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Author: Thomas A. Janvier

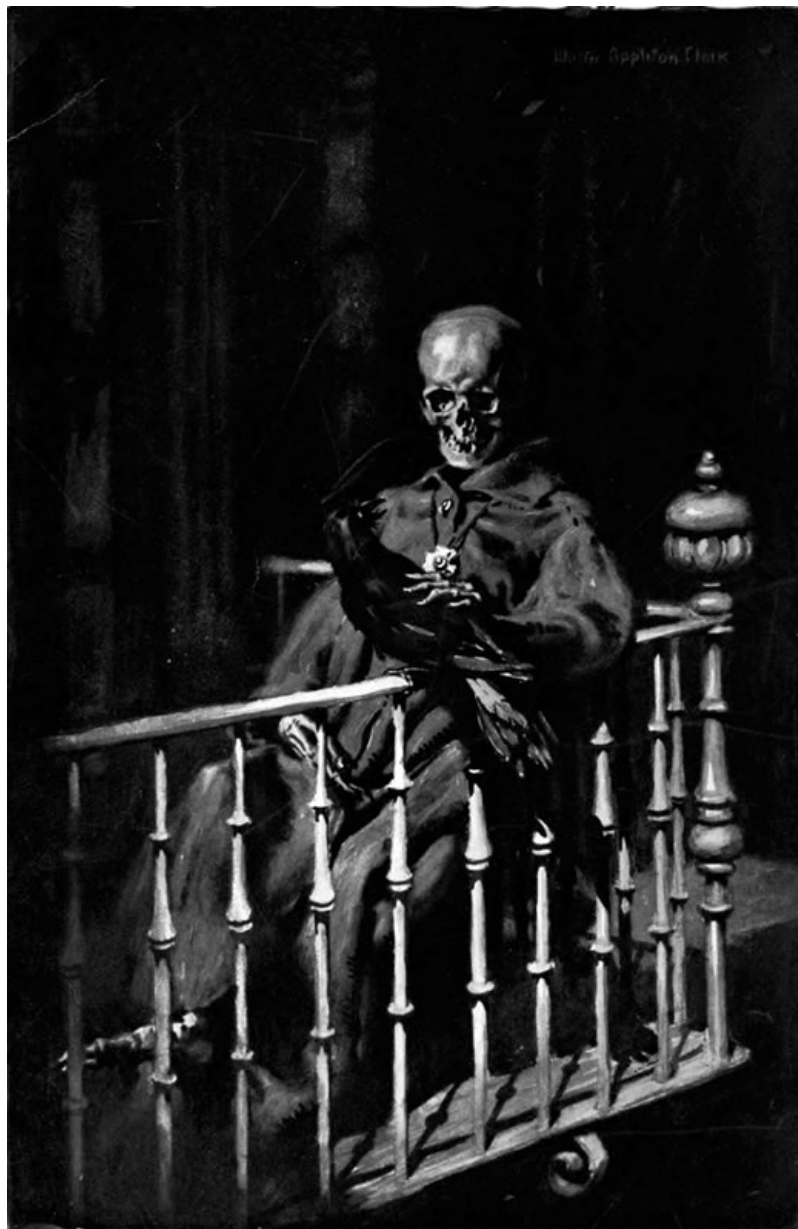
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EL PVENTE DEL CVERVO
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LEGENDS OF THE CITY OF MEXICO

COLLECTED BY
THOMAS A. JANVIER

MEMBER OF
THE FOLK-LORE SOCIETY, LONDON

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIX PICTURES BY
WALTER APPLETON CLARK
AND BY PHOTOGRAPHS OF PLACE



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TO
C. A. J.
WITHOUT WHOSE HELP THIS BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

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These legends of the City of Mexico are of my finding, not of my making. They are genuine folk-stories. Each one of them is a true folk-growth from some obscure curious or tragical ancient matter that, taking hold upon the popular imagination, has had built up from it among the people a story satisfying to the popular heart.

Many of them simply are historical traditions gone wrong: being rooted in substantial facts which have been disguised by the fanciful additions, or distorted by the sheer perversions, of successive generations of narrators through the passing centuries. Others of them have for their kernel some unaccounted-for strange happening that, appealing to the popular mind for an explanation, has been explained variously by various imaginative people of varying degrees of perception and of intelligence: whose diverse elucidations of the same mystery eventually have been patched together into a single story—that betrays its composite origin by the inconsistencies and the discrepancies in which it abounds. A few of them—starting out boldly by exalting some commonplace occurrence into a marvel—practically are cut from the whole cloth. All of them—and most obviously the most incredible of them—have the quality that gives to folk-stories in general their serious value: they reflect accurately the tone of thought, and exhibit more or less clearly the customs and the conditions, of the time to which they belong. Among the older people of the City of Mexico, alike the lettered and the unlettered, they still are cherished with a warm affection and are told with a lively relish—to which is added, among the common people, a lively faith. The too-sophisticated younger generation, unhappily, is neglectful and even scornful of them. Soon, as oral tradition, they will be lost.

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Most fortunately, the permanent preservation in print of these legends—and of many more of the same sort—long since was assured. Because of the serious meaning that is in them, as side-lights on history and on sociology, they have been collected seriously by learned antiquarians—notably by Don Luis González Obregón and by Don Manuel Rivera Cambas—who have searched and sifted them; and who have set forth, so far as it could be discovered, their underlying germs of truth. By the poets—to whom, naturally, they have made a strong appeal—they have been preserved in a way more in keeping with their fanciful essence: as may be seen—again to cite two authors of recognized eminence—in the delightful metrical renderings of many of them by Don Vicente Riva Palacio, and in the round threescore of them that Don Juan de Dios Peza has recast into charming verse. By other writers of distinction, not antiquarians nor poets, various

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collections of them have been made—of which the best is the sympathetic work of Don Angel R. de Arellano—in a purely popular form. By the playwrights have been made from the more romantic of them—as the legend of Don Juan Manuel—perennially popular plays. By minor writers, in prose and in verse, their tellings and retellings are without end.

While the oral transmission of the legends among the common people—by heightening always the note of the marvellous—has tended to improve them, the bandying about in print to which they have been subjected has worked a change in them that distinctly is for the worse. In their written form they have acquired an artificiality that directly is at odds with their natural simplicity; while the sleeking of their essential roughnesses, and the abatement of their equally essential inconsistencies and contradictions, has weakened precisely the qualities which give to them their especial character and their peculiar charm.

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The best versions of them, therefore, are those which are current among the common people: who were the makers of them in the beginning; who—passing them from heart to lip and from lip to heart again through the centuries—have retained in them the subtle pith that clearly distinguishes a built-up folk-story from a story made by one mind at a single melting; whose artless telling of them—abrupt, inconsequent, full of repetitions and of contradictions—preserves the full flavor of their patchwork origin; and, most important of all, whose simple-souled faith in their verity is of the selfsame spirit in which they were made. These are the versions which I have tried here to reproduce in feeling and in phrase.

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My first winter in Mexico, twenty-five years ago, was spent in Monterey; and there, in a small way, my collection of Mexican folk-lore was begun. My gathering at that time consisted mainly of superstitious beliefs—omens, house-charms, the evil eye, the unlucky day—but it included a version of the story of La Llorona essentially identical with the version, here given, that I later found current in the City of Mexico. The sources from which I drew in Monterey were three or four old, and old-fashioned, women with whom my wife established such friendly relations as to win them into freely confidential talk with her; the most abundant yield coming from a kindly old Doña Miguelita (she was given always the affectionate diminutive), who was attached loosely as a sort of brevet grandmother to the family with whom we were lodged. Had I been alone I should not have been able to extract any information from these old people. It would have been impossible to convince them that such matters could be regarded with anything but contempt by a man.

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In like manner, later, from a most valuable source in the City of Mexico, my information was to be had only at second-hand. This source was our dear Joséfa Correa, who during four successive winters at once was our washer-woman and our friend. Joséfa's semi-weekly visits gave us always a warm pleasure; and her talk—of which she was no miser—gave us always much of interest to ponder upon: she being a very wise old woman, with views of life that were broad and sound. As she was precisely of the class in which the folk-stories of the city originated, she was the best of authorities for the current popular versions of them: but always was it through my wife that her tellings of them came to me. Various other old women, encountered casually, similarly were put under contribution by my wife for my purposes. One of the most useful was a draggled old seller of rebozos; another, of equal value, was a friendly old body whom we fell in with at a railway station while waiting through two hours for a vagrant train. To me all of these women would have been sealed books; I could have got nothing from them without my wife's help.

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For that help, and for the help that she has given me in searching and in collating my authorities for the Legends and for the Notes relating to them, I am very grateful to her.

To my friend and fellow-lover of things ancient and marvellous, Gilberto Cano, I am under signal obligations. In addition to his nice appreciation and his wide knowledge of such matters, this excellent man—twenty-four years ago, and later—was the best waiter at the Hôtel del Café Anglais. (It is gone, now, that admirable little hotel over which the brave Monsieur Gatillon so admirably presided—and the City of Mexico distinctly is the worse for its loss.) Our acquaintance, that had its beginning in my encounters with him in his professional capacity, soon ripened into a real friendship—still enduring—along the line of similarity of tastes. His intelligent answers to my questions about one or another of the many old buildings which attracted our attention in the course of our walks about the city—then all new to us—early impressed upon me a serious respect for his antiquarian attainments; and this respect was increased when, after making a hesitant offer of them that I accepted eagerly, he lent to us several excellent books treating of the ancient matters in which we were interested: explaining, modestly, that these books were his own; and that he had bought them in order that he might acquire an accurate knowledge of the city in which he had been born and in which for all his life he had lived. As my own knowledge grew, I found that in every instance he had answered my questions correctly; and the books which he had lent to me were certified to, later, by my erudite friend Don José María Vigil, Director of the Biblioteca Nacional, as standard authorities—and I bought copies of all of them to add to the collection of Mexicana that I then was beginning to form.

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Gilberto was so obliging as to spend several afternoons in our quarters—coming to us in the dull time between luncheon and dinner when his professional duties were in abeyance—that I might write at his dictation some of the many folk-traditions with which his mind was stored. Like our dear Joséfa, he was an absolute authority on the current popular versions, and he seemed to share her faith in them; but he told them—because of his substantial knowledge of Mexican history—more precisely than she told them, and with an appreciative understanding of their

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antiquarian interest that was quite beyond her grasp.

He was a small man, our Gilberto, with a low and gentle voice, and a manner that was gentle also—both in the literal and in the finer sense of the word. In the thrilling portions of his stories he would lean forward, his voice would deepen and gather earnestness, his bright brown eyes would grow brighter, and his gestures—never violent, and always appropriate—would enlarge the meaning of his words. With the instinct of a well-bred man he invariably addressed himself to my wife; and through his discourse ran a constant refrain of "and so it was, Señorita"—*pues si, Señorita*—that made a point of departure for each fresh turn in the narrative, and at the same time gave to what he was telling an air of affirmative finality. Usually he ended with a few words of comment—enlightening as exhibiting the popular viewpoint—either upon the matter of his story or by way of emphasizing its verity.

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His tellings ranged widely: from such important legends as those of Don Juan Manuel and La Llorona—his versions of which are given in my text—to such minor matters as the encounter of his own brother with a freakish ghost who carried the bed on which the brother was sleeping from one part of the house to another. All the knowledge being on his side, I could give him little guidance—and whatever happened to come into his head, in the way of the marvellous, at once came out of it again for my benefit. Some of his stories, while exhaustively complete, and undeniably logical, were almost startling in their elemental brevity—as the following: "Once some masons were pulling down an old house, and in the wall they found many boxes of money. After that, those masons were rich"! In justice I should add that this succinct narrative merely was thrown in, as a make-weight, at the end of a long and dramatic hidden-treasure story—in which a kindly old ghost-lady, the hider of the treasure, had a leading part.

Because of the intelligent interest that Gilberto took in my folk-lore collecting, it was a source of keen regret to him that our meeting had not come a little earlier, only two years earlier, during the lifetime of his great-aunt: who had known—as he put it comprehensively—all the stories about the city that ever were told. I too grieved, and I shall grieve always, because that ancient person was cut off from earth before I could have the happiness of garnering the traditionary wisdom with which she was so full charged. But my grief is softened—and even is tintured with a warm thankfulness—by the fact that a great deal of it was saved to me by my fortunate encounter with her grand-nephew: who so faithfully had treasured in his heart her ancient sayings; and who so freely—to the winning of my lasting gratitude—gave them to me for the enrichment of my own store.

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NEW YORK, *September 26, 1909.*

LEGENDS OF THE CITY OF MEXICO

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LEGEND OF DON JUAN MANUEL^[1]

[Pg 1]

This Don Juan Manuel, Señor, was a rich and worthy gentleman who had the bad vice of killing people. Every night at eleven o'clock, when the Palace clock was striking, he went out from his magnificent house—as you know, Señor, it still is standing in the street that has been named after him—all muffled in his cloak, and under it his dagger in his hand.

Then he would meet one, in the dark street, and would ask him politely: "What is the hour of the night?" And that person, having heard the striking of the clock, would answer: "It is eleven hours of the night." And Don Juan Manuel would say to him: "Señor, you are fortunate above all men, because you know precisely the hour at which you die!" Then he would thrust with his dagger—and then, leaving the dead gentleman lying in the street, he would come back again into his own home. And this bad vice of Don Juan Manuel's of killing people went on, Señor, for a great many years.

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Living with Don Juan Manuel was a nephew whom he dearly loved. Every night they supped together. Later, the nephew would go forth to see one or another of his friends; and, still later, Don Juan Manuel would go forth to kill some man. One night the nephew did not come home. Don Juan Manuel was uneasy because of his not coming, fearing for him. In the early morning the city watch knocked at Don Juan Manuel's door, bringing there the dead body of the nephew—with a wound in the heart of him that had killed him. And when they told where his body had been found, Don Juan Manuel knew that he himself—not knowing him in the darkness—had killed his own nephew whom he so loved.

Then Don Juan Manuel saw that he had been leading a bad life: and he went to the Father to whom he confessed and confessed all the killings that he had done. Then the Father put a penance upon him: That at midnight he should go alone through the streets until he was come to the chapel of the Espiración (it faces upon the Plazuela de Santo Domingo, Señor; and, in those days, before it was a gallows); and that he should kneel in front of that chapel, beneath the

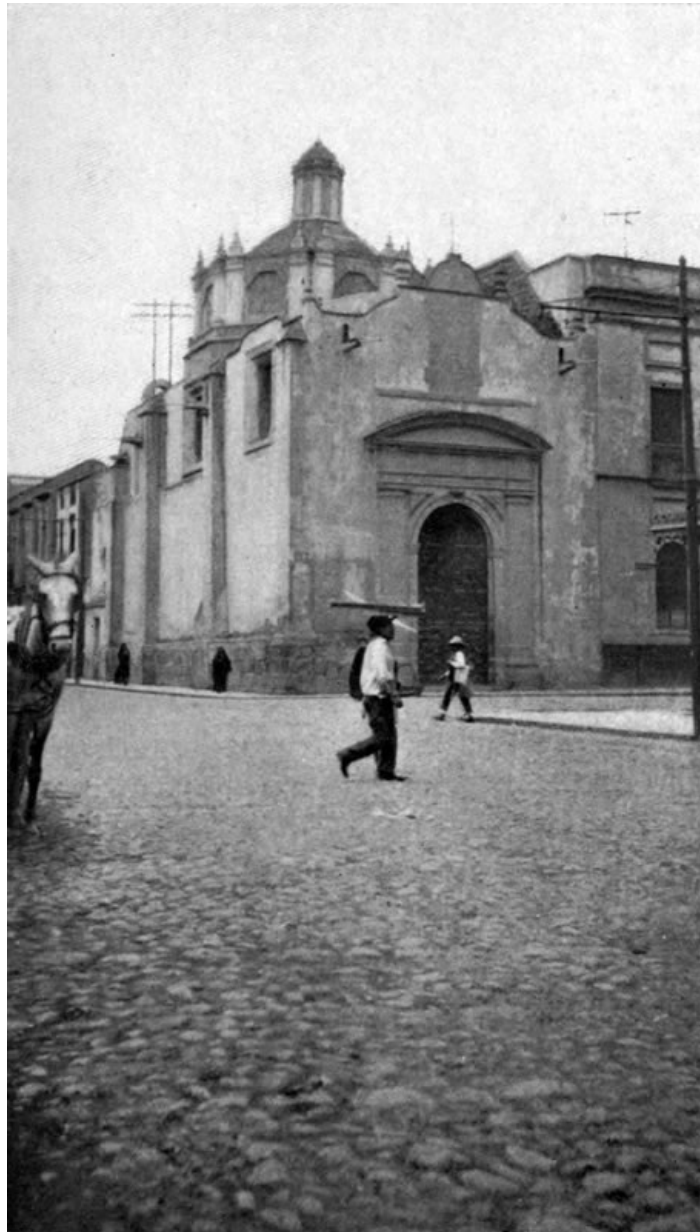
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gallows; and that, so kneeling, he should tell his rosary through. And Don Juan Manuel was pleased because so light a penance had been put upon him, and thought soon to have peace again in his soul.

But that night, at midnight, when he set forth to do his penance, no sooner was he come out from his own door than voices sounded in his ears, and near him was the terrible ringing of a little bell. And he knew that the voices which troubled him were those of the ones whom he had killed. And the voices sounded in his ears so wofully, and the ringing of the little bell was so terrible, that he could not keep onward. Having gone a little way, his stomach was tormented by the fear that was upon him and he came back again to his own home.

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Then, the next day, he told the Father what had happened, and that he could not do that penance, and asked that another be put upon him. But the Father denied him any other penance; and bade him do that which was set for him—or die in his sin and go forever to hell! Then Don Juan Manuel again tried to do his penance, and that time got a half of the way to the chapel of the Espiración; and then again turned backward to his home, because of those woful voices and the terrible ringing of that little bell. And so again he asked that he be given another penance; and again it was denied to him; and again—getting that night three-quarters of the way to the chapel—he tried to do what he was bidden to do. But he could not do it, because of the woful voices and the terrible ringing of the little bell.



CAPILLA DE LA ESPIRACIÓN

Then went he for the last time to the Father to beg for another penance; and for the last time it was denied to him; and for the last time he set forth from his house at midnight to go to the chapel of the Espiración, and in front of it, kneeling beneath the gallows, to tell his rosary through. And that night, Señor, was the very worst night of all! The voices were so loud and so very woful that he was in weak dread of them, and he shook with fear, and his stomach was tormented because of the terrible ringing of the little bell. But he pressed on—you see, Señor, it was the only way to save his soul from blistering in hell through all eternity—until he was come to the Plazuela de Santo Domingo; and there, in front of the chapel of the Espiración, beneath the gallows, he knelt down upon his knees and told his rosary through.

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And in the morning, Señor, all the city was astonished, and everybody—from the Viceroy down to the cargadores—came running to the Plazuela de Santo Domingo, where was a sight to see! And

the sight was Don Juan Manuel hanging dead on the gallows—where the angels themselves had hung him, Señor, because of his sins!

LEGEND OF THE OBEDIENT DEAD NUN

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It was after she was dead, Señor, that this nun did what she was told to do by the Mother Superior, and that is why it was a miracle. Also, it proved her goodness and her holiness—though, to be sure, there was no need for her to take the trouble to prove those matters, because everybody knew about them before she died.

My grandmother told me that this wonder happened in the convent of Santa Brígida when her mother was a little girl; therefore you will perceive, Señor, that it did not occur yesterday. In those times the convent of Santa Brígida was most flourishing—being big, and full of nuns, and with more money than was needed for the keeping of it and for the great giving of charity that there was at its doors. And now, as you know, Señor, there is no convent at all and only the church remains. However, it was in the church that the miracle happened, and it is in the choir that Sor Teresa's bones lie buried in the coffin that was too short for her—and so it is clear that this story is true.

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The way of it all, Señor, was this: The Señorita Teresa Ysabel de Villavicencio—so she was called in the world, and in religion she still kept her christened name—was the daughter of a very rich hacendado of Vera Cruz. She was very tall—it was her tallness that made the whole trouble—and she also was very beautiful; and she went to Santa Brígida and took the vows there because of an undecieving in love. The young gentleman whom she came to know was unworthy of her was the Señor Carraza, and he was the Librarian to the Doctors in the Royal and Pontifical University—which should have made him a good man. What he did that was not good, Señor, I do not know. But it was something that sent Sor Teresa in a hurry into the convent: and when she got there she was so devout and so well-behaved that the Mother Superior held her up to all the other nuns for a pattern—and especially for her humility and her obedience. Whatever she was told to do, she did; and that without one single word.

Well, Señor, it happened that the convent was making ready, on a day, for the great festival of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe; and in the midst of all the whirring and buzzing Sor Teresa said suddenly—and everybody was amazed and wonder-struck when she said it—that though she was helping to make ready for that festival she would not live to take part in it, because the very last of her hours on earth was almost come. And a little later—lying on her hard wooden bed and wearing beneath her habit the wired shirt of a penitent, with all the community sorrowing around her—Sor Teresa died just as she said she would die: without there being anything the matter with her at all!

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Because of the festival that was coming, it was necessary that she should be buried that very night. Therefore they made ready a comfortable grave for her; and they sent to the carpenter for a coffin for her, and the coffin came. And it was then, Señor, that the trouble began. Perhaps, because she was so very tall a lady, the carpenter thought that the measure had not been taken properly. Perhaps, being all so flurried, they really had got the measure wrong. Anyhow, whatever may have set the matter crooked, Sor Teresa would not go into her coffin: and as night was near, and there was no time to make another one, they all of them were at their very wits' end to know what to do. So there they all stood, looking at Sor Teresa; and there Sor Teresa lay, with her holy feet sticking straight out far beyond the end of the coffin; and night was coming in a hurry; and next day would be the festival—and nobody could see how the matter was going to end!

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Then a wise old nun came to the Mother Superior and whispered to her: telling her that as in life Sor Teresa had been above all else perfect in obedience, so, probably, would she be perfect in obedience even in death; and advising that a command should be put upon her to fit into her coffin then and there. And the old nun said, what was quite true and reasonable, that even if Sor Teresa did not do what she was told to do, no harm could come of it—as but little time would be lost in making trial with her, and the case would be the same after their failure as it was before. Therefore the Mother Superior agreed to try what that wise old nun advised. And so, Señor—all the community standing round about, and the candle of Nuestro Amo being lighted—the Mother Superior said in a grave voice slowly: "Daughter, as in life thou gavest us always an example of humility and obedience, now I order and command thee, by thy vow of obedience, to retire decorously within thy coffin: that so we may bury thee, and that thou mayest rest in peace!"

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And then, Señor, before the eyes of all of them, Sor Teresa slowly began to shrink shorter—to the very letter of the Mother Superior's order and command! Slowly her holy feet drew in from beyond the end of the coffin; and then they drew to the very edge of it; and then they drew over the edge of it; and then they fell down briskly upon the bottom of it with a sanctified and most pious little bang. And so there she was, shrunk just as short as she had been ordered to shrink, fitting into her coffin as cozily as you please! Then they buried her, as I have told you, Señor, in the comfortable grave in the choir that was waiting for her—and there her blessed shrunken bones are lying now.

This priest who was murdered and thrown over the bridge, Señor, was a very good man, and there was very little excuse for murdering him. Moreover, he belonged to a most respectable family, and so did the gentleman who murdered him, and so did the young lady; and because of all that, and because at the best of times the killing of a priest is sacrilege, the scandal of that murder made a stir in the whole town.

At that time—it was some hundreds of years ago, Señor—there lived in the street that now is called, because of it all, the street of the Puente del Clérigo, a very beautiful young lady who was named Doña Margarita Jáuregui. And she, being an orphan, dwelt with her uncle, this priest: who was named Don Juan de Nava and was a person of rank, being a caballero of the orders of Santiago and Calatrava. In those days there were few houses upon that street, which was the causeway between the City and the Indian town of Tlaltelolco; and for the greater safety of the Spaniards dwelling in the City there was a wide ditch, that this bridge crossed, between them and the Indian town. Long ago, Señor, Tlaltelolco became a part of the City; and the ditch, and the bridge over it, are gone.

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Now it happened that at the court of the Viceroy was a noble young Portuguese gentleman, who had great riches and two titles, named Don Duarte de Sarraza; and the Viceroy, who was the Conde de Salvatierra, very much esteemed him because he was of a loyal nature and of good heart. Therefore this noble young gentleman fell in love with Doña Margarita, and she with him; but her uncle, the Padre Don Juan, knowing that Don Duarte was a vicious young man—a gambler, and in other ways what he should not have been—forbade his niece to have anything to do with him. So things rested for a while on those terms, and Don Duarte did not like it at all.

Well, it happened on a night, Señor, that Don Duarte was at the window of Doña Margarita, telling his love for her through the grating; and while he was so engaged he saw Padre Don Juan coming home along the causeway by the light of the stars. Then that wicked young man went to where the bridge was, and when the Padre was come to the bridge he sprang upon him and drove his dagger deep into his skull. The dagger was nailed so fast there, Señor, that he could not drag it loose again; and so he bundled the dead priest over the wall of the bridge and into the water with the dagger still sticking in the skull of him; and then he went his way to his home.

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Not wishing to have it thought that he had committed that murder, Don Duarte did not go near Doña Margarita for almost a whole year. And then—because his love for her would not suffer him to wait away from her longer—he went in the night-time to meet her once more at her window; and he had in his heart the wicked purpose to make her come out to him, and then to carry her off.

That did not happen—and what did happen is a terrible mystery. All that is known about it is this: Very early in the morning the neighbors living thereabout found Don Duarte dead on the Bridge of the Cleric; and holding him fast, a bony knee on his breast and two bony hands at his throat strangling him, was a skeleton. And the skeleton, Señor, was dressed in a black cassock, such as only clerics wear, and in the skull of it a rusty dagger was nailed fast. Therefore it became generally known that Don Duarte had murdered the Padre Don Juan; and that the skeleton of the Padre Don Juan had killed Don Duarte in just revenge.

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LEGEND OF THE MULATA DE CÓRDOBA

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It is well known, Señor, that this Mulata of Córdoba, being a very beautiful woman, was in close touch with the devil. She dwelt in Córdoba—the town not far from Vera Cruz, where coffee and very good mangos are grown—and she was born so long ago that the very oldest man now living was not then alive. No one knew who was her father, or who was her mother, or where she came from. So she was called La Mulata de Córdoba—and that was all. One of the wonders of her was that the years passed her without marking her, and she never grew old.

She led a very good life, helping every one who was in trouble, and giving food to the hungry ones; and she dressed in modest clothes simply, and always was most neat and clean. She was a very wicked witch—and beyond that nobody really knew anything about her at all. On the same day, and at the same hour, she would be seen by different people in different places widely apart—as here in the City, and in Córdoba, and elsewhere variously—all in precisely the same moment of time. She also was seen flying through the air, high above the roofs of the houses, with sparks flashing from her black eyes. Moreover, every night the devil visited her: as was known generally, because at night her neighbors observed that through the chinks in the tight-shut doors and windows of her house there shone a bright light—as though all the inside of the house were filled with flames. She went to mass regularly, and at the proper seasons partook of the Sacrament. She disdained everybody; and because of her disdainings it was believed that the master of her beauty was the Lord of Darkness; and that seemed reasonable. Every single one of the young men was mad about her, and she had a train of lovers from which she could pick and choose. All wonders were told of her. She was so powerful, and could work such prodigies, that she was spoken about—just as though she had been the blessed Santa Rita de Cascia—as the Advocate of Impossible Things! Old maids went to her who sought for husbands; poor ladies who longed for jewels and fine dresses that they might go to the court of the Viceroy; miners that they might find

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silver; old soldiers, set aside for rustiness, to get new commands—so that the saying, "*I am not the Mulata of Córdoba!*" is the answer when any one asks an impossible favor even now.

How it came about, Señor, no one ever knew. What every one did know was that, on a day, the Mulata was brought from Córdoba here to the City and was cast into the prison of the Holy Office. That was a piece of news that made a stir! Some said that a disdained lover had denounced her to the Inquisition. Others said that the Holy Office had laid hands on her less because she was a witch than because of her great riches—and it was told that when she had been seized ten barrels filled with gold-dust had been seized with her. So talk about the matter was on every tongue.

Many years went by, Señor, and all of that talk was almost forgotten. Then, on a morning, the city was astonished by hearing—no one knew from where—that at the next auto de fé the witch of Córdoba would walk with the unredeemed ones, carrying the flameless green candle and wearing the high bonnet, and would be burned at the burning-place of the Holy Office—it was in front of the church of San Diego, Señor, at the western end of what now is the Alameda—and so would have burned out of her her sins. And before that astonishment was ended, there came another and a greater: when it was told that the witch, before the very eyes of her jailers, had escaped from the prison of the Inquisition and was gone free! All sorts of stories flew about the city. One said, crossing himself, that her friend the devil had helped her to her freedom; another said that Inquisitors also were of flesh and blood, and that she had been freed by her own beauty. Men talked at random—because, neither then nor later, did anybody know what really had happened. But what really did happen, Señor, was this:

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On a day, the chief Inquisitor went into the prison of the Mulata that he might reason her to repentance. And, being come into her prison—it was a long and lofty chamber that they had put her into, Señor, not one of the bad small cells—he stopped short in amazement: beholding before him, drawn with charcoal on the wall of the chamber, a great ship that lacked not a single rope nor a single sail nor anything whatever that a ship requires! While he stood gazing at that ship, wondering, the Mulata turned to him and looked strangely at him out of her wicked black eyes, and said in a tone of railing: "Holy Father, what does this ship need to make it perfect?" And to that he answered: "Unhappy woman! It is thou who needest much to make thee perfect, that thou mayest be cleansed of thy sins! As for this ship, it is in all other ways so wholly perfect that it needs only to sail." Then said the Mulata: "That it shall do—and very far!" and there was on her face as she spoke to him a most wicked smile. With astonishment he looked at her, and at the ship. "How can that be possible!" he asked. "In this manner!" she answered—and, as she spoke, she leaped lightly from the floor of the prison to the deck of the ship, up there on the wall, and stood with her hand upon the tiller at the ship's stern.

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Then happened, Señor, a very wonderful marvel! Suddenly the sails of the ship filled and bellied out as though a strong wind were blowing; and then, before the eyes of the Inquisitor, the ship went sailing away along the wall of the chamber—the Mulata laughing wickedly as she swung the tiller and steered it upon its course! Slowly it went at first, and then more and more rapidly, until, being come to the wall at the end of the chamber, it sailed right on into and through the solid stone and mortar—the Mulata still laughing wickedly as she stood there steering at the ship's stern! And then the wall closed whole and solid again behind the ship, and only a little echoing sound of that wicked laughter was heard in the chamber—and the ship had vanished, and the Mulata was out of her prison and gone!

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The Inquisitor, Señor, who had seen this devil's miracle, immediately lost all his senses and became a madman and was put into a mad-house: where, till death gave peace to him, he raved always of a beautiful woman in a great ship that sailed through stone walls and across the solid land. As for the Mulata, nothing more ever was heard of her. But it was generally known that her master the devil had claimed her for his own.

This story is entirely true, Señor—as is proved by the fact that the Inquisition building, in which all these wonders happened, still is standing. It is the Escuela de Medicina, now.

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LEGEND OF THE CALLEJÓN DEL MUERTO

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It is an unwise thing, Señor, and there also is wickedness in it, to make a vow to the Blessed Virgin—or, for that matter, to the smallest saint in the whole calendar—and not to fulfil that vow when the Blessed Virgin, or the saint, as the case may be, has performed punctually all that the vow was made for: and so this gentleman of whom I now am speaking found out for himself, and most uncomfortably, when he died with an unfulfilled vow on his shoulders—and had to take some of the time that he otherwise would have spent pleasantly in heaven among the angels in order to do after he was dead what he had promised to do, and what he most certainly ought to have done, while he still was alive.

The name of this gentleman who so badly neglected his duty, Señor, was Don Tristan de Alculer; and he was a humble but honorable Spanish merchant who came from the Filipinas to live here in the City of Mexico; and he came in the time when the Viceroy was the Marqués de Villa Manrique, and most likely as the result of that Viceroy's doings and orderings: because the Marqués de Villa Manrique gave great attention to enlarging the trade with the East through the Filipinas—as was found out by the English corsairs, so that Don Francisco Draco, who was the

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greatest pirate of all of them, was able to capture a galleon laden almost to sinking with nothing but silver and gold.

With Don Tristan, who was of an elderliness, came his son to help him in his merchanting; and this son was named Tristan also, and was a most worthy young gentleman, very capable in the management of mercantile affairs. Having in their purses but a light lining, their commerce at its beginning was of a smallness; and they took for their home a mean house in a little street so poor and so deserted that nobody had taken the trouble to give a name to it: the very street that ever since their time has been called the Alley of the Dead Man—because of what happened as the result of Don Tristan's unfulfilled vow. That they were most respectable people is made clear by the fact that the Archbishop himself—who at that period was the illustrious Don Fray García de Santa María Mendoza—was the friend of them; and especially the friend of Don Tristan the elder, who frequently consulted with him in regard to the state of his soul.

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So a number of prospering years passed on, Señor, and then, on a time, Don Tristan the son went down to the coast to make some buyings: and it was in the bad season, and the fever seized him so fiercely that all in a moment the feet and half the legs of him fairly were inside of death's door. Then it was that Don Tristan, being in sore trouble because of his son's desperate illness, made the vow that I am telling you about. He made it to the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe; and he vowed to her that if she would save his son alive to him from the fever he would walk on his bare feet from his own house to her Sanctuary, and that there in her Sanctuary he would make his thanks to her from the deep depths of his soul. And the Blessed Virgin, being full of love and of amiability, was pleased to listen to the prayer of Don Tristan, and to believe the vow that went along with it: wherefore she caused the fever immediately to leave the sick Don Tristan—and presently home he came to his father alive and well.

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But Don Tristan, having got from the Blessed Virgin all that he had asked of her, did not give to her what he had promised to give to her in return. Being by that time an aged gentleman, and also being much afflicted with rheumatism, the thought of taking a walk of near to three miles barefoot was most distasteful to him. And so he put his walk off for a week or two—saying to himself that the Blessed Virgin would not be in any hurry about the matter; and then he put it off for another week or two; and in that way—because each time that he was for keeping his vow shivers would come in his old feet at dread of being bare and having cold earth under them, and trembles would come in his old thin legs at dread of more rheumatism—the time slipped on and on, and the Blessed Virgin did not get her due.

But his soul was not easy inside of him, Señor—and it could not be, because he was playing fast and loose with it—and so he laid the whole matter before his friend the Archbishop: hoping that for friendship's sake the Archbishop would be so obliging as to dispense him from his vow. For myself, Señor, I cannot but think that the Archbishop—for all that his position put him in close touch with heavenly matters, and gave him the right to deal with them—was not well advised in his action. At any rate, what he did was to tranquillize Don Tristan by telling him that the Blessed Virgin was too considerate to hold him to a contract that certainly would lay him up with a bad attack of rheumatism; and that even—so wearied out would he be by forcing his old thin legs to carry him all that distance—might be the death of him. And so the upshot of it was that the Archbishop, being an easy-going and a very good-natured gentleman, dispensed Don Tristan from his vow.

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But a vow, Señor, is a vow—and even an Archbishop cannot cast one loose from it; and so they all found out on this occasion, and in a hurry—because the Blessed Virgin, while never huffed over trifles, does not let the grass grow under her feet when her anger justly is aroused.

Only three days after Don Tristan had received his dispensation—to which, as the event proved, he was not entitled—the Archbishop went on the twelfth of the month, in accordance with the custom observed in that matter, to celebrate mass at the Villa de Guadalupe in Our Lady's Sanctuary. The mass being ended, he came homeward on his mule by the causeway to the City; and as he rode along easily he was put into a great surprise by seeing Don Tristan walking toward him, and by perceiving that he was of a most dismal dead paleness and that his feet were bare. For a moment Don Tristan paused beside the Archbishop—whose mule had stopped short, all in a tremble—and clasped his hand with a hand that was of an icy coldness; then he passed onward—saying in a dismal voice, rusty and cavernous, that for his soul's saving he was fulfilling the vow that he had made to her Ladyship: because the knowledge had come to him that if this vow were not accomplished he certainly would spend the whole of Eternity blistering in hell! Having thus explained matters, not a word more did Don Tristan have to say for himself; nor did he even look backward, as he walked away slowly and painfully on his bare old feet toward Our Lady's shrine.

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The Archbishop trembled as much as his mule did, Señor, being sure that strange and terrible things were about him; and when the mule a little came out of her fright and could march again, but still trembling, he went straight to Don Tristan's house to find out—though in his heart he knew what his finding would be—the full meaning of this awesome prodigy. And he found at Don Tristan's house what he knew in his heart he would find there: and that was Don Tristan, the four lighted death-candles around him, lying on his bed death-struck—his death-white cold hands clasped on his breast on the black pall covering him, and on his death-white face the very look that was on it as he went to the keeping of his unkept vow! Therefore the Archbishop was seized with a hot and a cold shuddering, and his teeth rattled in the head of him; and straightway he and all who were with him—perceiving that they were in the presence of a divine mystery—fell to their knees in wondering awe of what had happened, and together prayed for the peace of Don Tristan's soul.

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Very possibly, Señor, the Archbishop and the rest of them did not pray hard enough; or, perhaps, Don Tristan's sin of neglect was so serious a matter that a long spell in Purgatory was required of him before he could be suffered to pass on to a more comfortable region and be at ease. At any rate, almost immediately he took to walking at midnight in the little street that for so long he had lived in—always wrapped in a long white shroud that fluttered about him in the night wind loosely, and carrying always a yellow-blazing great candle; and so being a most terrifying personage to encounter as he marched slowly up and down. Therefore everybody who dwelt in that street hurried to move away from it, and Don Tristan had it quite to himself in its desertedness—for which reason, as I have mentioned, the Alley of the Dead Man became its name.

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I have been told by my friend the cargador, Señor, and also by several other trustworthy persons, that Don Tristan—though more than three hundred years have passed since the death of him—has not entirely given up his marchings. Certainly, for myself, I do not think that it would be judicious to walk in the Callejón del Muerto at midnight even now.

LEGEND OF THE ALTAR DEL PERDON^[2]

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This painter, Señor, who by a miracle painted the most beautiful picture of Our Lady of Mercy that is to be found in the whole world—the very picture that ever since has adorned the Altar del Perdon in the Cathedral—in the beginning of him was a very bad sinner: being a Fleming, and a Jew, and many other things that he ought not to have been, and therefore straight in the way to pass the whole of Eternity—his wickednesses being so numerous that time would have been wasted in trying to purge him of them in Purgatory—in the hottest torments that the devil his master could contrive. He was a very agreeable young gentleman, of a cheerful and obliging nature, and both witty and interesting in his talkings—for which reason the Viceroy had a great liking for his company and had him often at the Palace to the banquets and the festivals of the court. His name, Señor, was Don Simon Peyrens; and the Viceroy his patron—in whose suite he had come from Spain expressly to beautify the Palace with his paintings—was Don Gastón de Peralta, Marqués de Falces: who was the third Viceroy of the Province, being the successor to the good Don Luis de Velasco when that most worthy gentleman ceased to be a Viceroy and became an angel in the year 1564.

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Well, Señor, it happened some years later—in the time of Don Martín Enriquez de Almanza, the fourth Viceroy, with whom Peyrens remained in favor—that the Chapter of the Cathedral, desiring to make splendid the Altar del Perdon, offered in competition to all the painters of Mexico a prize for the most beautiful picture of Our Lady of Mercy: which picture was to be placed in the centre of that altar and to be the chief glory of it. And, thereupon, all the painters of Mexico, save only Peyrens, entered into that competition with a reverent and an eager joy. And then it was, Señor, that Peyrens made plain the wickedness that was in him by his irreverent blasphemies. At a banquet at the Palace a very noble gentleman asked him why he alone of all the painters of Mexico—and he the best of all of them—had not entered into the competition; to which that sinful young man answered with a disdainful and impious lightness that the painting of what were called sacred pictures was but foolishness and vanity, and that he for his part could not be tempted to paint one by all the gold in the world!

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Talk of that sort, Señor, as you well may imagine, scalded the ears of all who heard it—and in the quarter where the punishment of such sinning was attended to it made an instant stir. In a moment information of that evil young man's utterances was carried to the Archbishop—who at that time was the venerable Fray Alonzo de Montúfar—and in another moment he found himself lodged behind iron bars in a cell in the Inquisition: that blessed constrictor to righteousness, for the comforting of the faithful, that then was proving its usefulness by mowing down the weeds of heresy with a very lively zeal.

Being of an incredible hard-heartedness, neither the threats nor the pleadings of the Familiars of the Holy Office could stir Peyrens from the stand that he had taken. Resolutely he refused to recant his blasphemies; equally resolutely he refused to accept his freedom on the condition that he should paint the picture of Our Lady—and he even went so far, when they brought him the materials for the making of that picture, as to tear the canvas to shreds and rags!

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And so the days ran on into weeks, and the weeks into months, and nothing changed in that bad matter: save that the Archbishop, saintly man that he was, began to lose his temper; and that the Familiars of the Holy Office lost their tempers entirely—and were for settling accounts with Peyrens by burning his wickedness out of him with heavenly fire.

As it happened, Señor, a great opportunity for such wholesome purifying of him was imminent: because at that time the preparations were being made for the very first auto de fé that ever was celebrated in Mexico, and all the City was on tiptoe of joyful expectation of it. Therefore everybody was looking forward with a most pleased interest to seeing that criminally stiff-necked painter—properly clad in a yellow coat with a red cross on the back and on the front of it—walking with the condemned ones; and then, on the brasero that had been set up in the marketplace, to seeing him and his sins together burned to ashes; and then to seeing those sin-tainted ashes carried to the outskirts of the City and scattered pollutingly on the muddy marsh.

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However, Señor, none of those interesting and edifying things happened: because Our Lady of

Mercy—and it was just like the good-nature of her to do so—took a hand in the affair, and by the working of a loving miracle made everything come out smoothly and well.

On a night, as he lay sleeping on his pallet in his cell in the Inquisition, Peyrens was awakened suddenly he knew not how; and as he wakened he found in his nose a smell so delectable that he thought that he still was asleep and his nose dreaming it: and for him to have that thought was quite reasonable, Señor, because it was the pure fragrance of heaven—to which, of course, human noses are unaccustomed—that filled the room. Then, as he lay on his pallet wondering, a shimmering light began to glow softly in the darkness; and the light constantly grew stronger and stronger until it became a glorious radiance far brighter than any sunlight; and then in the midst of that resplendency—yet the heavenly sparkle of her making the dazzle of it seem like darkness—Our Lady of Mercy herself appeared to him: and he would have died of the glory of her, had it not been for the loving kindness that shone upon him assuringly and comfortingly from her gentle eyes.

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Then said to him Our Lady, in a voice sweeter than any earthly music: "Little son, why dost thou not love me?" And Peyrens—his hard heart melted by that gentle look and by that sweet voice, and all of his wickedness cured by that loving kindness—rose from his pallet and knelt before Our Lady, saying with a deep earnestness: "Queen of Heaven, I reverence and I love thee with all the heart of me and with all my soul!" Then, for a time, a serene strange happiness bemazed him dream-fully—and when his bemazement left him the resplendent presence was gone. But with him still remained the heavenly radiance that was brighter than any sunlight, and the heavenly perfume that was sweeter than spikenard and lilies; and while he pondered all these mysteries, awe-bound and wondering, again sounded in his ears that heaven-sweet voice—coming as from a great distance, but with a bell-note clearness—saying to him gently and lovingly: "Paint now thy picture of me, little son!"

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Quite possibly, Señor, in the hurry of the moment, Our Lady forgot that Peyrens had no canvas—because in his sinful anger he had destroyed it—on which to paint the picture that she commanded of him; but, for myself, I think that she meant to set his wits to work to find the means by which he could obey her command. At any rate, his wits did work so well that even as she spoke he saw his way out of his difficulty; and in an instant—all a-thrill with joyful eagerness to do Our Lady's bidding, and inspired by the splendor of his vision of her—he set himself to painting the portrait of her, just as his own eyes had seen her in her glory, on the oaken door of his cell.

All the night long, Señor—working by the heaven-light that was brighter than any sunlight, and having in his happy nose the heaven fragrance that uplifted his soul with the sweetness of it—he painted as one who painted in a heaven-sent dream. And when the morning came, and the glimmering daylight took dimly the place of the heaven-light, he had finished there on the door of his cell the most beautiful picture of Our Lady—as I said in the beginning—that ever has been painted in this mortal world: and so it had to be—because, you see, it is the only picture of her that ever has been painted of her by one who has beheld her with mortal eyes!

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As usually is the case with miracles, Señor, the outcome of this one was most satisfactory. The Archbishop and the Chapter of the Cathedral, being brought in haste, instantly felt themselves compelled to adore that miraculous image; and when they had finished adoring it they equally felt themselves compelled to declare that Peyrens by his making of it had earned both his freedom and the prize. Therefore Peyrens was set at liberty and most richly rewarded; and the pictured door was taken from its hinges and, being framed in a great frame of silver, was set upon the Altar del Perdon to be the chief glory of it; and what was best of all—because it made safe the soul of him for all Eternity—the Archbishop formally confirmed to Peyrens his absolution, through Our Lady's loving kindness, from his bad heresy and from all his other sins.

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What became of this Peyrens later, Señor, I have not heard mentioned; but in regard to the accuracy of all that I have told you about him there can be no question: because the miracle-picture that he painted still adorns the Altar del Perdon, and is the chief glory of it—and there you may see it this very day.

LEGEND OF THE CALLEJÓN DEL ARMADO

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This Alleyway of the Armed One, Señor, got its name because long ago—before it had any name at all—there lived in it an old man who went always clad in armor, wearing also his sword and his dagger at his side; and all that was known about him was that his name was Don Lope de Armijo y Lara, and that—for all that he lived so meanly in so mean a street in so mean a quarter of the City—he was a rich merchant, and that he came from Spain.

Into his poor little house no one ever got so much as the tip of his nose, and he lived alone there in great mystery. In spite of his riches, he had not even one servant; and he himself bought his own victuals and cooked them with his own hands. Always he was seen armed to the teeth [*armado hasta los dientes*] when he went abroad. Under his mean robe was a full suit of armor, and in his belt was a long dagger and a broad and very long sword; also, when at night he went out on strange errands, he carried a great pike. Therefore, presently, people spoke of him not as Don Lope but as El Armado—and so he was called.

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That he was a wicked person was known generally. He was very charitable to the poor. Every

morning he went to pray in the church of San Francisco; and he remained praying there for hours at a time, kneeling upon his knees. Also, at the proper seasons, he partook of the Sacrament. Some said that through the shut windows of his house, in the night-time, they had heard the sound of his scourgings as he made penance for his sins.



EL CALLEJÓN DEL ARMADO

In the darkness of the darkest of nights—when there was no moon, and especially when a dismal drizzling rain was falling—he would be seen to come out from his house in all his armor and go stealing away in the direction of the Plazuela de Mixcalco. He would disappear into the shadows, and not come back again until midnight had passed. Then he would be heard, in his shut house, counting his money. For a long while that would go on—counting, counting, counting—there was no end to the clinking of silver coin. Then, when all his money was counted, would be heard the sound of scourging, together with most lamentable and complaining groanings. And, at the end of all, would come a heavy clanking—as of a great iron cover falling heavily upon a chest of iron. After that there would be no sign of life about the house until the morning—when the Armed One would come forth from it and go to San Francisco to pray.

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The life of that man was a bad mystery, Señor, that many wished to uncover by denouncing him to justice; but the uncovering came of its own accord, and was a greater mystery still! On a morning, all the neighbors saw the Armed One hanging dead—hanging dead from his own balcony by a cord! No one knew what to think; but most thought that he had hung himself there in fear that denouncement of his crimes would be made and that justice would have its hold upon him. When the Alcalde came, and made search in his house, a very great sum of money was found; and, also, were found many skulls of men who certainly must have perished at his hands.

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It is a most curious matter, Señor. I cannot see my way through it. But the house is gone.

LEGEND OF THE ADUANA DE SANTO DOMINGO^[3]

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This gentleman who for love's sake, Señor, conquered his coldness and his laziness and became

all fire and energy, was named Don Juan Gutiérrez Rubín de Celis. He was a caballero of the Order of Santiago—some say that he wore also the habit of Calatrava—and the colonel of the regiment of the Tres Villas. He was of a lovable nature, and ostentatious and arrogant, and in all his ways dilatory and apathetic to the very last degree. So great were his riches that not even he himself knew the sum of them: as you will understand when I tell you that on an occasion of state—it was the entry into the City in the year 1716 of the new Viceroy, the Marqués de Valero—pearls to the value of thirty thousand pesos were used in the mere trimming of his casacón.

Being of an age to take part so nobly in that noble ceremony, he must have been a gentleman well turned of forty, Señor, when the matters whereof I now am telling you occurred: of which the beginning—and also the middle and the ending, because everything hinged upon it—was his falling most furiously in love with a very beautiful young lady; and his falling in love in that furious fashion was the very first sign of energy that in all his lifetime, until that moment, he had shown. The name of this beautiful young lady with whom he fell in love so furiously was Doña Sara de García Somera y Acuña; and she was less than half as old as he was, but possessed of a very sensible nature that made her do more thinking than is done usually by young ladies; and she was of a noble house, and a blood relative of the Viceroy's: for which reason the Viceroy—who by that time was Don Juan de Acuña, Marqués de Casafuerte—was much interested in the whole affair.

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The love-making of this so notoriously lazy gentleman did not at all go upon wheels, Señor: because Doña Sara set herself—as was her habit when dealing with any matter of importance—to thinking about it very seriously; and the more that she thought about it the more she made her mind up that so dull and so apathetic a gentleman—who, moreover, was old enough to be her father—would not in the least be the sort of husband that she desired. But also, because of her good sense, she perceived that much was to be said in favor of entering into wedlock with him: because his rank and his great wealth made him one of the most important personages in the Vice-Kingdom; and, moreover, for all that he was old enough to be her father, he still was a very personable man. And so she thought very hard in both directions, and could not in either direction make up her mind.

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While matters were in this condition, Señor—Don Juan furiously in love with Doña Sara, and Doña Sara thinking in that sensible way of hers about being temperately in love with Don Juan—something happened that gave a new turn to the whole affair. This thing that happened was that the Viceroy—who was a great friend of Don Juan's; and who, as I have mentioned, was a kinsman of Doña Sara's, and much interested in all that was going forward—appointed Don Juan to be Prior of the Consulado; that is to say, President of the Tribunal of Commerce: which was a most honorable office, in keeping with his rank and his riches; and which also was an office—because all the work of it could be done by deputy, or even left undone—that fitted in with Don Juan's lazy apathy to a hair.

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Now at that time, Señor, the building of the Aduana de Santo Domingo was in progress—it ceased to be a custom-house many years ago, Señor; it is occupied by the Secretaría de Comunicaciones now—and it had been in progress, with no great result from the work that laggingly was done on it, for a number of years. The charge of the making of this edifice rested with the Consulado; and, naturally, the new Prior of the Consulado was even more content than had been his predecessors in that office to let the making of it lag on.

Then it was, Señor, that there came into the sensible mind of Doña Sara a notable project for proving whether Don Juan's lazy apathy went to the very roots of him; or whether, at the very roots of him—over and above the energy that he had shown in his furious love for her—he had energy that she could arouse and could set a-going in practically useful ways. And her reasoning was this wise: that if Don Juan could be stirred by her urgency to do useful work with vigor, then was it likely that her urgency would arouse him from all his apathies—and so would recast him into the sort of husband that she desired to have. Therefore Doña Sara told Don Juan that she would marry him only on one condition; and that her condition was that he should finish completely the long-drawn-out building of the Aduana within six months from that very day! And Don Juan, Señor, was so furiously in love with Doña Sara that in the same instant that she gave him her condition he accepted it; and he—who never had done a hand's turn of work in all his lifetime—promised her that he would do the almost impossible piece of work that she had set him to do: and that the Aduana should be finished completely within six months from that very day!

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And then all the City was amazed—and so, for that matter, Don Juan himself was—by the fire and the force and the breathless eagerness with which he set himself to the task that Doña Sara had put upon him. In a single moment he had gone to every one of all the architects in the City urging them to take in charge for him that almost impossible piece of building; and in the very next moment—every one of all the architects in the City having made answer to him that what he wanted of them could not even by a miracle be accomplished—he himself took charge of it: and with a furiousness that matched precisely—as Doña Sara perceived with hopeful satisfaction—with the furiousness of his love.

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What Don Juan did in that matter, Señor, was done as though in the insides of him were tempests and volcanoes! From the Tierra Caliente he brought up as by magic myriads of negro workmen to do the digging and the heavy carrying; all the quarries around the City he crammed full of stone-cutters; every mason was set to work at wall-laying; every carpenter to making the doors and the windows; every brick-yard to making the tiles for the roof and the floors; every blacksmith to making the locks and the hinges and the window-gratings and the balcony rails. And in the midst of his swarms of laborers Don Juan himself worked harder than all of them put together; and was everywhere at once among them urging them to hurry and to hurry; and to any one of them who

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showed even the slightest sign of lagging there came from Don Juan's mouth a berating volleying of scorpions and snakes and toads!

In very truth, Señor, such was Don Juan's raging energy that he was as a frenzied person. But it was a frenzy that had no real madness in it: because everything that he did and that he made to be done was directed by a most sensible discretion—so that not a moment of time nor the turn of a hand was wasted, and in every single instant the building grew and grew. And the upshot of it all was that he accomplished just what he had made his whole soul up he would accomplish: within the six months that Doña Sara had given him to do his work in, he did do it—and even with a little time to spare. Three full days before the last of his six months was ended the Aduana was finished to the very least part of its smallest detail; and Don Juan—all aglow over his triumphant fulfilment of Doña Sara's almost impossible condition—carried the key of that perfectly completed vast structure to the Palace, and there placed the key of it in the Viceroy's hands!

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Moreover—that all the world might know why it was, and for whom it was, that his great work had been accomplished—Don Juan caused to be carved on a wall of the building a most artfully contrived inscription: that seemed only to give soberly his own name, and the names of the Consules associated with him, and the date of the Aduana's completion; but that was so arranged that the first letters of the five lines of it together made the initials of Doña Sara's name.

Don Juan thus having done what Doña Sara had set him to do, and what every one of all the architects in the City had declared could not be done even by a miracle, it was evident to the whole world that at the very roots of him was more blazing energy than would suffice for the equipment of a half hundred of ordinary men. Wherefore Doña Sara was well satisfied—her urgency having stirred him to do that great useful work with such masterful vigor—that her urgency equally would arouse him from all of his apathies: and so would recast him into the sort of husband that she desired to have. Therefore Doña Sara immediately gave to Don Juan her hand in marriage: and as the Aduana still is standing—and precisely where, faster than a miracle, Don Juan built it—the Señor has only to look at it, and to read the inscription showing Doña Sara's initials, to know both the truth of this curious story and that Doña Sara's choice of a husband was well made.

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LEGEND OF THE CALLE DE LA QUEMADA

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Not knowing what they are talking about, Señor, many people will tell you that the Street of the Burned Woman got its name because—in the times when the Holy Office was helping the goodness of good people by making things very bad for the bad ones—a woman heretic most properly and satisfactorily was burned there. Such is not in the least the case. The Quemadero of the Inquisition—where such sinners were burned, that their sins might be burned out of them—was nowhere near the Calle de la Quemada: being at the western end of what now is the Alameda, in quite a different part of the town. Therefore it is a mistake to mix these matters: and the real truth is that this beautiful young lady did herself destroy her own beauty by setting fire to it; and she did it because she wanted to do it—that in that way she might settle some doubts which were in her heart. It all happened in the time of the good Viceroy Don Luis de Velasco: and so you will perceive, Señor, that this story is more than three hundred years old.

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The name of this beautiful young lady who went to such lengths for her heart's assuring was Doña Beatrice de Espinosa; and the name of her father was Don Gonzalo de Espinosa y Guevra—who was a Spanish rich merchant who came to make himself still richer by his buyings and his sellings in New Spain. Being arrived here, he took up his abode in a fine dwelling in the quarter of San Pablo, in the very street that now is called the Street of the Burned Woman because of what presently happened there; and if that street was called by some other name before that cruel happening I do not know what it was.

Doña Beatrice was as beautiful, Señor, as the full moon and the best of the stars put together; and she was more virtuous than she was beautiful; and she was just twenty years old. Therefore all the young gentlemen of the City immediately fell in love with her; and great numbers of the richest and the noblest of them—their parents, or other suitable persons, making the request for them—asked her father's permission to wed her: so that Doña Beatrice might have had any one of twenty good husbands, had any one of them been to her mind. However—being a lady very particular in the matter of husbands—not one of them was to her liking: wherefore her father did as she wanted him to do and refused them all.

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But, on a day, matters went differently. At a great ball given by the Viceroy in the Palace Doña Beatrice found what her heart had been waiting for: and this was a noble Italian young gentleman who instantly—as all the others had done—fell in love with her; and with whom—as she never before had done with anybody—she instantly fell in love. The name of this young gentleman was Don Martín Scipoli; and he was the Marqués de Pinamonte y Frantescello; and he was as handsome as he was lovable, and of a most jealous nature, and as quarrelsome as it was possible for anybody to be. Therefore, as I have said, Señor, Doña Beatrice at once fell in love with him with all the heart of her; and Don Martín at once fell in love with her also: and so violently that his jealousy of all her other lovers set off his quarrelsomeness at such a rate that he did nothing—in his spare time, when he was not making love to Doña Beatrice—but affront and anger them, so that he might have the pleasure of finding them at the point of his sword.

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Now Doña Beatrice, Señor, was a young lady of a most delicate nature, and her notions about

love were precisely the same as those which are entertained by the lady angels. Therefore Don Martín's continual fightings very much worried her: raising in her heart the dread that so violent a person must be of a coarse and carnal nature; and that, being of such a nature, his love for her came only from his beblindment by the outside beauty of her, and was not—as her own love was—the pure love of soul for soul. Moreover, she was pained by his being led on by his jealousy—for which there was no just occasion—to injure seriously, and even mortally, so many worthy young men.

Therefore Doña Beatrice—after much thinking and a great deal of praying over the matter—made her mind up to destroy her own beauty: that in that way she might put all jealousies out of the question; and at the same time prove to her heart's satisfying that Don Martín's love for her had nothing to do with the outside beauty of her and truly was the pure love of soul for soul.

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And Doña Beatrice, Señor, did do that very thing. Her father being gone abroad from his home, and all of the servants of the house being on one excuse or another sent out of it, she brought into her own chamber a brazier filled with burning coals; and this she set beneath an image of the blessed Santa Lucía that she had hung upon the wall to give strength to her in case, in doing herself so cruel an injury, her own strength should fail. Santa Lucía, as you will remember, Señor, with her own hands plucked out her own wonderfully beautiful eyes and sent them on a platter to the young gentleman who had troubled her devotions by telling her that he could not live without them; and with them sent the message that, since she had given him the eyes that he could not live without, he please would let her and her devotions alone. Therefore it was clear that Santa Lucía was the saint best fitted to oversee the matter that Doña Beatrice had in hand.

But in regard to her eyes Doña Beatrice did not precisely pattern herself upon Santa Lucía: knowing that without them she could not see how Don Martín stood the test that she meant to put him to; and, also, very likely remembering that Santa Lucía miraculously got her eyes back again, and got them back even more beautiful than when she lost them: because, you see, they came back filled with the light of heaven—where the angels had been taking care of them until they should be returned. Therefore Doña Beatrice bound a wet handkerchief over her eyes—that she might keep the sight in them to see how Don Martín stood his testing; and, also, that she might spare the angels the inconvenience of caring for them—and then she fanned and fanned the fire in the brazier until the purring of it made her know that the coals were in a fierce blaze. And then, Señor, she plunged her beautiful face down into the very heart of the glowing coals! And it was at that same instant—though Doña Beatrice, of course, did not know about that part of the matter—that the Street of the Burned Woman got its name.

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Being managed under the guidance and with the approval of Santa Lucía, the cruelty that this virtuous young lady put upon her own beauty could lead only to a good end. Presently, when the bitter pain of her burning had passed a little, Doña Beatrice bade Don Martín come to her; and he, coming, found her clad in virgin white and wearing over her poor burned face a white veil. And then the test that Doña Beatrice had planned for her heart's assuring was made.

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Little by little, Doña Beatrice raised her white veil slowly; and, little by little, Don Martín saw the face of her: and the face of her was more shudderingly hideous—her two beautiful eyes perfectly alight and alive amid that distorted deathliness was what made the shudder of it—than anything that ever he had dreamed of in his very worst dream! Therefore, with a great joy and thankfulness, Don Martín immediately espoused Doña Beatrice: and thence-forward and always—most reasonably ceasing to love the outside beauty of her—gave her, as she wanted him to give her, the pure love of soul for soul.

For myself, Señor, I think that the conduct of that young lady was unreasonable, and that Don Martín had just occasion to be annoyed.

LEGEND OF THE CALLE DE LA CRUZ VERDE^[4]

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This story is not a sad one, Señor, like the others. It is a joyful story of a gentleman and a lady who loved each other, and were married, and lived in happiness together until they died. And it was because of his happiness that the gentleman caused to be carved on the corner of his house, below the balcony on which he saw that day the sign which gave hope to him, this great green cross of stone that is there still.

The house with the green cross on it, Señor, stands at the corner of the Calle de la Cruz Verde—the street, you see, was named for it—and the Calle de Migueles. It was a fine house in the days when Doña María's father built it. Now it is old and shabby, and the saint that once stood in the niche above the cross is gone. But there is an excellent pulquería there, Señor—it is called La Heroína—where pulque of the best and the freshest is to be had every morning of every day the whole year round.

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I do not know, Señor, when this matter happened; but I have heard it told that this gentleman, who was named Don Alvaro de Villadiego y Manrique, came to Mexico in the train of the Viceroy Don Gastón de Peralta—so it must have happened a very long while ago.

This Don Alvaro was a very handsome gentleman—tall, and slender, and fair; and he wore clothes of white velvet worked with gold, and a blue cap with a white feather; and he rode always a very beautiful Arabian horse. His hair and his little pointed beard were a golden brown, Señor; and he

was a sight to behold!



LA CRUZ VERDE

It happened, on a day, that he was taking the air on his Arabian; and he was wearing—because a festival of some sort was in progress—all of his fine clothes. So he came prancing down the Calle de Migueles, and in the balcony of that corner house—the house on which the green cross now is—he saw a very beautiful young lady, who was most genteel in her appearance and as white as snow. He fell in love with her on that very instant; and she—although because of her virtue and good training she did not show it—on that very instant fell in love with him. Then he made inquiry and found that her name was Doña María de Aldarafuente y Segura. Therefore he resolved to marry her. And so, every day he rode past her balcony and looked up at her with eyes full of love. As for Doña María, she was so well brought up, and her parents watched her so narrowly, that it was a long while before she made any answering sign. And for that reason, Señor, she loved him all the more tenderly in her heart.

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Then it happened, at the end of a long while, that Doña María's mother fell ill; and so, the watch upon her being less close, Don Alvaro was able to get to her hands a letter in which he begged that she would give to him her love. And he told her in his letter that—if she could not answer it with another letter—she should give him one of two signs by which he would know her will. If she did not love him, she was to hang upon the railing of her balcony a cross of dry palm-leaves—and when he saw that dry cross he would most certainly, he told her, that day die. But if she did love him, she was to hang a cross of green palm-leaves upon the railing of her balcony—and when he saw that green cross he would know, he told her, that she had given him her true promise of heaven-perfect happiness for all his life long.

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Being a lady, Señor, Doña María let some days go by before she hung on the railing of her balcony any cross at all—and during those days Don Alvaro was within no more than a hair's breadth of going mad. And then—when madness was so close to him that with one single moment more of waiting his wits would have left him—on a day of days, when the spring-time sun was shining and all the birds were singing love-songs together, Don Alvaro saw hanging on the railing of Doña María's balcony a beautiful bright green cross!

Of course, after that, Señor, things went fast and well. By the respectable intervention of a cleric—who was the friend of Don Alvaro, and who also was the friend of Doña María's parents—all the

difficulties were cleared away in a hurry; and only a fortnight after the green cross was hung on the railing of Doña María's balcony—that fortnight seemed an endless time to Don Alvaro, but for such a matter it really was the least that a lady could get ready in—they went together before the altar, and at the foot of it they vowed to each other their love. And what is best of all, Señor, is that they kept faithfully their vow.

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Then it was, being gladly married, that Don Alvaro caused the green cross of stone—so big that it rises to the first floor from the pavement—to be carved on the corner of the house that thenceforward they lived in; and it was carved beneath the very balcony where had hung the green cross of palm-leaves that had given to him Doña María's true promise of heaven-perfect happiness for all his life long.

And there the green cross still is, Señor; and the name of the street, as I have told you, is the Calle de la Cruz Verde—which of course proves that this story is true.

LEGEND OF LA MUJER HERRADA^[5]

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I do not know when this matter happened, Señor; but my grandfather, who told me about it, spoke as though all three of them—the priest, and the blacksmith, and the woman—had lived a long while before his time. However, my grandfather said that the priest and the woman, who was his housekeeper, pretty certainly lived in a house—it is gone now, Señor—that was in the street that is called the Puerta Falsa de Santo Domingo. And he said that the blacksmith certainly did live in a house in the Calle de las Rejas de la Balvanera—because he himself had seen the house, and had seen the farrier's knife and the pincers cut on the stone arching above the door. Therefore you perceive, Señor, that my grandfather was well acquainted with these people, and that this story is true.

The priest was a secular, Señor, not belonging to any Order; and he and the blacksmith were compadres together—that is to say, they were close friends. It was because the blacksmith had a great liking for his compadre, and a great respect for him, that from time to time he urged him to send away the housekeeper; but his compadre always had some pleasant excuse to make about the matter, and so the blacksmith would be put off. And things went on that way for a number of years.

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Now it happened, on a night, that the blacksmith was wakened out of his sleep by a great pounding at the door of his house; and when he got up and went to his door he found standing there two blacks—they were men whom he never had laid eyes on—and with them was a she mule that they had brought to be shod. The blacks made their excuses to him politely for waking him at that bad hour: telling him that the mule belonged to his compadre, and had been sent to him to be shod in the night and in a hurry because his compadre of a sudden had occasion to go upon a journey, and that he must start upon his journey very early on the morning of the following day. Then the blacksmith, looking closely at the mule, saw that she really was the mule of his compadre; and so, for friendship's sake, he shod her without more words. The blacks led the mule away when the shoeing was finished; and, as they went off into the night with her, they fell to beating her so cruelly with heavy sticks that the blacksmith talked to them with great severity. But the blacks kept on beating the mule, and even after they were lost in the darkness the blacksmith continued to hear the sound of their blows.

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LA MVJER HERRADA

In some ways this whole matter seemed so strange to the blacksmith that he wanted to know more about it. Therefore he got up very early in the morning and went to his compadre's house: meaning to ask him what was the occasion of this journey that had to be taken in such a hurry, and who those strange blacks were who so cruelly had beaten his meritorious mule. But when he came to the house he had to wait a while before the door was opened; and when at last it did open, there was his compadre half asleep—and his compadre said that he was not going on any journey, and that most certainly he had not sent his mule to be shod. And then, as he got wider awake, he began to laugh at the blacksmith because of the trick that had been put upon him; and that the woman might share in the joke of it—they all were great friends together—he knocked at the door of her room and called to her. But the woman did not answer back to him; and when he knocked louder and louder she still gave no sign.

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Then he, and the blacksmith too, became anxious about the woman; and together they opened the door and went into the room. And what they saw when they were come into the room, Señor, was the most terrible sight that ever was seen in this world! For there, lying upon her bed, was that unhappy woman looking all distraught and agonized; and nailed fast to the feet and to the hands of her were the very same iron shoes that the blacksmith—who well knew his own forge-work—had nailed fast to the hoofs of the mule! Moreover, upon her body were the welts and the bruises left there when the blacks had beaten the mule with their cruel blows. And the woman, Señor, was as dead as she possibly could be. So they knew that what had happened was a divine punishment, and that the blacks were two devils who had changed the woman into a mule and so had taken her to be shod.

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Perceiving, because of such a sign being given him, Señor, that he had committed an error, the master of that house of horror immediately went out from it—and at once disappeared completely and never was heard of again. As for the blacksmith, he was so pained by his share in the matter that always afterward, until the death of him, he was a very unhappy man. And that is the story of the Iron-shod Woman, Señor, from first to last.

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LEGEND OF THE ACCURSED BELL [6]

This story, Señor—it is about the accursed bell that once was the clock-bell of the Palace—has so many beginnings that the only way really to get at the bones of it would be for a number of people, all talking at once, to tell the different first parts of it at the same time.

For, you see, the curse that was upon this bell—that caused it to be brought to trial before the Consejo of the Inquisition, and by the Consejo to be condemned to have its wicked tongue torn out and to be banished from Spain to this country—was made up of several curses which had been in use in other ways elsewhere previously: so that one beginning is with the Moor, and another with Don Gil de Marcadante, and another with the devil-forged armor, and still another with the loosing of all the curses from the cross (wherein for some hundreds of years they were imprisoned) and the fusing of them into the one great curse wherewith this unfortunate bell was afflicted—which happened when that holy emblem was refounded, and with the metal of it this bell was made.

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Concerning the Moor, Señor, I can give you very little information. All that I know about him is that he had the bad name of Muslef; and that he was killed—as he deserved to be killed, being an Infidel—by a Christian knight; and that this knight cut his head off and brought it home with him as an agreeable memento of the occasion, and was very pleased with what he had done. Unfortunately, this knight also brought home with him the Moor's armor—which was of bronze, and so curiously and so beautifully wrought that it evidently had been forged by devils, and which was farther charged with devilishness because it had been worn by an Infidel; and then, still more unfortunately, he neglected to have the armor purified by causing the devils to be exorcised out of it by a Christian priest. Therefore, of course, the devils remained in the armor—ready to make trouble whenever they got the chance.

How Don Gil de Marcadante came to be the owner of that accursed devil-possessed armor, Señor, I never have heard mentioned. Perhaps he bought it because it happened to fit him; and, certainly—he being a most unusually sinful young gentleman—the curse that was upon it and the devils which were a part of it fitted him to a hair.

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This Don Gil was a student of law in Toledo; but his studies were the very last things to which he turned his attention, and the life that he led was the shame of his respectable brother and his excellent mother's despair. Habitually, he broke every law of the Decalogue, and so brazenly that all the city rang with the stories of his evil doings and his crimes. Moreover, he was of a blustering nature and a born brawler: ready at the slightest contradiction to burst forth with such a torrent of blasphemies and imprecations that his mouth seemed to be a den of snakes and toads and scorpions; and ever quick to snatch his sword out and to get on in a hurry from words to blows. As his nearest approach to good nature was after he had killed some one in a quarrel of his own making, and as even at those favorable times his temper was of a brittleness, he was not looked upon as an agreeable companion and had few friends.

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This Don Gil had most intimate relations with the devil, as was proved in various ways. Thus, a wound that he received in one of his duels instantly closed and healed itself; on a night of impenetrable darkness, as he went about his evil doings, he was seen to draw apart the heavy gratings of a window as though the thick iron bars had been silken threads; and a stone that he cast at a man in one of his rages—mercifully not hitting him—remained burning hot in the place where it had fallen for several days. Moreover, it was known generally that in the night time, in a very secret and hidden part of his dwelling, he gave himself up to hideous and most horrible sacrileges in which his master the devil had always a part. And so these facts—and others of a like nature—coming to the knowledge of the Holy Office, it was perceived that he was a sorcerer. Therefore he was marched off—wearing his devil-forged armor, to which fresh curses had come with his use of it—to a cell in the Inquisition; and to make sure of holding him fast until the next auto de fé came round, when he was to be burned properly and regularly, he was bound with a great chain, and the chain was secured firmly to a strong staple in the cell wall.

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But the devil, Señor, sometimes saves his own. On a morning, the jailer went as usual to Don Gil's cell with the bread and the water for him; and when he had opened the cell door he saw, as he believed, Don Gil in his armor waiting as usual for his bread and his water: but in a moment he perceived that what he saw was not Don Gil in his armor, but only the accursed armor standing upright full of emptiness; and that the staple was torn out; and that the great chain was broken; and that Don Gil was gone! And then—so much to the horror of the jailer that he immediately went mad of it—the empty armor began slowly to walk up and down the cell!

After that time Don Gil never was seen, nor was he heard of, again on earth; and so on earth, when the time came for burning him at the auto de fé, he had to be burned in effigy. However—as there could be no doubt about the place to which the devil had taken him—everybody was well satisfied that he got his proper personal burning elsewhere.

Then it was, Señor, that the Holy Office most wisely ordered that that devil-possessed and doubly accursed armor should be melted, and refounded into a cross: knowing that the sanctity of that blessed emblem would quiet the curses and would hold the devils still and fast. Therefore that order was executed; and the wisdom of it—which some had questioned, on the ground that devils and curses were unsuitable material to make a cross of—was apparent as soon as the bronze turned fluid in the furnace: because there came from the fiery seething midst of it—to the dazed terror of the workmen—shouts of devil-laughter, and imprecations horrible to listen to, and frightful blasphemies; and to these succeeded, as the metal was being poured into the mould, a

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wild outburst of defiant remonstrance; and then all this demoniac fury died away—as the metal hardened and became fixed as a cross—at first into half-choked cries of agony, and then into confused lamentations, and at the last into little whimpering moans. Thus the devils and the curses were disposed of: and then the cross—holding them imprisoned in its holy substance—was set up in a little townlet not far from Madrid in which just then a cross happened to be wanted; and there it remained usefully for some hundreds of years.

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At the end of that period—by which time everybody was dead who knew what was inside of it—the cross was asked for by the Prior of a little convent in that townlet near Madrid, who desired it that he might have it refounded into a bell; and as the Prior was a worthy person, and as he really needed a bell, his request was granted. So they made out of the cross a very beautiful bell: having on one side of it the two-headed eagle; and having on the other side of it a calvario; and having at the top of it, for its hanging, two imperial lions supporting a cross-bar in the shape of a crown. Then it was hung in the tower of the little convent; and the Prior, and all the Brothers with him, were very much pleased. But that worthy Prior, and those equally worthy Brothers, were not pleased for long, Señor: because the curses and the devils all were loose again—and their chance to do new wickednesses had come!

On a night of blackness, without any warning whatever, the whole of the townlet was awakened by the prodigious clangor of a bell furiously ringing. In an instant—seeking the cause of this disturbance—everybody came out into the night's blackness: the Señor Cura, the Señor Alcalde, the alguaciles, the Prior, the Brothers, all the townfolk to the very last one. And when they had looked about them they found that the cause of the disturbance was the new bell of the convent: which was ringing with such an excessive violence that the night's blackness was corrupted with its noise.

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Terror was upon everyone; and greater terror was upon every one when it was found out that the door of the bell-tower was locked, and that the bell was ringing of its lone self: because the bad fact then became evident that only devils could have the matter in hand. The Señor Alcalde alone—being a very valiant gentleman, and not much believing in devils—was not satisfied with that finding. Therefore the Señor Alcalde caused the door to be unlocked and, carrying a torch with him, entered the bell-tower; and there he found the bell-rope crazily flying up and down as though a dozen men were pulling it, and nobody was pulling it—which sight somewhat shook his nerves. However, because of his valorousness, he only stopped to cross himself; and then he went on bravely up the belfry stair. But what he saw when he was come into the belfry fairly brought him to a stand. For there was the bell ringing tempestuously; and never a visible hand was near it; and the only living thing that he found in the belfry was a great black cat with its tail bushed out and its fur bristling—which evil animal for a moment leered at him malignantly, with its green eyes gleaming in the torch-light, and then sprang past him and dashed down the stair.

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Then the Señor Alcalde, no longer doubting that the bell was being rung by devils, and himself not knowing how to manage devils, called down from the belfry to the Señor Cura to come up and take charge of the matter: whereupon the Señor Cura, holding his courage in both hands, did come up into the belfry, bringing his hisopo with him, and fell to sprinkling the bell with holy water—which seemed to him, so far as he could see his way into that difficult tangle, the best thing that he could do. But his doing it, of course, was the very worst thing that he could have done: because, you see, Señor, the devils were angered beyond all endurance by being scalded with the holy water (that being the effect that holy water has upon devils) and so only rang the bell the more furiously in their agony of pain. Then the Señor Alcalde and the Señor Cura perceived that they could not quiet the devils, and decided to give up trying to. Therefore they came down from the belfry together—and they, and everybody with them, went away through the night's blackness crossing themselves, and were glad to be safe again in their homes.

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The next day the Señor Alcalde made a formal inquest into the whole matter: citing to appear before him all the townfolk and all the Brothers, and questioning them closely every one. And the result of this inquest was to make certain that the bell-ringer of the convent had not rung the bell; nor had any other of the Brothers rung it; nor had any of the townfolk rung it. Therefore the Señor Alcalde, and with him the Señor Cura—whose opinion was of importance in such a matter—decided that the devil had rung it: and their decision was accepted by everybody, because that was what everybody from the beginning had believed.

Therefore—because such devilish doings affected the welfare of the whole kingdom—a formal report of all that had happened was submitted to the Cortes; and the Cortes, after pondering the report seriously, perceived that the matter was ecclesiastical and referred it to the Consejo of the Inquisition; and the members of the Consejo, in due course, ordered that all the facts should be digested and regularized and an opinion passed upon them by their Fiscal.

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Being a very painstaking person, the Fiscal went at his work with so great an earnestness that for more than a year he was engaged upon it. First he read all that he could find to read about bells in all the Spanish law books, from the *Siete Partidas* of Alonzo the Wise downward; then he read all that he could find about bells in such law books of foreign countries as were accessible to him; then, in the light of the information so obtained, he digested and regularized the facts of the case presented for his consideration and applied himself to writing his opinion upon them; and then, at last, he came before the Consejo and read to that body his opinion from beginning to end. Through the whole of a long day the Fiscal read his opinion; and through the whole of the next day, and the next, and the next; and at the end of the fourth day he finished the reading of his opinion and sat down. And the opinion of the Fiscal was that the devil had rung the bell.

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Then the Consejo, after debating for three days upon what had been read by the Fiscal, gave

formal approval to his opinion; and in conformity with it the Consejo came to these conclusions:

1. That the ringing of the bell was a matter of no importance to good Christians.
2. That the bell, being possessed of a devil, should have its tongue torn out: so that never again should it dare to ring of its lone devilish self, to the peril of human souls.
3. That the bell, being dangerous to good Christians, should be banished from the Spanish Kingdom to the Indies, and forever should remain tongueless and exiled over seas.

Thereupon, that wise sentence was executed. The devil-possessed bell was taken down from the belfry of the little convent, and its wicked tongue was torn out of it; then it was carried shamefully and with insults to the coast; then it was put on board of one of the ships of the flota bound for Mexico; and in Mexico, in due course, it arrived. Being come here, and no orders coming with it regarding its disposition, it was brought from Vera Cruz to the Capital and was placed in an odd corner of one of the corridors of the Palace: and there it remained quietly—everybody being shy of meddling with a bell that was known to be alive with witchcraft—for some hundreds of years.

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In that same corner it still was, Señor, when the Conde de Revillagigedo—only a little more than a century ago—became Viceroy; and as soon as that most energetic gentleman saw it he wanted to know in a hurry—being indisposed to let anything or anybody rust in idleness—why a bell that needed only a tongue in it to make it serviceable was not usefully employed. For some time no one could tell him anything more about the bell than that there was a curse upon it; and that answer did not satisfy him, because curses did not count for much in his very practical mind. In the end a very old clerk in the Secretariat gave him the bell's true story; and proved the truth of it by bringing out from deep in the archives an ancient yellowed parchment: which was precisely the royal order, following the decree of the Consejo, that the bell should have its tongue torn out, and forever should remain tongueless and exiled over seas.

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With that order before him, even the Conde de Revillagigedo, Señor, did not venture to have a new tongue put into the bell and to set it to regular work again; but what he did do came to much the same thing. At that very time he was engaged in pushing to a brisk completion the repairs to the Palace—that had gone on for a hundred years languishingly, following the burning of it in the time of the Viceroy Don Gaspar de la Cerda—and among his repairings was the replacement of the Palace clock. Now a clock-bell, Señor, does not need a tongue in it, being struck with hammers from the outside; and so the Conde, whose wits were of an alertness, perceived in a moment that by employing the bell as a clock-bell he could make it useful again without traversing the king's command. And that was what immediately he did with it—and that was how the Palace clock came to have foisted upon it this accursed bell.

But, so far as I have heard, Señor, this bell conducted itself as a clock-bell with a perfect regularity and propriety: probably because the devils which were in it had grown too old to be dangerously hurtful, and because the curse that was upon it had weakened with time. I myself, as a boy and as a young man, have heard it doing its duty always punctually; and no doubt it still would be doing its duty had not the busybodying French seen fit—during the period of the Intervention, when they meddled with everything—to put another bell in the place of it and to have it melted down. What was done with the metal when the bell was melted, Señor, I do not know; but I have been told by an old founder of my acquaintance that nothing was done with it: because, as he very positively assured me, when the bell was melted the metal of it went sour in the furnace and refused to be recast.

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If that is true, Señor, it looks as though all those devils in the bell—which came to it from the Moor and from the devil-forged armor and from Don Gil de Marcadante—still had some strength for wickedness left to them even in their old age.

LEGEND OF THE CALLEJÓN DEL PADRE LECUONA^[7]

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Who Padre Lecuona was, Señor, and what he did or had done to him in this street that caused his name to be given to it, I do not know. The Padre about whom I now am telling you, who had this strange thing happen to him in this street, was named Lanza; but he was called by everybody Lanchitas—according to our custom of giving such endearing diminutives to the names of those whom we love. He deserved to be loved, this excellent Padre Lanchitas: because he himself loved everybody, and freely gave to all in sickness or in trouble his loving aid. Confessing to him was a pleasure; and his absolution was worth having, because it was given always with the approval of the good God. My own grandfather knew him well, Señor, having known a man who had seen him when he was a boy. Therefore this strange story about him is true.

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On a night—and it was a desponding night, because rain was falling and there was a chill wind—Padre Lanchitas was hurrying to the house of a friend of his, where every week he and three other gentlemen of a Friday evening played malilla together. It is a very serious game, Señor, and to play it well requires a large mind. He was late, and that was why he was hurrying.

When he was nearly come to the house of his friend—and glad to get there because of the rain and the cold—he was stopped by an old woman plucking at his wet cloak and speaking to him.

And the old woman begged him for God's mercy to come quickly and confess a dying man. Now that is a call, Señor, that a priest may not refuse; but because his not joining them would inconvenience his friends, who could not play at their game of malilla without him, he asked the woman why she did not go to the parish priest of the parish in which the dying man was. And the woman answered him that only to him would the dying man confess; and she begged him again for God's mercy to hurry with her, or the confession would not be made in time—and then the sin of his refusal would be heavy on his own soul when he himself came to die.

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So, then, the Padre went with her, walking behind her along the cold dark streets in the mud with the rain falling; and at last she brought him to the eastern end of this street that is called the Callejón del Padre Lecuona, and to the long old house there that faces toward the church of El Carmen and has a hump in the middle on the top of its front wall. It is a very old house, Señor. It was built in the time when we had Viceroy, instead of the President Porfírio; and it has no windows—only a great door for the entering of carriages at one end of it, and a small door in the middle of it, and another small door at the other end. A person who sells charcoal, Señor, lives there now.

It was to the middle door that the woman brought Padre Lanchitas. The door was not fastened, and at a touch she pushed it open and in they went together—and the first thing that the Padre noticed when he was come through the doorway was a very bad smell. It was the sort of smell, Señor, that is found in very old houses of which all the doors and windows have been shut fast for a very long time. But the Padre had matters more important than bad smells to attend to, and all that he did about it was to hold his handkerchief close to his nose. One little poor candle, stuck on a nail in a board, was set in a far corner; and in another corner was a man lying on a mat spread upon the earth floor; and there was nothing else whatever—excepting cobwebs everywhere, and the bad smell, and the old woman, and the Padre himself—in that room.

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That he might see him whom he was to confess, Padre Lanchitas took the candle in his hand and went to the man on the mat and pulled aside the ragged and dirty old blanket that covered him; and then he started back with a very cold qualm in his stomach, saying to the woman: "This man already is dead! He cannot confess! And he has the look of having been dead for a very long while!" And that was true, Señor—for what he saw was a dry and bony head, with yellow skin drawn tight over it, having shut eyes deep sunken. Also, the two hands which rested crossed upon the man's breast were no more than the same dry yellow skin shrunk close over shrunken bones! And, seeing such a bad strange sight, the Padre was uneasy and alarmed.

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But the woman said back to him with assurance, yet also coaxingly: "This man is going to confess, Padrecito"—and, so speaking, she fetched from its far corner the board with the nail in it, and took the candle from him and set it fast again upon the nail. And then the man himself, in the light and in the shadow, sat up on the mat and began to recite in a voice that had a rusty note in it the Confiteor Deo—and after that, of course, there was nothing for the Padre to do but to listen to him till the end.



EL CALLEJÓN DEL PADRE LECVONA

What he told, Señor, being told under the seal of confession, of course remained always a secret. But it was known, later, that he spoke of matters which had happened a good two hundred years back—as the Padre knew because he was a great reader of books of history; and that he put himself into the very middle of those matters and made the terrible crime that he had committed a part of them; and that he ended by telling that in that ancient time he had been killed in a brawl suddenly, and so had died unconfessed and unshriven, and that ever since his soul had blistered in hell.

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Hearing such wild talk from him, the Padre was well satisfied that the poor man's wits were wandering in his fever—as happens with many, Señor, in their dying time—and so bade him lie quietly and rest himself; and promised that he would come to him and hear his confession later on.

But the man cried out very urgently that that must not be: declaring that by God's mercy he had been given one single chance to come back again out of Eternity to confess his sins and to be shriven of them; and that unless the Padre did hearken then and there to the confession of his sins, and did shrive him of them, this one chance that God's mercy had given him would be lost and wasted—and back he would go forever to the hot torments of hell.

Therefore the Padre—being sure, by that time, that the man was quite crazy in his fever—let him talk on till he had told the whole story of his frightful sinnings; and then did shrive him, to quiet him—just as you promise the moon to a sick, fretful child. And the devil must have been very uneasy that night, Señor, because the good nature of that kind-hearted priest lost to him what by rights was his own!

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As Padre Lanchitas spoke the last words of the absolution, the man fell back again on his mat with a sharp crackling sound like that of dry bones rattling; and the woman had left the room; and the candle was sputtering out its very last sparks. Therefore the Padre went out in a hurry through the still open door into the street; and no sooner had he come there than the door closed behind him sharply, as though some one on the inside had pushed against it strongly to shut it fast.

Out in the street he had expected to find the old woman waiting for him; and he looked about for her everywhere, desiring to tell her that she must send for him when the man's fever left him—

that he might return and hear from the man a real confession, and really shrive him of his sins. But the old woman was quite gone. Thinking that she must have slipped past him in the darkness into the house, he knocked at the door lightly, and then loudly; but no answer came to his knocking—and when he tried to push the door open, using all his strength, it held fast against his pushing as firmly as though it had been a part of the stone wall.

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So the Padre, having no liking for standing there in the cold and rain uselessly, hurried onward to his friend's house—and was glad to get into the room where his friends were waiting for him, and where plenty of candles were burning, and where it was dry and warm.

He had walked so fast that his forehead was wet with sweat when he took his hat off, and to dry it he put his hand into his pocket for his handkerchief; but his handkerchief was not in his pocket—and then he knew that he must have dropped it in the house where the dying man lay. It was not just a common handkerchief, Señor, but one very finely embroidered—having the letters standing for his name worked upon it, with a wreath around them—that had been made for him by a nun of his acquaintance in a convent of which he was the almoner; and so, as he did not at all like to lose it, he sent his friend's servant to that old house to get it back again. After a good long while, the servant returned: telling that the house was shut fast, and that one of the watch—

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seeing him knocking at the door of it—had told him that to knock there was only to wear out his knuckles, because no one had lived in that house for years and years! All of this, as well as all that had gone before it, was so strange and so full of mystery, that Padre Lanchitas then told to his three friends some part of what that evening had happened to him; and it chanced that one of the three was the notary who had in charge the estate of which that very house was a part. And the notary gave Padre Lanchitas his true word for it that the house—because of some entangling law matters—had stood locked fast and empty for as much as a lifetime; and he declared that Padre Lanchitas must be mixing that house with some other house—which would be easy, since all that had happened had been in the rainy dark. But the Padre, on his side, was sure that he had made no mistake in the matter; and they both got a little warm in their talk over it; and they ended by agreeing—so that they might come to a sure settlement—to meet at that old house, and the notary to bring with him the key of it, on the morning of the following day.

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So they did meet there, Señor, and they went to the middle door—the one that had opened at a touch from the old woman's hand. But all around that door, as the notary bade Padre Lanchitas observe before they opened it, were unbroken cobwebs; and the keyhole was choked with the dust that had blown into it, little by little, in the years that had passed since it had known a key. And the other two doors of the house were just the same. However, Padre Lanchitas would not admit, even with that proof against him, that he was mistaken; and the notary, smiling at him but willing to satisfy him, picked out the dust from the keyhole and got the key into it and forced back hardly the rusty bolt of the lock—and together they went inside.

Coming from the bright sunshine into that dusky place—lighted only from the doorway, and the door but part way open because it was loose on its old hinges and stuck fast—they could see at first nothing more than that the room was empty and bare. What they did find, though—and the Padre well remembered it—was the bad smell. But the notary said that just such bad smells were in all old shut-up houses, and it proved nothing; while the cobwebs and the closed keyhole did prove most certainly that Padre Lanchitas had not entered that house the night before—and that nobody had entered it for years and years. To what the notary said there was nothing to be answered; and the Padre—not satisfied, but forced to give in to such strong proof that he was mistaken—was about to come away out of the house, and so have done with it. But just then, Señor, he made a very wonderful and horrifying discovery. By that time his eyes had grown accustomed to the shadows; and so he saw over in one corner—lying on the floor close beside where the man had lain whose confession he had taken—a glint of something whitish. And, Señor, it was his very own handkerchief that he had lost!

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That was enough to satisfy even the notary; and as nothing more was to be done there they came out, and gladly, from that bad dark place into the sunshine. As for Padre Lanchitas, Señor, he was all mazed and daunted—knowing then the terrible truth that he had confessed a dead man; and, what was worse, that he had given absolution to a sinful soul come hot to him from hell! He held his hat in his hand as he came out from the house—and never did he put it on again: bareheaded he went thenceforward until the end of his days! He was a very good man, and his life had been always a very holy life; but from that time on, till the death of him, he made it still holier by his prayings and his fastings and his endless helpings of the poorest of the poor. At last he died. And it is said, Señor, that in the walls of that old house they found dead men's bones.

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LEGEND OF THE LIVING SPECTRE^[8]

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Apparitions of dead people, Señor, of course are numerous and frequent. I myself—as on other occasions I have mentioned to you—have seen several spectres, and so have various of my friends. But this spectre of which I now am telling you—that appeared on the Plaza Mayor at noonday, and was seen by everybody—was altogether out of the ordinary: being not in the least a dead person, but a person who wore his own flesh and bones in the usual manner and was alive in them; yet who certainly was walking and talking here on the Plaza Mayor of this City of Mexico in the very self-same moment that he also was walking and talking in a most remote and wholly

different part of the world. Therefore—in spite of his wearing his own flesh and bones in the usual manner and being alive in them—it was certain that he was a spectre: because it was certain that his journeying could have been made only on devils' wings. The day on which this marvel happened is known most exactly: because it happened on the day after the day that the Governor of the Filipinas, Don Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, had his head murderously split open, and died of it, in the Molucca Islands; and that gentleman was killed in that bad manner on the 25th of October in the year 1593. Therefore—since everything concerning this most extraordinary happening is known with so great an accuracy—there can be no doubt whatever but that in every particular all that I now am telling you is strictly true.

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Because it began in two different places at the same time, it is not easy to say certainly, Señor, which end of this story is the beginning of it; but the beginning of it is this: On a day, being the day that I have just named to you, the sentries on guard at the great doors of the Palace—and also the people who at that time happened to be walking near by on the Plaza Mayor—of a sudden saw an entirely strange sentry pacing his beat before the great doors of the Palace quite in the regular manner: marching back and forth, with his gun on his shoulder; making his turns with a soldierly propriety; saluting correctly those entitled to salutes who passed him; and in every way conducting himself as though he duly had been posted there—but making his marchings and his turnings and his salutings with a wondering look on the face of him, and having the air of one who is all bedazzled and bemazed.

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What made every one know that he was a stranger in this City was that the uniform which he wore was of a wholly different cut and fabric from that belonging to any regiment at that time quartered here: being, in fact—as was perceived by one of the sentries who had served in the Filipinas—the uniform worn in Manila by the Palace Guard. He was a man of forty, or thereabouts; well set up and sturdy; and he had the assured carriage—even in his bedazzlement and bemazement—of an old soldier who had seen much campaigning, and who could take care of himself through any adventure in which he might happen to land. Moreover, his talk—when the time came for him to explain himself—went with a devil-may-care touch to it that showed him to be a man who even with witches and demons was quite ready to hold his own.

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His explanation of himself, of course, was not long in coming: because the Captain of the Guard at once was sent for; and when the Captain of the Guard came he asked the stranger sentry most sharply what his name was, and where he came from, and what he was doing on a post to which he had not been assigned.

To these questions the stranger sentry made answer—speaking with an easy confidence, and not in the least ruffled by the Captain's sharpness with him—that his name was Gil Pérez; that he came from the Filipinas; and that what he was doing was his duty as near as he could come to it: because he had been duly detailed to stand sentry that morning before the Governor's Palace—and although this was not the Governor's Palace before which he had been posted it certainly was a governor's palace, and that he therefore was doing the best that he could do. And to these very curious statements he added—quite casually, as though referring to an ordinary matter of current interest—that the Governor of the Filipinas, Don Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, had had his head murderously split open, and was dead of it, in the Molucca Islands the evening before.

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Well, Señor, you may fancy what a nest of wasps was let loose when this Gil Pérez gave to the Captain of the Guard so incredible an account of himself; and, on top of it, told that the Governor of the Filipinas had been badly killed on the previous evening in islands in the Pacific Ocean thousands and thousands of miles away! It was a matter that the Viceroy himself had to look into. Therefore before the Viceroy—who at that time was the good Don Luis de Velasco—Gil Pérez was brought in a hurry: and to the Viceroy he told over again just the same story, in just the same cool manner, and in just the same words.

Very naturally, the Viceroy put a great many keen questions to him; and to those questions he gave his answers—or said plainly that he could not give any answers—with the assured air of an old soldier who would not lightly suffer his word to be doubted even by a Viceroy; and who was ready, in dealing with persons of less consequence, to make good his sayings with his fists or with his sword.

In part, his explanation of himself was straightforward and satisfactory. What he told about the regiment to which he belonged was known to be true; and equally known to be true was much of what he told—being in accord with the news brought thence by the latest galleon—about affairs in the Filipinas. But when it came to explaining the main matter—how he had been shifted across the ocean and the earth, and all in a single moment, from his guard-mount before the Governor's Palace in Manila to his guard-mount before the Viceroy's Palace in the City of Mexico—Gil Pérez was at a stand. How that strange thing had happened, he said, he knew no more than Don Luis himself knew. All that he could be sure of was that it *had* happened: because, certainly, only a half hour earlier he had been in Manila; and now, just as certainly, he was in the City of Mexico—as his lordship the Viceroy could see plainly with his own eyes. As to the even greater marvel—how he knew that on the previous evening the Governor of the Filipinas had had his head murderously split open, and was dead of it, in the Molucca Islands—he said quite freely that he did not in the least know how he knew it. What alone he could be sure of, he said, was that in his heart he did know that Don Gómez had been killed on the previous evening in that bad manner; and he very stoutly asserted that the truth of what he told would be clear to Don Luis, and to everybody, when the news of the killing of Don Gómez had had time to get to Mexico in the ordinary way.

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And then Gil Pérez—having answered all of the Viceroy's questions which he could answer, and

having said all that he had to say—stood quite at his ease before the Viceroy: with his feet firmly planted, and his right hand on his hip, and his right arm akimbo—and so waited for whatever might happen to be the next turn.

Well, Señor, the one thing of which anybody really could be sure in this amazing matter—and of which, of course, everybody was sure—was that the devil was at both the bottom and the top of it; and, also, there seemed to be very good ground for believing that Gil Pérez was in much closer touch with the devil than any good Christian—even though he were an old soldier, and not much in the way of Christianity expected of him—had any right to be. Therefore the Viceroy rid himself of an affair that was much the same to him as a basket of nettles by turning Gil Pérez over to the Holy Office—and off he was carried to Santo Domingo and clapped into one of the strongest cells.

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Most men, of course, on finding themselves that way in the clutches of the Inquisition, would have had all the insides of them filled with terror; but Gil Pérez, Señor—being, as I have mentioned, an old campaigner—took it all as it came along to him and was not one bit disturbed. He said cheerfully that many times in the course of his soldiering he had been in much worse places; and added that—having a good roof over his head, and quite fair rations, and instead of marching and fighting only to sit at his ease and enjoy himself—he really was getting, for once in his life, as much of clear comfort as any old soldier had a right to expect would come his way. Moreover, in his dealings with the Familiars of the Holy Office his conduct was exemplary. He stuck firmly to his assertion that—whatever the devil might have had to do with him—he never had had anything to do with the devil; he seemed to take a real pleasure in confessing as many of his sins as he conveniently could remember; and in every way that was open to him his conduct was that of quite as good a Christian as any old soldier reasonably could be expected to be.

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Therefore—while he staid on in his cell very contentedly—the Familiars of the Holy Office put their heads together and puzzled and puzzled as to what they should do with him: because it certainly seemed as though the devil, to suit his own devilish purposes, simply had made a convenience of Gil Pérez without getting his consent in the matter; and so it did not seem quite fair—in the face of his protest that he was as much annoyed as anybody was by what the devil had done with him—to put him into a flame-covered sanbenito, and to march him off to be burned for a sorcerer at the next auto de fé. Therefore the Familiars of the Holy Office kept on putting their heads together and puzzling and puzzling as to what they should do with him; and Gil Pérez kept on enjoying himself in his cell in Santo Domingo—and so the months went on and on.

And then, on a day, a new turn was given to the whole matter: when the galleon from the Filipinas arrived at Acapulco and brought with it the proof that every word that Gil Pérez had spoken was true. Because the galleon brought the news that Don Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas—the crew of the ship that he was on having mutinied—really had had his head murderously split open, and was dead of it, in the Molucca Islands; and that this bad happening had come to him at the very time that Gil Pérez had named. Moreover, one of the military officers who had come from the Filipinas in the galleon, and up from Acapulco to the City of Mexico with the conducta, recognized Gil Pérez the moment that he laid eyes on him; and this officer said that he had seen him—only a day or two before the galleon's sailing—on duty in Manila with the Palace Guard. And so the fact was settled beyond all doubting that Gil Pérez had been brought by the devil from Manila to the City of Mexico; and, also, that the devil—since only the devil could have done it—had put the knowledge of the murderous killing of Don Gómez into his heart. Wherefore the fact that Gil Pérez was in league with the devil was clear to all the world.

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Then the Familiars of the Holy Office for the last time put their heads together and puzzled and puzzled over the matter; and at the end of their puzzling they decided that Gil Pérez was an innocent person, and that he undoubtedly had had criminal relations with the devil and was full of wickedness. Therefore they ordered that, being innocent, he should be set free from his cell in Santo Domingo; and that, being a dangerous character whose influence was corrupting, he should be sent back to Manila in the returning galleon. And that was their decree.

Gil Pérez, Señor, took that disposition of him in the same easy-going way that he had taken all the other dispositions of him: save that he grumbled a little—as was to be expected of an old soldier—over having to leave his comfortably idle life in his snug quarters and to go again to his fightings and his guard-mounts and his parades. And so back he went to the Filipinas: only his return journey was made in a slow and natural manner aboard the galleon—not, as his outward journey had been made, all in a moment on devils' wings.

To my mind, Señor, it seems that there is more of this story that ought to be told. For myself, I should like to know why the Familiars of the Holy Office did not deal a little more severely with a case that certainly had the devil at both the bottom and the top of it; and, also, I should like to know what became of Gil Pérez when he got back to Manila in the galleon—and there had to tell over again about his relations with the devil in order to account for his half year's absence from duty without leave. But those are matters which I never have heard mentioned; and what I have told you is all that there is to tell.

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LEGEND OF THE CALLE DE LOS PARADOS

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Two dead lovers, Señor, stand always in the Calle de los Parados, one at each end of it; and that is why—because they remain steadfastly on parade there, though it is not everybody who happens to see their yellow skeletons on those corners—the street of the Parados is so named.



LA CALLE DE LOS PARADOS

As you may suppose, Señor, the lovers now being dry skeletons, what brought them there happened some time ago. Just when it happened, I do not know precisely; but it was when an excellent gentleman, who was an officer in the Royal Mint, lived in the fine house that is in the middle of the street on the south side of it, and had living with him a very beautiful daughter whose hair was like spun gold. This gentleman was named Don José de Vallejo y Hermosillo; and his daughter was named (because her mother was of the noble family of Vezca) Doña María Ysabel de Vallejo y Vezca; and she was of great virtue and sweetness, and was twenty-two years old.

All the young men of the City sought her in marriage; but there were two who were more than any of the others in earnest about it. One of these was Don Francisco Puerto y Solis, a lieutenant of dragoons: who had to offer her only his good looks—he was a very handsome gentleman—and the hope of what he might get for himself with his sword. The other one was the Señor Don Antonio Miguel del Cardonal, Conde de Valdecebros—who also was a handsome gentleman, and who owned mills in Puebla of the Angels, and a very great hacienda, and was so rich that it was the whole business of two old notaries to count his gold.

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And these two posted themselves every day in the street in which was Doña María's home—one at the corner of the Calle del Reloj, the other at the corner of the Calle de Santa Catarina—that they might look at her when she came forth from her house; and that she might see them waiting to get sight of her, and so know that they loved her. It was the same custom then, Señor, as it is to-day. In that way all of our polite young men make love.

And just as our young ladies nowadays wait and wait and think and think before they make their hearts up, so Doña María waited and thought then—and the time slipped on and on, and neither the Lieutenant nor the Conde knew what was in her mind. Then there happened, Señor, a very dismal thing. A pestilence fell upon the City, and of that pestilence Doña María sickened and died. But it chanced that neither of her lovers was on his corner when they took her out from her house to bury her—you see, Señor, even lovers must eat and sleep sometimes, and they could not be always on their watch for her—and in that way it happened that neither of them knew that she was dead and gone. Therefore they kept on standing on their parade quite as usual—coming steadfastly to their corners day after day, and month after month, and year after year. And

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although, after a while, they died too, they still stood at their posts—just as though they and Doña María still were alive. And there, on their corners, they have remained until this very day.



HOME OF DOÑA MARÍA

It is told, Señor, that once in broad daylight half the City saw those honest waiting skeletons. It was on a day when there was a great festival for the incoming of a new Viceroy, and they were seen by the crowd that waited in the atrium of the church of Santa Catarina to see the procession pass. But that was some hundreds of years ago, Señor. Now, for the most part, it is at night and by moonlight that they are seen. I have not happened to see them myself—but then I do not often go that way.

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LEGEND OF THE CALLE DE LA JOYA

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What this street was called, in very old times, Señor, no one knows: because the dreadful thing that gave to it the name of the Street of the Jewel happened a long, long while ago. It was before the Independence. It was while the Viceroys were here who were sent by the King of Spain.

In those days there lived in this fine house at the corner of the Calle de Mesones and what since then has been called the Calle de la Joya—it is at the northwest corner, Señor, and a biscuit-bakery is on the lower floor—a very rich Spanish merchant: who was named Don Alonso Fernández de Bobadilla, and who was a tall and handsome man, and gentle-mannered, and at times given to fits of rage. He was married to a very rich and a very beautiful lady, who was named Doña Ysabel de la Garcide y Tovar; and she was the daughter of the Conde de Torreleal. This lady was of an ardent and a wilful nature, but Don Alonso loved her with a sincerity and humored her in all her whims and wants. When they went abroad together—always in a grand coach, with servants like flies around them—the whole City stood still and stared!

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Doña Ysabel was not worthy of her husband's love: and so he was told one day, by whom there was no knowing, in a letter that was thrown from the street into the room where he was sitting, on the ground floor. It was his office of affairs, Señor. It is one of the rooms where the biscuits

are baked now. In that letter he was bidden to watch with care his wife's doings with the Licenciado Don José Raul de Lara, the Fiscal of the Inquisition—who was a forlorn little man (*hombrecillo*) not at all deserving of any lady's love—and Don Alonso did watch, and what came of his watching was a very terrible thing.

He pretended, Señor, that he had an important affair with the Viceroy that would keep him at the Palace until far into the night; and so went his way from his home in the early evening—but went no farther than a dozen paces from his own door. There, in the dark street, huddled close into a doorway, his cloak around him—it was a night in winter—he waited in the creeping cold. After a time along came some one—he did not know who, but it was the Licenciado—and as he drew near to the house Doña Ysabel came out upon her balcony, and between them there passed a sign. Then, in a little while, the door of Don Alonso's house was opened softly and the Licenciado went in; and then, softly, the door was shut again.

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Presently, Don Alonso also went in, holding in his hand his dagger. What he found—and it made him so angry that he fell into one of his accustomed fits of rage over it—was the Licenciado putting on the wrist of his wife a rich golden bracelet. When they saw him, Señor, their faces at once went white—and their faces remained white always: because Don Alonso, before the blood could come back again, had killed the two of them with his dagger—and they were white in death! Then Don Alonso did what gave to this street the name of the Street of the Jewel. From Doña Ysabel's wrist he wrenched loose the bracelet, and as he left the house he pinned it fast with his bloody dagger to the door.

In that way things were found the next morning by the watch; and the watch, suspecting that something wrong had happened—because to see a bracelet and a bloody dagger in such a place was unusual—called the Alcalde to come and look into the matter; and the Alcalde, coming, found Doña Ysabel and the Licenciado lying very dead upon the floor. So the street was called the Calle de la Joya, and that is its name.

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Don Alonso, Señor, was worried by what he had done, and became a Dieguino—it is the strict order of the Franciscans. They go barefoot—and it was in the convent of the Dieguinos, over there at the western end of the Alameda, that he ended his days.

LEGEND OF THE CALLE DE LA MACHINCUEPA

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Naturally, Señor, this matter which gave its name to the Calle de la Machincuepa created a scandal that set all the tongues in the City to buzzing about it: every one, of course, blaming the young lady—even though she did it to win such vast riches—for committing so publicly so great an impropriety; but some holding that a greater blame attached to the Marqués, her uncle, for punishing her—no matter how much she deserved punishment—by making her inheritance depend upon so strange and so outrageous a condition; and some even saying that the greatest blame of all rested upon the Viceroy: because he did not forbid an indecorum that was planned to—and that did—take place in the Plaza Mayor directly in front of his Palace, and so beneath his very nose. For myself, Señor, I think that the young lady deserved more blame than anybody: because she was free to make her own choice in the matter, and that she chose riches rather than propriety very clearly proved—though that, to be sure, was known before she did her choosing—that she had a bad heart. As the Viceroy who did not forbid that young lady to do what she did do was the Duque de Linares—who, as you know, Señor, took up the duties of his high office in the year 1714—you will perceive that the curious event about which I now am telling you occurred very nearly two full centuries ago.

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At that time there lived in the street that ever since that time has been called the Street of the Machincuepa a very rich and a very noble Spanish gentleman whose name was Don Mendo Quiroga y Saurez, and whose title was Marqués del Valle Salado. In his beginning he was neither rich nor noble, and not even of good blood: having been begotten by an unknown father and born of an unknown mother; and having in his young manhood gone afloat out of Spain as a common sailor to seek his fortune on the sea. What he did upon the sea was a matter that his teeth guarded his tongue from talking about in his later years: but it was known generally that—while in appearance he and his ship had been engaged in the respectable business of bringing slaves from Africa to the colonies—his real business had been that of a corsair; and that on his murdering piracies the corner-stone of his great fortune had been laid.

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Having in that objectionable manner accumulated a whole ship-load of money, and being arrived at an age when so bustling a life was distasteful to him, he came to Mexico; and, being come here, he bought with his ship-load of money the Valle Salado: and there he set up great salt-works out of which he coined more gold—knowing well how to grease the palms of those in the Government who could be of service to him—than could be guessed at even in a dream. Therefore it was known with certainty that he possessed a fortune of precisely three millions and a half of dollars—which is a greater sum, Señor, than a hundred men could count in a whole month of summer days. And of his millions he sent to the King such magnificent presents that the King, in simple justice to him, had to reward him; and so the King made him a marqués—and he was the Marqués del Valle Salado from that time on.

Therefore—being so very rich, and a marqués—his sea-murderings of his younger days, and his sea-stealings that made the corner-stone of his great fortune, were the very last things which his teeth suffered his tongue to talk about: and he lived with a great magnificence a life that caused

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much scandal, and he was generally esteemed and respected, and because of his charities he was beloved by all the poor.

As old age began to creep upon this good gentleman, Señor, and with it the infirmities that came of his loose way of living, he found himself in the world lonely: because, you see—never having perceived any necessity for marrying—he had no wife to care for him, nor children whose duty it was to minister to his needs. Therefore—his brother in Spain about that time dying, and leaving a daughter behind him—he brought from Spain his dead brother's daughter, whom he put at the head of his magnificent household, and equally confided himself in his infirmity to her care. And, that she might be repaid for her care of him, he heaped upon her every possible luxury and splendor that his great riches could procure.

The name of this young lady, Señor, was Doña Paz de Quiroga; and the position to which she was raised by Don Mendo's munificence—and all the more because she was raised to it from the depths of poverty—was very much to her mind. Doña Paz was of a great beauty that well became the rich clothing and the rich jewels that her uncle lavished upon her; and what with her beauty, and her finery, and her recognized nobility as the lawful inheritor of her uncle's title, she knew herself to be—and made no bones of asserting herself to be—the very greatest lady at the Viceroy's court. She was of a jealous and rancorous disposition, and very charitable, and excessively selfish, and her pride was beyond all words. Every one of the young men in the City immediately fell in love with her; and she won also the respect of the most eminent clerics and the homage of the very greatest nobles of the court. So nice was her sense of her own dignity that even in the privacy of her own household her conduct at all times was marked by a rigorous elegance; and in public she carried herself with a grave stateliness that would have befitted a queen.

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But this young lady had a bad heart, Señor, as I have already mentioned; and toward Don Mendo, to whom she owed everything, she did not behave well at all. So far from ministering to him in his infirmities, she left him wholly to the care of hired servants; when she made her rare visits to his sick-room she carried always a scented kerchief, and held it to her nose closely—telling him that the smell of balsams and of plasters was distasteful to her; and never, by any chance whatever, did she give him one single kind look or kind word. As was most natural, Don Mendo did not like the way that Doña Paz treated him: therefore, in the inside of him, he made his mind up that he would pay her for it in the end. And in the end he did pay her for it: as she found out when, on a day, that worthy old man was called to go to heaven and they came to read his will.

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Doña Paz listened to the reading of the will with the greatest satisfaction, Señor, until the reading got to the very end of it: because Don Mendo uniformly styled her his beloved niece—which somewhat surprised her—and in plain words directed that every one of his three millions and a half of dollars should be hers. But at the very end of the will a condition was made that had to be fulfilled before she could touch so much as a tlaco of her great inheritance: and that condition was so monstrous—and all the more monstrous because Doña Paz was so rigorously elegant in all her doings, and so respectful of her own dignity—that the mere naming of it almost suffocated her with fright and shame.

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And, really, Señor, that Doña Paz felt that way about it is not to be wondered at, because what Don Mendo put at the very end of his will was this: "So to Paz, my beloved niece, I leave the whole of my possessions; but only in case that she comply precisely with the condition that I now lay upon her. And the condition that I now lay upon her is this: That, being dressed in her richest ball dress, and wearing her most magnificent jewels, she shall go in an open coach to the Plaza Mayor at noonday; and that, being come to the Plaza Mayor, she shall walk to the very middle of it; and that there, in the very middle of it, she shall bow her head to the ground; and that then, so bowing, she shall make the turn which among the common people of Mexico is called a 'machincuepa.' And it is my will that if my beloved niece Paz does not comply precisely with this condition, within six months from the day on which I pass out of life, then the whole of my possessions shall be divided into two equal parts: of which one part shall belong to the Convent of Nuestra Señora de la Merced, and the other part shall belong to the Convent of San Francisco; and of my possessions my beloved niece Paz shall have no part at all. And this condition I lay upon my beloved niece Paz that, in the bitterness of the shame of it, she may taste a little of the bitterness with which her cruelties have filled my dying years."

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Well, Señor, you may fancy the state that that most proud and most dignified young lady was in when she knew the terms on which alone her riches would come to her! And as to making her mind up in such a case, she found it quite impossible. On the one side, she would say to herself that what was required of her to win her inheritance would be done, and done with, in no more than a moment; and that then and always—being rich beyond dreaming, and in her own right a marquésa—she would be the greatest lady in the whole of New Spain. And then, on the other side, she would say to herself that precisely because of her great wealth and her title she would be all the more sneered at for descending to an act so scandalous; and that if she did descend to that act she would be known as the Marquésa de la Machincuepa to the end of her days. And what to do, Señor, she did not know at all. And as time went on and on, and she did not do anything, the Mercedarios and the Franciscanos—being always more and more sure that they would share between them Don Mendo's great fortune—talked pleasantly about new altars in their churches and new comforts in their convents: and as they talked they rubbed their hands.

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And so it came to the very last day of the six months that Don Mendo had given to Doña Paz in which to make her mind up; and the morning hours of that day went slipping past, and of Doña Paz the crowds that filled the streets and the Plaza Mayor saw nothing; and the Mercedarios and the Franciscanos all had smiling faces—being at last entirely certain that Don Mendo's millions of

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dollars would be theirs.

And then, Señor, just as the Palace clock was striking the half hour past eleven, the great doors of Don Mendo's house were opened; and out through the doorway came an open coach in which Doña Paz was seated, dressed in her richest ball dress and wearing the most magnificent of her jewels; and Doña Paz, pale as a dead woman, drove through the crowds on the streets and into the crowd on the Plaza Mayor; and then she walked, the crowd making way for her, to the very middle of it—where her servants had laid a rich carpet for her; and there, as the Palace clock struck twelve—complying precisely with Don Mendo's condition—Doña Paz bowed her head to the ground; and then, so bowing, she made the turn which among the common people of Mexico is called a machincuepa! So did Doña Paz win for herself Don Mendo's millions of dollars: and so did come into the soul of her the bitterness of shame that Don Mendo meant should come into it—in reward for the bitterness with which her cruelties had filled his dying years!

What became of this young lady—who so sacrificed propriety in order to gain riches—I never have heard mentioned: but it is certain that the street in which she lived immediately got the name of the Street of the Machincuepa—and the exact truth of every detail of this curious story is attested by the fact that that is its name now. [Pg 126]

Perhaps the meaning of this word machincuepa, Señor—being, as Don Mendo said in his will, a word in use among the common people of Mexico—is unknown to you. The meaning of it, in good Spanish, is salto mortal—only it means more. And it was precisely that sort of an excessive somersault—there in the middle of the crowded Plaza Mayor at noonday—that the most proud and the most dignified Doña Paz turned!

LEGEND OF THE CALLE DEL PUENTE DEL CUERVO

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As you know, Señor, in the street that is called the Street of the Bridge of the Raven, there nowadays is no bridge at all; also, the house is gone in which this Don Rodrigo de Ballesteros lived with his raven in the days when he was alive. As to the raven, however, matters are less certain. My grand-father long ago told me that more than once, on nights of storm, he had heard that evil bird uttering his wicked caws at midnight between the thunderclaps; and a most respectable cargador of my acquaintance has given me his word for it that he has heard those cawings too. Yet if they still go on it must be the raven's spectre that gives voice to them; because, Señor, while ravens are very long-lived birds, it is improbable that they live—and that much time has passed since these matters happened—through more than the whole of three hundred years.

This Don Rodrigo in his youth, Señor, was a Captain of Arcabuceros in the Royal Army; and, it seems, he fought so well with his crossbowmen at the battle of San Quintin (what they were fighting about I do not know) that the King of Spain rewarded him—when the fighting was all over and there was no more need for his services—by making him a royal commissioner here in Mexico: that he might get rich comfortably in his declining years. It was the Encomienda of Atzacotalco that the King gave to him; and in those days Atzacotalco was a very rich place, quite away from the City westward, and yielded a great revenue for Don Rodrigo to have the fingering of. Nowadays, as you know, Señor, it is almost a part of the City, because you get to it in the electric cars so quickly; and it has lost its good fortune and is but a dreary little threadbare town. [Pg 128]

It was with the moneys which stuck to his fingers from his collectorship—just as the King meant that they should stick, in reward for his good fighting—that Don Rodrigo built for himself his fine house in the street that is now called, because of the bridge that once was a part of it, and because of the raven's doings, the Puente del Cuervo. If that street had another name, earlier, Señor, I do not know what it was. [Pg 129]

This Don Rodrigo, as was generally known, was a very wicked person; and therefore he lived in his fine house, along with his raven, in great magnificence—eating always from dishes of solid silver, and being served by pages wearing clothes embroidered with gold. But, for all his riches, he himself was clad as though he were a beggar—and a very dirty beggar at that. Over his jerkin and breeches he wore a long capellar that wrapped him from his neck to his heels loosely; and this capellar had been worn by him through so many years that it was shabby beyond all respectability, and stained with stains of all colors, and everywhere greasy and soiled. Yet on the front of it, upon his breast, he wore the Cross of Santiago that the King had given him; and wearing that cross, as you know, Señor, made him as much of a caballero as the very best. In various other ways the evil that was in him showed itself. He never went to mass, and he made fun openly of all holy things. The suspicion was entertained by many people that he had intimacies with heretics. Such conduct gives a man a very bad name now; but it gave a man a worse name then—and so he was known generally as the Excommunicate, which was the very worst name that anybody could have. [Pg 130]

As to the raven, Señor, Don Rodrigo himself named it El Diablo; and that it truly was the devil—or, at least, that it was a devil—no one ever doubted at all. The conduct of that reprobate bird was most offensive. It would soil the rich furnishings of the house; it would tear with its beak the embroidered coverings of the chairs and the silken tapestries; it would throw down and shatter valuable pieces of glass and porcelain; there was no end to its misdeeds. But when Don Rodrigo stormed at his servants about these wreckings—and he was a most violent man, Señor, and used

tempestuous language—the servants had only to tell him that the raven was the guilty one to pacify him instantly. "If it is the work of the Devil," he would say without anger, "it is well done!"—and so the matter would pass.

Suddenly, on a day, both Don Rodrigo and the raven disappeared. Their going, in that strange and sudden way, made a great commotion; but there was a greater commotion when the Alcalde—being called to look into the matter—entered the house to search it and found a very horrible thing. In the room that had been Don Rodrigo's bedroom, lying dishonored upon the floor, broken and blood-spattered, was the most holy image; and all about it were lying raven feathers, and they also were spattered with blood. Therefore it was known that the raven-devil and Don Rodrigo had beaten the holy image and had drawn blood from it; and that the great devil, the master of both of them, in penalty for their dreadful act of sacrilege, had snatched them suddenly home to him to burn forever in hell. That was the very proper end of them. Never were they seen again either on sea or land. [Pg 131]

Naturally, Señor, respectable people declined to live in a house where there had been such shocking doings. Even the people living in the adjoining houses, feeling the disgrace that was on the neighborhood, moved away from them. And so, slowly, as the years went on, all of those houses crumbled to pieces and fell into ruins which were carted away—and that is why they no longer are there. But it is generally known, Señor, that until Don Rodrigo's house did in that way go out of existence, Don Rodrigo continued to inhabit it; and that the raven continued to bear him company. [Pg 132]

Just a year from the time that the devil had snatched away to hell the two of them—and it was at midnight, and a storm was upon the City—the neighbors heard between the thunder-claps the clock on the Palace striking its twelve strokes; and then, between the next thunder-claps, they heard the raven caw twelve times. Then it became known that the raven nightly took up its post on the parapet of the bridge that was in that street; and that, when his cawing for midnight was ended, he habitually flew up into the balcony of Don Rodrigo's house; and that on the balcony he found Don Rodrigo—a yellow skeleton, and over the bones of it the dirty old capellar—ready and waiting for him. Don Rodrigo's skeleton would be sitting quite at its ease on the balcony; on the railing of the balcony would be perched the raven; and with his dry-bone fingers—making a little clicking sound, like that of castanets—Don Rodrigo would stroke gently the back of that intensely wicked bird. All this would show for a moment while the lightning was flashing; then darkness would come, and a crash of thunder; and after the thunder, in the black silence, the little clicking sound of Don Rodrigo's dry-bone fingers stroking the raven's back gently again would be heard. [Pg 133]

And so it all went on, Señor, my grandfather told me, until the house tumbled down with age, and these disagreeable horrors no longer were possible; and it is most reasonably evident—since the street got its name because of them—that they really must have happened, and that they must have continued for a very long time.

As I have mentioned, Señor, my friend the cargador—who is a most respectable and truthful person—declares that sometimes on stormy nights he himself has heard the raven's cawings when the Palace clock has finished its twelve strokes; and from that it would appear that the raven is to be met with in the Puente del Cuervo even now.

LEGEND OF LA LLORONA^[9]

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As is generally known, Señor, many bad things are met with by night in the streets of the City; but this Wailing Woman, La Llorona, is the very worst of them all. She is worse by far than the vaca de lumbre—that at midnight comes forth from the potrero of San Pablo and goes galloping through the streets like a blazing whirlwind, breathing forth from her nostrils smoke and sparks and flames: because the Fiery Cow, Señor, while a dangerous animal to look at, really does no harm whatever—and La Llorona is as harmful as she can be!

Seeing her walking quietly along the quiet street—at the times when she is not running, and shrieking for her lost children—she seems a respectable person, only odd looking because of her white petticoat and the white reboso with which her head is covered, and anybody might speak to her. But whoever does speak to her, in that very same moment dies! [Pg 135]

The beginning of her was so long ago that no one knows when was the beginning of her; nor does any one know anything about her at all. But it is known certainly that at the beginning of her, when she was a living woman, she committed bad sins. As soon as ever a child was born to her she would throw it into one of the canals which surround the City, and so would drown it; and she had a great many children, and this practice in regard to them she continued for a long time. At last her conscience began to prick her about what she did with her children; but whether it was that the priest spoke to her, or that some of the saints cautioned her in the matter, no one knows. But it is certain that because of her sinnings she began to go through the streets in the darkness weeping and wailing. And presently it was said that from night till morning there was a wailing woman in the streets; and to see her, being in terror of her, many people went forth at midnight; but none did see her, because she could be seen only when the street was deserted and she was alone.

Sometimes she would come to a sleeping watchman, and would waken him by asking: "What time is it?" And he would see a woman clad in white standing beside him with her reboso drawn over [Pg 136]

her face. And he would answer: "It is twelve hours of the night." And she would say: "At twelve hours of this day I must be in Guadalajara!"—or it might be in San Luis Potosí, or in some other far-distant city—and, so speaking, she would shriek bitterly: "Where shall I find my children?"—and would vanish instantly and utterly away. And the watchman would feel as though all his senses had gone from him, and would become as a dead man. This happened many times to many watchmen, who made report of it to their officers; but their officers would not believe what they told. But it happened, on a night, that an officer of the watch was passing by the lonely street beside the church of Santa Anita. And there he met with a woman wearing a white reboso and a white petticoat; and to her he began to make love. He urged her, saying: "Throw off your reboso that I may see your pretty face!" And suddenly she uncovered her face—and what he beheld was a bare grinning skull set fast to the bare bones of a skeleton! And while he looked at her, being in horror, there came from her fleshless jaws an icy breath; and the iciness of it froze the very heart's blood in him, and he fell to the earth heavily in a deathly swoon. When his senses came back to him he was greatly troubled. In fear he returned to the Diputacion, and there told what had befallen him. And in a little while his life forsook him and he died.

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What is most wonderful about this Wailing Woman, Señor, is that she is seen in the same moment by different people in places widely apart: one seeing her hurrying across the atrium of the Cathedral; another beside the Arcos de San Cosme; and yet another near the Salto del Agua, over by the prison of Belen. More than that, in one single night she will be seen in Monterey and in Oaxaca and in Acapulco—the whole width and length of the land apart—and whoever speaks with her in those far cities, as here in Mexico, immediately dies in fright. Also, she is seen at times in the country. Once some travellers coming along a lonely road met with her, and asked: "Where go you on this lonely road?" And for answer she cried: "Where shall I find my children?" and, shrieking, disappeared. And one of the travellers went mad. Being come here to the City they told what they had seen; and were told that this same Wailing Woman had maddened or killed many people here also.

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Because the Wailing Woman is so generally known, Señor, and so greatly feared, few people now stop her when they meet with her to speak with her—therefore few now die of her, and that is fortunate. But her loud keen wailings, and the sound of her running feet, are heard often; and especially in nights of storm. I myself, Señor, have heard the running of her feet and her wailings; but I never have seen her. God forbid that I ever shall!

NOTES

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LEGEND OF DON JUAN MANUEL

Don Juan Manuel was a real person: who lived stately in a great house, still standing, in the street that in his time was called the Calle Nueva, and that since his time has borne his name; who certainly did murder one man—in that house, not in the street—at about, probably, eleven o'clock at night; and who certainly was found hanging dead on the gallows in front of the Capilla de la Espiración, of an October morning in the year 1641, without any explanation ever being forthcoming of how he got there. What survive of the tangled curious facts on which the fancies of this legend rest have been collected by Señor Obregón, and here are summarized.

Don Juan Manuel de Solórzano, a native of Burgos, a man of rank and wealth, in the year 1623 came in the train of the Viceroy the Marqués de Guadalcázar to Mexico; where for a long while he seems to have led a life prosperous and respectable. In the year 1636 he increased his fortune by making an excellent marriage—with Doña Mariana de Laguna, the daughter of a rich mine-owner of Zacatecas. His troubles had their beginning in an intimate friendship that he formed with the Viceroy (1635-1640) the Marqués de Cadereita; a friendship of so practical a sort on the side of the Viceroy as to cause remonstrance to be made in Spain against his excessive bestowal of official favors on his favorite. Moreover, "the evil speaking of the curious" was excited by the fact that Don Juan and his wife spent a great part of their time at the Palace in the Viceroy's company.

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Matters were brought to a crisis by Don Juan's appointment as Administrator of the Royal Hacienda; an office that gave him control of the great revenues derived from the fleets which plied annually between Mexico and Spain. The conduct of this very lucrative administration previously had been with the Audiencia; and by the members of that body vigorous protest was made against the Viceroy's action in enriching his favorite at their cost. "Odious gossip" was aroused; threats were made of a popular uprising; an appeal—duly freighted with bribes to assure its arrival at the throne—was made to the King. "But the springs put in force by the Viceroy must have been very powerful—more powerful than the money sent by the Audiencia—since Philip IV. confirmed Don Juan in the enjoyment of his concession."



HOUSE OF DON JUAN MANUEL

While the case thus rested, an incidental scandal was introduced into it. By the fleet from Spain came one Doña Ana Porcel de Velasco: a lady of good birth, very beautiful, the widow of a naval officer, reduced by her widowhood and by other misfortunes to poverty. In her happier days she had been a beauty at Court, and there the Marqués de Cadereita had known her and had made suit to her, wherefore she had come to Mexico to seek his Viceregal protection. Housing her in the Palace being out of the question, the Viceroy begged that Don Juan would take her into his own home: and that disposition of her, accordingly, was made—with the result that more "odious gossip" was aroused. What became of the beautiful Doña Ana is unrecorded. Her episodic existence in the story seems to be due to the fact that because of her the popular ill-will against Don Juan and against the Viceroy was increased.

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A far-reaching ripple from the wave of the Portuguese and Catalonian revolt of the year 1640, influencing affairs in Mexico, gave opportunity for this ill-will to crystallize into action of so effective a sort that the Viceroy was recalled, and his favorite—no longer under protection—was cast into prison. Don Juan's commitment—the specific charge against him is not recorded—was signed by one Don Francisco Vélez de Pereira: who, as Señor Obregón puts it, "was not only a Judge of the criminal court but a criminal Judge" (*no era solamente un Alcalde del crimen sino un Alcalde criminal*) because he made dishonest proposals to Doña Mariana as the price of her husband's liberation. It would seem that Doña Mariana accepted the offered terms; and in so grateful a spirit that she was content to wait upon the Alcalde's pleasure for their complete ratification by Don Juan's deliverance. Pending such liquidation of the contract, news was carried to Don Juan in prison of the irregular negotiations in progress to procure his freedom: whereupon he procured it for himself, one night, by breaking jail. Going straight to his own home, he found there the Alcalde—and incontinently killed him.

That one killing that Don Juan Manuel certainly did commit—out of which, probably, has come the legend of his many murders—created, because of the high estate of all concerned in it, a deplorable scandal: that the Audiencia—while resolved to bring Don Juan to justice—sought to allay by hushing up, so far as was possible, the whole affair. The Duque de Escalona, the new Viceroy (1640-1642), was at one with the Audiencia in its hushing-up policy; but was determined—for reasons of his own which are unrecorded—that Don Juan should not be executed. So, for a considerable period of time, during which Don Juan remained in prison, the matter rested. The

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event seems to imply that the Audiencia accomplished its stern purpose, as opposed to the lenient purpose of the Viceroy, by means as informal as they were effective. Certainly, on a morning in October, 1641, precisely as described in the legend, Don Juan Manuel was found hanging dead on the gallows in front of the Capilla de la Espiración. Señor Obregón concludes the historical portion of his narrative in these words: "The Oidores, whose orders it is reasonable to suppose brought about that dark deed, attributed it to the angels—but there history ends and legend begins."



DOORWAY, HOUSE OF DON JUAN MANUEL

Somewhere in the course of my readings—I cannot remember where—I have come upon the seriously made suggestion that Don Juan Manuel practically was a bravo: that the favors which he received from the Viceroy were his payment for putting politically obnoxious persons out of the way. This specious explanation does account for his traditional many murders, but is not in accord with probability. Aside from the fact that bravos rarely are men of rank and wealth, a series of murders traceable to political motives during the Viceregal term of the Marqués de Cadereita—whose many enemies keenly were alive to his misdoings—almost certainly would be found, but is not found, recorded in the chronicles of his time. Such omission effectively puts this picturesque explanation of Don Juan's doings out of court.

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NOTE II

LEGEND OF THE ALTAR DEL PERDON

Simon Peyrens, a Flemish painter, came to Mexico in the suite of the third Viceroy (1566-1568) Don Gastón de Peralta, Marqués de Falces. If he painted—and, presumably, he did paint—a Virgin of Mercy for the Altar del Perdon, his picture has disappeared: doubtless having been removed from the altar when the present Cathedral (begun, 1573; dedicated, though then incomplete, 1656) replaced the primitive structure erected a few years after the Conquest. The Virgin of the Candelaria on the existing Altar del Perdon was painted by Baltasar de Echave, the

Elder; a Spanish artist of eminence who came to Mexico about the end of the sixteenth century. Peyrens certainly had the opportunity to do his work under conditions akin to, but decidedly more unpleasant than, those set forth in the legend: as Señor Obregón has made clear by producing facts which exhibit the afflictions of that unfortunate artist; and which also, incidentally, account for the appearance in Mexico of a miracle-story that in varying forms is found in the saintly chronicles of many lands.

Señor Obregón's source is an original document of the time of Fray Alonso de Montúfar; a Dominican brother who was the second Archbishop of Mexico (1554-1572), and who also held the office of Inquisitor—in accordance with the custom that obtained until the formal establishment (1571) of the Inquisition in Mexico. It was before him, therefore, as represented by his Provisor, that the case of Peyrens was brought.

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As stated in this document, Peyrens had declared in familiar talk with friends that simple incontinence was not a sin; and he farther had declared that he liked to paint portraits, and that he did not like to, and would not, paint saints nor pictures of a devotional sort. His friends admonished him that his views in regard to incontinence made him liable to arraignment before the ecclesiastical authorities; whereupon—seemingly seeking, as a measure of prudence, to forestall by his own confession any charge that might be brought against him—he "denounced himself," on September 10, 1568, to Fray Bartolomé de Ledesma, Gobernador de la Mitra. As the result of his confession—instead of being granted the absolution that he obviously expected to receive—he was arrested and cast into prison.

Four days later, September 14th, he was examined formally. To the questions propounded to him, he replied, in substance: That he had been born in Antwerp, the son of Fero Peyrens and of Constanza Lira his wife; that he was not of Jewish descent; that none of his family had been dealt with by the Inquisition; that in his early manhood he had gone to Lisbon and later to Toledo, where the Court then was seated, to practice his profession as a painter; that he had come to New Spain, in the suite of the Viceroy, in the hope of bettering his fortunes. In regard to the charges against him, he explained: That what he had said about the sinlessness of simple incontinence had been spoken lightly in friendly talk, and, moreover, very well might have been misunderstood because of his imperfect knowledge of the Spanish tongue; and that what he had said about liking to paint portraits and not being willing to paint saints had been said only because portrait-painting was the better paid. His trial followed: at which nothing more was produced against him—although a number of witnesses, including "many painters," were interrogated—than the facts brought out in his own examination.

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In order to force from Peyrens himself a fuller and more incriminating confession, the Provisor, Don Estéban de Portillo, ordered that he should be "submitted to the test of torture." This test was applied on December 1st—when Peyrens "supported three turns of the rack and swallowed three jars of water dripped into his mouth by a linen rag," without modifying or enlarging his previous declarations. By the rules of the game—he having, in the jargon of the Inquisition, "conquered his torment"—the proceedings against him then should have ended. Mr. Lea, commenting on his case ("The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependencies," p. 198), writes: "This ought to have earned his dismissal, but on December 4th he was condemned to pay the costs of his trial and to give security that he would not leave the City until he should have painted a picture of Our Lady of Merced, as an altar-piece for the church. He complied, and it was duly hung in the Cathedral."

I have not found—seemingly, Mr. Lea did find—a record of the actual painting of the picture. The sentence passed on Peyrens is given in full by Señor Obregón—in archaic Spanish, whereof much of the queer flavor evaporates in translation—and is as follows:

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"In the criminal plea now pending before me, preferred by the Holy Office against simon peireins fleming held in the prison of this Arcobispado in regard to the words which the said simon peireins spoke and on which he has been prosecuted, on the acts and merits of this case it is found that for the crime committed by simon peyrens using him with equity and mercy I condemn him to paint at his own cost an altar-piece (retablo) of our lady of mercy for this holy church [the Cathedral] very devout and to me pleasing, and that in the interim while he is painting this altar-piece he shall not leave this city under penalty of being punished with all rigor as one disobedient to the mandates of the holy office, and I admonish and command the said simon peireins that from this time forth he shall not speak such words as those for the speaking of which he has been arrested nor shall he question any matters touching our holy catholic faith under penalty of being rigorously punished and in addition I condemn him to pay the costs of this trial, and this is my definitive sentence so judging and I pronounce and order it in and by this writing

El D^{or} Estevan de Portillo

"In Mexico the fourth of december of the year one thousand five hundred and sixty eight was given and pronounced this definitive sentence of the above tenor by the aforesaid sor doctor barbosa (*sic*) provisor and vicar general of this Archbishopric of Mexico in the presence of me joan de avendaño apostolic notary public and of the audiencia of this Archbishopric of mexico witnesses el bachiller villagomez and juan

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The ancient record ends with the statement that this sentence was communicated to Peyrens on the day that it was pronounced, and that he "consented and did consent" with it—*y dixo que consentía y consentió*.

NOTE III

LEGEND OF THE ADUANA DE STO. DOMINGO

Carved over an arch half-way up the main stairway of the ex-Aduana—the building no longer is used as a custom-house—still may be read Don Juan's acrostic inscription that sets forth the initials of Doña Sara de García Somera y Acuña, the lady for whom he so furiously toiled:

Siendo prior del Consulado el coronel Dⁿ Juan Gutierrez Rubin de Celis, caballero del Orden de Sⁿtiago, y consules Dⁿ Garza de Alvarado del mismo Orden, y Dⁿ Lucas Serafin Chacon, se acabó la fabrica de esta Aduana en 28 de Junio de 1731.

NOTE IV

LEGEND OF THE CALLE DE LA CRUZ VERDE

Señor Arellano has documented the legend of the Green Cross by adding to his sympathetic version of it the following note: "Some years ago I saw in either the church of San Miguel or the church of San Pablo, set aside in a corner, a bronze tablet that once had rested upon a tomb. On it was the inscription, 'Doña María de Aldarafuente Lara y Segura de Manrique. Agosto 11 de 1573 años. R.I.P.'; and beneath the inscription was a large Latin cross. Probably the tablet was melted up. When I went to look for it, later, it was not to be found."

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This record testifies to the truth of the pretty legend to the extent that it proves that the hero and the heroine of it were real people, and that their wedding really took place; and it also testifies to the melancholy fact—since Don Alvaro came to Mexico in the train of the Viceroy Don Gastón de Peralta, whose entry into the Capital was made on September 17, 1566—that their wedded life lasted less than seven years. The once stately but now shabby house whereon the cross is carved is in what anciently was a dignified quarter of the City; and the niche for a saint, vacant now, above the cross is one of the characteristics of the old houses in which people of condition lived. The cross is unique. No other house in the City is ornamented in this way.

NOTE V

LEGEND OF THE MUJER HERRADA

Doubtless this legend has for its foundation an ancient real scandal: that—being too notorious to be hushed up—of set purpose was given to the public in a highly edifying way. Certainly, the story seems to have been put in shape by the clerics—the class most interested in checking such open abuses—with the view of driving home a deterrent moral by exhibiting so exemplary a punishment of sin.

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Substantially as in the popular version that I have used in my text, Don Francisco Sedano (circa 1760) tells the story in his delightful "Noticias de México"—a gossiping chronicle that, on the dual ground of kindly credulity and genial inaccuracy, cannot be commended in too warm terms.

"In the years 1670-1680, as I have verified," Sedano writes, "there happened in this City of Mexico a formidable and fearful matter"; and without farther prelude he tells the story practically as I have told it, but in much plainer language, until he reaches the climax: when the priest and the blacksmith try to awaken the woman that she may enjoy the joke with them. Thence he continues: "When a second call failed to arouse her they looked at her more closely, and found that she was dead; and then, examining her still more closely, they found nailed fast to her hands and to her feet the four iron shoes. Then they knew that divine justice thus had afflicted her, and that the two blacks were demons. Being overcome with horror, and not knowing what course to follow in a situation so terrible, they agreed to go together for counsel to Dr. Don Francisco Ortiz, cura of the parish church of Santa Catarina; and him they brought back with them. On their return, they found already in the house Father José Vidal, of the Company of Jesus, and with him a Carmelite monk who also had been summoned. [By whom summoned is not told.] All of them together examining the woman, they saw that she had a bit in her mouth [the iron shoes on her

hands and feet are not mentioned] and that on her body were the welts left by the blows which the demons had given her when they took her to be shod in the form of a mule. The three aforesaid [the Cura, Father Vidal, and the Carmelite] then agreed that the woman should be buried in a pit, that they then dug, within the house; and that upon all concerned in the matter should be enjoined secrecy. The terrified priest, trembling with fear, declared that he would change his life—and so left the house, and never appeared again."

Sedano documents the story with facts concerning the reputable clerics concerned in it, writing: "Dr. Ortiz, cura de Santa Catarina, being internally moved [by what he had seen] to enter into religion, entered the Company of Jesus; wherein he continued, greatly esteemed and respected, until his death at the age of eighty-four years. He referred always to this case with amazement. A memoir of Father José Vidal, celebrated for his virtues and for his preaching, was written by Father Juan Antonio de Oviedo, of the Company of Jesus, and was printed in the College of San Yldefonso in the year 1752. In that memoir, chapter viii, p. 41, this case is mentioned; a record of it having been found among the papers of Father Vidal." Sedano adds that he himself heard the case referred to in a Lenten sermon preached by a Jesuit Father in the church of the Profesa in the year 1760.



NO. 7 PUERTA FALSA DE SANTO DOMINGO

Sedano farther writes: "In the Calle de las Rejas de la Balvanera is a casa de vecindad [tenement house] that formerly was called the Casa del Pujabante: because a pujabante and tenazos [farrier's knife and pincers] were carved on the stone lintel of the doorway. This carving I have seen many times. It was said to mark the house in which the blacksmith lived, in memory of the shoeing of the woman there. The house [the site is that of the present No. 5] has been repaired and the carving has been obliterated. In the street of the Puerta Falsa de Santo Domingo, along the middle of which anciently ran a ditch, facing the Puerta Falsa, was an old tumble-down house [the site is that of the present No. 7] wherein lived, as I was told by an antiquarian friend, the priest and the woman. This is probable: because Father Vidal tells that the house was near the parish church of Santa Catarina; and for that reason Dr. Ortiz, the cura of that church, would be likely to make notes of an occurrence in his own parish."

NOTE VI

LEGEND OF THE ACCURSED BELL

This legend affords an interesting example of folk-growth. As told by Señor Obregón, the story simply is of a church bell "in a little town in Spain" that, being possessed by a devil, rang in an unseemly fashion without human aid; and for that sin was condemned to have its tongue torn out and to be banished to Mexico. As told by Señor Arellano, the story begins with armor that was devil-possessed because worn by the devil-possessed Gil de Marcadante. This armor is recast into a cross wherein the devils are held prisoners and harmless; the cross is recast into a bell of which the loosed devils have possession—and from that point the story goes on as before. As told in verse by Señor Juan de Dios Peza, the armor is devil-forged to start with; and is charged still more strongly with devilishness by being worn in succession by an Infidel and by a wicked feudal lord before it comes to Gil de Marcadante—from whose possession of it the story continues as before.

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A fourth, wholly Spanish, version of this legend is found in Becquer's *La Cruz del Diablo*. In this version the armor belongs in the beginning to one Señor del Segre, whose cruelties lead to a revolt of his vassals that ends in his death and in the burning of his castle—amid the ruins of which the armor remains hanging on a fire-blackened pillar. In time, bandits make their lair in the ruined castle. While a hot dispute over their leadership is in progress among them the armor detaches itself from the pillar and stalks into the midst of the wrangling company. From behind the closed visor a voice declares that their leader is found. Under that leadership the bandits commit all manner of atrocities. Again the country folk rally to fight for their lives. Many of the bandits are killed, but the leader is scatheless. Swords and lances pass through the armor without injuring him. In the blaze of burning dwellings the armor becomes white-hot, but he is unharmed. A wise hermit counsels exorcism. With this spiritual weapon the devil-leader is overcome and captured; and within the armor they find—nothing at all! In true folk-story fashion the narrative rambles on with details of the escape and recapture of the devil-armor "a hundred times." In the end, following again the wise hermit's counsel, the armor is cast into a furnace; and then, being melted, is refounded—to the accompaniment of diabolical shrieks and groans of agony—into a cross. A curious and distinctive feature of this version is that the devils imprisoned in the cross retain their power for evil. Prayers made before that cross bring down curses; criminals resort to it; in its neighborhood is peril of death by violence to honest men. So leaving the matter, Becquer's story ends. The scene of these marvels is the town of Bellver, on the river Segre, close under the southern slope of the Pyrenees.^[10]

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Señor Obregón gives what is known of the bell's history in Mexico. It was of "medium size"; the hanger in the shape of an imperial crown supported by two lions; on one side, in relief, the two-headed eagle holding in its talons the arms of Austria; on the other side a Calvario—Christ, St. John, the Virgin; near the lip, the words "Salve Regina," and the legend: "Maese Rodrigo me fecit 1530." From the unknown time of its arrival in Mexico until the last quarter of the eighteenth century it reposed idly in one of the corridors of the Palace. There it was found by the Viceroy (1789-1794) the Conde de Revillagigedo; and by that very energetic personage, to whom idleness of any sort was abhorrent, promptly was set to work. In accordance with his orders, it was hung in a bell-gable, over the central doorway of the Palace, directly above the clock; and in that position it remained, very honestly doing its duty as a clock-bell, for more than seventy years. During the period of the French intervention, in December, 1867, a new bell was installed in place of it and orders were given that it should be melted down—possibly, though Señor Obregón gives no information on this point, to be recast into cannon, along with the many church bells that went that way in Mexico at about that time. Whatever may have been planned in regard to its transmutation did not come off—because the liquid metal became refractory and could not be recast. As this curious statement of fact has an exceptional interest in the case of a bell with so bad a record, I repeat it in Señor Obregón's own words: "*Entonces se mandó fundirla; mas al verificarlo se descompuso el metal!*"

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NOTE VII

LEGEND OF THE CALLEJÓN DEL PADRE LECUONA

By a natural confusion of the name of the street in which the dead man was confessed with the name of the priest who heard his confession, this legend frequently is told nowadays as relating not to Padre Lanza but to Padre Lecuona. An old man whom I met in the Callejón del Padre Lecuona, when I was making search for the scene of the confession, told me the story in that way—and pointed out the house to me in all sincerity. Following that telling, I so mixed the matter myself in my first publication of the legend. Who Padre Lecuona was, or why the street was named after him, I have not discovered. Probably still another legend lurks there. Señor Riva Palacio tells the story as of an unnamed friar "whom God now holds in his glory," and assigns it to the year 1731. The motive of the story is found in Spain long before the oldest date assigned to it in Mexico. The wicked hero of Calderon's play, *La devocion de la Cruz*, is permitted to purge his sinful soul by confession after death. The Padre Lanza whose name has been tacked fast to the

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story—probably because his well-known charitable ministrations to the poor made him a likely person to yield to the old woman's importunities—was a real man who lived in the City of Mexico, greatly loved and respected, in the early years of the nineteenth century. Señor Roa Bárcena fixes the decade 1820-1830 as the date of his strange adventure with a dead body in which was a living soul.



WHERE THE DEAD MAN WAS CONFESSED

Aside from minor variants, two distinct versions of this legend are current. That which I have given in my text is the more popular. The other, less widely known, has for its scene an old house in the Calle de Olmedo—nearly a mile away from the Callejón del Padre Lecuona, and in a far more ancient quarter of the City. Concisely stated, the Calle de Olmedo version is to this effect:

Brother Mendo, a worthy and kind-hearted friar, is met of a dark night in the street by a man who begs him to come and hear a dying person confess. The friar wears the habit of his Order, and from his girdle hangs his rosary. He is led to a house near by; and finds within the house a very beautiful woman, richly clad in silks, whose arms are bound. That she is not in a dying state is obvious, and the friar asks for an explanation. For answer, the man tells him roughly: "This woman is about to die by violence. I must give her death. As you please, wash clean her sinful soul—or leave it foul!" At that, he yields, and her confession begins. It is so prolonged that the man, losing patience, ends it abruptly by thrusting forth the friar from the house. Through the closed door he hears shrieks and tries to re-enter; but the door remains closed firmly, and his knocking is unheeded. He finds that his rosary no longer is at his girdle. In order to recover it, and to allay his fears for the woman's safety, he calls a watchman to aid him by demanding in the name of the law that the door shall be opened. No response is made from within to their violent knocking; and an old woman, aroused by it, comes out from a nearby dwelling and tells them that knocking there is useless—that through all her long lifetime she has lived beside that house, and that never through all her long lifetime has that house been inhabited. The watchman—holding his lantern close to the door, and so perceiving that what she tells is verified by the caked dust that fills its crevices and that clogs its key-hole—is for abandoning their attempt to enter. The friar insists that they must enter: that his rosary is within the house; that he is determined to recover it; that the door must be forced. Yielding to him, the watchman forces the door and together they enter: to find a yellowed skeleton upon the floor; scattered around it scraps of mouldering silk; in the eye-sockets of the skull cobwebs—and lying across that yellowed skeleton is the friar's rosary! Brother Mendo covers his face with his hands, totters for a moment, and then falls dying as he exclaims in horror: "Holy God! I have confessed a soul from the other life!" And the crowd of neighbors, by that time assembled, cries out: "Brother Mendo is dead because he has confessed the dead!"

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NOTE VIII

LEGEND OF THE LIVING SPECTRE

The theme of this legend—the transportation by supernatural means of a living person from one part of the world to another—is among the most widely distributed of folk-story motives. In *The Arabian Nights*—to name an easily accessible work of reference—it is found repeatedly in varying forms. In Irving's *Alhambra* a version of it is given—"Governor Manco and the Old Soldier"—that has a suggestive resemblance to the version of my text. Distinction is given to the Mexican story, however, by its presentment by serious historians in association with, and as an incident of, an

otherwise well-authenticated historical tragedy.

That Don Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, Governor of the Filipinas, did have his head badly split open, and died of it, in the Molucca Islands, on the 25th of October in the year 1593, and that on that same day announcement of his so-painful ending was made in the City of Mexico, are statements of natural and of supernatural fact which equally rest upon authority the most respectable: as appears from Señor Obregón's documentation of the legend, that I here present in a condensed form.

Guarded testimony in support of the essential marvel of the story is found in a grave historical work of the period, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, written by the learned Dr. Antonio de Morga, a Judge of the Criminal Court of the Royal Audiencia and sometime legal adviser (*consultor*) to the Holy Office in New Spain. This eminent personage notes as a curious fact that the news of the murder of Don Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas was known on the Plaza Mayor of the City of Mexico on the very day that the murder occurred; but adds—his legal caution seemingly disposing him to hedge a little—that he is ignorant of the means by which the news was brought.

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Without any hedging whatever, Fray Gaspar de San Agustin, in his *Conquista de las Islas Philipinas* (Madrid, 1698), tells the whole story in a whole-hearted way. According to Fray Gaspar, there arrived in Manila about the year 1593, Don Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas being at that time Governor, ambassadors sent by the King of Cambodia—one of them a Portuguese named Diego Belloso, and the other a Spaniard named Antonio Barrientes—whose mission was to ask the assistance of the Spaniards in repelling an invasion of Cambodia, then threatened by the King of Siam. As a present from the King to the Governor, the embassy brought "two beautiful elephants (*dos hermosos elefantes*), which were the first ever seen in Manila."

Don Gómez Pérez promised readily the assistance asked for; but with the intention of using a pretended expedition to Cambodia as a cloak for a real expedition to seize the Moluccas. To this end he assembled an armada, made up of four galleys and of attendant smaller vessels, on which he embarked a considerable military force; and, along with the soldiers, certain "notable persons and venerable religious." His preparations being completed, he sailed from Manila on October 17, 1593. A week later, the capitana galley, having on board the Governor, was separated from the fleet by a storm and was driven to take shelter in the harbor of Punta de Azufre: to make which haven the two hundred and fifty Chinese rowers were kept at their work with so cruel a rigor, the climax of other cruelties, that they determined to mutiny. Accordingly, on the night of their arrival, October 25th, "putting on white tunics that they might know each other in the darkness," they rose against the Spaniards and murdered every one of them—the Governor, as he came forth from his cabin, having "his head half split open"—and tossed their dead bodies overboard into the sea.

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Fray Gaspar points out that Don Gómez Pérez came to that bad end as a just reward from heaven, because on various occasions he arrogantly had "contended and disputed" with the Bishop of the Filipinas; and in support of this view of the matter he declares that the Governor's deserved murder "was announced in Manila and in Mexico by supernatural signs." In Manila the announcement was symbolical: "On the very day of his killing there opened in the wall [of the Convent of San Agustin] on which his portrait was painted a crack that corresponded precisely with the splitting of his skull." Of the other announcement, that described in the legend, he writes in these assured terms: "It is worthy of deep ponderation that on the very same day on which took place the tragedy of Gómez Pérez that tragedy was known in Mexico by the art of Satan: who, making use of some women inclined to such agilities (*algunas mujeres inclinadas á semejantes agilidades*), caused them to transplant to the Plaza Mayor of the City of Mexico a soldier standing guard on the walls of Manila; and this was accomplished so unfelt by the soldier that in the morning—when he was found walking sentry, musket in hand, in that city—he asked of those who addressed him in what city he was. By the Holy Office it was ordered that he should be sent back to these islands: where many who knew him have assured me of the truth of this event."

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Señor Obregón's comment, at once non-committal and impartial, on Fray Gaspar's narrative admits of no improvement. I give it in his own words: "In the face of the asseveration of so brainy a chronicler (*un cronista tan sesudo*) we neither trump nor discard (*no ponemos ni quitamos rey*"); to which he adds a jingle advising the critical that he gives the story as it was given to him:

"Y si lector, dijeres, ser comento,
Como me lo contaron te lo cuento."

NOTE IX

LEGEND OF LA LLORONA

This legend is not, as all of the other legends are, of Spanish-Mexican origin: it is wholly Mexican—a direct survival from primitive times. Seemingly without perceiving—certainly without noting—the connection between an Aztec goddess and this the most widely distributed of all Mexican folk-stories, Señor Orozco y Berra wrote:

"The Tloque Nahuaque [Universal Creator] created in a garden a man and a woman who were the

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progenitors of the human race.... The woman was called Cihuacoatl, 'the woman snake,' 'the female snake'; Tititl, 'our mother,' or 'the womb whence we were born'; Teoyaominqui, 'the goddess who gathers the souls of the dead'; and Quilaztli, implying that she bears twins. She appears dressed in white, bearing on her shoulder a little cradle, as though she were carrying a child; and she can be heard sobbing and shrieking. This apparition was considered a bad omen." Referring to the same goddess, Fray Bernardino de Sahagun thus admonished (circa 1585) the Mexican converts to Christianity: "Your ancestors also erred in the adoration of a demon whom they represented as a woman, and to whom they gave the name of Cioacoatl. She appeared clad as a lady of the palace [clad in white?]. She terrified (*espantada*), she frightened (*asombraba*), and cried aloud at night." It is evident from these citations that La Llorona is a stray from Aztec mythology; an ancient powerful goddess living on—her power for evil lessened, but still potent—into modern times.

She does not belong especially to the City of Mexico. The belief in her—once confined to, and still strongest in, the region primitively under Aztec domination—now has become localized in many other places throughout the country. This diffusion is in conformity with the recognized characteristic of folk-myths to migrate with those who believe in them; and in the case of La Llorona reasonably may be traced to the custom adopted by the Conquistadores of strengthening their frontier settlements by planting beside them settlements of loyal Aztecs: who, under their Christian veneering, would hold to—as to this day the so-called Christian Indians of Mexico hold to—their old-time faith in their old-time gods.

Being transplanted, folk-myths are liable to modification by a new environment. The Fiery Cow of the City of Mexico, for instance, not improbably is a recasting of the Basque vaca de lumbre; or, possibly, of the goblin horse, El Belludo, of Grenada—who comes forth at midnight from the Siete Suelos tower of the Alhambra and scours the streets pursued by a pack of hell-hounds. But in her migrations, while given varying settings, La Llorona has remained unchanged. Always and everywhere she is the same: a woman clad in white who by night in lonely places goes wailing for her lost children; a creature of evil from whom none who hold converse with her may escape alive.

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Don Vicente Riva Palacio's metrical version of this legend seems to be composite: a blending of the primitive myth with a real tragedy of Viceregal times. Introductorily, he tells that for more than two hundred years a popular tale has been current in varying forms of a mysterious woman, clad in white, who runs through the streets of the City at midnight uttering wailings so keen and so woful that whoever hears them swoons in a horror of fear. Then follows the story: Luisa, the Wailer, in life was a woman of the people, very beautiful. By her lover, Don Muño de Montes Claros, she had three children. That he might make a marriage with a lady of his own rank, he deserted her. Through a window of his house she saw him at his marriage feast; and then sped homeward and killed—with a dagger that Don Muño had left in her keeping—her children as they lay sleeping. Her white garments all spattered with their blood, she left her dead children and rushed wildly through the streets of the City—shrieking in the agony of her sorrow and her sin. In the end, "a great crowd gathered to see a woman garroted because she had killed her three children"; and on that same day "a grand funeral procession" went with Don Muño to his grave. And it is this Luisa who goes shrieking at night through the streets of the City even now.

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My friend Gilberto Cano is my authority for the version of the legend—the popular version—that I have given in my text. It seems to me to preserve, in its awed mystery and in its vague fearsomeness, the very feeling with which the malignant Aztec goddess assuredly was regarded in primitive times.

THE END

FOOTNOTES:

[1] See [Note I.](#)

[2] See [Note II.](#)

[3] See [Note III.](#)

[4] See [Note IV.](#)

[5] See [Note V.](#)

[6] See [Note VI.](#)

[7] See [Note VII.](#)

[8] See [Note VIII.](#)

[9] See [Note IX.](#)

[10] "La Cruz del Diablo," with other stories of a like sort by Becquer, all very well worth reading, may be read in English in the accurate translation recently made by Cornelia Frances Bates and Katharine Lee Bates under the title *Romantic Legends of Spain* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.); and in the original Spanish, with the assistance of scholarly notes and a vocabulary, in the collection prepared for class use by Dr. Everett Ward Olmsted under the English title *Legends and Poems by Gustavo Adolfo Becquer* (Boston, Ginn & Co.).



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Minor typographical errors have been corrected without note. Irregularities and inconsistencies in the text have been retained as printed.

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The list of drawings is incorrect. There is no drawing in the book for LEGEND OF THE CALLE DEL PUENTE DEL CLÉRIGO *Facing p.* 14, but the reference to it has been left in place.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LEGENDS OF THE CITY OF MEXICO ***

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