

Capitulo VII

Guzman the Good *

Telesforo Trueba y Cossío

Aben-Jacob, the Moorish King of Fez and Morocco, had determined to lay siege to Tarifa, the possession of which was of the greatest advantage to the Moslem, as it formed an entrance to Spain from the Mediterranean. He accordingly made mighty preparations to accomplish his design. His cousin, Amir, was first sent with a competent body of men, and he him-self resolved to follow shortly after, carrying with him everything necessary to prosecute a vigorous siege.

Don Sancho, King of Castile, could not behold the hostile intentions of Aben-Jacob without some feelings of apprehension. Though one of the bravest princes that swayed the sceptre, yet the impoverished state, and distracted situation of his kingdom, rendered him incapable of attending to the defense of the important point of Tarifa. In this emergency a nobleman presented himself to the King, and generously offered to help his sovereign in his difficulty. He promised to collect the men and supply the money necessary for conducting the undertaking himself. The King, pressed on every side, gratefully accepted the offer of this heroic subject, and his mind was relieved from a heavy burthen.

The brave man, who had exhibited such noble sentiments, was

* Transcripción de: *The romance of history. Spain*, by Don T. Trueba, published by Frederick Warne and Co., London, 1872, pp. 284-304.

Don Alonzo Perez de Guzman, called in history *el Bueno*, or the Good. He had already rendered signal services to the King of Castile, for it was he that had conquered Tarifa from the Moors, after a stubborn and laborious siege. His name was celebrated in Spain and Africa, for his extraordinary courage and the noble qualities of his mind. Indeed, among the epithets with which men generally distinguish a fellow creature who has been conspicuous for his merit, Guzman might have laid just claim to the most brilliant. The great, the brave, the noble, or the powerful, would have naturally attached to his name, but as if it was requisite better to distinguish him, the title of *el Bueno*, or the Good, was bestowed upon him: a title the most appropriate, as it served to imply every kind of excellence.

Don Alonzo Perez de Guzman speedily repaired to Tarifa, taking with him all his family, friends, and adherents. He caused the walls to be put in a state of proper defense, and made every arrangement conducive to the successful defense of a siege, which he anticipated would be as obstinate as the hatred of Aben-Jacob was rancorous towards himself. Guzman had previously lived in Africa, in terms of strict friendship with Aben-Jucef, the father of Aben-Jacob, from which circumstance a rancorous jealousy had been excited in the heart of the latter – a heart as paltry and malignant as that of his sire had been noble and magnanimous. Feelings of private revenge being thus united to interest of national import, Guzman, easily foresaw that the task which he had taken upon himself was one of difficulty ; but that great man had a soul which disdained the softest whisperings of fear; and the critical nature of his position awakened in his mind no other thoughts but such as were conducive to the successful fulfillment of his undertaking.

There was in the camp of the Moors a brother of the King of Castile, so perverse that he did not scruple to wage war against his lawful sovereign, his brother, on the side of the enemies of his country and religion. This unprincipled man was the Infant Don Juan, one of the most profligate and detestable princes whose names have stained the page of Spanish history. Of his vices it is difficult to decide which was the most predominant; that indeed assumed the mastery which was most immediately conducive to

the indulgence of the moment. He had been a continual agitator, a firebrand of discord, a restless genius of evil, whom neither generous pardon could conciliate, nor threatened punishment turn from his wicked career. His life had already been spared, and the King had even been so lavish in his generosity as to liberate him from that prison in which, both for the public peace and as the punishment of his guilt, he ought to have finished his days. The return which Don Juan made to his indulgent brother upon his liberation from confinement was, hastening to Africa and offering his services to Aben-Jacob. The Moorish chief most readily accepted the offer, for he knew that Don Juan would be of most essential use to him, both by his daring courage and the deep scheming of his turbulent disposition; besides, he feared nothing from his unprincipled



Illustration 46.- Guzman the Good. The illustration shows an etching by J. J. Martínez based on a painting by Antonie Van Dyck.

character, as he would not stand upon so much ceremony with him as the King of Castile – having resolved at the very first offense to sever his head from his body.

Aben-Jacob being a cruel and wicked man himself, found the temper and disposition of the Castilian prince in perfect accordance with his own. A friendship as deep and sincere as can possibly be cemented in the breasts of two unprincipled beings, was soon engendered in theirs; and another circumstance strengthened their sentiments of mutual regard. Aben-Jacob had a sister, the young Zora, a maiden of extraordinary beauty. Nature had been most prodigal in her favours to this lovely being. The soft liquid eye mirrored the gentleness of her mind ; the seraph smile that graced her lip betokened the kindness of her heart. She was adorned with every feminine attraction, and if anything could exceed the beauty of her person, it was the loveliness of her soul.

Don Juan no sooner beheld this bewitching object, than he was powerfully struck with her charms: a violent, a stormy passion, such as could only be excited in his tumultuous heart, was soon enkindled, and it raged with resistless power. From the moment he saw her, he determined to possess that paradise of charms; but as he could not flatter himself to be able to accomplish his purpose by force or deception, he demanded her hand as the reward he was to receive for all the services he might afford to Aben-Jacob. The Moor acceded to his proposal, not knowing that amongst the accomplishments of the Castilian prince was that of contracting marriage bonds with the same facility as he broke them whenever it suited his inclination or interest

Zora, however, shrunk with disgust from a union with Don Juan, His character was odious to her; nor were there in his person any attractions to soften the ill-impression which his detested temper was calculated to produce. But besides the reasons afforded by the suitor himself to impede the success of his desires, there were other obstacles which it would have been difficult to surmount, had Don Juan been even endowed with as many virtues as he was unfortunately deformed with vices. Zora had already felt the influence of a tender passion, and the object that had inspired it was as deserving of her love, as her present admirer was of her

hatred and contempt. The young Don Pedro de Guzman inherited both the prepossessing appearance and noble qualities of his heroic father, Don Alonzo. The habits of friendship and confidence in which the elder Guzman lived with Aben-Jucef whilst residing in Africa, had facilitated many interviews between their children, and these had led to the formation of a tender and devoted affection. Mutual vows of constancy were pledged, and when Don Pedro was obliged to depart for Spain, he took his leave of Zora with perfect confidence in her faith, and with fond hopes of future happiness. Such was the state of the Moorish maiden's heart when Don Juan came, not to dislodge the unalterable feelings of that heart, but to fill it with sorrow and dismay.

Aben-Jacob now repaired to prosecute the siege of Tarifa, begun by his cousin Amir. Don Juan, with a slender party of renegade Christians, accompanied the Moor, who compelled his sister to attend him to the camp as a means of precaution. He had perceived the abhorrence and disdain with which Zora treated the attentions of her admirer, and he knew besides that young Guzman was in a great measure the cause of those inimical sentiments. Aben-Jacob, therefore, conceived that Zora was a most powerful engine in his hands, both as a security foic the unwearied exertions and services of Don Juan, and as the means of devising some future schemes against Tarifa by playing upon the affections of Don Pedro de Guzman. The presence of his sister in the camp he considered a stroke of profound policy, and she was accordingly compelled to follow the sordid Moor before the walls of the besieged town.

The place was attacked with fierce animation, but without effect. In a sally which the Castilians made, the Moors were routed with considerable loss. Aben-Jacob next endeavoured to corrupt the integrity of Guzman the Good; and with this view he sent a private messenger to the Christian chief, offering him a munificent reward if he would surrender the town. The proposition was received by the Governor with all the indignation that might have been expected from his character. The siege continued; but the Moor, perceiving the little success of his undertaking, and despairing of bringing it to a future issue, made a different proposal to Guzman, which was, that upon the delivery of a certain sum of money, he would

immediately raise the siege. This alternative the Spaniard treated with the same contempt as the former, and it was upon this occasion that he returned the answer – «*Good Knights neither buy nor sell the victory.*»

Aben-Jacob, enraged at the failure of all his schemes, and yet ashamed to raise the siege which he had begun with such arrogance, applied the whole powers of his subtle soul to a very different expedient. He pretended that the siege could not be prosecuted for the present, and making a great show of his wishes to enter into some amicable arrangement, assumed the expression of a disposition which was in direct contradiction with his character and actual ideas. He ordered his sister Zora to be brought into his presence, and affecting great mildness of tone and courtesy of manner, he began to address the maiden.

«Dear Zora,» he said, «I am now sensible of my error in laying siege to Tarifa, when defended by such a man as Guzman. His integrity is equal to his bravery; but his goodness of heart is superior to both. I am most willing to renew the bonds of friendship which existed between our late father and the noble Castilian, and for this an amicable termination of our difference is indispensable. I am sensible of thy affection for young Guzman ; and I also know that he fully returns that tender feeling. On the other hand, my eyes have been opened to the villainies and depraved character of Don Juan, thy present suitor. Yet I am at present so delicately situated, that I must not openly exasperate him. Thou hast, however, my decided approbation to repel his addresses, and to favour those of Don Pedro de Guzman. To this young warrior thou must send a letter immediately, inviting him to a clandestine meeting to-night, in which thou must exert thy influence over his heart to persuade him to use his best endeavours with his father towards an adjustment of this contest. In the letter thou art to write to thy lover, do not forget to mention the importunities of Don Juan, and thy dread and abhorrence of his character.»

This insidious speech was received by the unsuspecting Zora with feelings of the most unmixed delight There was such an appearance of sincerity in her brother's words and manner, and besides, what was required of her bore so reasonable an aspect,

Illustration 47.- The foto shows a statue of Guzman the Good, in prayer, by Martínez Montañés, which is in the Monastery of San Isidoro, in Santiponce, Seville.



that she could not for a single moment harbour a suspicion of Aben-Jacob's treacherous intentions. She willingly promised, herefore, to comply with his request, and wrote an affectionate letter to Don Pedro, earnestly inviting him to a secret interview on the approaching night. In this letter she failed not to depict the trials she had undergone, and was even now exposed to, from the odious suit of Don Juan ; and made use of all that female eloquence which is so powerful in deciding the actions of men, when slaves to the absorbing passion of love.

This letter was sent by an old Moor, who, at the same time, carried a message to Guzman. Aben-Jacob confided implicitly in the sagacity of this man, and he hailed as certain the accomplishment of his plans. With regard to Don Juan, he was made acquainted with all the circumstances by the Moor; nay it was he who had the principal share in maturing the treacherous plot, as he longed to get bis successful rival, Don Pedro, into his

power,

Their hopes succeeded to the widest extent; the letter was received by Don Pedro, and produced upon him the desired effect. The young enamored cavalier was filled with rapturous delight at the perusal of Zora's vows of love and constancy, but at the same time the persecutions to which she was exposed from the wicked Don Juan filled him with alarm. He knew that the character of that prince was capable of the last degree of depravity, and he trembled for the safety of his beloved Zora. His resolution was soon made; the offered meeting presented too many attractions to be refused. Now and then some misgivings rose in the generous youth's heart, concerning the propriety of his visiting clandestinely the enemy's camp; nor was he completely satisfied that his conduct was irreproachable, in thus taking any step without the knowledge and sanction of his father. But love, all powerful love, soon silenced these scruples, and Don Pedro prepared to leave Taarifa in the night.

The wished-for moment arrived, and young Guzman, accompanied by the wily Moor who had brought the letter, left the town with the utmost secrecy and precaution. After some perilous adventures, he arrived in the enemy's camp, and was introduced to a tent, where, with feelings of unbounded rapture, he met Zora waiting for him alone. The Moor-guide then retired, and the two lovers were allowed undisturbed conversation.

«Oh, my Zora!» said the enamored Guzman, «could I expect so much felicity? Thy love, indeed, is great and sincere – great as thy angelic beauty, sincere as the goodness of thy soul. The boldness of this meeting is the strongest proof of thy affection.»

«My own Guzman,» she said, in a loving voice, «many have been the trials I have sustained, many the hardships I have endured, since the sad moment of our separation. I even apprehended we should never meet again; but propitious Heaven has ordained otherwise, and this meeting is only the prelude to greater happiness.»

«Thy confidence, Zora,» answered Don Pedro, in surprise, «is to me most gratifying; yet the delight it affords is scarcely greater than the astonishment. Why speak thus, when subject to so many

dangers and persecutions? Even now perils surround us, and should we unfortunately be surprised –»

«Banish Such fears from thy mind,» interrupted Zora, smiling sweetly; «the danger which you apprehend does not exist.»

«What say you, Zora?»

«The truth – we are in perfect security.»

«Yet, thy brother! – Don Juan!»

«My brother knows that you are here.»

«Just Heavens! – Can this be possible?»

«Is by his own desire that I wrote that letter. He hates Don Juan now as deeply as we do; but considerations of policy oblige him to affect a show of friendship which is very distant from his heart. Nay, Aben-Jacob approves our affection, and is willing to give it his sanction. He is most anxious that this contest should be brought to a friendly termination, and –»

«Hold, my Zora,» cried young Guzman, mournfully, «my heart misgives me strangely. Some deep plot has been contrived by thy scheming brother.»

«A plot ! no, no,» eagerly replied Zora; «it cannot be. Sincerity was stamped in his every word and action. Besides, what plot can there exist?»

«He no doubt intends to gain possession of Tarifa by means of our attachment. Alas! he deceives himself completely if he supposes that any private interest can induce my noble father to act in prejudice of his duty: the love of his son for a Moorish maiden will never persuade him to surrender the town; nay, were my great sire capable of the weakness, I myself would be the first to dissuade him from an act so detrimental to the splendor and glory which belong to his name.»

«You mistake, O Guzman!» interposed his mistress; «you really mistake my brother's views. He does not want to corrupt the integrity of the father by bribing the affections of his son. No, no, I believe he has renounced every idea of becoming master of Tarifa, and is only anxious to renew those habits of amity and good-will which existed between our respected fathers.»

This asseveration did not smoothe away the doubt of young Guzman. He had fondly indulged the belief that his coming into

the Moorish camp was the effect of a romantic passion, not any resource of policy. He came with the deepest conviction that no one was aware of this clandestine meeting, which, to his fervid imagination, had appeared arrayed in all the charms of adventure. Soon therefore as the romance was removed, his doubts were awakened, for the conversion of Aben-Jacob appeared to him too suddenly effected, and too little supported by reason, to be lasting and sincere.

Zora read in her lover's looks the painful thoughts which occupied his mind; she endeavoured to calm his apprehensions, but her affectionate endeavours proved in vain! a fearful presentiment of evil had taken possession of his heart, and a sad smile of incredulous import was the answer which the fond girl received to her warm protestations and soothing manner.

«But tell me, my own Guzman,» she said, endearingly, «what danger do you apprehend? Do you really conceive that Aben- Jacob premeditates some treason?»

«Alas!» he answered, «my mind is so confused with crowding thoughts, that I cannot form any reasonable surmise. The idea of danger is vividly engraved on my imagination – my heart whispers that some evil is at hand, but what the precise nature of that calamity may be I cannot imagine.»

At this moment a noise of approaching footsteps was heard; Don Pedro started in surprise, and believed that his apprehensions were about to be realized. Soon after, two persons entered the tent: these persons were Aben-Jacob and Don Juan.

«Merciful Heavens!» exclaimed Don Pedro, in sorrow, «then my worst fears are confirmed! Oh, Zora, Zora! into what an abyss of danger and misery has thy imprudent confidence precipitated thy loving friend!»

«Most amorous sir,» quoth Aben-Jacob, with a savage grin, «so you have fallen into my power! Poor wittol! deluded youth! That love should thus turn the common reason of man, is to me surprising!»

«What mean you brother?» demanded Zora in alarm; «surely you cherish no hostile feelings towards the unoffending Castilian?»

«Unoffending Castilian!» exclaimed the Moor, with a laugh of

derision; «by Allah, such words are most amusing! Here I find an enemy within my camp, in clandeistine intercourse with mine own sister – yet the youth is unoffending, forsooth!»

With a look of horror and dismay Zora fixed her eyes upon her treacherous brother, unable to express her astonishment by words. Young Guzman preserved a proud composure: the foul treason was now fully unfolded to him, but he declined to show any signs of fear or alarm. He had been guilty of an imprudent act, and he resolved to undergo the award which it deserved with a courage worthy of his sire. Don Juan cast a malignant glance on the youth, and enjoyed all the pleasure of which a treacherous nature is capable.

«I see I am the victim of a dark plot,» said Don Pedro, resolutely, and looking haughtily on his enemies.

«No,» replied Aben-Jacob scornfully, "thou art the victim of thy own folly.»

«I demand,» said Guzman firmly, «to be allowed to return to Tarifa in perfect safety, or you may rue the day when you thought by vile contrivances to deceive the sincerity of an honorable Castilian.»

«An honourable Castilian!» cried Don Juan in derision. «Forsooth! the term is well applied to a man who comes in the darkness of night, like a prowling thief, to seduce the faith of a foolish maiden – a woman too who is destined to become the bride of another.»

«False man! vile renegade! Castilian unworthy of the name!» exclaimed young Guzman in violent agitation. «Darest thou even pronounce the word honorable, sunk, degraded as thou art? Can aught in nature wear a more loathsome aspect than the Infant Don Juan: that traitor to his country and religion, that supreme of all that is vicious, darksome, and repugnant! Shame! that an infatuation of love should have reduced me to endure a vision that fills me with horror and disgust. Any, to come into the presence of a man whom I should wish nowhere to see but hand to hand in the field of battle!»

«Speak on, miserable boy – drivelling fool, speak on,» returned Don Juan, with coolness; «vent all the spite and choler that oppresses

thy deluded heart: ay, vent it freely, else thou mayst be smothered ere the time of retribution arrive!»

«Oh! my brother,» cried Zora, in the most lively affliction, «you mean not to act treacherously by Don Pedro: from the false Don Juan nothing can be expected but that which is base and criminal; but you, my brother, cannot wish to rival that monster in wickedness. «Twas by your own desire that the unfortunate letter which has brought that Castillian into this dilemma was written and sent. I obeyed your instructions, and now –"»

«And now,» interrupted Aben-Jacob, with ferocious exultation, «now that I have reaped the fruit of my sagacious head and thy foolish credulity; now that my enemy is secure, and the proud Don Alonso de Guzman compelled to lower his arrogance; now that I have a precious hostage, and that thou art no longer of any use in this transaction; retire to thy women, and be prepared to become the bride of Don Juan the moment it may please me to give the word: and thou, Christian,» he added, turning to Guzman, «surrender thy arms, for thou art my prisoner.»

He stamped with his foot, and the tent was instantly filled with soldiers; the unfortunate Don Pedro perceived the madness of attempting a defense, and with feelings of horror and indignation was compelled to surrender.

Zora endeavoured to move the hard heart of her brother by her tears and supplications; but that tender appeal, instead of soothing the savage Moor, tended only to confirm him more strongly in his intentions. The unfortunate Don Pedro was immediately secured and loaded with chains. At the sight of this indignity offered to him, a tear of mingled shame and resentment started to his eye.

«Base Moor!» he exclaimed, «tis not enough that I am become thy victim, but thou must needs add this aggravating insult to my misfortune! I am bound – secured with odious irons like a detested criminal – some dangerous felon. If thou hast the least remnant of human feeling in thy heart, spare me – oh! spare me this last humiliation.»

But this application to the Moor's heart was equally unsuccessful with that made by Zora. The wretched maid, considering herself the cause of the heavy disaster that had befallen her lover, was



Illustration 48.- The painting in the photograph is by the 19th century painter José Utrera, from Cadiz, who painted it at the age the nineteen. The intensely dramatic scene, with Guzman's wife, María Coronel, playing a part, gave rise to may theatre plays about the hero of Tarifa.

thrown into a paroxysm of grief and despair. She cast a lingering, melancholy look on the victim of her love as she was torn from him, and a horrid presentiment came over her soul that they were separated for ever. Aben-Jacob and Don Juan congratulated themselves on the success of their hellish machination, and now held a consultation on the most efficient method of making this first success conducive to their ultimate designs.

Thus passed that night. Don Alonso Perez de Guzman, little aware of the misfortune of his son, and the severe trial to which his paternal feelings were about to be subjected, rose in the morning, and began in his wonted manner carefully to inspect the town, and see if everything was in a proper state. The sounds of a trumpet soon startled his ear, and a new parley from the Moors was

announced.

«This obstinacy on the part of the enemy,» he muttered with some impatience, «is as singular as it is fruitless; they know full well that all attempts to make me deviate from the stem path of duty is unavailing: however,» he added, turning to one of his men, «Alvarez, bring the messengers into my presence, I will not deny them courtesy, however inflexible I may prove in other respects.»

The delegates from the Moorish camp were introduced; and their arrogant demeanour and insolent looks caused amaze to the Christians, who had been accustomed to very different behaviour from their enemies in all their previous embassies. They awaited in suspense what could be the object of the present mission, announced as it was with such confidence.

«Guzman,» said abruptly one of the messengers, «in the name of the sacred Prophet, his lieutenant, the mighty and magnificent Aben-Jacob, sends us again in a spirit of generosity to invite thee to surrender this town and fortress of Tarifa. Bear well in mind that a non-compliance with this demand shall be attended with mournful results to the Christians, and especially to thee.»

«Moor» replied Guzman, with dignified composure, «my sentiments ought by this time to be so well known to thy countrymen as to be in need of no further illustration. While I draw breath, Tarifa shall not become the property of the Moors. This decision I have repeatedly signified to Aben-Jacob, and now I declare it for the last time. Let him know, therefore, that henceforward he may spare himself the trouble of sending embassies.»

«That high tone,» returned the Moor vauntingly, «will soon be reduced to a more conciliatory level, when thou knowest the power of Aben-Jacob to work thy ruin.»

«Hold, infidel!» cried Guzman proudly, «thou couldest not adopt a more fruitless plan than attempting to bow Alonzo Perez de Guzman by threats. Whatever the power of Aben-Jacob may be, however boundless his resources, however terrible his means of inflicting misery, they can never be sufficient to work the downfall of my honour – and that, in sooth, is the only ruin that I should dread.»

«There is another peril, proud Spaniard,» said the messenger,

«which will make thee tremble, if thou hast indeed the attributes of a man. Thou art a father, Guzman, and haughty and unbending as thy soul may be, still the powerful cries of nature cannot be totally disregarded when they make an appeal to thy heart.»

He stopped; Guzman and his companions were puzzled at the mysterious words of the Moor; they suffered him to proceed.

«The danger of thy son Don Pedro must needs awake thy paternal solicitude.»

«My son Don Pedro ! what meanest thou, Moor?» cried Guzman, in some confusion and alarm; «surely he has not turned traitor to his country and religion? But,» he added, turning to the Castilians, «where is my son – why is he not present here?»

No one could answer the question, and the apprehensions of the Christians acquired additional power.

«Thy son,» resumed the Moor, with exultation, «is now a prisoner in our camp, in which, last night, he was surprised on a romantic adventure. He is a valuable hostage, and Aben-Jacob means to turn this fortunate event to the best advantage. The freedom of thy son can only be obtained by the surrender of Tarifa.»

«Then,» replied Guzman, with stern composure, «my son must remain in bondage all his life.»

«Hold, Guzman,» proceeded the Moor, «thou knowest not the full extent of the danger to which the boy is exposed. His life is threatened; for learn, haughty Castilian, that unless this town be surrendered in twelve hours, the head of young Guzman must be severed from its trunk.»

«Then,» cried Don Nuno Garcia, one of the Castilians, fiercely, «it is high time we secure your persons, that your lives may answer for any danger that may threaten Don Pedro!»

As he said this, the Noble and other attendants were about to secure the messengers, when Guzman interposed –

«Stay, Castilians!» he said, «what does a mistaken zeal prompt ye to do? These men, however unworthy, bear the characters of ambassadors, and as such we must respect them. Let it never be said, that Alonzo Perez de Guzman followed up the treacherous conduct which marked the proceedings of his enemies. Depart, Moors, and tell your master that threats and promises are of equal

inefficiency with the Governor of Tarifa. Barbarous as he is, I do him the justice to suppose him incapable of such an atrocious and treacherous deed, as the murder of an unoffending boy. But, should so dark a design really occupy his meditations, tell him, that although he may break the heart of a father, the murder shall have no effect upon the resolution of his mind.»

Saying this, he dismissed the messengers, confounded and astonished at the unbending sternness of his soul. The Castilians applauded the conduct of their chief; although some of them conceived that he had carried his generous and punctilious integrity too far, when he respected the character of ambassadors in men who ought not to have claimed the privileges of such. Most of the Castilians, however, supposed that the message of Aben-Jacob would prove an idle threat, which would be abandoned as soon as it was perceived that it produced no effect upon the father; indeed, this fond hope was further confirmed, by the idea, that however cruel and unprincipled the Moor might be, yet the generous behaviour of Guzman towards his messengers would excite a reciprocity in his heart. In this, however, the event proved that they were most lamentably deceived, as honourable men will always be, when they judge by their own feelings of the sentiments of the depraved.

At the end of three hours another summons of trumpets was heard, and Guzman gave orders that no more messages from the enemy should be admitted, but proceeded to the walls of the city, to hear what new proposals the Moors might bring; but he was greeted by a sight capable of unmanning the stoutest heart. His unfortunate son stood surrounded by Moors; his neck bare, his hands and legs strongly bound, and ready for execution. Near him was seen the ferocious Aben-Jacob, and the still more odious Don Juan; while the whole of the besieging army stood in battle. A Moor then approached near enough to be heard, and, in a loud voice, exclaimed –

«Oh! Guzman, behold thy son! If, within the time allotted thee to determine, Tarifa does not surrender, the unfortunate youth shall fall a victim to his father's cruelty.»

«Thou utterest rank falsehood, Moor!» replied, with indignant

pride, the Governor.» If my son falls a victim, it will not be to my cruelty, but to your base cowardice and his own imprudence.»

«Then your resolution is fixed!»

«Moor, tamper not with the inflexible honour of Alonzo de Guzman! – consummate the horrid sacrifice; and that no doubts may remain of my invincible resolution to adhere to my duty, take this token – that if you require a weapon for the murder of his son, his father presents you with it.»

And as he spoke, he hurled his own sword into the enemy's camp, and then, with a firm step, after casting a mournful look towards his son, returned from the walls. Every one was struck at the sublime horror of a deed that for eclipsed the most renowned acts of the old Romans. A murmur of mingled awe and admiration ran through the spectators of the scene. But the unfortunate and heroic father had a new and overwhelming trial to undergo. It was not enough that he had seen his darling son – a son of whom even the great Guzman might be proud – bound like a felon, and ready to suffer a terrible death; to add to the agonies of this sacrifice, the stern patriot was now obliged to encounter the piercing cries and frantic appeals of a mother on the point of seeing her child murdered.

Dona Maria Coronel, the noble spouse of Guzman, had been noted for an heroism of character, and a magnanimity in suffering toil and danger, which had rendered her an object of admiration to her countrymen, and of tender devotion to her lord. But what courage or resolution is there strong enough to smother the yearnings of maternal love? Dona Maria would have fearlessly waded through fields teeming with horror and slaughter; she would with fortitude have undergone the hardest privations – the most poignant sorrows; but yet to see her only son bleed before her eyes, when it was in the power of his father to save him, filled her with an agony – a despair, that was as fearful in its expression as it was heartrending to the noble Guzman.

Several of the most influential Castilians added their supplications to those of Dona Maria. They remonstrated with the inflexible Governor, that the King could never require so horrible a sacrifice of a father; and they urged that, even supposing Tarifa

surrendered this time, the exertions of the Castilians would again effect its surrender to the Castilian dominion. But neither arguments, nor tears, nor supplications, produced any effect upon the heroic father, save that of augmenting his affliction. In a sombre mood he paced the hall of his dwelling – now endeavouring to soothe the frantic grief of his Dona Maria, now repelling the mighty efforts made to conquer his inflexibility to the calls of unrelenting duty.

Thus time wore away in a dreadful suspense; Don Pedro awaited his doom with fortitude, for he anticipated that, from the known character of his father, he had now nothing more to hope. Aben-Jacob, and his accomplice, the traitor Don Juan, with powerful vexation perceived that their expectations would never be accomplished. With furious disappointment they saw their diabolical stratagem baffled, for the term allowed for deliberation was fast approaching, and there was no sign that the heroic Guzman would relent; while the resolute decision of his previous conduct, and the act of throwing his own sword into the camp, were indications that he would inflexibly adhere to his purpose.

A tumultuous noise was now heard at Tarifa: dismal cries of horror, mingled with martial sounds, filled the air, and everything announced some mighty event. Guzman rushed in agitation to the walls, which were already encumbered with soldiers; he inquired into the cause of the commotion – a Castilian pointed in horror to the enemy's camp, where the unfortunate father perceived the headless trunk of young Guzman distilling blood, whilst the gory head itself, affixed to a long spear, was presented as a ghastly trophy to his view!

«I feared,» said the magnanimous man, «that the enemy had taken the town; thank Heaven, it is not so! – I have done my duty!»

He then cast a mournful look towards the remains of his son, and confessed himself a father; tears started in his eyes, and bedewed his manly countenance, and, folding his arms, in a mood of utter desolation, he retired from the spot.

Contrary to the general expectations, the horrid sacrifice had been carried into effect. Aben-Jacob and Don Juan were actuated by a fiendish spirit of revenge, and, since they could not bend the

Illustration 49.- Sketch of Guzman the Good by the artist Manuel Reiné Jiménez, who also made the sculpture in Tarifa which commemorates the immortal act.



soul of the stout Castilian, they resolved to break his heart. Don Juan especially longed for the death of the young Guzman; a powerful feeling of jealousy absorbed his thoughts, and he was happy to find an opportunity of disembarassing himself of a hated rival. He was therefore assiduous in stimulating the resolutions of his ally, the Moor; and, scarcely had the term granted to Guzman expired, when Don Juan instantly ordered the execution of the helpless young man. His death, however, when the first sensation of chilling horror had subsided, served to stimulate the Christians to a boundless desire of revenge; they were inflamed with a wish to fall upon the dastard Moors, and Don Alonzo Guzman, finding the greatest difficulty in restraining their wild excitement, gave the order for a sally against the enemy.

The courage of the Castilians, seconded by feelings of indignation and vengeance, succeeded in causing the greatest slaughter and

confusion amongst their enemies. In vain Aben-Jacob and Don Juan strove to stem the violence of the charge – their exertions proved in vain, and the chastisement of the Moors for their barbarity was as severe as it was amply deserved. The bleeding remains of Don Pedro de Guzman were rescued from the Moorish camp, and brought to Tarifa, where the funeral rites were bestowed upon them, causing the deepest sensation amongst the spectators of the mournful ceremony. The heroic father, having fulfilled his duty in so stern a manner, was now plunged in a moody reverie of sorrow, which, while it moved all the Castilians to pity, no one dared to disturb. To offer consolation to such a man as Guzman, and to offer it under existing circumstances, would have been an insult. He was therefore suffered to indulge his sad reflections, unless these were broken upon by the affairs of the siege, at which time all the feelings of the father were banished the heart of the warrior, and the duties of the vigilant patriot again engrossed his attention.

The heroic Castilian, his spouse, and friends, were not the only mourners for the death of Don Pedro. There was another, whose sorrow was more poignant, whose despair seemed to produce the most melancholy effects upon her reason – the fond and unfortunate Zora was plunged in inconsolable affliction. The horrid fate of her lover continually haunted her fevered imagination. She considered her error the primary cause of the young Castilian's death, and she bitterly accused herself for the facility with which she had credited the treacherous words of her brother.

But, alas! the agony consequent on her lover's fearful doom was not the only trial she was compelled to undergo. The loathed obsequiousness of Don Juan still persecuted her with painful constancy, and these attentions had something fiendish and appalling since the hateful traitor had added to his other crimes the murder of his unfortunate rival. Zora, wrought to a pitch of desperation, fearlessly and resolutely spurned the miscreant from her, and, the intensity of her despair giving her courage for the most daring acts, she openly defied her merciless brother. She expressed her unconquerable aversion to the two princely ruffians, and her determination to suffer the most frightful death sooner than consent to become the bride of Don Juan. She was flattered

and menaced; every art that shrewdness could invent – every dreadful means that baffled hopes, allied to cruelty, could suggest, were resorted to, but every endeavour to induce her to alter her resolution proved totally ineffectual.

The disappointed tormentors now adopted the most rigorous and execrable measures; their unfortunate victim was closely immured, treated with every kind of contumely, and even unmanly violence was made use of, to punish her obstinacy, if not to change her determination. These accumulated trials, added to the agony of mind produced by her lover's catastrophe, soon wrought the most disastrous effects upon a delicate constitution. Scarcely a week had elapsed since the death of Don Pedro, when his unfortunate mistress, the lovely, the tender Zora, followed him to the grave.

The link which bound the two miscreants being thus removed, Don Juan's turbulent temper made him anxious to seek fortune elsewhere; and he resolved to repair to some other spot, where his genius for doing evil might be called into action. Aben-Jacob suffered him to depart without regret, for he now began to reflect that his services were of no importance, since the hopes of capturing Tarifa were every day growing weaker. He made several attempts, both by stratagem and force, to render himself master of the town; but the active vigilance of Don Alonso was proof against surprise, while his courage and resolution victoriously repelled any attack. At length Aben-Jacob, taught by repeated experience to respect the virtues and martial qualities of Guzman the Good, resolved in despair to raise the siege. This he effected in a few days, and retired to Africa full of rage and shame; and thus the glorious defense of Tarifa was brought to a successful end.

The fame of Guzman's sacrifice and magnanimous conduct during the siege soon spread throughout Spain. King Sancho, anxious to testify his gratitude and respect for the illustrious patriot, wrote a letter expressive both of congratulation and condolence; saying, that sickness alone prevented him from going to meet the best of Castilians, and earnestly inviting him to his court. The greatest honours were showered upon Guzman. His march to Alcala de Henares, where the King then resided, was, in truth, a triumphant procession. The inhabitants of cities, the retired

peasants—every one ran to see that great and virtuous man; and amongst the thousand human beings that daily impeded his progress, there was not a single voice but what was expressive of admiration and respect

Upon his arrival at Alcala de Henares, the King, attended by his whole court, went forth to meet him; and, having embraced him, and pointed him out to his attendants as the model of a true Castilian knight, gave him all the territories between the shores of the Guadalquivir and Guadalete. Guzman, the rest of his existence, preserved the same unspotted character for virtue, the same splendid name for heroism, that had marked all his previous life.

Such was Don Alonso Perez de Guzman, the Good. One of the most illustrious heroes of Spain; a son of that land, conspicuous in the remotest ages for the magnanimous qualities of her children; a land favourable to the growth of courage and honour, and integrity and noble pride, and all the most exalted attributes of man. A land, which, however sunk in the present day, in former times dazzled the neighbouring states with the brilliancy of her glory.

Guzman the Good was the first Lord of San Lucar de Barrameda, and founder of the house of Medina-Sidonia, which may be justly proud of so glorious a descent. The death of Guzman was in all respects equally glorious as the rest of his illustrious career. He was sent to besiege Gibraltar, which, after an obstinate resistance, surrendered, having remained in the possession of the Moors five hundred years. This was the last service which Guzman the Good did to his country; and here his glorious life met with a glorious end. Having advanced in the pursuit of the Moors, who were spoiling the neighbourhood of Algeciras, he was surrounded by the enemy before a competent number of his own men were near, and slain after a gallant defense.

«His memory» (says Quintana) «excites amongst us a respect equal to that which is inspired by the most celebrated worthies of antiquity –such as a Scipio, or an Epaminondas; and his name, hearing the impress of the most exalted patriotism is never pronounced but with a sort of religious veneration.»