

**DON SEBASTIAN
OR
THE HOUSE OF
BRAGANZA**

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

VOL. I.

BY MISS ANNA MARIA PORTER

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DON SEBASTIAN
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Take Physic, Pomp!
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
So shalt thou shake the superflux to them,
And shew the Heavens more just.
KING LEAR.

PREFACE.

THE name of Don Sebastian immediately recals to every historical reader, a character, which youth, faults, virtues, and misfortunes, have rendered highly interesting: I selected such a one for my Hero, from the wish of shewing how “sweet are the uses of adversity.”

If I may be so fortunate as to instruct and to amuse at the same time, the utmost of my literary ambition will be gratified.

It has been my aim to keep as close to historical records, as was consistent with a work wherein imagination is allowed to make up for the deficiencies of actual tradition. In some places I have been obliged to antedate an event, and to mix other motives of action with such as were avowed by the persons then acting on the great theatre of Europe; but I have scrupulously avoided slandering the illustrious dead, and am not conscious of having materially altered any well-known portrait.

Some readers may be offended or wearied with the frequent use which I have made of religious tenets; to them I can only offer one apology;—I had no other way of reconciling the conduct of Catholic powers, with what I have been obliged to suppose, their conviction of Don Sebastian’s identity when he re-appeared at Venice; and as his chief calamity was the product of a bigotted attachment to the doctrines of Rome, I could scarcely make that calamity effect the necessary revolution in his general character, without changing also the nature of his religious opinions.

In my delineation of countries, manners, &c. I have endeavoured to give as faithful a picture as was possible to one

who describes after the accounts of others; I consulted the voyages and tours of those days; so that the modern traveller, in journeying with me over Barbary, Persia, and Brazil, must recollect that he is beholding those countries as they appeared in the sixteenth century.

By accident, I met with an ancient work upon South America, in which was the following sentence: “twelve leagues southward from St. Salvador, appears the village of Cachoeira, formerly belonging to an unknown Portuguese, who took great pains in reforming the savage people Guaymures to a civil life.” This hint suggested to me the idea of making the Portuguese, and my principal character, the same person.

I am told that there has been a novel written in French on the same story, which forms the ground work of mine, but I have not seen it. The materials with which I have worked, have been drawn from general history, accounts of particular periods, the Harleian Miscellany, and a curious old tract published in 1602, containing the letters of Texere, De Castro, and others, with minute details of the conduct and sufferings of the mysterious personage concerning whom it treats.

I trust the candid reader will excuse many defects in this romance, when he considers how long was the space of time to be filled up with events solely imaginary, and which it was indispensable so to occupy, as to unite facts and to give the whole the semblance of probability: he will reflect also how difficult it was for me to find any historical action of sufficient weight and brilliancy, with which I might have earlier concluded the adventures of Sebastian.

If my unassuming work should disappoint the reader, he must suffer me to assure him that neither diligence in obtaining information, and selecting circumstances, nor industry in using them, has been spared. I may fail from want of ability, but not from want of application.

August, 1809.

INTRODUCTION.

NEVER has the pen of history had to record a more affecting event, than that which bore the house of Braganza to another hemisphere: animated by a noble disdain of submitting to foreign despotism, and bravely placing his country, not in the land of Portugal, but in the hearts of her people, the Prince Regent conquered in adversity, and triumphed even at the moment of despair.

Like the pious Eneas, who snatched from the flames of Troy, his father and his household Gods, he hastened to save some relics of Portugal; he hastened to embark his family and their adherents on board the national fleet; to launch with them on the hitherto untried deep, and to lead them under the protection of Great Britain, to found a new empire in a new world.

It was on the morning of the 29th of November, 1807, that these patriot emigrants quitted the bay of Lisbon; they looked back on their forsaken capital, with emotions too strong and too complicated for description: every individual had left behind him some aged, or infirm, or timid relative, whom it was agony to abandon, and whom he quitted with the conviction of never seeing again; the scenes of their childhood, their vineyards, and their cities, nay even the shores of their native land, were never more to gladden their eyes!

A solemn pause had followed the noise and distraction of their embarkation; Lisbon was motionless: profound stillness, like that silence which surrounds the death bed of a mother, rested within her walls: every heart felt its impression.

Advancing with majestic slowness down the Tagus, the Portuguese fleet crossed the bar, and entered between the lines formed by the navy of England: the cannons of the two fleets answered each other; the sounds, doubled and redoubled by numerous echoes, were prolonged after the smoke had cleared away, and discovered the ships of Portugal and of Britain mingled together on the Atlantic ocean.

Having exchanged gratulation and farewell with the Ambassador and the gallant Admiral of the friendly squadron, the Prince Regent gave a last, long look to Portugal, and forcibly tore himself from the deck of his vessel. In the cabin, he found part of the royal family yielding themselves up to regret and anxiety: he suffered them to weep without interruption, till the moment in which lamentation made a pause; he then took the united hands of his daughter, and of his nephew, the Prince of Spain, and pressing them within his own, held them with a look, serious, sad, yet collected.

“Let us dry our tears,” he said; “let us bravely submit to our fate, and bless God for having allowed us to retain that which ennobles every situation—Freedom!—We go, my children, to seek a new world; to found there a new empire; it belongs to us to stamp the future character of an unborn nation:—May we feel the gratitude of such responsibility!—As our example shall persuade, as our authority shall impel, so will vice or virtue prevail in Transatlantic Portugal; her existence, her expansion, her dignity, her immortality, depend upon her princes and nobles. Be this truth engraven on your hearts! may its awful voice resound for ever in your ears, influencing your lives to the exercise of all the social duties.”

Among the state treasures, I have preserved one most precious; 'tis the history of an illustrious ancestor, more unfortunate than ourselves, but for whom misfortune was a blessing.

“We will read this MSS together; the style and the arrangement may offend a nice judgment, because they are the production of an humble pen; but the story itself is interesting, and the character of our ancestor may serve as an important lesson to ourselves: compose your spirits my dear children—listen to me with attention.”

While the Prince was speaking, he drew from his breast a large roll of written paper, and after such of his family, as were present, had seated themselves eagerly around him, he read in a voice somewhat agitated by late emotion, the following narrative.

**DON SEBASTIAN,
OR
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CHAP. I.

ON the 12th of January, 1554, Juan, prince of Portugal, breathed his last, in the palace of Ribera, at Lisbon.

At that sad moment grief and dismay seized the hearts of his royal parents; as they alternately clasped his senseless clay in their arms, and thought of all he had been, they almost forgot their hope of soon possessing a memorial of his fair-promising youth.

Ignorant of her husband's danger, his young consort had been removed to the palace of Xabregas, in the suburbs; there, while he was struggling between life and death, she was impatiently awaiting the hour which was to bless her with the first pledge of their happiness and their love. Under such circumstances the concealment of prince Juan's death became an act of necessity; at least as it regarded the princess, whose life, and that of her unborn infant, would have been risked by a disclosure.

She was now tenderly deceived by all around her; the King and Queen painfully dissembling their affliction visited her as usual, daily bringing with them little billets from their son, whose anxious love had early foreseen and provided against this trying occasion. He had left behind him several letters without dates, expressive of the fondest attachment, and pathetically lamenting the slow progress of his recovery, which alone kept him from her society: he had ordered these to be given her from time to time, until she should have safely brought into the world another heir to the crown of Portugal: after that period deception was to cease.

Soothed by this sweet error the young princess yielded to the desire of her royal parents, that she should not attempt returning to Ribera before the birth of her child: she yielded with tears, but they were not tears of apprehension; she wept only because her situation denied her the tender office of watching her husband's returning health. Again and again she read his letters, again and again she dwelt on their blissful meeting, when she should have an infant to present him with: happily unconscious that the husband and the father, the young and beauteous prince, was laid at rest for ever, in the grave!

Lisbon became now a scene of hope and sorrow. Lamentations for one beloved prince was mixed with anxiety for the birth of another: solemn fasts were ordained, vows offered, pilgrimages undertaken, processions made. On the eighth day after Juan's decease, at the dead of the night preceding the feast of St. Sebastian, all the religious orders in Portugal were seen headed by the archbishop, and cardinal Henry, walking in awful silence, barefooted and dejected, bearing in their hands mourning torches to light them on their way to the grand church of Bethlehem: there mass for the soul of their departed prince was celebrated, with all the pomp of that church which affects and overwhelms the heart by its powerful appeal to the senses. Images, relics, incense, music, all contributed to heighten pity and grief into madness: groans and prayers were for awhile the only sounds heard mingling with the wailing tones of the organ: at length even these ceased, and the priests and the people remained in silence prostrate before the host.

At that moment a shout from the multitude without, broke the solemn pause; the next instant this cry was heard—"a Prince! a Prince is born!" The whole mass of suppliant started from the earth; the organ burst into a loud swell; the priests and the people

joined their voices; and the dome of the cathedral rang with hymns and thanksgiving.

Thus in the midst of national hopes and fears was born the heir of Portugal. His grand-uncle, the cardinal Don Henry, soon afterwards named him Sebastian, in honor of the saint's day upon which he was given to their prayers; and then rejoicings and illuminations took place all over the kingdom.

When the princess Joanna's safety was thoroughly ascertained, the mournful task of preparing her to hear the account of her husband's death was undertaken by the Queen: she gradually presented less cheering letters from her son; till at length venturing to pronounce the fatal truth, she called upon the princess to live for her child and them. Joanna heard not these exhortations: she swooned repeatedly; reviving only to call, with frantic cries, upon him whose "ear was now stopped with dust."

From that hour no human effort availed to comfort her: scarcely sixteen, this heaviest of all mortal sorrows was the first suffering her heart had known: even her infant son, though she loved him to agony, failed to reanimate her hopes: as she held him in her arms she would bathe him in tears and think but the more of his father. A curtain of adamant had fallen between her and the world: she felt it; and fearful of being urged into new engagements hereafter, determined upon withdrawing to the sanctuary of a religious profession.

While the widowed princess was inwardly revolving how best to compass this melancholy desire, she was summoned into Spain by her brother Philip II., then just setting out for Flanders to negotiate his nuptials with Mary of England. By accepting the

regency during his absence, she hoped to find an opportunity for tranquillizing her mind previous to a renunciation of all sublunary ties; and trusted, that when far from the scene of past happiness and future anxiety—when removed from the afflicting pleasure of her infant’s smiles, she might succeed in giving up her whole soul to Christ and God. Aware of the opposition which would be made to this resolution in Portugal, the princess confined it to her own breast; but while she took an affecting leave of the King and Queen, could not refrain from exclaiming—“O my parents! we shall never meet again.” These words were at the time ascribed to the forebodings of a heart which believed itself breaking, but were afterwards remembered as proofs of a steadily pursued resolution.

From her child the youthful mother tore herself with difficulty: in the midst of its innocent endearments, she felt that all delightful emotions had not been buried with her husband. For the first time her heart whispered that she was not utterly desolate, since she had yet something precious to relinquish.

Melted from her purpose, trembling, and bathed in tears, Joanna sunk upon a seat: “Ah, my child!” she exclaimed, straining it to her breast—“how can I leave thee to see thee no more?”

The King and Queen not venturing to speak, folded their arms around her: their tremulous, yet strong pressure, spoke a joyful hope of detaining her: at that instant she raised her eyes, overflowing with consent; but they fell on the picture of Juan drawn in his bridal habit. At this piercing sight, she shrieked, covered her face, wildly repeating—“O no, no; I shall but love him and lose him too.”

Impressed with this sudden dread of living to witness the premature death of her son, the princess broke from every attempt to detain her, and hurried through the palace. Her retinue waited at the gates: she threw herself into a carriage, and amidst guards and attendants left Portugal never to return.

A destroying angel seemed at this period to be commissioned for the affliction of that unhappy country. The death of prince Juan had been followed by the voluntary departure of his interesting widow; and regret for the last misfortune, was absorbed in grief for the loss of Louis, Duke de Beja, brother to the King: the King himself, sinking under sorrow and sickness, shortly afterwards terminated his exemplary life, leaving a monarch of three years old, whose long minority threatened many political calamities.

The Queen now unwillingly undertook the regency, a task imposed on her by her late husband. For awhile she administered the laws, and guided public measures, with a wise and impartial spirit: but at length wearied with groundless animadversions, she grew timid of her own counsels, and gladly transferred the reins of government into the hands of cardinal Henry.

The new regent possessed much ability, and more integrity; but he was a prelate of the church of Rome, and thought less of instructing his young sovereign in the art of governing well, than of teaching him to revere and defend all the superstitions of popery. He confided him to the care of four preceptors: two of these were zealous Jesuits, and were charged with his spiritual education: the others were noblemen of distinguished reputation, who were to instruct their prince in history, philosophy, and moral exercises.

Don Alexes de Meneses, the first of these nobles, was allied to the Italian family of Medici, and had been nurtured at Florence, under their auspices, in the newly-discovered learning of the ancients: having a genius for active scenes, he devoured with avidity the works of their historians and poets, while he coldly perused the peaceful theories of their philosophers. He came therefore to the task of education, with no other aim than that of making his pupil a conqueror.

His coadjutor, Gonzalez de Camera, facilitated this aim. He had served in the wars of Germany, under Sebastian's maternal grandfather, Charles V., and though no longer young, talked with youthful ardor of battles, and sieges, and victories. He failed not to paint every virtue in the justest colours; but when he spoke of those which brighten the crown of a hero, his language set his hearer in a blaze.

That rapid, that resistless eloquence, which rouses the passions and impels the will, was ever at his command: he could touch every spring of the human heart. Sebastian's soon learned to move solely at his direction.

From such governors the character of the young monarch received an impetus which was fatal to its excellence. Nature had given him an excess of sensibility, requiring the rein rather than the spur; his virtues were of themselves too much inclined to tread a precipice: had he fallen into the hands of men of calmer feelings, and cooler heads, he might have risen with steady wing to the empyreal height of true glory: as it was, he became the prey of passion, and the slave of error.

Years now rolled away: Portugal gradually recovered from her domestic losses, and began to anticipate with eagerness the end of her young sovereign's minority: the regent himself panted for a more tranquil station; and Don Sebastian burned to seize the sceptre Providence had destined him to wield. At the age appointed by law, this was voluntarily resigned to him.

The young monarch's coronation was as magnificent as his spirit: all the riches of the new world, the gold of Mexico, the diamonds of Brazil, the pearls of Ormutz, were displayed on the persons of the nobility. Their very horses, proudly pranced under housings of cloth of gold and precious stones.

As the long procession passed from the palace to the cathedral, crouds of spectators lining the streets and windows, easily distinguished their prince by the superior nobleness of his air. In the very flower of his youth Sebastian appeared mounted on a white Arabian, the trappings of which were studded with rubies: his own ornaments were few: the order of Christus, alone sparkled in brilliants upon his majestic chest; the rest of his dress merely displayed without seeking to decorate the symmetry of his figure. While passing one of his minister's houses, some ladies showered flowers upon him from a balcony: at this act of female gallantry, he checked his horse, and looking up, lifted off his hat. The air was immediately rent with "Long live our King, Sebastian!" His enchanting smile, the still sweeter smile of his eyes, his animated complexion and ingenuous countenance, seemed to promise a character which intoxicated the people: they shouted again, when again smiling with as much gaiety as graciousness, he threw away his hat, and rode forward uncovered. From that moment he became their idol. Such is the effect of youth, beauty, and urbanity, in high stations!

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