

CHAPTER XII

WHERE THE CAPTIVE RELATES HIS LIFE AND
ADVENTURES

IN the mountains of Leon my family had its first original,¹ and was more kindly dealt withal by nature than by fortune, though my father might pass for rich among the inhabitants of those parts, who are but poorly provided for. To say truth, he had been so, had he had as much industry to preserve, as he had inclination to dissipate his income; but he had been a soldier, and the years of his youth spent in that employment, had left him in his old age a propensity to spend, under the name of liberality. War is a school where the covetous grow free, and the free prodigal: to see a soldier a miser, is a kind of prodigy which happens but seldom. My father was far from being one of them; for he passed the bounds of liberality, and came very near the excesses of prodigality; a thing which cannot suit well with a married life, where the children ought to succeed to the estate, as well

¹ See Appendix, Note 1, Chapter XII., Book IV.

as name of the family. We were three of us, all at man's estate; and my father, finding that the only way (as he said) to curb his squandering inclination, was to dispossess himself of that which maintained it, his estate (without which Alexander himself must have been put to it), he called us one day all three to him in his chamber, and spoke to us in the following manner.

“My sons, to persuade you that I love you, I need only tell you I am your father, and you my children; and on the other side, you have reason to think me unkind, considering how careless I am in preserving what should one day be yours; but to convince you, however, that I have the bowels of a parent, I have taken a resolution, which I have well weighed and considered for many days. You are all now of an age to choose the kind of life you each of you incline to; or, at least, to enter upon some employment that may one day procure you both honour and profit: therefore I design to divide all I have into four parts, of which I will give three among you, and retain the fourth for myself, to maintain me in my old age, as long as it shall please heaven to continue me in this life. After that each of you shall have received his part, I could wish

you would follow one of the employments I shall mention to you, every one as he finds himself inclined. There is a proverb in our tongue, which I take to contain a great deal of truth, as generally those sorts of sayings do, being short sentences framed upon observation and long experience. This proverb runs thus, Either the church, the sea, or the court. As if it should plainly say, that whosoever desires to thrive must follow one of these three; either be a churchman, or a merchant and try his fortune at sea, or enter into the service of his prince in the court; for another proverb says, that King's chaff is better than other men's corn. I say this, because I would have one of you follow his studies, another I desire should be a merchant, and the third should serve the king in his wars; because it is a thing of some difficulty to get an entrance at court; and though war does not immediately procure riches, yet it seldom fails of giving honour and reputation. Within eight days' time I will give each of you your portion, and not wrong you of a farthing of it, as you shall see by experience. Now therefore tell me if you are resolved to follow my advice about your settling in the world." And turning to me, as the eldest, he bid me answer first.

I told him, that he ought not upon our account to divide or lessen his estate, or way of living; that we were young men, and could shift in the world; and at last I concluded, that for my part I would be a soldier, and serve God and the king in that honourable profession. My second brother made the same regardful offer, and chose to go to the Indies; resolving to lay out in goods the share that should be given him here. The youngest, and, I believe, the wisest of us all, said he would be a churchman; and in order to it, go to Salamanca, and there finish his studies. After this, my father embraced us all three, and in a few days performed what he had promised; and, as I remember, it was three thousand ducats apiece, which he gave us in money; for we had an uncle who bought all the estate, and paid for it in ready money, that it might not go out of the family. A little after, we all took leave of my father; and at parting I could not forbear thinking it a kind of inhumanity to leave the old gentleman in so strait a condition: I prevailed with him therefore to accept of two thousand of my three, the remainder being sufficient to make up a soldier's equipage. My example worked upon my other brothers, and they each of them presented him with a

thousand ducats; so that my father remained with four thousand ducats in ready money, and three thousand more in land, which he chose to keep and not sell out-right. To be short, we took our leave of my father and the uncle I have mentioned, not without much grief and tears on all sides; they particularly recommending us to let them know by all opportunities our good or ill fortune. We promised to do so, and having received the blessing of our old father, one of us went straight to Salamanca, the other to Sevil, and I to Alicant, where I was informed of a Genoese ship, which was loading wood for Genoa.

This year makes two and twenty since I first left my father's house, and in all that time, though I have writ several letters, I have not had the least news, either of him, or of my brothers. And now I will relate, in few words, my own adventures in all that course of years. I took shipping at Alicant, arrived safe and with a good passage at Genoa, from thence I went to Milan, where I bought my equipage, resolving to go and enter myself in the army of Piedmont; but being come as far as Alexandria de la Paille, I was informed that the great Duke of Alva was passing into Flanders¹

¹ See Appendix, Note 2, Chapter XII., Book IV.

with an army; this made me alter my first resolution. I followed him, and was present at all his engagements, as well as at the deaths of the Counts Egmont and Horne; and at last I had a pair of colours under a famous captain of Guadalajara, whose name was Diego de Urbina.¹ Some time after my arrival in Flanders, there came news of the league concluded by Pope Pius V. of happy memory, in junction with Spain, against the common enemy the Turk, who at that time had taken the island of Cyprus from the Venetians; which was an unfortunate and lamentable loss to Christendom. It was also certain, that the general of this holy league was the most serene Don Juan of Austria,² natural brother to our good King Don Philip. The great fame of the preparations for this war excited in me a vehement desire of being present at the engagement, which was expected to follow these preparations; and although I had certain assurance, and, as it were, an earnest of my being advanced to be a captain upon the first vacancy: yet I resolved to leave all those expectations, and return, as I did, to Italy. My good fortune was such, that I arrived just about the same time that Don

¹ See Appendix, Note 3, Chapter XII., Book IV.

² *Ibid*, Note 4.

Juan of Austria landed at Genoa, in order to go to Naples, and join the Venetian fleet, as he did at Messina. In short, I was at that great action of the battle of Lepanto, being a captain of foot, to which post my good fortune, more than my desert, had now advanced me; and that day, which was so happy to all Christendom, because the world was then disabused of the error they had entertained, that the Turk was invincible by sea, that day, I say, in which the pride of the Ottomans was first broke, and which was so happy to all Christians, even to those who died in the fight, who were more so than those who remained alive and conquerors, I alone was the unhappy man; since, instead of a naval crown, which I might have hoped for in the time of the Romans, I found myself that very night a slave, with irons on my feet, and manacles on my hands. The thing happened thus: Vehali, King of Algiers,¹ a brave and bold pirate, having boarded and taken the Capitana galley of Malta, in which only three knights were left alive, and those desperately wounded, the galley of Joan Andrea Doria bore up to succour them; in this galley I was embarked with my company, and doing my duty on this occasion, I leaped into

¹ See Appendix, Note 5, Chapter XII., Book IV.

the enemy's galley, which getting loose from ours, that intended to board the Algerine, my soldiers were hindered from following me, and I remained alone among a great number of enemies; whom not being able to resist, I was taken after having received several wounds; and as you have heard already, Vehali having escaped with all his squadron, I found myself his prisoner; and was the only afflicted man among so many joyful ones, and the only captive among so many free; for on that day above 15,000 Christians, who rowed in the Turkish galleys, obtained their long-wished-for liberty. I was carried to Constantinople, where the Grand Seignor Selim made Vehali, my master, general of the sea, he having behaved himself very well in the battle, and brought away with him the great flag of the order of Malta, as a proof of his valour.

The second year of my captivity, I was a slave in the Capitana galley at Navarino; and I took notice of the Christians' fault, in letting slip the opportunity they had of taking the whole Turkish fleet¹ in that port; and all the Janisaries and Algerine pirates did so expect to be attacked, that they had made all in readiness to escape on shore without fighting;

¹ See Appendix, Note 6, Chapter XII., Book IV.

so great was the terror they had of our fleet: but it pleased God to order it otherwise, not by any fault of the Christian general, but for the sins of Christendom, and because it is his will we should always have some enemies to chastise us. Vehali made his way to Modon, which is an island not far from Navarino, and there landing his men, fortified the entrance of the harbour, remaining in safety there till Don Juan was forced to return home with his fleet. In this expedition, the galley called *La Presa*, of which Barbarossa's own son was captain, was taken by the admiral galley of Naples, called the *Wolf*, which was commanded by that thunder-bolt of war, that father of the soldiers, that happy and never-conquered captain, Don Alvaro de Bacan, Marquis of Santa Cruz;¹ and I cannot omit the manner of taking this galley. The son of Barbarossa² was very cruel, and used his slaves with great inhumanity; they perceiving that the *Wolf*-galley got of them in the chase, all of a sudden laid by their oars, and seizing on their commander, as he was walking between them on the deck, and calling to them to row hard; they passed him on from hand to hand to one another, from one end of

¹ See Appendix, Note 7, Chapter XII., Book IV.

² See Appendix, Note 8, Chapter XII., Book IV.

the galley to the other, and gave him such blows in the handling him, that before he got back to the mainmast, his soul had left his body, and was fled to hell. This, as I said, was the effect of his cruelty, and their hatred.

After this we returned to Constantinople; and the next year, which was 1573, news came that Don Juan of Austria had taken Tunis and its kingdom from the Turks, and given the possession of it to Muley Hamid,¹ having thereby defeated all the hopes of reigning of Muley Hamid, one of the cruellest, and withal one of the bravest Moors in the world. The Grand Seignor was troubled at this loss, and, using his wonted artifices with the Christians, he struck up a piece with the Venetians, who were much more desirous than he of it.

The year after, which was 1574, he attacked the *Goletta*, and the fort which Don Juan had begun,² but not above half finished, before Tunis. All this while I was a galley slave, without any hopes of liberty; at least, I could not promise myself to obtain it by way of ransom; for I was resolved not to write my father the news of my misfortune. *La Goletta**

¹ See Appendix, Note 9, Chapter XII., Book IV.

² See Appendix, Note 10, Chapter XII., Book IV.

* The *Goletta* is a fortress in the Mediterranean, between that sea and the lake of Tunis. In 1535 Charles V. took it by storm.

and the fort were both taken, after some resistance; the Turkish army, consisting of 75,000 Turks in pay, and above 400,000 Moors and Arabs out of all Africa near the sea; with such provisions of war of all kinds, and so many pioneers, that they might have covered the Goletta and the fort with earth by handfuls. The Goletta was first taken, though always before reputed impregnable; and it was not lost by any fault of its defenders, who did all that could be expected from them; but because it was found by experience, that it was practicable to make trenches in that sandy soil, which was thought to have water under it within two feet; but the Turks sunk above two yards and found none; by which means, filling sacks with sand, and laying them on one another, they raised them so high, that they over-topt and commanded the fort, in which none could be safe, nor show themselves upon the walls. It has been the opinion of most men, that we did ill to shut ourselves up in the Goletta; and that we ought to have been drawn out to hinder their landing; but they who say so, talk without experience, and at random, of such things; for if in all there were not above 7000 men in the Goletta and the fort, how could so small a number, though never so

brave, take the open field against such forces as those of the enemies? And how is it possible that a place can avoid being taken, which can have no relief, particularly being besieged by such numbers, and those in their own country? But it seemed to many others, and that is also my opinion, that God Almighty favoured Spain most particularly, in suffering that sink of iniquity and misery, as well as that sponge and perpetual drain of treasure, to be destroyed. For infinite sums of money were spent there to no purpose, without any other design than to preserve the memory of one of the Emperor's (Charles the Fifth's) conquests; as if it had been necessary to support the eternity of his glory, which will be permanent, that those stones should remain in being. The fort was likewise lost, but the Turks got it foot by foot; for the soldiers who defended it, sustained two-and-twenty assaults, and in them killed above 25,000 of those barbarians; and when it was taken, of 300 which were left alive, there was not one man unwounded; a certain sign of the bravery of the garrison, and of their skill in defending places. There was likewise taken, by composition, a small fort in the midst of a lake, which was under the command of Don John Zanuerra,

a gentleman of Valencia, and a soldier of great renown. Don Pedro Puerto Carrero, General of the Goletta, was taken prisoner, and was so afflicted at the loss of the place, that he died of grief by the way, before he got to Constantinople, whither they were carrying him. They took also prisoner the commander of the fort, whose name was Gabriel Cerbellon, a Milanese, a great engineer, as well as a valiant soldier. Several persons of quality were killed in those two fortresses, and amongst the rest was Pagan Doria, the brother of the famous John Andrea Doria, a generous and noble-hearted gentleman, as well appeared by his liberality to that brother; and that which made his death more worthy of compassion, was, that he received it from some Arabs, to whom he had committed his safety after the loss of the fort, they having promised to carry him disguised in a Moor's habit to Tarbaca, which is a small fort held on that coast by the Genoeses, for the diving for coral; but they cut off his head, and brought it to the Turkish General, who made good to them our Spanish proverb, that the treason pleases, but the traitors are odious; for he ordered them to be hanged up immediately, for not having brought him alive.

Amongst the Christians which were taken in the fort, there was one Don Pedro de Aguilar,¹ of some place in Andalusia, and who was an ensign in the place; a very brave, and a very ingenious man, and one who had a rare talent in poetry. I mention him, because it was his fortune to be a slave in the same galley with me, and chained to the same bench. Before he left the port he made two sonnets, by way of epitaph for the Goletta, and the fort, which I must beg leave to repeat here, having learned them by heart, and I believe they will rather divert than tire the company.—When the captive named Don Pedro de Aguilar, Don Ferdinand looked upon his companions, and they all smiled; and when he talked of the sonnets, one of them said, “Before you go on to repeat the sonnets, I desire, sir, you would tell me what became of that Don Pedro de Aguilar, whom you have mentioned.”—“All that I know of him,” answered the slave, “is, that after having been two years in Constantinople, he made his escape disguised like an Arnaut,* and in company of a Greek spy; but I cannot tell whether he obtained his liberty or no, though I believe he did, because about

¹ See Appendix, Note 11, Chapter XII., Book IV.

* A trooper of Epirus, Dalmatia, or some of the adjacent countries.

a year after I saw the same Greek in Constantinople, but had not an opportunity to ask him about the success of his journey."—"Then I can tell you," replied the gentleman, "that the Don Pedro you speak of is my brother, and is at present at home, married, rich, and has three children."—"God be thanked," said the slave, "for the favours he has bestowed on him; for in my mind there is no felicity equal to that of recovering one's lost liberty."—"And moreover," added the same gentleman, "I can say the sonnets you mentioned, which my brother made."—"Pray say them then," replied the slave, "for I question not but you can repeat them better than I."—"With all my heart," answered the gentleman. "That upon the Goletta was thus."

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORY OF THE CAPTIVE CONTINUED

A SONNET

"Blest souls, discharged of life's oppressive weight,
Whose virtue proved your passport to the skies;
You there procured a more propitious fate,
When for your faith you bravely fell to rise.

"When pious rage, diffused through every vein,
On this ungrateful shore inflamed your blood;
Each drop you lost, was bought with crowds of slain,
Whose vital purpose swell'd the neighb'ring flood.

"Though crush'd by ruins, and by odds, you claim
That perfect glory, that immortal fame,
Which, like true heroes, nobly you pursued;
On these you seized, even when of life deprived,
For still your courage even your lives survived;
And sure 'tis conquest thus to be subdued."

"I know it is just as you repeat it," said the captive.—"Well then," said the gentleman, "I will give you now that which was made upon the fort, if I can remember it.

A SONNET

"Amidst these barren fields, and ruin'd tow'rs,
The bed of honour of the fallen brave,
Three thousand champions of the Christian powers
Found a new life, and triumph in the grave.