A STORY
—OF THE—
SPANISH INQUISITION.

WRITTEN FOR THE PRESS AND CAROLINIAN.

By Maria Butterham Lindsey.

CHAPTER VIII.—*Continued.*

A deathlike stillness prevailed. The very air itself seemed heavy with oppression. The prevailing color lent a mournful air to the room and its occupants. The carefully excluded light of day struggled faintly in and lit with a dim, unearthly light the sombre room or hall. High on his chair of state sat the uncouth Inquisitor General, eyeing with no gentle look the fair figure before him. It seemed his intention to awe her with the oppressive stillness, but if so, he failed signally. Isidore stood like the gentle lady that she was, quite unconscious of fear or shame. She did not raise her eyes, but waited calmly to be addressed. At length, incensed by her bearing, the Grand Inquisitor General of the Most Holy Inquisition spake:

"Girl! Offspring of sin! Heir of blasphemy and child of damnation! You are here to answer for the accursed sin of heresy. Come forward, her accuser, and state her fall from grace and its manner."

And Father Pedro [illegible] stood by her side, and gave his account of her "sin." How he had long had grievous suspicions of her, of his watching, of his discovery of her love, all that he knew or guessed of it, and finally of the crowning crime of her reading secretly the Forbidden Book, and of her obstinate refusal to tell the source from whence she obtained it. There was no change in the accused's manner, save that a very mantle of blushes swept over her face and neck and brow as she heard her love thus openly told, but she made no sign of tremor or fear, and the rosy hue of modesty soon left her, paler, but calm as before. The Grand Inquisitor General passed a coarse jest upon it, and then, after commending the zealous informer for his vigilance, he sternly adjured Isidore to make full confession of her sin and its abettor, and to be thus absolved and go free. She raised her eyes and answered quietly:

"I am conscious of no sin in this matter. With regard to my affection and its object, that I think does not come within the province of this court. The confessor of my father's household systematically overlooked his most sacred duties, and I did not judge it necessary to acquaint him with my perusal of a portion of God's Holy Word."

She paused, and the Inquisitor asked roughly:

"Didst thou think that hands like thine had any business tampering with the Forbidden Book?"

"And why forbidden?" asked she simply.

"It is not for babes and fools to interpret the Book of God, neither is it meet for you, maiden, to dare enquire into the long established and divinely ordained rules of the church."

Whereat Isidore stood mute. Several of the other officers then came forward and desired the laws with regard to heretics to be read in the vulgar tongue. This was accordingly done, and as they were by no means short, but rather the reverse a hour and more passed before they were ended. Then the Inquisitor again commanded Isidore to reveal the source of her heresy.

"Where and from whom was this copy of St. John obtained? Who gave it to you? Was it that graceless Ferdinand the younger? Answer, girl, and refuse at your peril. Remember you have ears now, body and soul. The rack is in the next room, the stake is always ready for obstinate heretics. Confess your accomplice and go forth."

And the young girl, faint as she was with the long fast which was yet unbroken since she left her father's home, and weak with standing so long, for she had been there nearly three hours, answered firmly but quietly:

"Ferdinand Gonselmo did not give it to me. He had nothing whatever to do it. I cannot implicate any one. I alone am to blame. You may take me to the rack and the stake if you wish. My body truly is in your power, but my soul is in God's care."

The Inquisitor cursed her with a terrible curse that made her shiver from head to foot, and turning to his officers, he said:

"Take this accursed heretic hence. We will see if the torture chamber can break her brave spirit," and he laughed coarsely.

And they led Isidore away, with faltering steps it is true, but fearless at heart still, for conscious of innocence, her faith in her new-found Savior upheld and strengthened her even in this trying hour.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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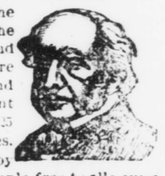

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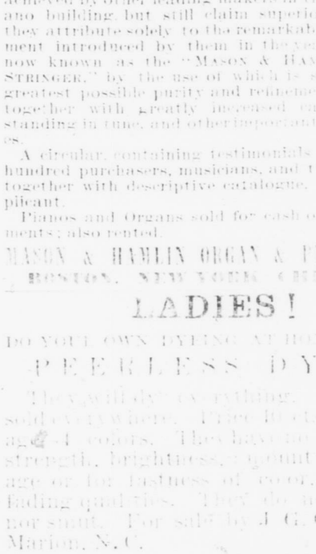

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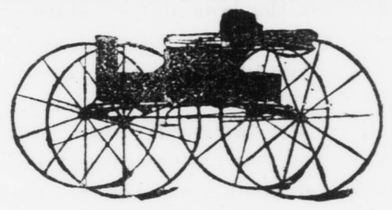

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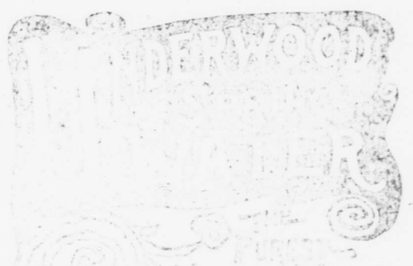

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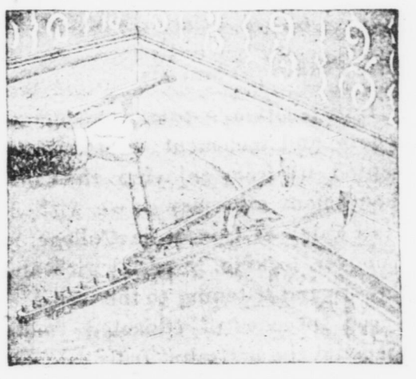

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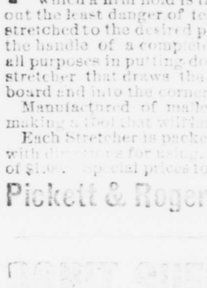

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