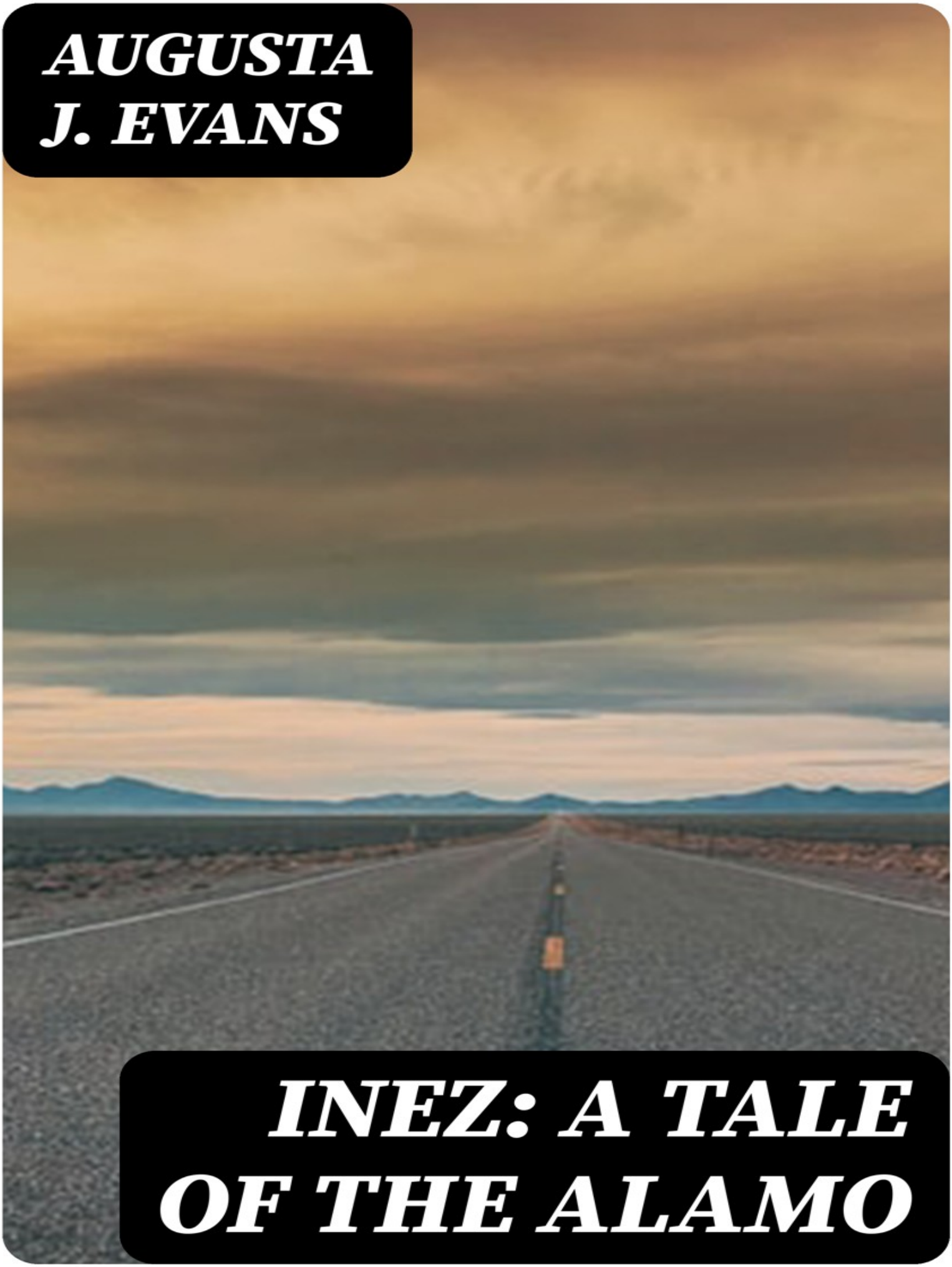
AUGUSTA
J. EVANS
INEZ: A TALE
OF THE ALAMO

Augusta J. Evans

Inez: A Tale of the Alamo

EAN 8596547379065

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

"But O, th' important budget!
Who can say what are its tidings?"

COWPER.

"There is the bell for prayers, Florry; are you ready?" said Mary Irving, hastily entering her cousin's room at the large boarding-school of Madame ——.

"Yes; I rose earlier than usual this morning, have solved two problems, and translated nearly half a page of Telemaque."

"I congratulate you on your increased industry and application, though you were always more studious than myself. I wish, dear Florry, you could imbue me with some of your fondness for metaphysics and mathematics," Mary replied, with a low sigh.

A momentary flush passed over the face of her companion, and they descended the stairs in silence. The room in which the pupils were accustomed to assemble for devotion was not so spacious as the class-room, yet sufficiently so to look gloomy enough in the gray light of a drizzling morn. The floor was covered with a faded carpet, in which the indistinct vine seemed struggling to reach the

wall, but failed by several feet on either side. As if to conceal this deficiency, a wide seat was affixed the entire length of the room, so high

"That the feet hung dangling down,
Anxious in vain to find the distant floor."

There were no curtains to the windows, and the rain pattered drearily down the panes.

The teacher who officiated as chaplain was seated before a large desk, on which lay an open Bible. He seemed about twenty-four, his countenance noble rather than handsome, if I may make so delicate a distinction. Intelligence of the first order was stamped upon it, yet the characteristic expression was pride which sat enthroned on his prominent brow; still, hours of care had left their impress, and the face was very grave, though by no means stern. His eye was fixed on the door as the pupils came in, one by one, for prayers, and when Florence and Mary entered, it sunk upon his book, In a few moments he rose, and, standing with one arm folded across his bosom, read in a deep, distinct tone, that beautiful Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd." He had only reached the fourth verse, when he was interrupted by two girls of twelve or fourteen, who had been conversing from the moment of their entrance. The tones grew louder and louder, and now the words were very audible:

"My father did not send me here to come to prayers, and Madame has no right to make us get up before day to hear him read his Bible!"

Many who coincided with them tittered, others stared in silence, while Florence's lip curled, and Mary looked sorrowingly, pityingly upon them—hers was the expression

with which the angel multitudes of Heaven regard their erring brethren here. The chaplain turned toward them, and said, in a grave yet gentle voice, "My little friends, I am afraid you did not kneel beside your bed this morning, and ask God to keep your hearts from sinful thoughts, and enable you to perform all your duties in a humble, gentle spirit. In your present temper, were I to read the entire book instead of one Psalm, I fear you would receive no benefit."

The girls were awed more by the tone than words, and sat silent and abashed. The reading was concluded, and then he offered up a prayer earnest and heartfelt. Instead of leaving the room immediately, the pupils waited as for something, and taking a bundle of letters from the desk, their tutor distributed them as the direction indicated.

"My budget is not so large as usual, and I regret it for your sakes, as I fear some are disappointed. Miss Hamilton, here are two for you;" and he handed them to her without looking up.

"Two for Florry, and none for me?" asked Mary, while her voice slightly trembled. He was leaving the room, but turned toward her.

"I am very sorry, Miss Mary, but hope you will find a comforting message in your cousin's."

Gently he spoke, yet his eyes rested on Florence the while, and, with a suppressed sigh, he passed on. "Come to my room, Mary; it is strange the letters are postmarked the same day." And while she solves the mystery, let us glance at her former history.

CHAPTER II.

Table of Contents

"Calm on the bosom of thy God,
Fair spirit! rest thee now!
Ev'n while with us thy footsteps trod,
His seal was on thy brow."

HEMANS.

Florence Hamilton had but attained her fourth year when she was left the only solace of her widowed father. Even after the lapse of long years, faint, yet sweet recollections of her lost parent stole, in saddened hours, over her spirit, and often, in dreams, a face of angelic beauty hovered around, and smiled upon her.

Unfortunately, Florence proved totally unlike her sainted mother, both in personal appearance and cast of character. Mr. Hamilton was a cold, proud man of the world; one who, having lived from his birth in affluence, regarded with a haughty eye all who, without the advantages of rank or wealth, strove to attain a position equal to his own. Intelligence, nobility of soul, unsullied character, weighed not an atom against the counterpoise of birth and family. He enjoyed in youth advantages rare for the unsettled times in which he lived; he tasted all that France and Italy could

offer; and returned *blasé* at twenty-seven to his home in one of the Southern States. Attracted by the brilliant fortune of an orphan heiress, he won and married her; but love, such as her pure, gentle spirit sought, dwelt not in his stern, selfish heart. All of affection he had to bestow was lavished on his only sister, who had married during his absence.

His angel wife drooped in the sterile soil to which she was transplanted, and, when Florence was about four years old, sunk into a quiet grave.

Perhaps when he stood with his infant daughter beside the newly-raised mound, and missed the gentle being who had endeavored so strenuously to make his home happy, and to win for herself a place in his heart, one tear might have moistened the cold, searching eyes that for years had known no such softening tendency. "Perhaps," I say; but to conjecture of thee, oh Man! is fruitless indeed.

As well as such a nature could, he loved his child, and considered himself extremely magnanimous in casting aside all thought of a second marriage, and devoting his leisure moments to the formation of her character, and direction of her education.

Florence inherited her father's haughty temperament without his sordid selfishness, and what may seem incompatible with the former, a glowing imagination in connection with fine mental powers. To all but Mr. Hamilton she appeared as cold and impenetrable as himself; but the flashing eye and curling lip with which she listened to a tale of injustice, or viewed a dishonorable act, indicated a nature truly noble. Two master passions ruled her heart—love for her parent, and fondness for books. Idolized by the

household, it was not strange that she soon learned to consider herself the most important member of it. Mr. Hamilton found that it was essential for the proper regulation of his establishment that some lady should preside over its various departments, and accordingly invited the maiden sister of his late wife to make his house her home, and take charge of his numerous domestics.

Of his daughter he said nothing. Aunt Lizzy, as she was called, was an amiable, good woman, but not sufficiently intellectual to superintend Florry's education. That little individual looked at first with distrustful eyes on one who, she supposed, might abridge her numerous privileges; but the affectionate manner of the kind-hearted aunt removed all fear, and she soon spoke and moved with the freedom which had characterized her solitude.

One day, when Florence was about nine years old, her father entered the library, where she sat intently reading, and said,

"Florence, come here, I have something to tell you."

"Something to tell me! I hope it is pleasant;" and she laid her hand on his knee, and looked inquiringly in his face.

"You remember the cousin Mary, whose father died not long ago? Well, she has lost her mother too, and is coming to live with us." As he spoke, his voice faltered, and his proud curling lip quivered, yet he gave no other evidence of the deepest grief he had known for many years.

"She will be here this evening, and I hope you will try to make her contented." With these words he was leaving the room, but Florence said,

"Father, is she to stay with us always, and will she sleep in my room, with me?"

"She will live with us as long as she likes, and, if you prefer it, can occupy the same room."

The day wore on, and evening found her on the steps, looking earnestly down the avenue for the approach of the little stranger.

At length a heavy carriage drove to the door, and Florry leaned forward to catch a glimpse of the inmate's face. A slight form, clad in deep mourning, was placed on the piazza by the coachman.

Mr. Hamilton shook her hand kindly, and, after a few words of welcome, said,

"Here is your cousin Florence, Mary. I hope you will love each other, and be happy, good little girls." Mary looked almost fearfully at her proud young cousin, but the sight of her own pale, tearful face touched Florry's heart, and she threw her arms round her neck and kissed her. The embrace was unexpected, and Mary wept bitterly.

"Florence, why don't you take Mary to her room?"

"Would you like to go up-stairs, cousin?"

"Oh yes! if you please, I had much rather." And taking her basket from her hand, Florry led the way.

Mary took off her bonnet, and turned to look again at her cousin. Their eyes met; but, as if overcome by some sudden recollection, she buried her face in her hands and burst again into tears.

Florence stood for some time in silence, at length she said gently,

"It is almost tea-time, and father will be angry if he sees you have been crying."

"Oh! I can't help it, indeed I can't," sobbed the little mourner, "he is so much like my dear, darling mother;" and she stifled a cry of agony.

"Is my father like your mother, cousin Mary?"

"Oh yes! When he spoke to me just now, I almost thought it was mother."

A tear rolled over Florry's cheek, and she slowly replied, "I wish I knew somebody that looked like my mother." In that hour was forged the chain which bound them through life, and made them one in interest.

Years rolled on, and found Mary happy in her adopted home. If her uncle failed to caress her as her loving heart desired, she did not complain, for she was treated like her cousin, and found in the strong love of Florence an antidote for every care. Mary was about sixteen, and Florence a few months younger, at the time our story opens, and had been placed in New Orleans to acquire French and music, as good masters could not be obtained nearer home. We have seen them there, and, hoping the reader will pardon this digression, return to Florry's letter.

CHAPTER III.

Table of Contents

"Philosophy can hold an easy triumph over past and future misfortunes; but those which are present, triumph over her."

ROCHEFOUCAULT.

A Striking difference in personal appearance was presented by the cousins, as they stood together. Florence, though somewhat younger, was taller by several inches, and her noble and erect carriage, in connection with the haughty manner in which her head was thrown back, added in effect to her height. Her hair and eyes were brilliant black, the latter particularly thoughtful in their expression. The forehead was not remarkable for height, but was unusually prominent and white, and almost overhung the eyes. The mouth was perfect, the lips delicately chiseled, and curving beautifully toward the full dimpled chin. The face, though intellectual, and artistically beautiful, was not prepossessing. The expression was cold and haughty; and for this reason she had received the appellations of "Minerva" and "Juno," such being considered by her fellow-pupils as singularly appropriate.

Mary, on the contrary, was slight and drooping, and her sweet, earnest countenance, elicited the love of the beholder, even before an intimate acquaintance had brought to view the beautiful traits of her truly amiable character.

And yet these girls, diametrically opposed in disposition, clung to each other with a strength of affection only to be explained by that strongest of all ties, early association.

Florence broke the seal of her letter, and Mary walked to the window. It looked out on a narrow street, through which drays rattled noisily, and occasional passengers picked their way along its muddy crossings.

Mary stood watching the maneuvers of a little girl, who was endeavoring to pass dry-shod, when a low groan startled her; and turning quickly, she perceived Florence standing in the center of the room, the letter crumpled in one hand: her face had grown very pale, and the large eyes gleamed strangely.

"Oh! Florry, what is the matter? Is your father ill—dead—tell me quick?" and imploringly she clasped her hands.

Florence made a powerful effort, and spoke, in her usual tone:

"I was foolish to give way to my feelings, even for a moment—my father is well." She paused, and then added, as if painfully, "But, oh! he is almost penniless!"

"Penniless!" echoed Mary, as though she could not comprehend her cousin's meaning.

"Yes, Mary, he has been very unfortunate in his speculations, obliged to sell our plantation and negroes, and now, he says, 'a few paltry thousands only remain;' but, oh!

that is not the worst; I wish it were, he has sold out everything, broken every tie, and will be here this evening on his way to Texas. He writes that I must be ready to accompany him to-morrow night."

She paused, as if unwilling to add something which must be told, and looked sadly at her cousin.

Mary understood the glance.

"Florry, there is something in the letter relating to myself, which you withhold for fear of giving me pain: the sooner I learn it the better."

"Mary, here is a letter inclosed for you; but first hear what my father says," and hurriedly she read as follows: ... "With regard to Mary, it cannot be expected that she should wish to accompany us on our rugged path, and bitterly, bitterly do I regret our separation. Her paternal uncle, now in affluence, has often expressed a desire to have her with him, and, since my misfortunes, has written me, offering her a home in his family. Every luxury and advantage afforded by wealth can still be hers. Did I not feel that she would be benefited by this separation, nothing could induce me to part with her, but, under existing circumstances, I can consent to give her up."

Florence flung the letter from her as she concluded, and approaching her cousin, clasped her arms fondly about her. Mary had covered her face with her hands, and the tears glistened on her slender fingers.

"Oh, Florry, you don't know how pained and hurt I am, that uncle should think I could be so ungrateful as to forget, in the moment of adversity, his unvaried kindness for six

long years. Oh! it is cruel in him to judge me so harshly," and she sobbed aloud.

"I will not be left, I will go with him, that is if—if—Florry, tell me candidly, do you think he has any other reason for not taking me, except my fancied dislike to leaving this place—tell me?"

"No, dear Mary; if he thought you preferred going with us, no power on earth could induce him to leave you."

Mary placed her hand in her cousin's, and murmured,

"Florry, I will go with you; your home shall be my home, and your sorrows my sorrows."

A flash of joy irradiated Florence's pale face as she returned her cousin's warm embrace.

"With you, Mary, to comfort and assist me, I fear nothing; but you have not yet read your uncle's letter, perhaps its contents may influence your decision."

Mary perused it in silence, and then put it in her cousin's hand, while the tears rolled over her cheeks.

"Mary, think well ere you reject this kind offer. Remember how earnestly he entreats that you will come and share his love, his home, and his fortune. Many privations will be ours, in the land to which we go, and numberless trials assail the poverty-stricken. All these you can avoid, by accepting this very affectionate invitation. Think well, Mary, lest in after-years you repent your hasty decision."

There came a long pause, and hurriedly Florence paced to and fro. Mary lifted her bowed head, and pushing back her clustering hair, calmly replied, "My heart swells with gratitude toward my noble, generous uncle. Oh, how fervently I can thank him for his proffered home! yet,

separated from you, dear Florry, I could not be happy; my heart would ache for you, and your warm, trusting love. I fear neither poverty nor hardships. Oh, let me go with you, and cheer and assist my dear uncle!"

"You shall go with us, my pure-hearted cousin. When I thought a moment since, of parting with you, my future seemed gloomy indeed, but now I know that you will be near, I am content."

A short silence ensued, broken by a mournful exclamation from
Florence.

"Ah! Mary, it is not for myself that I regret this change of fortune, but for my proud, haughty father, who will suffer so keenly. Oh, my heart aches when I think of him!"

"Florry, we must cheer him by those thousand little attentions, which will lead him to forget his pecuniary troubles."

Florence shook her head.

"You do not know my father as I do. He will have no comforters, broods over difficulties in secret, and shrinks from sympathy as from a 'scorching brand.'"

"Still, I think we can do much to lighten his cares, and I pray God I may not be mistaken," replied Mary.

Florence lifted her head from her palm and gazed vacantly at her cousin, then started from her seat.

"Mary, we must not sit here idly, when there is so much to do, Madame —— should know we leave to-morrow, and it will take us all day to prepare for our journey."

"Do let me go and speak to Madame——; it will be less unpleasant to me?"

"No, no; I will go myself; they shall not think I feel it so sensibly, and their condolence to-morrow would irritate me beyond measure. I scorn such petty trials as loss of fortune, and they shall know it."

"Who shall know it, Florry?"

Her cheek flushed, but without a reply she left the room, and descended the steps which led to Madame ——'s parlor. Reaching the door, she drew herself proudly up, then knocked.

"Come in," was the response.

She did so. In the center of the apartment, with an open book on the table before him, sat the teacher who officiated at prayers. He rose and bowed coldly in answer to her salutation.

"Pardon my intrusion, Mr. Stewart. I expected to find Madame here."

"She has gone to spend the morning with an invalid sister, and requested me to take charge of her classes, in addition to my own. If I can render you any assistance, Miss Hamilton, I am at your service."

"Thank you, I am in need of no assistance, and merely wished to say to Madame that I should leave New Orleans to-morrow, having heard from my father that he will be here in the evening boat."

"I will inform her of your intended departure as early as possible."

"You will oblige me by doing so," replied Florence, turning to go.

"Miss Hamilton, may I ask you if your cousin accompanies you?"

"She does," was the laconic answer, and slowly she retraced her steps, and stood at her own door. The cheeks had become colorless, and the delicate lips writhed with pain. She paused a moment, then entered.

"Did you see her, Florry?"

"No, she is absent, but I left word for her."

Her tone was hard, dry, as though she had been striving long for some goal, which, when nearly attained, her failing strength was scarce able to grasp. It was the echo of a fearful struggle that had raged in her proud bosom. The knell it seemed of expiring exertion, of sinking resistance. Mary gazed sadly on her cousin, who stood mechanically smoothing her glossy black hair. The haughty features seemed chiseled in marble, so cold, stony was the expression.

"Dear Florry! you look harassed and weary already. Why, why will you overtask your strength, merely to be called a disciple of Zeno? Surely you cannot seriously desire so insignificant an honor, if it merits that title?"

"Can, you, then, see no glory in crushing long-cherished hopes—nay, when your heart is yearning toward some 'bright particular' path, to turn without one symptom of regret, and calmly tread one just the opposite! Tell me, can you perceive nothing elevating in this Stoical command?"

The cold, vacant look had passed away; her dark eyes gleamed, glittered as with anticipated triumph.

"Florry, I do not understand you exactly; but I do know that command of the heart is impossible, from the source whence you draw. It may seem perfect control now, but it will fail you in the dark hour of your need, if many trials

should assail. Oh! my cousin, do not be angry if I say 'you have forsaken the fountain of living water, and hewn out for yourself broken cisterns, which hold no water.' Oh! Florry, before you take another step, return to Him, 'who has a balm for every wound.'"

Florence's face softened; an expression of relief began to steal over her countenance; but as Mary ceased speaking, she turned her face, beautiful in its angelic purity, full upon her. A bitter smile curled Florence's lip, and muttering hoarsely, "A few more hours and the struggle will be over," she turned to her bureau, and arranged her clothes for packing.

The day passed in preparation, and twilight found the cousins watching intently at the casement. The great clock in the hall chimed out seven, the last stroke died away, and then the sharp clang of the door-bell again broke silence. They started to their feet, heard the street door open and close—then steps along the stairs, nearer and nearer—then came a knock at the door. Mary opened it; the servant handed in a card and withdrew. "Mr. J.A. Hamilton." Florence passed out, Mary remained behind.

"Come, why do you linger?"

"I thought, Florry, you might wish to see him alone; perhaps he would prefer it."

"Mary, you have identified yourself with us. To my father we must be as one." She extended her hand, and the next moment they stood in the reception-room.

The father and uncle were standing with folded arms, looking down into the muddy street below. He advanced to

meet them, holding out a hand to each. Florence pressed her lips to the one she held, and exclaimed,

"My dear father, how glad I am to see you!"

"Glad to see me! You did not receive my letters then?"

"Yes, I did, but are their contents and pleasure at meeting you incompatible?"

He made no reply, and then Mary said, in a low, tremulous tone,

"Uncle, you have done me a great injury, and you must make me all the reparation in your power. You said, in your letter to Florry, that you did not think I would wish to go with you. Oh, uncle! you do not, cannot believe me so ungrateful, so devoid of love as to wish, under any circumstances, to be separated from you. Now ease my heart, and say I may share your new home. I should be very miserable away from you."

An expression of pleasure passed over his face, but again the brow darkened.

"Mary! Florence is my child—my destiny hers, my misfortunes hers; but I have no right to drag you with me in my fall; to deprive you of the many advantages that will be afforded, by your uncle's wealth, of the social position you may one day attain."

"Uncle! uncle! am I not your child by adoption? Have you not loved and cared for me during long years? Oh! what do I care for wealth—for what you call a high position in the world? You and Florry are my world." She threw her arms about his neck, and sobbed, "Take me! oh, take me with you!"

"If you so earnestly desire it, you shall indeed go with us, my Mary."
And, for the first time in her life, he imprinted a kiss on her brow.

When he departed, it was with a promise to call for them the next morning, that they might make, with their aunt, some necessary purchases, and remove to a hotel near the river.

Everything was packed the ensuing day, when Mary suddenly remembered that her books were still in the recitation-room, and would have gone for them, but Florence said,

"I will bring up the books, Mary; you are tired and pale with bending so long over that trunk." And accordingly she went.

Mary threw herself on the couch to rest a moment, and fell into a reverie of some length, unheeding the flying minutes, when she recollected that Florence had been absent a long time, and rising, was about to seek her; just then her cousin entered. A change had come over her countenance—peace, quiet, happiness reigned supreme. One hour later, and they had gone from Madame ——'s, never to return again.

CHAPTER IV

Table of Contents

"Time the supreme! Time is eternity,
Pregnant with all eternity can give;
With all that makes archangels smile
Who murders time, he crushes in the birth
A power ethereal."

YOUNG.

A year had passed away. "How paradoxical is the signification of the term!" How vast, when we consider that each hour hastens the end of our pilgrimage! How insignificant in comparison with futurity! A single drop in the boundless deep of eternity! Oh Time! thou greatest of all anomalies! Friend yet foe, "preserver and yet destroyer!" Whence art thou, great immemorial? When shall thy wondrous mechanism be dissolved? When shall the "pall of obscurity" descend on thy Herculean net-work? Voices of the past echo through thy deserted temples, and shriek along thy bulwarks—Never, no never!

Season had followed season in rapid succession, and the last rays of an August sun illumined a scene so beautiful, that I long for the pencil of a Claude Lorraine. It was a far-off town, in a far-off state, yet who has gazed on thy loveliness,

oh, San Antonio, can e'er forget thee! Thine was the sweetness of nature; no munificent hand had arranged, with artistic skill, a statue here, a fountain there.

The river wound like an azure girdle round the town; not confined by precipitous banks, but gliding along the surface, as it were, and reflecting, in its deep blue waters, the rustling tule which fringed the margin. An occasional pecan or live-oak flung a majestic shadow athwart its azure bosom, and now and then a clump of willows sighed low in the evening breeze.

Far away to the north stretched a mountain range, blue in the distance; to the south, the luxuriant valley of the stream. The streets were narrow, and wound with a total disregard of the points of the compass. Could a stranger have been placed blindfold in one of them, and then allowed to look about him, the flat roofs and light appearance of most of the houses would have forced him to declare that he had entered a tropical town of the far east.

Many of the buildings were of musquit pickets, set upright in the ground, lashed together with strips of hide, and thatched with the tule before mentioned. There were scarce three plank-floors in the town; by far the greater number being composed of layers of pebbles, lime, and sand, rolled with a heavy piece of timber till quite compact; daily sprinkling was found necessary, however, to keep down the dust, produced by constant friction.

The wealthy inhabitants built of sun-dried bricks, overcast with a kind of stucco. Yet, unfortunately, the plastering art died with the Montezumas, for the most vivid imagination failed to convert this rough coating into the

"silver sheen" which so dazzled Cortes's little band. The reader will exclaim, "I can fancy no beauty from so prosy a description. Thatched roofs and dirt floors, how absurd!"

Although a strict analysis might prove detrimental, I assure you the *tout ensemble* was picturesque indeed.

"Italia! oh Italia! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty."

Art rivaled here. Thy gorgeous skies have floated hither, and hover like a halo round the town. The sun had set; the glowing tints faded fast, till of the brilliant spectacle naught remained save the soft roseate hue which melted insensibly into the deep azure of the zenith. Quiet seemed settling o'er mountain and river, when, with a solemn sweetness, the vesper bells chimed out on the evening air. Even as the Moslem kneels at sunset toward the "Holy City," so punctiliously does the devout papist bend for vesper prayers. Will you traverse with me the crooked streets, and stand beneath the belfry whence issued the holy tones?

This ancient edifice was constructed in 1692. It fronted the Plaza, and was a long, narrow building, flanked, as it were, by wings lower than the main apartment, and surmounted by a dome, in which were five or six bells. This dome or belfry was supported by pillars, and in the intervening openings were placed the bells. The roof was flat, and the dark green and gray moss clung along the sides. The interior presented a singular combination of art and rudeness; the seats were of unpainted pine, and the cement floor between was worn irregularly by the knees of devout attendants. The railing of the altar was of carved mahogany, rich and beautiful. Over this division of the long

room hung a silken curtain, concealing three niches, which contained an image of the "Virgin," the "Child," and in the center one, a tall gilt cross. Heavy silver candlesticks were placed in front of each niche, and a dozen candles were now burning dimly. A variety of relics, too numerous to mention, were scattered on the altar, and in addition, several silver goblets, and a massive bowl for holding "holy water." A few tin sconces, placed against the wall, were the only provision for lighting that dark, gloomy church, and dreary enough it looked in the twilight hour. About a dozen devotees were present, all kneeling on the damp, hard floor. The silk curtain which concealed the altar was drawn aside, with due solemnity, by two boys habited in red flannel petticoats, over which hung a loose white slip. The officiating priest was seen kneeling before the altar, with his lips pressed to the foot of the cross. He retained his position for several moments, then rising, conducted the ceremonies in a calm, imposing manner. When these were concluded, and all had departed save the two boys, who still knelt before the Virgin, he beckoned them to him, and speaking a few words in Spanish, ended by pointing to the door and uttering, emphatically, "Go." Crossing themselves as they passed the images, they disappeared through a side door, and the priest was left alone.

CHAPTER V.

Table of Contents

* * * "He was a man
Who stole the livery of the court of heaven
To serve the devil in; in Virtue's guise,
Devoured the widow's house and orphan's bread;
In holy phrase, transacted villanies
That common sinners durst not meddle with."

POLLOK.

In years, he could not have exceeded twenty-five, yet the countenance was that of one well versed in intrigue. The cast was Italian—the crisp black hair, swarthy complexion, and never-to-be-mistaken eyes. A large amount of Jesuit determination was expressed in his iris, blended with cunning, malignity, and fierceness. The features were prominent particularly the nose; the lips finely cut, but thin; the teeth beautiful and regular. In stature he was low, and habited in the dress of his order, a long black coat or gown, buttoned to the throat, and reaching nearly to the feet.

Glancing at his watch as the sound of the last step died away, he paced round and round the altar, neglecting now the many genuflections, bows, and crossings with which he had honored the images in the presence of his flock. His

brows were knit, as if in deep thought, and doubtless he revolved the result of some deep-laid plan, when the door was hurriedly opened, and a man, bowing low before the images, approached him. The dress of the stranger declared him a ranchero: he wore no jacket but his pantaloons were of buckskin, and his broad sombrero was tucked beneath his arm.

"Benedicit, Juan!"

"Bueño noche, Padre."

"What tidings do you bring me?" said Father Mazzolin.

The Mexican handed him a letter, and then, as if much fatigued, leaned heavily against the wall, and wiped his brow with a large blue cotton handkerchief. As the priest turned away and perused his letter, a smile of triumphant joy irradiated his face, and a momentary flush tinged his dark cheek. Again he read it, then thrusting it into his bosom, addressed the bearer:

"May the blessing of the church rest upon you, who have so faithfully served your Padre;" and he extended his hand. Warmly it was grasped by Juan, with a look of grateful surprise.

"Este bueño?" inquired Juan.

"Si mui bueño. Juan, do you read American writing?"

"Chiquito," was answered, with a slight shrug.

"What is the news in the el-grand Ciudad?"

"They have a strong ox to pull the ropes, now Santa Anna is at the head. Bravura!" and the ranchero tossed his hat, regardless of the place.

It was, however, no part of Mazzolin's policy to allow him for one moment to forget the reverence due the marble

images that looked so calmly down from their niches, and with a stern glance he pointed to them, crossing himself as he did so. Juan went down on his knees, and with an "Ave Maria," and a Mexican dollar (which he laid on the altar), quieted his conscience.

"Señor Austin is in the Calaboose," he said, after a pause.

Mazzolin started, and looked keenly at him, as if striving to read his inmost thoughts.

"You must be mistaken. Juan; there is no mention of it in my letter?" he said, in a tone of one fearing to believe good news.

"Not at all, Padre. We started together—there were fifteen of us—and after we had come a long way, so far as Saltillo, some of Santa Anna's cavaleros overtook us, and carried Señor Americano back with them, and said they had orders to do it, for he was no friend to our nation. I know, for I heard for myself."

"Do you know the particular reason of his arrest?"

Juan shook his head, and replied, "That the officers did not say."

"Did you mention to any one your having a letter for me?"

"No, Padre; I tell no man what does not concern him."

"A wise plan, Juan, I would advise you always to follow; and be very careful that you say nothing to any one about my letter: I particularly desire it."

"Intiendo," said Juan, turning toward the door. "I go to my ranche to-morrow, but come back before many sunsets, and if you want me again, Padre, you know where to find me."