

roll of the *Diana*, or break-of-day drum, found some of them there. What are meals, or repose, or comfort, to their intense anxiety? Politics are to these men a second nature, a life, an only possible existence: they would sit till to-morrow in the gallery, if the fury of debate could last so long (which is impossible, since intense fires soon burn out), and not pine for a crust, nor sigh for a glass of water. Their longings would be only for the forbidden cigarillo! The doors are opened, and the rush is tremendous: ribs are crushed, coats torn off the back—pooh! that is nothing—a bristling row of bayonets, a battery of artillery, would alike be nothing. Life to these men has no charm without the excitements of the hour, society no interest but in the vicissitudes of political intrigue. There are soldiers, gunned and bayoneted, planted at the door (a graphic stroke of Narvaez's policy); but they are soon borne away by the impetuous tide, and only succeed in arresting *some Deputies* by mistake—a proceeding of which complaint was made in the Chamber—the crowd, like the waves assailing Canute, has roughly chastised the insolence which attempted to sway it. The seats in the interior all are occupied; the debates are opened, and continued for days; Olózaga, Pidal, Cortina, Bravo, Lopez, De la Rosa, Cantero, Madoz—all are listened to with profound attention. The excitement was too intense for vulgar disturbance. Occasional exclamations of applause, dissent, or surprise, burst forth now and then, in despite of police agents and President's bell; but not even the violent excitement of the passions produced a serious breach of decorum.

At one the President entered the Hall of Congress, when the sitting was immediately opened. The secretary, Posada, ascended the tribune, and whilst he read the *acta*, or record of the previous session, the murmurs of a hundred voices in the Chamber, and in the *salas* outside, prevented a word from being distinctly heard, while the strong gruff voice of Madoz, the Progresista leader, was plainly distinguishable amongst the crowd of Deputies without. At this moment, with noble step and carriage, and a countenance serene and smiling, entered Salustiano de Olózaga. In an instant an immense shout, a terribly confused *algazára*, arose from all the benches. *Vivas* and *fueras* * were uttered at the same time by partisan and opponent, with such thundering reverberations, that the building seemed on the point of coming down. The President's bell was violently rung, but it was like whistling to a tempest. Of its shrill tones not one was heard; the feeble and tremulous motion alone was seen; and the President summarily closed the sitting, abandoning his chair. But the *algazára* was then redoubled, and extended to the strangers' galleries. The ladies even took part in the fray, and waved their handkerchiefs in approval, or shook them fiercely at Olózaga. Their shrill voices, too, supplied the needful treble. The scene was of unparalleled excitement, lasting for near half an hour. The Deputies disputed violently on the floor, straining their voices to a most unnatural pitch in the endeavour to make themselves heard; some appeared highly irritated, and to require the

* Out!

strongest conventional fetters to keep them even from blows; others left the Hall for the outer *salas*, amongst the rest, Olózaga, as the only means of allaying the storm. These in about a quarter of an hour returned, when tolerable order was re-established. Olózaga took his customary seat at the extreme left, and earnestly conversed with several Deputies. Lopez took his seat on the central benches—a place for him unusual—with the head of the Progresistas, Cortina, on one side, and the Moderado leader, Martinez de la Rosa, on the other. At two the President resumed his seat.

This functionary, bent on proving how much partisanship may adorn his office, from his presidential chair made the gratuitous proposition that Olózaga should not be heard, because he had not been re-elected after receiving the appointment of Prime Minister (from which post he had just been dismissed!)

Olózaga rose, and in a voice that betrayed the terrible agitation which mastered him, notwithstanding the serenity of his aspect, protested against this preliminary injustice, having revelations to make so important, that upon them depended the ruin or the triumph of the Constitutional monarchy. This announcement excited profound attention, and the question whether Olózaga and his colleagues should be permitted to take part in the discussions, submitted in a formal motion by Señor Posada, was discussed with tolerable decency, and decided in the affirmative, but not till the end of the following day. The pressure at the doors of the Córtes continued to be tremendous, and on the third of December a man

was crushed to death. The circumstance was not known, or, if known, was not attended to, and was only made public on the following day. Such a trifle could not move the Spanish indifference to death. "*Contarle con los muertos,*" is a familiar Castilian proverb to describe a man who is entirely forgotten. The Madrileños marched over the prostrate victim of curiosity, and the claims of humanity were postponed to the eagerness for a seat. If the dying man could have sought revenge, he might have found it in the fact that his recumbent body served to trip a hundred others, his last groan was stifled in the confusion of a scrambling crowd; and I must do his unconscious murderers the justice of saying, that but few were aware of his fate.

Olózaga's character is of that precise stamp which needs persecution and adversity to elicit all the nobler qualities. In smooth water he runs with a relaxed sail before the wind; but when the tempest gathers around, he grapples his cordage with a sinewy arm, and sways the rudder firmly. He has vanities, feeblenesses, follies, in his level hours, but rises with each extraordinary occasion like a man of whom greatness is the inherent quality, and frivolity only an accident. The pettiness of the Golden Fleece was forgotten in the grandeur with which he grappled with the Palace Intrigue; the weakness of his Parisian displays, in the strength with which he smote the Camarilla. He was, indeed, a giant at bay, and a lion taken in the toils, when he faced that Moderado Córtes, and rose to perform the most delicate task which can fall to statesman—to skirmish when

there could be no pitched battle—to disprove where he could not dare deny—to destroy a charge which, left standing, must ruin him for ever, and at the same time spare the tremulous character of his Sovereign—to travel round the whole circumference, and yet not touch its centre—to convince the world that he had never for a moment coerced with brutal rudeness a girl of thirteen, and yet not compromise that royal maiden's honour! Olózaga did all this, and did it well. His language was guarded throughout, and never wanting in befitting respect to the Queen. "Never, Señores, was man in a position so difficult as mine!"

Yes, that the Camarilla had made him the victim of a treacherous conspiracy, was proved by every consideration which it was possible to advance, without positive compromise of the royal dignity; and no single point was left unnoticed which tended to complete that moral proof of which the nature of the case alone admitted. The Camarilla was short-sighted in its depth of baseness. It knew the respectful attachment—the "*maxima reverentia*" of Olózaga for his royal pupil; it knew the preponderance of the assertion of a crowned head over that of a private individual; it knew the reluctance with which the minister would contradict even the most deadly impeachment coming from that quarter, and the coldness with which such contradiction would be received by a hostile Chamber; but it forgot that there is such a thing as *circumstantial evidence*. More demonstratively by this than by any direct statement did Olózaga perfect his rebutting case, and most

conclusive was the conviction, which, in words of burning eloquence, he sent home to every head and heart. His tears were genuine then, his sobs were unaffected, and his triumph was marred by no melodramatic insincerity, such as when—Espartero meditating no treason against either—he exclaimed in the same Chamber in June, “*God save the Queen! God save the country!*” and subsequently, affecting that the Regent had plans of murder, cried, “*Let the assassins come!*”

The politicians of the Puerta del Sol, who, like the people everywhere, take broad and massive views of policy, who are brimful of imagination and prejudice, but seldom err very widely from the truth in their judgments of individual character, set down Olózaga as an Afrancesado, and as bought over to support Queen Cristina's cause. He probably was, at least, flattered and cajoled, the Tuileries for such men has a potent spell, and his vanity has indeed been brilliantly rewarded. It is scarcely possible to conceive that his desertion of the Regent last summer was impelled by motives entirely pure; but the charge of corruption is easier made than made good; and in every part of Spain, even in his own city of Cadiz, I have heard enough of general expression of ill-will towards Espartero (utterly groundless though it may have been, for I never heard good grounds) to account, in combination with his inefficient military performances since the period of his last marching from Madrid, for the universal desertion of his countrymen. Olózaga, perhaps, only acutely “snuffed the tainted gale,” and retired from the side of a man who was

inevitably doomed to fall. But with the true recklessness of a Spanish politician, he knocked the falling Regent upon the head, and a large section of the Liberal party considered him a backslider and an apostate. In the wonderful mutability of things at Madrid, the recent persecution rallied his old and estranged friends, conciliating those who had ceased to like him; and men who hated or despised him when he was dubious and vacillating, and shrank disgusted from his egotism, placed themselves once more beneath his banner when he showed decision and energy; his errors were condoned and his faults overlooked. Through him it was plain that the Camarilla struck at liberty; that Moderatism and Absolutism were elbowing reform off the scene; and the Progresista leaders, Cortina and Madoz, with the bulk of their party, both Old and Exalted, clung to him as if he had throughout been firm as bronze or marble. Adversity united all the sections of the Liberal party; the Gorgon aspect of an infernal plot made those who had opposed Espartero regret their opposition, and pity the poor young girl who was raised to a throne but a day or two before, to be stripped of her innocence, shorn of her *prestige*, and degraded to a miserable instrument.

“What, Señores (said Olózaga), is the great object which legists propose to obtain by representative government? How was the happy compromise effected between ancient monarchy and modern society, which requires to be represented in all its interests, in all the force of its political opinions? How was it designed to conciliate the stability, the

dignity, the benign deportment of thrones, immovable in the midst of political tempests, with the recognition, renovation, flexibility of popular opinion, and the nomination of that opinion to power which is most generally preferred by the country? In what consists, Señores, the spirit, the mind of constitutional government, but in maintaining sovereigns free from the contact of parties, absolutely free, aloof in their persons from the conflicts which prevail in the country, and choosing for their responsible ministers, for the executors of the national will, the men esteemed most worthy amongst the representatives of the dominant opinion? Was it not presumed that this scheme would provide the means of governing the country through the country, with a shelter for the throne, and a limit to ambition in the respect which tradition secures to monarchy? But how, Señores, are both principles to be reconciled? How is royalty to be fixed thus high? To be exempted from the visitation of party? How is it to represent society and its interests, if you will have it to represent societies and interests of the moment, and yield to the suggestions of coteries and individuals? If you are sincerely desirous to have thrones what they should be, if anxious to preserve our constitutional dignity, I do not fear to assert, that neither ministers, whoever they be, nor parliament, nor the country, will tolerate the intervention of these party and private interests. I do not fear to assert it, because representative government has stronger roots in Spain than some may think, and because the sincere lovers of our august Queen see that, if these are the saving prin-

ciples of thrones, never, in any circumstances, was their observance more necessary, their rigid observance, than when the destinies of the country are swayed by a guileless girl, who may so easily be surprised, may so readily be deceived, unless we admit the guarantees of responsible ministers, and of the majorities which sustain them."

Olózaga's second speech was still more effective than his first. It was a speech which made his life no longer safe in Madrid; and after delivering it, warned by significant threats of assassination, he was no longer publicly seen in the metropolis. It was the bold and energetic declaration of a dauntless tribune of the people:—"Is it judgment (he asked) you want, or is it sacrifice? Is it truth, or base intrigue? Let Señores opposite desire what they may, be their opinions what they will, if they come to tell us in these latter times that the word of the Queen is to be believed without question, I answer 'No!' There is either a charge or there is none. If there be, that word is a testimony like any other, and to that testimony I oppose mine!"

The discussion in the Córtes lasted for seventeen days! Before it had terminated, the Deputies, the public, the press, were wearied. The heaving mountain became parturient, in the end, of a mouse of the smallest dimensions—a mere respectful message to the Queen, assuring her of the sympathy, distress, and loyalty of the Congress. Ulterior proceedings against Olózaga—so significantly had public opinion declared itself—were instantly abandoned, and the Chambers were closed, because the Camarilla knew

not what to do. One result was, however, made clear by these transactions—that Parliamentary government and Court influence are incompatible; that Monarchy has infinitely more to dread from whisperers and flatterers than from open enemies, and that the evils of a Regency are preferable to the Royalty of a child.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROYAL CHARGE CONFUTED.

BUT for one precaution, most judiciously taken by Olózaga, his ruin would have been consummated easily, though by an act of the profoundest baseness. An Under-Secretary of State went to his house immediately after his return from the Palace, on the night of the 29th, when he was informed that he would find his dismissal at home, and made a formal demand of the decree which the Queen was alleged to have forcibly signed.

The plot was deeply planned by the Camarilla, which held that, in the first flow of feeling and prostration of spirits, the degraded Minister would yield without question to the supposed requisition of his Sovereign. Olózaga was not so easily surprised; but, with characteristic penetration and presence of mind, retained the document till the following day, very frankly disclosing his purpose, which was to show it to at least 100 Deputies and others, and thus decisively prove that the signature was in the same regular, unshaken, and school-girl hand-writing, which Queen Isabel had invariably employed since her majority was declared.

The decree was given up on the ensuing day; but the plans of the Camarilla were thus decisively frustrated, for the decree, which they had forged with a

blotted and tremulous signature, could not be altered, and the Queen had no opportunity, by attesting it, to seal Olózaga's lips for ever!

The construction of the palace at Madrid is worthy of consideration, in connection with this plot of the Camarilla. The palace is deficient in great apartments, where a scene like that described between the Queen and Olózaga might occur without the interference of the immediate attendants upon royalty.

The Sala de los Embassadors* is indeed of enormous extent. Two persons placed in the centre of this hall might well dispute together loudly, run along the floor, and drag each other about, without one word of the quarrel being heard outside its immense area. But, in the Gabinete del Despacho, or Cabinet for transacting Ministerial business, this is utterly impossible. It is one of the smallest rooms in any palace or noble house in Madrid. The room is *scarcely six yards square*, and outside its two doors were standing officially the Marquesas de Santa Cruz and de Valverde, with the Duke de Baylen, Calvet, or Donoso Cortés, and probably Narvaez himself at no great distance.

The moment a voice was raised, or a shuffling of feet was heard, the room must have been instantly entered. Besides, both doors had keyholes, through which Olózaga must have been seen pulling the Queen about and forcing her to sign. But the doors, to be sure, were locked—violently locked—by Olózaga; and it was impossible for their Excellencies, the Marquesas

* Hall of Ambassadors.

de Santa Cruz and de Valverde, to ask her little Catholic Majesty, through the door, whether she was a consenting party to locking herself in with that ogre—the Marquesas de Santa Cruz and de Valverde were so modestly bashful, and so blushfully innocent! I positively declare that nothing above a whisper could be spoken in the little apartment without being distinctly heard outside. The most farcical part of the transaction was the piece of acting by Queen Isabel, after she had made and signed her declaration, attested by the grand notary of the kingdom, in the presence of all the principal Officers of State. “Come, Señores,” she said, “till I show you exactly how it happened.” (Her whole lesson had been rehearsed to her by the Marquesa de Santa Cruz in her carriage-drive that day.)

The courtly party, and presidents and vice-presidents of the legislative Chambers, hesitated to compromise the dignity of their Sovereign by taking a step which would imply a doubt of her word, and they stopped short. “Come on!” she cried, with childish animation, and with the excitement which was natural and requisite to sustain her through her piece of personation. “Here Olózaga caught me by the arm—here he went to this door and locked it—here he dragged me to the other door and locked it too—and here he held my hand and forced me to sign!” All the time she frisked and flurried about, and too plainly and sadly overacted her part.

Upon the days of Despacho Real, or despatch of business by the Sovereign, the ministers proceed to

the palace, each with his cartera or portfolio, containing the various decrees or orders which require to receive the royal signature, together with any reports or other documents which it may be requisite for the Sovereign to read. The decrees, before being carried to the palace, have invariably received the minister's *refrendata* or countersign.

Upon ordinary occasions each minister repairs to the palace in his own carriage separately, transacts his own business, and retires; ten minutes sufficing for each, and the others waiting, if they should arrive in the interim, until the minister actually engaged retires. But whenever there is a question of a very important decree, which it is desirable to have fortified in every shape, and to send forth to the country with visible tokens of ministerial unanimity and consent, a council of ministers is held, at which the Sovereign for the most part assists, the opinions of all are heard, the subject is fairly discussed, and upon agreement all sign together. The practice of the Sovereign signing decrees with blanks for the date has excited considerable surprise since this *éclat* at the palace divulged it; but the practice has been invariable, and is held to be respectful to the Sovereign. It is assumed that the latter may choose to exercise a discretion as to the period when the decree is to be issued and to have force. It is likewise evident that temporary illness and various other causes may render the Sovereign inaccessible at the precise period of the ministers repairing to the palace, and hence would arise the inconvenience of altering dates already written.

But the option to a minister of carrying dateless decrees in his pocket, and afterwards, when he pleases, giving them force, and specially by inserting a date, perhaps when months have elapsed, and the particular subject has vanished from the royal mind (when a change, too, may have occurred in the royal opinions), cannot, without great irregularity, be admitted, and denotes, like so many other things, the prevalent indolence of Spain. It is not too much to expect that in future the minister will invariably fill up the date in each decree at the moment when it has received the royal signature. Upon the memorable night of the 28th, Olózaga had several decrees in his cartera, all of which her Majesty signed after reading them.

The decree of dissolution was one of them. At the end the Queen presented him with a paper of sweetmeats for his daughter. Not a murmur, nor a buzz was heard, and the whole occupied less than a quarter of an hour! No one attempted to deny this in the Córtes. The weight of evidence is made irresistible by the declaration of General Serrano in the Córtes on the 17th December, nineteen days after the alleged occurrence. Olózaga had then fled from Madrid, and entered Castello Branco in Portugal two days after (on the 19th). No private entreaties could therefore have been used on Olózaga's part to induce him to conceal or colour. The high and soldierly character of Serrano is also a secure guarantee for the impossibility of his departure from truth and honour, and the proud indignation with which he crushed Bravo's attempt to twist against Olózaga some words dropped in confidential intercourse, makes this testimony

entirely unsuspected; as does likewise the fact that he had a personal quarrel with Olózaga, and had hastily retired from the ministry.

In reply to a question from Roca de Togores, Serrano spoke as follows:—"On the night of the 28th I had the honour to sit in the theatre by the side of the distinguished person referred to (the Marquesa de Santa Cruz) till half-past ten, and on the following day I paid her a visit in the palace at noon. I was in her company till half-past two, and she said nothing to me about anything having happened on the previous night. She was talking to me with all the frankness with which that lady honours me, and said nothing to induce me to believe that anything of the slightest consequence had occurred."

The calumny respecting Olózaga's thrusting himself forward to take the Queen's arm on the occasion of the grand dinner given at the palace, immediately after the declaration of the Queen's majority, was equally odious and unfounded. By the Queen's own order, it was communicated through the Grand Chamberlain to the Presidents of the Congress and Senate, that her Majesty, desirous to give an eminent mark of distinction to the legislative bodies, as well as of her gratitude for their anticipating the legal period of her majority, would accord to them the honour of taking her arm to and from the dinner-table.

The Grand Chamberlain, as was his duty, called the two Presidents by their official names respectively, in the presence of all the assembled guests, and these were the first who in the saloon of waiting before dinner were led up to the Queen, and paid to her their

respectful salutations. The Chamberlain announced that one should take her Majesty's arm then, the other on her return. The lead was accorded to Olózaga; and so far was he from desiring to monopolize the favour, that he solicited the Queen to accord to the other President permission to sit at her right hand, the place of honour, which was done accordingly, Olózaga seating himself by the royal desire at the Queen's left hand. The malice of courtiers and of women gave to this *commanded* act the aspect of an intrusive and impertinent liberty.

So far was Olózaga from overstepping those boundaries which the as yet unextinguished chivalry of European countries, and very particularly of Spain, fixes as impassable with regard to the gentler sex, still more in the case of youthful girls, more sacredly still in respect of Queens—bounds strictly conventional and therefore more respected,—that he even with peculiar delicacy resigned his claim to the honour of taking her Majesty's arm upon the third occasion that evening when she needed the service of a cavalier.

The President of the Peers conducted the Queen from the dinner-table to the coffee-saloon, and there his privilege ended. After half an hour's conversation, her Majesty, as is her wont, (for it is obvious that a child is not in all respects to affect the manners of a mature Queen,) retired from the saloon in which coffee is usually served, to the *Camara Real* or Royal Chamber. It clearly devolved upon Olózaga here to conduct her—a matter, be it observed in passing, of no moment whatever, but its exposition rendered

necessary by the devices of slander—it came to his turn, for the honour was to be alternated between him and the other President; yet, with the instinctive superiority of great minds, and with a delicacy far removed from the vulgar hustling for the favours of royalty, which other men would have shown under similar circumstances, Olózaga gave the *pas* to the President of the Senate, who thus had the honour of twice escorting her Majesty on the same evening, while Olózaga escorted her only once, all taking their leave of the Queen and retiring the moment she had passed to the Camara Real.

From these minutiae it is plain that Olózaga was grossly calumniated. But this was not all. He put a little wine into her Majesty's glass twice only during dinner, and the Palace Jezabels declared that he wanted to make her drunk! The high-principled Bravo too repeated in the Congress some private conversation which he had held with Serrano, in which Olózaga's (most properly) energetic deportment towards the Queen was commented on, but with nothing of the spirit of depreciation attributed by Bravo, and the latter for his pains had the lie flung in his teeth.

But all these scandalous distortions show what malice was at work—a malice fiendish, if you will, but assuredly human likewise—to blacken the character of the man whom it was determined to ruin, and give colour to the infamous charge of compelling his Sovereign to sign.

The alleged fact was an utter impossibility. The whole history of Olózaga's life disproved it. Familiar

with courts and with the best society, having the habitual *entrée* into the first palaces in Europe, of high culture and most gentlemanly manners, a visibly well-bred air pervading his person and whole deportment, he was the last man who could be capable of such conduct—a conduct for which there was not even the shadow of a motive, for the decree was neither dated, nor was he at all fixed in his intention to use it—but to watch the progress of Congress, and be guided by events. Men do not commit crimes except for definite objects, and gentlemen assuredly do not perpetrate one of the highest of human offences for the mere pleasure of, coward-like, bullying a royal girl. Unless we admit the now fashionable hypothesis of mania, which seems especially set apart for excusing assaults upon royalty; unless we conceive that Olózaga, famed over Europe already, the only subject of Spain made illustrious by its highest order; unless we suppose that the statesman and orator, the companion of princes and the preceptor of royalty, regarded his Golden Fleece as nothing, and needed for his reputation to discharge a popgun pistol at his Sovereign, like some minor British heroes, “forgery” is branded on the tale. So far from succeeding, the attempt to ruin an honourable man has met with a summary fate—the reputation of Olózaga shines forth brighter than before. Never was tissue of calumny more rapidly unwoven. Like the web of Penelope, it was undone in a night! The arrows of truth were potent as Ithuriel’s spear, and the lie was strangled almost the moment it was born.

Dolus patefactus ad auras!

And may it ever be thus. May falsehood in palaces be visited with a keener censure, and baseness in high nobility struck with a more withering blight. May the fountains of honour be lashed till they are purified, and kept in agitated ferment till their grosser particles subside, and their scum descend to the lowest depth of the waters. May countries be taught what respect mankind has for embroidered villains; and ladies, that lying lips, however lovely, are foul with a serpent's slime!

The bold and unshrinking firmness with which Olózaga defended himself, and the remarkable and convincing ability with which he refuted the charge against him, completely frustrated the plans of the Camarilla, and confounded the minister called to succeed him. The generous warmth, too, with which the Progresistas to a man supported him, and forgot their differences in their allegiance to truth, turned the tide of opinion so strongly against the Court, that there were witnessed the usual results of fraud and crime.

Bitter was the repentance of the foiled intriguers, and intense their regret at the impossibility of recalling the results of their immeasurable folly. Their tale was now borne upon all the winds—and disbelieved; disbelieved in Spain, disbelieved in France, disbelieved in England, disbelieved throughout Europe.

The Queen's reputation, not Olózaga's, was damaged. The cat's paw was burnt. What a naughty man Olózaga was to defend himself! Ministers have been beheaded before now for look-

ing crooked at a Queen. They didn't think he would be so stubborn and impudent! Was there ever so outrageous a thing as his not ruining himself for the amusement of the court? Indeed, he should make no defence, but suffer himself to be condemned; when the Queen would be graciously pleased to pardon him. A proposal to this effect was formally made. But Olózaga knew better.

In whatever light this affair is regarded, with eyes however favourable to the institution of royalty, with a strong desire to rescue an unformed character from serious imputation, making every allowance for royal misconception, and for rashness and indiscretion in the minister's bearing, it is as clear as sunlight that, in asserting that Olózaga "held her hand and forced her to sign," Queen Isabel said the thing that was not; and that Narvaez and the Camarilla concocted the plan—a plan not worthy of a palace, but of hell itself.