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T H E

VALLEY OF ALVARDO,

O R T H E

SPY OF TENNESSEE:

A LEGEND OF MEXICO.

BY TRISTAM BURGES.

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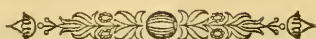
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1921.
A LEGEND OF MEXICO.



1

" Whence, whence art thou flying, old man, in such haste ?

Why tears in thine eyes ? and all out of breath ?

Old time will keep pace, go thou ever so fast ;

Nor canst thou outrun the pale horse of death."

2

So cried a young farmer, who paused in his toil,

And leaned on his plough and his goad ;

While half with a tear and half with a smile,

He hailed him who fled on the road.

3

The fugitive paused ; and then he looked round,

And threw himself down where he stood ;

His tears in a torrent were poured on the ground,

And his cry was, " O Mexico ! where is thy God ?"

The youth stopped his team in the furrow begun,
 And hastened away to the stranger's relief ;
 He kneeled at his side, like a dutiful son,
 And begged him to tell all the cause of his grief.

The old man arose from his place in the dust,
 And sat on a stone, by the side of the way ;
 While groan after groan from his bosom then burst,
 And struggling to speak, not a word could he say.

His head was all white with the winters of time ;
 On his face was no trace or of anger, or pride ;
 He gazed on the youth, that youth in his prime ;
 And then fell on his bosom and died.

And who he was, or whence he came,
 No mortal there could then reveal ;
 His woes, his travel and his name
 Were hidden under death's dark seal.

They took him to a village near,
 And there the fun'ral rites began ;
 While many an eye wept many a tear
 For him, the broken-hearted man.

Upon a bier the coffin stood,—
 So was the custom of the place,
 That all who passed along that road
 Might see, and haply know the face.

The passing trav'ler knew the sign,
 And stopping, murmured with a sigh,
 "The old man's lot, it may be mine,
 Alone with strangers thus to die."

Then from the City of the Kings
 A youth came riding toward the crowd ;
 Hope seemed to bear him on her wings,
 Through vernal skies without a cloud.

But when the coffin came in view,
 He left his horse across the way,
 To see if he the stranger knew,
 And with the mourners weep and pray.

He saw the face, as he drew near,
 Then rushing to the coffin, cried,
 "My father ! O my father dear !
 For thee I would have gladly died !

14

And I away, and thou alone,
 From home, to struggle and expire ;
 O father dear ! forgive thy son ;
 And God avenge my murdered sire !"

15

After the fun'ral rites were o'er,
 And dust to dust, in hope was given ;
 The son, consoled by pious lore,
 Had humbly bowed his will to heaven.

16

Then the young ploughman left his farm,
 To journey with the grieving son,
 That they might go and learn what harm
 Was in his father's household done.

17

They, up the hills, in silence rode,
 Each musing on the mournful past,
 'Till on the mountain top they stood,
 And near them heard a trumpet's blast.

18

A troop of horse they saw advance,
 And he, who rode this troop before,
 Upon the long shaft of his lance,
 Of Mexico the ensign bore.

19

"Dear, dear Francisco !" loud he cried,
 "What tidings from thy absent sire ?"
 The farmer youth alone replied,
 "I saw him in my arms expire."

20

Silent and sad the troop drew nigh,
 To hear what this young man could tell ;
 And sorrow gushed from every eye,
 For one they knew and loved so well.

21

Then to their leader, as they turned,
 And saw him by the weeping son ;
 "Tell him, Gonzelo, all we've mourned,
 O tell him all that has been done.

22

This can't be hidden in the ground,
 Nor can this blood sink in the sand ;
 Angels of God, with trumpet-sound,
 Will publish all in every land.

23

What we now struggle to conceal,
 From other tongues he soon will hear ;
 Then tell ; and tell him all we feel,
 And we will give him tear for tear."

24

“ Now, Dear Francisco, must I tell?
 And must thou hear these woes from me ?
 O may the orphan’s God be still
 A God, a Father unto thee.

25

Ours is Alvarado’s lovely vale,
 Where dwelt thy sire and where dwells mine,
 No Eastern storm, no Northern gale,
 Can blight or freeze the fig or vine.

26

High on the West, and East, and South,
 The mountains, crowned with forests, rise ;
 While open to the balmy South,
 Embosomed there our valley lies.

27

From North to South a river flows,
 Through meadows green and fields of corn ;
 There every month renews the rose,
 And health on every breeze is borne.

28

From the high race of Indian Kings,
 From Montezuma on his throne,
 And from Castille the Herald brings
 Our ancient race united down.

29

We feel this blood beat in the heart,
 We feel it warm in every vein ;
 Not teaching of rude war the art,
 But of fair truth and peace the reign.

30

Too rich for want, too poor for pride,
 A happy medium we employ,
 We toil or sport, we walk or ride,
 And every hour has its own joy.

31

Thus have we lived for many years,
 Nor ever wished a lovlier home ;
 But now, alas ! a vale of tears
 Our happy valley has become.

32

God's vengeance will that man confound,
 Who coveting his neighbor's land,
 Dares to remove his neighbor's bound,
 With a false tongue and bloody hand.

33

Two moons ago, it may be more,
 Just at the close of evening light,
 A stranger, at thy father's door,
 Asked food and shelter for the night.

34

Thy father brought him to the fire,
 The board had for repast been spread ;
 He joined the family in prayer,
 And joined them then in breaking bread.

35

He seemed to be in early life,
 His age, it might be twenty-five ;
 And much he censured war and strife,
 And prayed that men in peace might live.

36

Of Tennessee, he did not cease
 Strange tales and wonderous to tell ;
 The President, that man of peace
 And piety, he knew full well.

37

The war with Mexico was wrong,
 He oft had heard that *good man* say ;
 But Congress, wild and brave of tongue,
 Would have their own, their wicked way.

38

The President had not the right
 To point a gun, or draw a sword,
 Or order any man to fight,
 Till Congress meet and give the word.

39

I am not, by this war detained,
 But travel on, as free as air,
 To see where Montezuma reigned,
 And all the famous wonders there.

40

Although I carry sword and gun,
 I wait for no commander's words ;
 But, as I wander on alone,
 Make my own war, on beasts and birds.

41

Thy father liked his talk to hear,
 And pressed him there to stop some days ;
 But thy dear mother could not bear
 Of JAMES K. POLK to hear the praise.

42

Thy brother's wife, thy sister too,
 Believed he was in deep disguise ;
 They saw his treach'rous heart look through
 The windows of his wicked eyes.

43

Thy brother Carlos thought them wrong,
 Though doubting much which had been told ;
 How could it be that one so young,
 Could be in treachery so old.

44

Thy father showed him all his store ;
 His corn, his wheat, his styes of swine,
 His stables filled from door to door,
 His yards of oxen and of kine.

45

'Twas harvest home, the teeming year
 Had greatly blest his summer toil ;
 And many a barn and rick was there,
 Loaded with products of the soil.

46

The toils of summer being past,
 Thy brother called his neighbors out,
 With hound and horse to cheer his guest,
 And range the woods with jovial shout.

47

The wolf they slaughtered in his den,
 High up the savage mountain's side,
 The deer came bounding down the glen,
 And by the dogs or rifle died.

48

He said he could not tarry long ;
 But, while he lingered in the vale,
 He sang us many a joyous song,
 And told us many a merry tale.

49

None knew that he to any one
 A tale of love had ever told ;
 But to Maria once, alone,
 The villain dared to be so bold.

50

One day he met her in a grove,
 Alone, far from her father's door,
 And soon began to talk of love,
 And vows he vowed, and oaths he swore.

51

If she with him would only fly,
 She soon should be his wedded wife ;
 If not, for her he swore to die,
 For life, without her, was not life.

52

Around her waist his arm he threw,
 And to her cheek his lips he pressed ;
 She from his arm two steps withdrew
 And snatched a poniard from her breast.

53

“ Touch me,” she cried, “ and thou shalt feel,
 Vile coward and traitor, as thou art !
 Touch me, *base Spy* ! and soon this steel
 Shall find thy black and wicked heart.

54

How couldst thou raise thine eyes to me ?

To me, who would not be thy bride,
For all the slaves in Tennessee,
And all her boasted lands beside."

55

The caitiff turned and left the grove ;
Nor staid, nor stopped to look behind ;
But cursed the rage of lawless love,
That one, so cunning, made so blind.

56

With demon malice in his heart,
He reached thy father's friendly door ;
Then, smiling, said he must depart,
And linger now he could no more.

57

Thy father urged him to delay ;
"Be still," he said, "my welcome guest ;
But if you cannot, will not stay,
Depart ; and be thou ever blest."

58

He left the valley ; we believed
He was a man of a pure mind ;
But we, how wretchedly deceived,
And to the future, O how blind !

59

Six nights ago, thy father came,
 As brother dear, to visit mine ;
 Their lives had ever been the same,
 Both remnants of an honored line.

60

Then much they talked of war and strife ;
 And much in TAYLOR'S praise was said,
 That, to avoid the waste of life,
 He a short league of peace had made.

61

Monterey, where his army lay,
 Was ten leagues from their happy vale ;
 And none so far from camp would stray,
 To murder, or destroy, or steal.

62

So passed, in rapid flight, Old Time,
 Who never waits for human power ;
 The watchman, Clock, began his chime,
 And told us twelve was then the hour.

63

Thy father left his brother's door,
 Upon my arm, close to my side ;
 Alas ! to visit there no more,
 And would to God he there had died !

64

We reached the wall, which fenced his farm,
 And when the wicket gate we passed,
 We met two men in wild alarm,
 And wild with eager flying haste.

65

"Stop! stop! dear master," loud they said,
 "Of all thy stores thou art bereft;
 All, all thy family are dead,
 Thy house is burnt and nothing left.

66

That *felon Spy*, who, as a son,
 Thy table and thy house enjoyed,
 Has brought a gang of ruffians down,
 And all is plundered and destroyed."

67

We hurried to that lovely ground,
 Where once thy father's house had stood;
 And there, alas! we nothing found,
 But smould'ring fire, and brands and blood!

68

"Where is my wife! my daughter! son!
 His wife—their little ones—O where?"
 "Dead! dead! dear master! every one—
 And buried in that raging fire!"

69

He, from the horrid sight, looked round,
 And by the flashes of the flame,
 Saw a man on the bloody ground,
 Looked in his face and called his name.

70

“ John Tompkins ! *O thou villain Spy !*
 Hast eat my bread, and sold my blood ?
Traitor ! thy life is all one lie !
False to thy friends ! thy foes ! thy God !”

71

He said : and quickly left the place,
 In the deep darkness of the night ;
 Since then we have not seen his face,
 Although we searched till morning light.

72

I questioned both the servants, then,
 Of this sad slaughter and this flame,
 They told me more than twenty men,
 At night-fall, to the valley came.

73

That night three of our men had gone,
 To visit up the mountain side,
 And left us and our master's son
 To guard the hearth by which he died.

74

'These ruffians, round the house and door
 They placed a guard ; then to their toil
 They went ;—they plundered every store,
 And heaped their wagons with the spoil.

75

First, all the stock of every kind
 Was hurried out and driven away,
 That none who followed them might find,
 Or reach these droves another day.

76

Up near the roof, as I looked out,
 And saw the havoc which they made ;
 Oh ! how I wished I were a scout,
 To run, and call, and gather aid !

77

For aid, alas ! we could not send ;
 And far apart our dwellings stood ;
 But still we hoped they did intend,
 When they had robbed, to spare our blood.

78

Our Mistress, where she sat, had tried
 To show that she felt no alarms ;
 And Carlos' wife sat by her side,
 Each held a child closed in her arms.

79

Maria stood alone ; her eye,
 In that dark hour no fear expressed ,
 But, gazing on her mother nigh,
 She placed her right hand on her breast.

80

The door was fastened with the bar,
 The window shutters closed and fast,
 And we all hoped these dogs of war,
 With plunder gorged, would leave in haste.

81

O how deceived ! for soon they thrust
 A heavy bar against the door ;
 And bar and hinges quickly burst,
 And all fell crashing on the floor.

82

Their captain, and *that felon Spy*,
 Rushed, both at once, into the room ;
 But Carlos, with an angry eye,
 Called loud to know for what they come.

83

The Captain of the gang replied,
 " We want two lasses who are here ;
 One for a six months' soldier's bride,
 And one to serve a single year.

84

'*Old Ready*' sent us, and the rest,
 With gold to purchase fresh supplies;
 Lieutenant Tompkins thought it best
 To keep the gold and seize the prize.

85

This gold will now be his and mine;
 We'll keep it safely in our purse;
 And these sweet girls with us shall join,
 And take and share this gold with us.

86

Now Tompkins, so our bargain said,
 "The choice is yours; we'll have no strife;
 And if *you* take the pretty maid,
 Then *I* must take the pretty wife."

87

"Not maid nor wife," then Carlos cries,
 "Shall ever be or his or thine;
 Touch either, and who touches dies!
 Sister or wife, they both are mine.

88

Base slanderers of your General's fame,
 When sent to buy, you rob and steal,
 He soon shall know your treacherous game,
 And you, vile thieves! the rope shall feel."

Then first the trembling mother spoke :

“ Dear Carlos, hear these words of mine,—
Do not these lawless men provoke,
But to thy Maker’s will resign.

They will not stain our hearth with blood,
Nor tear my daughters from my side ;
All men must have some fear of God,
Some love for Christ, who for them died.”

The Captain shouted loud,—“ *No God
Or Christ, thou fool, that ever died,
Shall save thy hearth and floor from blood ;
Some Priest, old crone, to thee has lied !*”

Quick, at the word, he raised his gun,
And in a moment gave the fire ;
And his dear mother, and his son,
Brave Carlos saw at once expire.

“God’s vengeance be upon thy head,
Base coward and murd’rer as thou art !”
The Captain, at the word, fell dead,
With Carlos’ sword driven through his heart.

94

Tompkins, the *Spy*, base son of Hell !

Then drew a pistol from his side,
And in a moment Carlos fell,
And, by his murdered mother, died.

95

The floor, alas ! was drenched with blood,

With blood the couch it was defiled ;
Maria, like an angel, stood
To guard her sister and her child.

96

The traitor, like a tiger, flew

To seize and drag her to the door ;
She from her breast her hand withdrew,
And he lay dying on the floor.

97

She drew the weapon from her foe,

I saw the naked, reeking blade ;
“ Go where the wicked ever go,”
Was all the beauteous maiden said.

98

Two ruffians, then, rush'd through the door,

And stopping by each other's side,
Gazed on their Captain in his gore,
And Carlos, where he fell and died.

99

I and my brother were not seen,
 Though we these murderers plainly saw ;
 We did not fire upon the men
 Because we hoped they would withdraw.

100

The widow'd mother, in her seat,
 Seem'd dead and cold with grief and fear ;
 Her husband lay dead at her feet,
 With her dear son and mother near.

101

She held her infant on her breast,
 Maria by her weeping stood ;
 Onward these ruffians slowly pressed,
 With cautious fear, and thirst for blood.

102

On each we kept a watchful eye,
 That we, before they could, might fire ;
 Nor did we wish these men should die,
 If they would with their spoil retire.

103

So suddenly they raised each gun,
 So quick let fly the fatal leads,
 That their foul murder all was done
 Before our bullets reached their heads.

104

We saw these murderers, both were dead ;—
We hastened by our friends to save ;
All, all were in one gory bed,
The young, the lovely and the brave.

105

Nor could we here a moment stop,
Or bear these precious bodies out,
For of the coming robber troop
We heard the wild and savage shout.

106

For when the Captain and the *Spy*,
With their two aids, came from the wood,
Each trooper on his horse drew nigh
To where the loaded wagons stood.

107

For one stray shot they did not care,—
That trifle no attention found ;
But, when our volley reach'd their ear,
Each horseman leaped upon the ground.

108

They, running to the house, rushed in
Upon that floor with slaughter dyed,
While we passed by these hurrying men,
And found a shelter where to hide.

109

Not being quite dead, *that traitor Spy*
 Had dragged himself out through the door,
 And found a place whereon to die,
 When he could drag himself no more.

110

Their Captain and his aids they found,
 All stark, and stiff, and bloody there ;
 For their Lieutenant they looked round,
 But took for him no further care.

111

"Here, here's the gold the General gave
 To pay for all our heavy loads ;
 We'll take it from this bloody knave
 And share it, by the blessed Gods."

112

So cried the Sergeant, as he drew
 Out from the Captain's bloody breast
 A purse of gold ; and they all knew
 For what he had that gold possessed.

113

And then that gold, which thus they got
 Amidst the dead, they parted there ;
 The Sergeant took a double lot,
 But each, beside, a single share.

114

Then all were sworn that all should tell
 How the good Captain fully paid ;
 And then these Mexicans of hell
 Captain and Tompkins both shot dead.

115

And they must swear how hard they fought
 Live stock and forage to retain ;
 And, battling for what they had bought,
 Two of their bravest men were slain.

116

"Now fire the house," aloud they shout,
 "Leave none to follow us and tell ;
 Guard every path, let none get out,
 Till both the roof and wall have fell."

117

And here they watched with sword and gun,
 Around the raging dreadful fire ;
 Nor, till their wicked work was done,
 Did one vile ruffian thence retire.

118

O good Gonzelo ! what a night
 We wretched, wretched men have passed ;
 And God be praised that morning light
 Has broken on our eyes at last.

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