Grace, make us not your executioners.'

The bold remonstrance would not, at another time, have been in vain to the 'The Good King Denis'; but it was at the present moment, addressed to one whose reason was as little under his control as that of a maniac. Harshly, and with threats that, if they dared to disobey his will they should themselves suffer the doom they were unwilling to inflict upon another, the king reiterated his command, and received a sullen reluctant assurance that it should be executed.

'But how, may it please your Grace,' asked the limeburner, 'shall we know the page for the right one?'

'Ye have not often visits from royal pages methinks,' said the patient; but to give you full assurance, the traitor will ask ye, 'If the king's will be done;' and then see that ye do it, or beware!' As he finished this stern injunction, Denis rode away from the spot, leaving his amazed and awe-stricken subjects to discuss in fear and trembling, the strange mandate they had received from him, whom they had fully recognised as their popular and hitherto merciful sovereign.

Our readers have of course divined that the fatal message was now entrusted to Gonzales, who at early dawn left the palace, in obedience to the royal behest, though all unconscious of its purport. The opening day was even more than usually beautiful, and his path, which at first lay through the grove surrounding the palace, was gem-dewed with crystal dew drops. The page's mind was keenly susceptible of beauty, and the holy voice of nature never spoke to his heart in vain. Thoughts and aspirations that were not of the earth awoke under the influence of the calm balmy air and the music of the birds; and when the matin bell from a sylvan chapel joined the general song, he started, and felt a sudden awe mingled with his thrill of delight. His feet lingered on the sod. The sweet yet solemn sound seemed to call him like a familiar voice, and obeying the promptings of his heart, he turned aside from the path, entered the consecrated building, and knelt in devout and humble prayer before the altar.

It was noon day; King Denis paced his chamber alone, a prey to the most torturing reflections. By this time his vengeance was sated, and with that thought came a reaction of feeling. A terrible doubt arose in his mind as to the possibility of his having been deceived: in short, reason was resuming its empire, and dispirited and uncertain, he ordered Bernardo di Silva to his presence. The page could not be found; he had left the palace some two hours before. The attendant was in the act of giving this information to the agitated sovereign, when a low knock at the door interrupted him. Opening it at the king's command, he beheld Gonzales, pale, trembling, with an expression of unutterable horror on his usually calm features, standing before him. Had he turned his eyes towards his royal master, he would have been still more astonished at the expression his countenance wore as he recognised the page, who, whilst the king stood mute and motionless with amazement, advanced, and bending his knee, in a faltering voice said, 'your will has been obeyed sire!—my unhappy comrade is no more. I reached the limekiln in time to hear his death cry.' He shuddered and continued, after an instant pause, 'the murderers—I crave your Grace's pardon—the executioners charged me to inform their king, that when he found resistance and entreaty vain, the miserable Bernardo acknowledged the justice of his fate; and his last audible words declared that he had wronged the queen, and abused your royal ear with falsehood.'

In emotion too great for speech, Denis of Portugal heard this extraordinary communication; and when at last he found words, it was to utter an ejaculation of thanksgiving to the Divine Providence, which had saved him at least from the guilt of shedding innocent blood.

A long and careful enquiry explained the mysterious substitution. The morning mass was long, and ere Gonzales had quitted the chapel, Bernardo believing that he was already dead, left the palace and proceeded to the kilns, to gratify his fiendish malice, by ascertaining that he had no longer a rival. He had either not heard the words agreed upon, or, by a natural inadvertence, his first question was, 'is the king's will done?' and the lime-burners, recognised the sign, at once seized him, and in spite of his treaties and remonstrances, inflicted on him the fate intended for his betrayed comrade.

This fearful lesson was not wholly lost on

Denis. His jealousy, if not entirely, was partially cured; and no after-imprudence on the part of the terrified and shocked Isabella gave occasion for its display or its control. Gonzales ceased, apparently, to be her favourite; but his rising fortunes did not therefore suffer. He became, in years after, a powerful and confidential minister and counsellor of the king; the founder of a noble family in his adopted country, and never did the aged noble hear, without paying devout obedience to its summons, the voice of the matin bell.

Whether this singular legend be true or otherwise, it is a curious picture of a rude and nearly lawless age, and as such we present it to our readers. If the former, it is a striking instance of the visible working of that Divine power which, both history and experience teach us, frequently causes the wickedness of man to fall on their own head; so that in the pit he had privately dugged for another his own foot shall be taken.

From the Spirit of the Times.

EARLY TRAINING.

'TRAIN up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' Volumes could not express more than the foregoing sentence. The vices, follies, and many other evils which overwhelm mankind, are for the most part traceable to the want of its proper application. Whatsoever ideas are inculcated, whatsoever feelings and passions are cherished, whatsoever sentiments are fostered in the breasts of children or of youth, as they increase in years, so do they become more potent. Youth is the time when the first seeds of rectitude should be sown; the harvest must be reaped in ripener ages.

The period of youth may be very properly divided into three parts, each comprising a term of seven years. These may, for the sake of perspicuity, be designated the infant stage, the middle stage, and the advanced stage.

The infant stage may be subdivided into two periods; the first including the four primary years of life; and the second, the three succeeding ones. This second division is rendered particularly necessary; on account of the feeble and helpless state of early infancy. It has been ordained by the all-wise Maker and Preserver of the universe, that those creatures which are of major importance in existence should have their periods of incubation longer than those which are of minor consequence. Thus the gaudy butterfly bursts from its pristine formation, exchanges its shape for one more gaily decked, flutters on the wings of pleasure, then withers, decays, and dies, whilst the seminal properties of other beings have scarcely begun to consciously exert their influence. In the human race, not merely is the period of production long, but the natural helplessness of early youth is also extended; the feelings, habits, and passions require a longer period for formation; and increase of civilisation has produced a necessary increase of care and attention in cherishing their growth. The duration of life and the powers of exertion necessarily, in a great measure, depend upon the strength of constitution; and this strength may be either improved or lessened, in proportion to the method of early cultivation. The health of a youth or an adult depends generally upon a good foundation being laid; for though there are certain disorders which have a hereditary tendency, still these may be lessened in virulence; and the generality of others are but too often brought about by either inattention or over-fondness in infancy. Extremes are never good; it is always preferable to pursue a middle path; and an excessive share of fondness serves to enervate and render by delicateness the body subject to weakness and disease, instead of causing the child to have its constitution strengthened. As in the moral world, the exercise of social duties lessons in proportion to the more brutal feelings of our nature; so, in the intellectual world, the strengthening of the mind has a tendency to lessen the physical attributes of the body. In proportion as the brighter and more noble traits in human character are developed, the more will the animal passions be weakened. This is the triumph of mind over matter; the substitution of an ethereal essence for the coarser and grosser predilections of earth. The extent to which the faculty of mind may be improved, must, however, depend upon the energy of the body; the mind can scarcely be healthy if the body be sickly. Health is one of the greatest blessings we can possess; without it, wealth is fruitless, honours are of no avail, and pleasure is a stranger. The seeds of bodily health, as well as of mental vigour, must likewise be sown in infancy; and therefore we would devote the four primary years in the infant stage to the establishment of a robust and hardy constitution, leaving the mind to develop itself at its own pleasure.

Perfection is not of the earth; neither is the highest intelligence of spontaneous existence. It requires the labour of years to produce an eminence, and it in like manner must require time to make a proper impression upon a child. That some children display a greater share of aptitude than others, cannot for a moment be denied; but it is no less true than many a promising child has been spoiled by what may be termed an unnatural forcing of its apparent abilities. Parents have been delighted to see their children possess a degree of knowledge at five or six equal to others twelve or thirteen years of age; but this premature acquirement, when satiated with the consciousness of over-praise, deadens the faculties, and when the child arrives at manhood it never possesses sufficient powers to cope with others