

**A STORY**  
—OF THE—  
**SPANISH INQUISITION.**

WRITTEN FOR THE PRESS AND CAROLINA  
By Maria Batterham Lindsey.

**CHAPTER IV.**  
**FERDINAND'S ILLNESS.**

And now an unlocked-for thing came to pass. Ferdinand, the gay, courtly, light-hearted heir of Gonselmo, fell sick, and his sickness was very grievous. It lasted long and was very near unto death, and during this period of anxious watching and alternate hope and fear all minor matters were forgotten, for the heart of Gonselmo was bound up in his son. He came before and above everything. Even the father's bitter animosity was put aside while the trembling balance hung between life and death. It could rest for the wide future. Inez also was overlooked. The fair slave girl was indeed too much needed to be spared in such a season. Between Ferdinand and herself there had always existed a deep affection, one of those rare affinities of thought and sympathy between near relatives. He regarded her as a dear sister, and it was the cherished wish of his heart to bestow freedom upon her. He knew the sad story of her mother's life, and his influence was always exerted to shield her child from the fierce hatred of his father, and thus they had grown up together, and now Inez was his chief nurse and almost constant attendant. In the delirium of fever her clear, soft voice and her gentle touch could alone calm him. But she could not hush his unconscious utterance, and the name of Isidora was constantly on his lips. Even the anxious father remarked upon the repetition of the name, but he sought no farther enlightenment. In that time of suspense it passed almost without notice, though in truth there came a day when he recalled it anxiously.

But Ferdinand grew better, and during the period of fretful convalescence it was still Inez who cheered and quieted him most successfully. She would talk and sing to him by the hour together. But at first she never read. There was only one book she really prized, and she knew that she had no right to obtrude its sacred contents upon her half brother. He had rarely of late spoken to her upon serious matters. His life had been too full of gayety and physical enjoyment for him to have cherished any such. But he knew his "little sister," as he fondly called her when they were alone, was of a serious turn of mind. And there had been times when they two had often speculated together upon the great religious questions of the day. Ferdinand lacked much of his stern father's bitter hatred of the reformers, but as yet had given no marked preference to either side. He was as the world said "a good Catholic," and attended mass always when reminded thereto by the family priest. This man, Friar John, was a priest indeed. He was no Jesuit or secret friar. He was simply one of those scarce natures who are what they are. His gentle ministry was a source of much comfort to Inez, for though she knew many of his doctrines to be mistaken, she yet found much of help and comfort in his mild admonitions.

It was a matter of wonder to many that the crafty and grasping Gonselmo should permit such a priest in his household, but the Friar had some thither with the former mistress as confessor and spiritual guide when she as a young girl had left her sunny home in the mountains to reign for a few short years over her husband's home. He was now a very aged man, so old indeed as to be scarcely capable of fulfilling his duties as he would have wished.

But his kindly face and slow step were dearly loved and honored in Gonselmo's house. All save the master-cherished his ministrations. Gonselmo took little notice of him, he was too busy for such trivianities. And the old priest was often in Ferdinand's room, generally listening to the talk of Inez and his sick charge, but his presence was not a check upon their happy intercourse. Had he not known them from childhood and taught them all they knew of books and theology? For Friar John was a bookworm, and he it was who read dry manuscript by the volume to Ferdinand until he often slept from sheer weariness. At such times Inez would sit with her embroidery or sewing, a quiet and often amused listener. But the Friar was a good man, and she seldom argued with him upon religious matters. That she was far ahead of him he knew, but how far he did not care to ascertain. It was enough if she was privately devout and attended mass regularly. And so far Inez was safe. But she did not escape the prying eyes of Ferdinand, and he watched her narrowly. There was something, an undefinable sweetness, a sense of rest and peace in her face and manner that puzzled him. Had she a lover? And who could it be? His "little sister" was barely seventeen, and small and childlike at that; yet, and he noticed it now for the first time, there was a new womanliness and dignity about her, and for many days it was a matter of serious speculation to him. At length he questioned her about herself.

"Inez," he said one day, "have you a lover?"

And a momentary blush overspread her face as she answered quietly and without raising her eyes, "I think I have."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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