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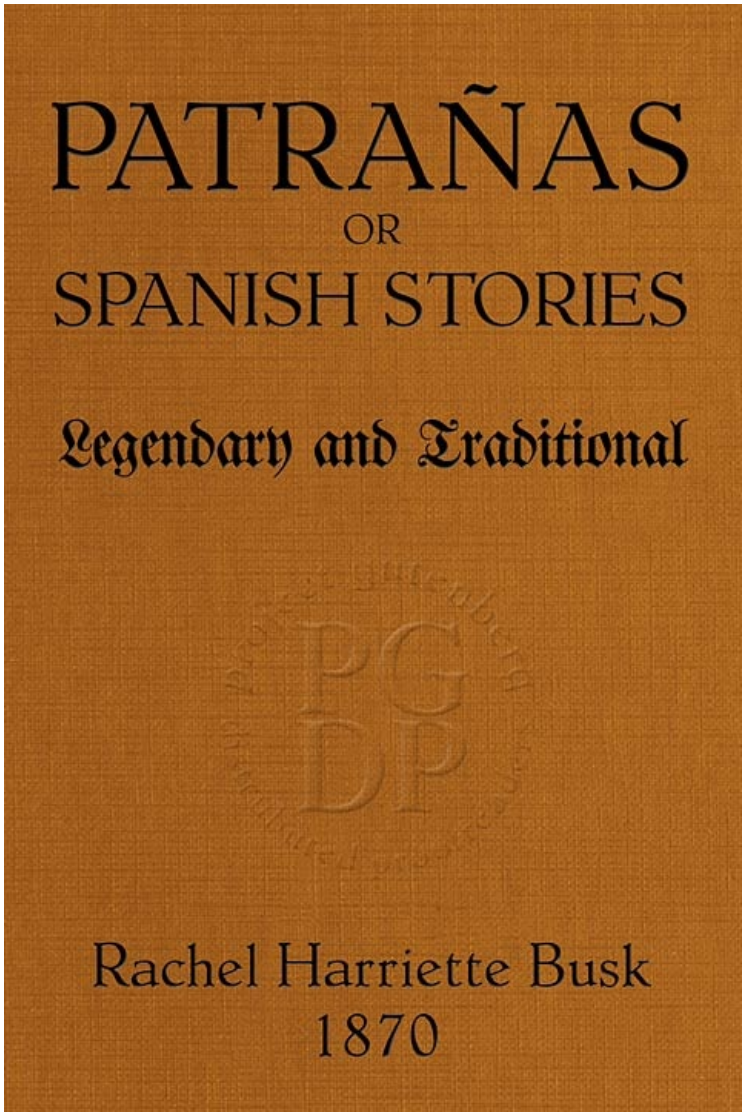

PATRAÑAS;

OR

SPANISH STORIES,

Legendary and Traditional.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "TRADITIONS OF TIROL."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY E. H. CORBOULD.

LONDON:
GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,
SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERY AND HARRIS,
CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.
MDCCCLXX.

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INTRODUCTION.

You will often have it said to you, when smarting under a disappointment, "Never mind! it is all for the best!" I dare say you are sometimes inclined to doubt the truth of this maxim; I remember when I was a child I did, but I have found out in life, that it does very often prove true. And if you like, I will tell you one instance in which this was the case.

In the course of one of my rambles in Spain it happened one day that I was tempted by an old longing to make acquaintance with one of her most out-of-the-way and primitive villages, to separate from my party at the comfortable hotel at C —— and make my way with only one young companion to a place some five miles west, called Guadaxox, a name which I dare say in your longest geography lesson you have never been called on to pronounce; and you would find it no easy matter to do so, unless I wrote it for you thus: *Guadakquoth*.

[2]

Five miles' walk through the clear bright air of Spain, and the fresh spring breeze charged with all the perfume from the mountains, is a pleasant prospect enough; and as I can usually adapt myself to any quarters which may fall to my lot on a march, I had little fear of not being sufficiently rested to perform the return journey easily before sunset. My companion was a hearty lad of fourteen, who had joined us for his Easter vacation from Eton, and the prospect proposed even less difficulties to him.

I think you would be amused with our little adventures by the way through a country in which every outline of foreground or horizon, every tree and plant, every beast or fowl, every implement of husbandry, every article of dress of the people, every individual thing you meet, will probably prove new to an English eye. But I must not dwell on these things now. I will only tell you that we had such a bright and pleasant day as I have hardly ever known out of Spain; that we found so much to sketch and so much to interest us altogether, that we never noticed how the time passed, nor how the wind from the mountains had covered the fair sky with angry clouds. It was only when the first great drops of the storm patted us on the shoulder that we realized the extent of our difficulty. We looked at the banks of clouds and then at each other, for we each felt there was little chance of holding up that evening, and if it did, some of the mountain paths we had to traverse would be rendered too slippery by the torrent to be pleasant, not to say safe, for our lowland-bred feet.

[3]

It was a *contretemps* which disconcerted us not a little; but we turned with what courage remained to see after a shelter for the night. Time forbids me to describe the only *venta*, or inn, the place boasted, it will suffice to say it wanted for *every* comfort. It only expected to have hardy peasants to house who would not object to the earthen floor or the companionship of pigs and fowls in their slumbers. My Eton companion thought it rather manly to roll himself up in his great coat and compose himself to sleep on a board sloped from a low bench on to the floor. For myself I preferred sitting up, and established myself bravely in a chair, having previously taken the precaution to replenish the lamp. The first stage of weariness was just coming on when the door, which there was no means of locking, was thrown rudely open, and a couple of rough carters were ushered in to take up their quarters in the same apartment. I remonstrated at the intrusion without success, [4] and something of an altercation ensued, in the midst of which another door, which I had not before noticed, was opened by a lady in black, who beckoned me into her room. I followed her, glad of an escape, but with a misgiving, lest I had not mended the matter. At first sight I had felt inclined to set her down as “an old hag;” but as she talked I saw intelligent benevolence in her dark eye, and traced remnants of early beauty in her shrivelled countenance. We were soon friends. She was travelling from place to place with her daughter, who supported them both by her exertions on the stage; she had gone on with friends to another village that evening, so her bed was free; it did not look inviting, and I excused myself as delicately as I could. She had the tact not to press the matter; and we continued sitting up, talking about the customs and legends of the people, a matter in which the old lady was well versed, and which had always had a special charm for me. She was delighted to have some one who would listen to her “long yarn;” and I was delighted to have found a source at which to satisfy some of my curiosity about Spanish Traditions.

The next day, as I sat in the hotel at C—— writing down the substance of what she had told me, and which I have embodied in the following collection of tales, I could not help saying to myself, “Well, it was all for the best. I thought that storm a great [5] annoyance yesterday, but it has procured me an acquaintance with the very subjects after which I had had many fruitless researches before.”

The store thus begun has been added to since in many various ways which I will not detain you by narrating, as I sincerely hope you are anxious to plunge into them, and still more that they will answer your expectations and entertain you as they did me.

I dare say they will seem to you at first very like other stories you have read, but if you follow them attentively you will trace many singular national characteristics. One in particular to which I would call your attention is the spirit of humour of which the Spanish and particularly the Andalusian people are so fond. This will sometimes lead them to what we should be inclined to consider irreverence; but it is nothing of the sort with them; and if you find them speaking with playfulness on a sacred subject[1], it is because such a vein of faith underlies all they say that the notion of being irreverent never occurs to them. [6]

1 The Story “Where One may Dine Two may Dine” is a particular illustration of this. ↑

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CARLO MAGNO AND THE GIANT.

Many tales of Spain are full of memories of Charlemagne. It is strange that history says comparatively little of his doings there; but his was a character such as the Spanish Romancers were sure to seize, and, with their habit of heaping all perfections on their heroes, ascribe to him all manner of fabulous achievements. Here is one of the exploits they tell of him:—

One of the Moorish kings, who sought his alliance in the internecine turmoils in which the chiefs of their race were at the time engaged, had an only and beautiful daughter, the apple of his eye, who was guarded with jealous care, indulged in every wish, waited on by the most beautiful maidens in a fairy-like palace, and suffered to know nothing of her father’s wars and dangers. Life seemed all smoothness and pleasure to her; and every one, who at any time met her eye, made it their delight to obey her faintest sign.

But life passed even amid continual sunshine, flowers, and harmony may become [7] monotonous. When the Moorish princess had had fifteen years of it, she began to seek some pleasure newer and more exciting. Her fond father, only glad to hear her express a wish, that he might have the satisfaction of gratifying it, promised to

give her a fresh diversion such as she had never before seen.

For this purpose he ordered a great *fête*, and chose out all the mightiest men of his forces, to perform feats of arms and mock combats before her.

The princess, who had never witnessed any combat more serious than that of her pet doves, was delighted beyond measure with the new sensation, and thought she could never tire of seeing the brave horsemen contend; dealing each other such heavy blows, and all the while seeming so indifferent to danger. Nevertheless the time came when the sameness of these shows struck her too, and she began to crave for something newer yet.

The king then ordered that valiant men out of other countries should be invited to come and contend before her, each after the fashion of their own country; and many warriors of renown were content to come and display their prowess; the Moslem in the hope of winning the bright smile of the king's daughter; Christians, to have the opportunity of displaying their might before the infidel horde.

Among the strangers, but belonging to neither of these categories, came one day a [8]
powerful giant, five cubits high, who rode on a horse as tall as a house. All the mighty men of the king's army turned pale when they saw him; and the king regretted that his invitations to all comers had been so unlimited that he could find no courteous excuse for excluding him; to prefer an unfair one would have been dangerous, as his ire would have been terrible if provoked. So he received him as smilingly as his trepidation would permit; and the giant seemed a very good-natured person, too full of his own consequence to think of any thing else, even of picking a quarrel with any one.

He challenged every one to fight with him, but no one would venture; and this testimony to his might put him in still better humour. Then he showed off all his feats of strength, to the great delight of the court, and of none more than the princess, who was so astonished at the prodigies he rehearsed, that she leant out from her balcony, and suffered the veil to blow away from her face.

The giant happened to be looking towards her at the moment, and that moment sufficed to make him fall in love with her. For the rest of the day he exhibited his surprising strength with renewed energy; but the evening was no sooner come, than he stole up to her window, which, though it was in a very high tower of the *alcázar*[1], was just at a convenient height for his head to reach as he stood upon the [9]
ground. Putting his face against the lattice, he whispered very softly that he must speak to her. The poor little princess was dreadfully frightened, and could not guess what he wanted, but thought it would not be dignified to show any fear; so she went near enough to the window to be heard by him, and asked him his pleasure. The giant told her that he loved her, and she must marry him. The princess was dreadfully terrified when she heard this, for she knew she had no possible means of resisting him if he chose to carry her off by force; and she reflected, too, that her father himself would have very little chance if he attempted to fight him: and what a dreadful thing it would be if he should kill her father—her dear father, who was so fond of her! Yet in the fright she was in, she could think of no better stratagem than to stammer forth that he must give her time to think about it.

The giant was not very dissatisfied with this reply, and promised he would leave her quite to herself till the next day. All that night, and all the next day, the little princess thought and thought of what excuse she could make; but she could think of nothing but to ask him to give her another day; and then again she sat and thought, and no invention would come: and she durst not tell, her father, lest he should in his indignation challenge the giant to fight, and be killed by him. But [10]
when he came the third time, and she could still think of no stratagem for getting rid of him, she was obliged to tell him plainly that she could not make up her mind to marry him.

At first the giant tried all sorts of clumsy persuasions and entreaties; but the maiden held firm; and at last, finding she would not yield, he grew fiercely angry, seized the alcázar by the roof, and made it rock backwards and forwards, tore up the trees, and threw them on the ground, and stamped upon the soil with a noise like peals of thunder. The poor little princess was so terrified she hardly knew what was happening, only she heard him swear that he would come back and take her by a way she could not escape him; and after repeating that threat several times at length disappeared.

It was a long time before the princess came to her senses again, for she had fainted with the dire terror, and when she did, she began to wonder what the terrible trouble was which had so shattered her; by degrees the memory of the stormy scenes lately passed came back to her, but all was now so calm and still, she could hardly realize the truth of what she had gone through. It was a great

relief to find the giant was quite gone—far away; and she learnt that he lived a long, long way off, in a valley as far below the level of the plain as the height on which her father's alcázar stood was above it. She remembered, indeed, his threat that he would come back, but it seemed that it would have been so easy for him to have taken her then had he been so minded, that she could not think he was serious in the intention to carry her off at all. Why should he come back to do what he might just as well have done at once? [11]

Time passed on, and she heard no more of the giant; people left off talking of his feats of strength, and she began to forget all about him. A matter happened, too, which gave another direction to her thoughts. A neighbouring king made war upon her father, and with such overwhelming preparations, that this time he could not conceal the fact from her. Every one was full of apprehensions, and the king, distracted with the fear of losing his kingdom, had no time even to think of the fancies of his beloved daughter. The princess heard from one and another of the attendants that things were going very wrong, that the enemy were getting the upper hand, and advancing nearer and nearer; but she learnt more from their anxious looks than from their lips, for every one was afraid to distress her by giving her details of the truth.

We must now go back to the giant, whom we left marching off in no good humour. The truth about him was, that with all his strength he was not very courageous—he was more of a bully than a warrior. He had heard a great deal of the bravery and more particularly of the excellent arms of the Moors, and as he knew they would rise as one man to defend their princess if he carried her off, he did not like the idea of their making pincushions of his legs with their fine sharp swords, even if they could not reach to do him further damage. So he resolved to carry out his plan in a way which would be less fraught with danger to himself. [12]

Coming down from the alcázar, he went on to the neighbouring sovereign, and treacherously gave him a description of all he had seen at the court where he had just been staying; told him the number and situation of the army, and the condition of the defences, and pointed out the least protected points of the country by which an incursion could be made. Having received a rich guerdon for this information, he continued his way homewards, and then set all his people to work to cut a long cave, which he made them extend further and further in a sloping direction till it should come out opposite the alcázar where the Moorish princess dwelt, by means of which he could reach her unperceived, and carry her off without danger to his own skin, while the city was in the midst of the tumult which he thought would be brought about by the inroad of the inimical power he had perfidiously invoked. [13]

Various underground rumblings had been observed for some time past by the country people, but as they held little communication with each other it did not strike them that the sounds continually advanced in the direction of the capital. Indeed, all minds were too much filled with apprehensions of the destruction the advancing foe above ground was likely to reek upon their property, to have time to give way to fears of a chimerical foe in the regions below the soil.

Thus the giant worked on steadily and without hindrance, while the poor little princess was far from thinking of her tormentor otherwise than as at a safe distance; much less did she dream of his continually nearing approach! Enough she had to excite her anxiety without this. And she sat crying over her father's danger till her face became quite pale and her eyes worn with tears.

At last a day came when every one seemed bright with fresh hope; and they ran hastily enough to tell her the good news. The youthful conqueror, Carlo Magno, had been appealed to by the king to help him. His advent had entirely turned the tide of affairs: the enemy had been completely repulsed, and the victorious army was returning in triumph to the city.

The news spread like wildfire; every one hasted to deck their houses festively, and put on their best attire, to do honour to the conquerors; and when they appeared, shouted their thanks in loud acclamations. The little princess was very desirous to see the young hero who had saved her father's life; and, though it is not the custom for Moorish women to appear in public, she contrived to see him as he passed by, and thought in the silence of her heart how nice it would have been if it had been the handsome Christian who had wanted to marry her instead of the monstrous giant. Having once seen him, she was so desirous to see him again that she sent to ask him to come, that she might thank him for having saved her father's kingdom; but it was not entirely for her father's sake that she contrived the interview. [14]

When he came, however, though he was very courteous towards her, he was also very reserved, and stayed a very short time; assured her that what he had done was nothing at all; that his sword was ever ready to defend the right, whoever it might be invoked his aid; and with that took his leave without paying her any

compliments. The Moorish princess was sad when she saw him go out so; and sadder still when she learnt that no Christian prince cared to know a Moorish maid. Carlo Magno himself, however, was sorry for the poor child, as he had seen that she wanted to be better acquainted with him; but he could hold no intimacy with the unbeliever.

The giant, meantime, had gone on boring away; and, though he had now got quite [15]
under the alcázar, every one was so full of festivity and rejoicing that nobody heeded the sound of his pickaxe. On his part, he had not been altogether unmindful to listen for the sounds which might keep him informed of what was going on in the upper world, he had been very well satisfied with what he heard. There had been unmistakable clashings of battle, and he never doubted that the princess's father must be getting the worst of it; and now, when he heard the sounds of busy running to and fro in the festive palace, he made sure it was his allies pillaging the place.

At last the tunnel was complete; he crept out in the first fall of the darkness of night, threaded the familiar way up to the princess's window, rested his foot on the cornice of the first story for a stepping-stone, and with one grasp of his hand had swept her off her couch before she had time to open her eyes. Then closing her mouth, so that she might not cry and raise an alarm, walked quietly back with her to his subterranean passage, down the sloping path of which he carried her in exultation.

Quickly and silently as the feat had been performed, the keen bright eyes of a little black slave had followed the whole affair, as she lay at the foot of her mistress's couch. She had seen the huge hand spread over the room,—the nail of its little [16]
finger had indeed sadly grazed her forehead. She recognized it at once as belonging to the giant, her mistress's dread of whom she had so often shared. And no sooner was her helplessness to rescue her apparent, than she rushed madly into the banqueting-hall, tearing her clothes and plucking out her hair, and crying out in wailing accents what had befallen. It was not easy to gain credence to so strange a story; and when at last her earnestness induced belief in her sincerity, the princess's room had to be searched to afford the necessary proof that she was gone. When this was found to be indeed but too true, the wail was taken up by all the people. The banquet was broken up, and every one went hither and thither, not knowing what to do; for, withal that the giant was so big, none had seen him pass to tell which way he had gone.

But Carlo Magno, brave and self-possessed in the midst of all, saw an occasion to be of service to the poor Moorish princess, and make up for the disappointment he had caused her in the morning. It was plain to him that if the giant had stood under the window, as the little black slave had said, he must have left his foot-prints there; and that he could thence be tracked whithersoever he had gone. So he raised a loud voice, and bid all the people be still: and that if they would all remain without stirring, he would deliver their princess; for he wanted them not to [17]
stir up the soil any more, lest they should destroy the track.

The voice of Carlo Magno, after what he had already done for them, possessed great authority with the people; and so all stood quite still, while he bade the little black slave guide him to the window; and there, under it, sure enough he found the giant's footprints, two great holes in the sand, like dry tanks for water. Allowing due space for his prodigious stride, the prince readily found another and another, till they brought him to the mouth of the tunnel, where he had indeed passed. When all the people saw the great gaping hole which had never appeared there before that night, and gazed down its descending gullet, no wonder they thought it was the mouth of hell opened to vomit forth its monster.

But Carlo Magno said he would deliver the princess though his enterprise should indeed lead him into the realms of Hades. And all the people applauded his courage, but he went down the black path alone.

Though he travelled at all speed, the giant had now good start, and the length of his step was equal to several of the Christian prince's charger; but Carlo Magno made such good haste that he had not got above a hundred miles before he heard the giant's laugh, exulting over his prize, resounding through the gloomy passage, though still at some considerable distance. This roused the Christian prince's [18]
indignation, and made him urge his steed yet faster, till at last he came within sight of him. And then, when he saw his monstrous arms bearing the little helpless princess, his compassion made him use yet greater speed, till at length just as he reached the mouth of the cave, Carlo Magno managed to overstep him by one bound of his horse, and then wheeling round confronted him with fearless eye.

The giant I have already said was more of a bully than a warrior. When he saw the Christian knight so brave and firm, and withal encased in such strong armour, and brandishing his trenchant sword, he felt his best defence lay in hectoring and

boasting, and thereby frightening the Christian hero from attempting to fight him.

With a terrible voice, therefore, which made the rocks resound, he asked his opponent, on whom he lavished every startling epithet, what he meant by venturing to appear before him; following up the question by such a volley of imprecations and threats as he fancied would suffice to make him wish to escape with a whole skin.

Carlo Magno, however, who knew that the dogs who bark most bite least, waited unmoved till he had exhausted his whole repertory of violent language, and then quite undismayed summoned him to surrender the maiden. [19]

Another loud and angry volley followed upon this demand, with further threats of the terrible vengeance he intended to take on the intruder.

“Then,” said Carlo Magno, “if you will not give her up quietly, I must even take her by force.” And with that he dismounted and drew his sword. The giant saw now that he must defend his life, or he would lose it; and so, forced to fight, he drew his clumsy sword and began laying about him in right-determined fashion; but all his blows alighted far and wide of the Christian prince. Furious at finding his awkward efforts ineffectual, while the highly trained agility of the prince saved him from all his strokes, he began laying about him with such untempered violence that at last his weapon dropped from his hand. Fully expecting that Carlo Magno would try to possess himself of it, he hastily bent down to regain it. But Carlo Magno had other thoughts. Waiting calmly till the monster had bent him sufficiently low, he swung his fine sharp blade and buried it deep in his heart with the unerring dexterity with which the matador lays low his bull—at one thrust.

Of course he severed the giant’s head afterwards to bear away as his trophy; and raising the princess in his arms, who had swooned away at sight of the horrid combat, bore her swiftly upwards through the subterranean path and delivered her, yet unconscious, to her father. [20]

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1 Moorish palace. ↑

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EL CONDE SOL.

A great war was proclaimed between Spain and Portugal, and the king called all his knights to arms to follow him into the field.

“Tell me, Conde,” said the wife of Conde Sol, “how many years will you be absent in this campaign?”

“If I am not back, Condesa, in six years, reckon me dead, and forget me, and take another husband.”

Six years pass, and eight, and ten, and one more yet, and the Conde Sol is not come back, nor has any news been heard of him. Men say he has fallen in the wars; but the Countess believes them not; her heart tells her that her husband lives, and she will take no rest and no diversion. Her father comes to see her, and he finds her always in tears.

“What ails thee, daughter dear? Why are thy eyes ever filled with tears?”

“Father, let me go to seek the Count; for my heart tells me he lives, and that I shall find him.” [21]

“Do all thou wilt, daughter, and my blessing go with thee!”

The next morning the Countess sets out and goes to seek the Count, bowed down with sadness, by land and by sea, through all Spain and Italy and France. One day she comes to a vast plain shaded by pine-trees, and in the shade a herd of kine grazing.

“Tell me, I pray you, *vaquerita*[1], and tell me now in truth, whose are the kine grazing in these pastures?”

“They belong to the Conde Sol, lady, who commands all this country.”

“And all these wheat crops that they are just garnering in, *vaquerita*; tell me in truth, whose are they?”

“The Conde Sol’s, lady; for it is he sows these fields.”

“And whose are all those sheep, *vaquerita*, all with their little lambs gathered round them so tenderly?”

“The Conde Sol’s, lady; for it is he who has them bred.”

“And whose these gardens and this royal-seeming palace, *vaquerita*? Tell me the truth, I pray.”

“Also the Conde Sol’s, lady; for it is there he has his abode.” [22]

“And whose are those horses, *vaquerita*, which I hear neighing in the stall?”

“They belong to the Conde Sol, lady; for he goes with them to the hunt.”

“And whose is that fair dame, *vaquerita*, who stands so near that knight?”

“That is the affianced of the Conde Sol, lady, whom he is just going to make his bride.”

“Now, *vaquerita, vaquerita*, by the love of our Lord’s sufferings, give me here thy poor dress, and take my robe of silk, and let me go, for I have found him I seek!”

Then she put on the poor dress, and went and stood where the Count must pass, begging charity. When the Count came by, he bent down over his saddle-bow, and gave her an alms, and asked her,—

“Good stranger woman, whence are you?”

“In Spain was I born,” answered the Countess, with a faltering voice.

“And why do you come hither?”

“I go over all countries seeking my long lost husband, and so by chance I came here too. I have gone through perils on the sea, and hardships on the land; my feet are cut by the stony rocks; and—will you believe me, Conde?—when at last I find him I learn that he is about *to be married*, Conde; that he had so forgotten his fond and lawful spouse who had come so far for love of him!” [23]

“*Romerica, romerica*[2]! Hush now, say not so. Confess that the evil one has sent you to tempt me with a false story.”

“Neither has the evil one sent me, Conde, neither do I seek to tempt thee; but nevertheless I am thy true wife, Conde, who has come so far to seek thee.”

Then the Conde Sol, when he heard that, sent to fetch a light-footed palfrey wearing a breast-band covered with silver bells, and with stirrups and spurs of gold; and on to this he sprang, and rode back to the castle bearing his good wife in his arms, and presenting her to all his people, bade them honour her as their lawful mistress. [24]

1 Good Cowherdess. ↑

2 Female pilgrim. ↑

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SIMPLE JOHNNY AND THE SPELL-BOUND PRINCESSES.

When Ferdinand King of Spain drove the Moors out of his dominions with his invincible sword, there were among their chiefs many descended from right noble lineage. Among them was one, of whose ancestor Clotaldo the following story was told, who for his prowess was elected king of the fertile provinces of that part of the East which is called Syria.

Clotaldo had three beautiful daughters, who were so beautiful that men said they were divinities and not women. The King thought that as they were so very beautiful they ought not to be given in marriage in the ordinary way, but that whoso would marry them should perform some great deed of valour. So he called together all the masons of the kingdom and made them build an immense castle, so high that it seemed to reach up to heaven. And more than this, he gathered all the magicians and made them enchant it with all their enchantments, so that no [25]

one might ever be able to get at them or see them unless the King himself should admit him.

So the magicians enchanted the castle with all their spells, and set three enchanted horses to guard the enclosure so that no one might break through.

Meantime the King sent heralds round into all countries to proclaim that every noble, or knight of high degree, who could make his way into the castle should have one of his daughters in marriage; they were likewise at the same time to set forth their beauty, to let all men know the worth of the prize for which they were asked to contend. And he did this because he thought that none but one worthy of them would be able to overcome all the obstacles he had interposed.

Many were the adventurous and valorous knights and nobles and princes who were drawn to try their fortune at this high enterprise. But none could find any way into the castle, and they all came back crest-fallen, without having effected any thing.

At last came three brothers, who though but simple knights and poor of estate, yet were of high and noble lineage, and of higher and nobler courage. They no sooner heard Clotaldo's heralds pronounce this embassy in their country, which was Denmark, than they set out to try whether they might not be fortunate enough to deliver the three princesses from the enchanted tower. [26]

First they came to Clotaldo and told him their purpose, who ordered that every thing they asked for should be given them for their assistance; so the two elder brothers asked for mettled horses and shining arms; but the youngest brother said all he wanted was a waggon and two oxen, with provisions for several days, an immeasurably long rope, some long nails, and a powerful hammer. Whatever each asked for he received.

The two elder brothers set off very confidently on their dashing steeds, and in a very short time arrived at an eminence overlooking the castle; but to their dismay they found it was ten times as high as they had ever imagined; and then, too, that it had neither door nor window, nor the smallest break of any kind in the massive walls.

"How can we ever get into a place like this?" said the eldest brother, looking very foolish.

"It looks to me very like a fool's errand," said the other.

"I vote we go back," answered the first.

"The best thing we can do," rejoined the second.

"And the sooner the better," continued the first.

"Here we go, then," added the second; and they turned their horses' heads round, like chicken-hearted men, and galloped back by the way they had come. [27]

They had not gone far when they met their younger brother toiling along in his cart.

"It is no use your going to the castle," said the eldest brother: "we have been there, and find the game is impossible."

"We shall see," answered the youth.

"But I tell you the thing can't be done!" ejaculated the second.

"When I go out to do a thing I don't go back without doing it," said the youngest, quietly. "But as there is a considerable distance to be got over yet, I am going to have some dinner: you had better do the same."

The other brothers, who had not had the foresight to bring any provisions themselves, were very glad of the invitation, so they all sat down and dined. When they had done, the youngest brother set out to continue his journey in his waggon, and the two horsemen were going to pursue theirs homewards, when suddenly one of them said to the other, "Suppose we stop and see what he does; may-be he will succeed, and then, as we are two to one, who knows but that we may be able to overcome him, and take the merit to ourselves?"

"Well thought!" exclaimed the eldest, heartily; and they turned their horses' heads again, and followed behind the cart; telling their younger brother they had come to see if they could not be of any service in case his temerity led him into danger. [28]

The younger had overheard their conversation; but he saw no way of getting rid of

the brothers, who were well armed and well mounted; so he could but continue his way and trust to his wits to save him from their intentions afterwards. As he rode along he measured the vast height of the castle with his eye, and laid all his plans in his head. Arrived under the wall, he bound the nails and hammer into his girdle, and, tying one end of the rope round his arm, proceeded to scale the wall of the castle.

The brothers sat on their horses watching him, expecting every minute to see him fall to the ground; but on he went, steady and lithe, with the tenacity of a cat or squirrel, till he got so high that he looked like a little speck, and at last was lost from sight altogether.

Scarcely had he attained the battlements of the wall, and trod a few steps upon the flat, than three most beautiful nymphs, who seemed more divine than human, came out to meet him. At first he was so dazzled with the sight of their exceeding beauty, that he could not speak, but stood gazing at them while they said,—

“Who art thou, young man, who venturest to profane the decorum of this *alcázar*[1], the abode of three virgin princesses? With thy life must thou expiate this temerity.” [29]

“To die at your command, fair ladies, and in your sight, would be joy enough for me,” stammered forth the young knight; “but yet I have first a work to accomplish, which is your liberation. So tell me now, what is it I have to do to set you free?”

“Since thou art so stout-hearted and so well-spoken,” responded the sisters, “we will even tell thee what thou hast to do, and great shall be thy reward. Know, then, in this castle are three noble horses, and thou hast to take one hair from the tail of each, for in this lies the spell which binds us. But they are fierce and shy of approach; nevertheless fear not if they even breathe out fire upon thee; for if thou art bold, thou shalt succeed.”

The young knight went out to meet the three enchanted horses without fearing or flinching; and though they breathed out fire upon him, he took the three hairs from their tails, and destroyed the spell of the princesses.

Then he bound the cord round the first princess, and with much care and address he lowered her gently and safely on to the ground below. He did the same with the second. But when he would have parted from the third, she turned and thanked him with gentle words, and said,—

“Take this necklace, noble youth, which for both workmanship and power has no other like to it on earth. Never part from it, and may-be that one day it may deliver thee from as great strait as that from which thou hast delivered us.” [30]

With that she waved her hand to him, and prepared to descend as her sisters had done.

As soon as the young knight had watched her reach the ground in safety, he turned to drive the strong nails into the tower to make fast the rope for his own descent; but scarcely was he thus occupied than his wicked brothers, seeing the moment of their advantage had arrived, gave a violent pull to the rope, and down it came, leaving him no means of escape!

Then they made haste and carried off the princesses, riding on without stopping till they came to the king.

Clotaldo, seeing his daughters free, never doubted but that those who had brought them were their true deliverers, and therefore loaded them with honour and favour, and married them to the two elder princesses. It was in vain that the youngest princess tried to explain the deceit: there were four living witnesses against her; for the elder princesses took the part of their promised husbands, and said that the long imprisonment had turned their younger sister’s mind, and no one listened to her. So there was a great rejoicing, and a noble marriage-feast; but she sat in her chamber apart, weeping.

Meantime the youngest brother was left full of terror and dismay on top of the exceeding high tower, with no means of ever getting away from it, and, which was worst of all, with the prospect of never again seeing his little princess. He did not care about the others, but she who alone had thanked him, and that so prettily, and who had had a thought for his future welfare in giving him the splendid necklace, he could not give *her* up. [31]

He took it out and looked at it: it was indeed of curious workmanship, and the bright gems sparkled like rays of hope. He kissed it because it reminded him of the kind little princess, but he could not see how it was to help him; so after gazing at it for a long time, he at last wrapped it up, and put it by in his bosom again. But as

he continued to think of all that had lately taken place, he remembered how the sisters had spoken of the wonderful qualities of the horses who held their spell, and at last he began to wonder whether with their aid he could not make his escape.

To remain where he was was certain death, and a shameful, pusillanimous death to boot. He was never wanting in clear thoughts, or fair courage to execute them, and a plan now ripened rapidly in his mind which he determined to put into execution.

“If thou art bold, thou shalt succeed.” The words rang in his ears, and seemed an omen of good fortune. He went back to the place where he had found the horses before: there they stood, all three abreast of each other, as if waiting a word of command from him. [32]

Resolutely the young knight sprang on the back of the centre one, and gathering the floating manes of the three in his hand, all started together, and with one fearful bound, which seemed to shiver the tower to atoms behind them, they dashed off the battlements, the wild career through the air depriving him of the use of his senses.

When he came to, he found himself lying on the ground in a wild wood so full of thick trunks of withered trees that daylight hardly penetrated. He walked on for a long lonesome way, till at last he came to a place where cattle were feeding. Of the herd tending them he asked where he was, and found he was on the borders of Clotaldo’s kingdom; “but,” said the herd, “you are not of this people, by your dress and speech.”

“No, friend,” replied the young knight; “I am a poor foreigner, who am come out to seek fortune, and she has reduced me to a sad plight. But I have one favour to ask, which is that you will exchange clothes with me.”

The cattle-herd was pleased enough at the proposal, and asked no further questions. He had soon arrayed himself in the knight’s fine clothes, and he in turn found a complete disguise in the rough clothing of undressed skins which made up the peasant’s attire. [33]

Thus he walked on eight hundred leagues, begging alms to sustain his life by the way; and with all the fatigues, and privations, and hardships he had endured, he was quite altered, so that his brothers would not know him again. That he might appear still more different from his former self, he assumed the manners of a half-silly person, and took the name of Juan; and all the people called him “*Juanillo el loco*[2].”

All this time Clotaldo had been urging his youngest daughter that she should marry like her sisters, but she never would look at any of the princes he named to her. She had determined to belong to no one but the young knight her deliverer, and she felt all confidence in his valour, that he would find means to make his way to her. At last, one day, when the king had been persuading her very urgently to follow his counsel, she brought out a drawing she had made in secret of the necklace she had bestowed on her knight, and told her father that when he could find any one who could produce a necklace like that, she would be his wife.

The king was very glad to have her consent on any conditions, and forthwith set clever draughtsmen to copy the drawing, and sent heralds abroad over the whole earth, to proclaim that whoever could make the necklet to the required pattern should have the hand of his daughter. But the workmanship was so fine, and the setting of the jewels so cunningly devised, that no goldsmith on earth could produce it. [34]

It was just about the time that Juan reached the kingdom that all the people were full of excitement about this subject, and thus it came to his ears also. So when he heard the conditions the princess had made, and remembered her words when she gave him the necklet—“that the earth could not produce such another”—he was beside himself for joy, for he knew that she was waiting for his return.

However, not to betray himself too soon, he continued his silly ways, and, as if he knew nothing of the matter, asked to see the design. The guards and people told him to go away, but the king was a very just man, and said there was no exception named in his decree, and therefore whoever applied must be allowed a fair trial.

“But,” he added, when he saw the rough, uncouth form of the suppliant, “remember, fellow, if you fail, your throat shall pay the forfeit of your impudence.”

The feigned Juanillo played his part perfectly; he gave his assent by a silly grin, and a nod of his head to all the remonstrances used to dissuade him; and at last they shut him up in a tower, with a furnace and crucible, and much gold, and

priceless diamonds, and emeralds, and rubies. [35]

So the knight let them fasten the gate as if he were going to set to work in earnest. And at the end of three days, when they came to see what he had done, he brought out the original necklet; and every one was in amazement, because all could see that it presented the perfect image of the design.

When the princess heard by the cries of all the people that some one had succeeded in producing the necklet, she came forward to see who it was; and in an instant, through all the disguise, she knew her deliverer again; and she turning to the king said,—

“Well, the conditions are fulfilled: I am ready to do your bidding!”

Her father was amazed at her readiness to marry the rough, silly man Juanillo appeared, and tried all he could to dissuade her; but, as she would not change her mind, there was no excuse for him to go back from the word plighted by his proclamation. So the princess and the knight were married; though Clotaldo was so ashamed of the bridegroom, he had the ceremony performed in the quietest way, and assigned them a little house outside the walls of the town to live in, where no one should see or hear any thing more of them.

Clotaldo had had a very prosperous career hitherto; but the troubles of life were beginning to press round him, and the first trouble he had was failing eyesight. His [36] physicians could not understand the malady, or do any thing for him; and at last he became quite blind. In despair at the loss of his sight, he sent into all countries to call together the wisest mediciners; but none could help him; till one day an ancient man appeared, who said that the only remedy for his case was the water of a fountain flowing out of a sharp rock in the mountains of Sclavonia; but that it was a perilous journey to fetch it, on account of the fierce beasts inhabiting the surrounding country.

As there was no one with sufficient courage to run the great risks, the king called his two sons-in-law, and said, as they had been so valiant in overcoming the spells of the great castle, they could doubtless help him now; and that they would not shrink from the perils of the journey, which was to procure the means of restoring his sight.

The knights did not dare to show any hesitation, as it would have betrayed their former deception. So they set out on the journey, but with heavy hearts, and plotting as they went what excuse they could make for coming back without success.

But Juanillo, the moment he had heard the old physician’s sentence, had taken counsel with his princess, and at her bidding went out into the wilderness, and called one of the enchanted horses, and vaulting on to him, sped away like a whirlwind. After passing through ten thousand perils, he filled his flask with the [37] water of the fountain which sprang out of the sharp rock in the mountains of Sclavonia, and made the best of his way back again.

As he had nearly reached home he met his two brothers riding out, looking very doleful and in great perplexity. When they saw him speeding along like the wind, they were very curious to know who he was and whence he came; so they called to him to stop and tell them. And he answered, courteously,—

“I have been to fill my flask with water which flows over the sharp rock in the mountains of Sclavonia!”

When they heard that, their first impulse was to spring upon him and take the prize from him; but when they saw his impetuous horse, and reflected that he had come back unscathed from all the perils of the adventure, they perceived who he was, and feared to measure their strength against his, therefore they assumed a different tone. Instead, however, of making up for past faults, and cheerfully acquiescing and rejoicing in his success, they still followed their selfish aim, but in a more covert way than they had at first meditated. Thus they offered him any bribe he liked to name if he would give them the flask of water.

Juanillo gave them the flask, but refused their bribes, naming as his only guerdon [38] two golden pears which the king had given them off a tree in his garden, which only produced two every year, and which none might pluck but he.

The bargain was thus settled. Juanillo returned to tell all to the little princess; and the two knights bore the flask exulting to the king, and vaunting the deeds of valour by which they pretended they had won it, taking care to say nothing about poor Juanillo.

The king recovered his sight, and loaded them with rewards and honours. But

before long he was stricken with another infirmity: gradually his hearing began to fail; and getting no relief from his physicians, he very soon became quite deaf. A proclamation of great reward attracted the learned in the medical art again to his court, and among the men of science came once more the old doctor who had given effectual counsel before.

In the deserts of Albania, he said, under the shade of the highest mountains, live, among their many wild beasts, a race of lionesses, more fierce than the rest of their kind: if any one can by artifice procure the milk of one of these, without injury to her life, that would be the sovereign remedy.

Juanillo no sooner heard the sentence than he went out into the wilderness and called another of the enchanted horses, and started off on him like the wind, to the [39] desert of Albania; and, armed with the words of magic the little princess had taught him, he could get up to the lioness without being perceived by her, and fill his flask with her milk.

Meantime the king had called his two elder sons-in-law, and not doubting that, as they had acquitted themselves so well before, they would be able to accomplish this feat also, despatched them to the mountains of Albania. They, suspecting that their brother would do the work as before, set out with less concern than on former occasions, and only plotted how they should cajole him this time. Nor had they advanced many leagues when they met him coming back at full speed on his brave steed, and the bottle of lioness' milk in a flask at his girdle.

"Good morrow, friend!" they cried, as he came near: "whence ride ye, so fast and so early?"

"I have been to the desert of Albania, to fetch the lioness' milk to bathe the ears of our good king," replied the younger brother.

"At what price do ye put it, friend?"

"Nay, this I sell *not*."

"But we have come out to fetch it, and how shall we return to the king without it?" And they pleaded so wheedlingly, that Juanillo was fain to give them the flask, but exacting this time the penalty of an ear of each of them. [40]

The condition was hard, but the game was desperate now. If they returned empty-handed this time, it was an acknowledgment of their perfidy before; and after all it was a much less injury than might have befallen them in the deserts of Albania if they had pursued the journey, or from the anger of the king and the populace if they had remained at home. So they combed the hair over their ears to conceal the loss, and pushed their way home to the king with their trophy, while Juanillo returned to his little princess.

Clotaldo recovered his hearing by the use of the lioness' milk. But a direr danger awaited him now; for a powerful neighbouring sovereign suddenly declared war against him, while he was quite unprepared. His prowess in battle in his younger days it was which had procured him the throne; but now, in his declining years, he feared to take the field, not through any coward fear for his life, but lest the glory of his country should be tarnished by his waning energy. So he called his two sons-in-law to him, and said that their valour, which had been proved in so many enterprises, had now a signal occasion for manifesting itself; and he gave them the command of Captains-General of his forces, and sent them out as if they had been his own sons, to meet the foe.

This order gave them greater trepidation than any of the preceding, for there appeared no way out of it. How was Juanillo himself to fight the battle for them [41] without an army? and how could they transfer the command of the army to him without betraying all?

While they were going along, then, sad of heart, to put themselves at the head of the forces and trust to good luck to extricate them from the fray, they met Juanillo, coming along at fiery speed, with two of the enemy's standards planted on his stirrups, and they saw by the colours that the enemy had been laid low. For at the first threat of war he had taken soft leave of the little princess, had gone out into the wilderness and called the third of the enchanted horses, and with him had ridden with such impetuosity against the enemy, imitating Saint Jago, that he had put the whole army to flight, and borne off their banners as trophies.

But the brothers talked and persuaded him, with soft words, into giving these up also; and the payment he exacted this time was, that they should let him brand them on the shoulder as if they had been his slaves of war.

After this he returned home to the little princess, and his brothers carried the

banners to the king's feet. When the king saw this fresh testimony to their merit, his indignation rose high against his third son-in-law, whom he supposed to be living in shameful indolence, and doing nothing for the honour of the dynasty and [42] nation. So he pronounced a decree banishing him from his kingdom, and forbidding him ever to appear before him again. The brothers, who had always lived in fear that their treachery would come out some day, upheld him in his intention, as they thought they would breathe easier when he was removed to a distance.

Now Juanillo had been very forbearing and very generous all this time, but this was rather too much. He could not bear that his little princess should be banished from her friends and country without any fault; and she, too, represented to him how sad it would be for the people when the old king died, if they were to live under the governance of the two wicked brothers. So Juanillo went up to the king, and begged him with great humility on his knees that he would grant him one last favour before he went away for good and all; and that was, to have a famous banquet on the last day, and invite all the kingdom to it.

The good king granted the request; and a day was appointed when all the great men and small of the kingdom met for a famous banquet.

Simple Johnny dressed himself for this occasion in his true character. His massive chestnut curls were parted on his lofty forehead, and every one was struck by the dignity with which his broad shoulders carried the crimson and ermine mantle; in fact, few suspected that it was Simple Johnny at all, and the most inclined to [43] believe it were still doubtful. But he, as one who had a great duty to perform, went up with earnest mien to the king, and laying down the two pears and the ears before him said,—

"The time is come, O King, to make known the truth to thee. Long have I suffered in secret; but if my silence is to occasion my banishment and that of my dear wife, I must make known that it was I who delivered the princesses, I who fetched the water from the sharp rock in the mountains of Sclavonia, I who brought the milk of the lioness from the deserts of Albania, I who overcame thine enemies and brought home the two standards. Here are my proofs; and if more are needed, bid the princes uncover their shoulders, and they shall be found branded as my slaves taken in war."

The good king was much astonished at this revelation; but now something came back to him of what the little princess had said, and how he had thought her mad for the story. And when he had investigated all patiently, and was convinced of the truth of Juanillo's statement, he was full of indignation, and commanded the bad brothers to be put to death, and his daughters banished for their silent participation in their infamy. To Simple Johnny he gave a very hearty embrace in the sight of the people, and not only made him heir to all the kingdom, but associated him with himself in the government, beginning from that very day. [44]

Simple Johnny, however, would not allow his brothers to be put to death, but only deprived them of the right to reign, which might have brought misery on the kingdom, and appointed them houses and money that they might spend the rest of their days in harmless retirement. [45]

1 Moorish castle. ↑

2 Silly Johnny. ↑

[Contents]

TURIAN AND FLORETA.

There lived once in very ancient times in Spain a young prince, the Infante Turian. He was a very beautiful youth, and the only child of his parents, King Canamor and his consort Leonela: they were thus tempted to indulge him very much, and, as we should say, to spoil him; in fact, he was allowed to have every thing he asked for, and when any present or novel article of merchandise was brought to the palace, if it happened to take his fancy, he got into a way of expecting to have it for his own, and no one thought of thwarting him.

One day there came a foreign merchant to the court, who, instead of having a train of mules heavily laden with varieties of his wares to suit all tastes and fancies, was quite alone and unattended, and himself bore his whole stock. It consisted, indeed, of but one little parcel easily stowed away in the folds of his cloak. The servants were scandalized at such a mean apparatus, and would have driven him away [46]

without letting him have a chance of addressing himself to their masters, telling him if he had nothing more to show than the contents of one little case, it was not worth while to trouble them. It was in vain the merchant urged that what he had to show was of priceless value, and in itself alone was worth all the mule-loads of other merchants put together: they held it for idle raving, and bid him begone.

It happened, however, that the Infante Turian was coming home at the moment, and hearing the altercation, his curiosity was piqued to know what it could be that could be counted so precious. He had horses, and arms, and trappings, and gay clothes, and games, and baubles of every sort, and he had wearied of them all. He had acquired them without labour, and he consequently held them without esteem. Now there appeared a chance of some quite fresh sensation; moreover, the merchant himself had a strange air which fascinated him; again, his accent was different from any he had heard before, and suggested that he brought the productions of some climate which had not yet laid its stores at his feet. Proud, too, to show his power in setting the man free from the importunate scorn of the servants, he ordered them to stand back, and then gave the strange merchant permission to open his store.

Assuming an air of mystery, which excited the young prince still more, the [47]
merchant, however, now told him he must take him to some private recess apart, as what he had to show must be seen only by royal eyes. The prince accepted all conditions in his eagerness, and was indeed rather flattered by this one. As soon as they were quite alone, the strange merchant placed before him a portrait. Yes, nothing but a portrait in a very simple frame! But it was *such* a portrait that it quite turned poor Turian's head. He had never before dreamt of any thing so beautiful; he went into ecstasies at first sight, kissed it, gazed at it, paced up and down the hall with it, raved about it, and grew almost frantic, when the strange merchant at last went up to him and said it was time for him to go home, and he must have the portrait to pack up again.

"Pack up again!" cried the prince: "why, I buy it of you at triple, tenfold, an hundredfold its weight in gold."

The merchant assured him it could not be sold; he required, indeed, a considerable price for suffering it to be seen, but part with it he could not, on any conditions whatever.

The prince threw his purse to him, and ordered him in no measured terms to depart while the way was clear, otherwise he would set on him the myrmidons from whom he had but now released him.

The strange merchant quietly picked up the purse, counted out conscientiously the [48]
sum he had named as the price for the sight of the picture, and laid down the rest; deliberately stowed away his fee in his belt, and at the same time took from it, unperceived by the prince, a little box of powder; then suddenly turning round, he scattered its contents over his face, producing instant insensibility. Prepared for the effect, he caught him in his arms, and laid him gently on a bench, and then, possessing himself of his picture, he stealthily left the castle, unperceived by all.

When the Infante Turian came to himself, some hours afterwards, of course pursuit was vain; nor could any trace be learnt of the way the stranger had taken.

The prince was furious that, at least, he had not learnt some clue as to the original of the portrait, but there had not been time for a word of inquiry. And when he set himself to recall every detail, all that would come back to his mind was, that on the blue embroidery of the white drapery which veiled the matchless form, he had made out in curious characters the name Floreta. Armed with this only guide, he determined to roam the world till he discovered the real beauty whose ideal had so absorbed him.

King Canamor and Queen Leonela were inconsolable at the idea of their only son [49]
leaving them on so wild an errand; but they had never taught him obedience and self-control, and they could not move him now. All their persuasions could obtain was his consent to be accompanied by the *Conde* Dirlos, an ancient counsellor of great wisdom and authority in the kingdom, who would know how to procure him assistance by land and sea, in whatever enterprise he might be minded to take in hand. But it was stipulated that he was to control him in nothing: simply watch over him, and further his designs, so as to save him from fatigue and danger.

On they wandered for a year and a day, meeting many adventures and incurring many perils; but no one knew the name of Floreta. Wherever they went it was still a foreign name. At last—it was just the day year that the strange merchant had brought the portrait—their travels brought them to a steep mountain-path, which led down to the sea. At a turn of the winding road, just below them, a tall figure appeared, wrapped in a long cloak, and wearing a high-peaked cap. The prince

gave a bound of joy, and shouted to the figure to halt. It paid no heed, however. “Stop! or you are dead!” shouted the prince, at the same time pointing an arrow with unerring aim at a spot a little in advance of the moving figure. As if conscious of what was going on, though he never moved his head, the strange merchant—for it was he, and the prince had instantly recognized him—stood still for an instant, [50] as the bolt rattled in the ground on which he would have stood had he pursued his way three steps further, and then passed on unheeding. The prince shouted more madly than before; but to no purpose; and in another moment the wind of the road had taken him out of sight.

Madly the prince spurred his horse in pursuit, and reached the turn; but no living form was to be seen. The rocks now resounded with the cries and imprecations with which he adjured the magician—for such he now rightly deemed him—to stand forth. At last, when he was silent from sheer exhaustion, a low but commanding voice from the depths of a neighbouring cave bade him listen, but, as he valued his life, advance not.

“Speak!” cried the prince; “nor torture me with longer suspense. What must I do to find Floreta? I am prepared to go to the end of the world, to undergo any hardship, any torture, to find her; but find her I am determined: if you refuse your help, then by help of some other; so you see it is idle to turn a deaf ear.”

“By none other help but mine,” answered the magician, “*can* you find Floreta; so your threats are vain. But if I had not meant you to see her, I should not have shown you the portrait at first, for I knew its influence could not be other than that it has exercised. I am going to instruct you how to reach her; but first you must [51] give me my guerdon.”

“Name it; ask what you will,” interposed the impetuous prince; “ask my kingdom if you like; but keep me not in suspense.”

“I only ask what is reasonable,” answered the magician; “the real is worth a thousandfold the representation;” and he named a price equivalent to a thousand times the sum he had originally received.

Without so much as waiting to reply, Turian turned to *Conde* Dirlos and told him now was the time to fulfil his father’s behest by accomplishing this requirement, and begged him to raise the money without an instant’s loss of time.

The count remonstrated in vain, and in vain represented the miseries he would be inflicting on the people by requiring, in so sudden a manner, the levy of so large a sum. Turian, blinded by his passion, bid him save his words, as nothing could change his purpose; and the king’s orders to obey him having been unconditional, *Conde* Dirlos set out with a heavy heart to comply.

Ten days of anxious suspense during his absence were spent by the prince in wandering over the rugged declivities of the coast: the ardour of his excitement demanded to be fed with deeds of daring and danger. When he was not so occupied, he was seated panting on the topmost crags, scouring the whole country [52] with his eager glance to descry the first impression of the return of the count, with the means of pursuing his desperate resolve.

The day came at last. And afar off, first only like so many black specks, but gradually revealing themselves as *Conde* Dirlos on his faithful steed, and a long file of heavily-laden mules, came the anxiously expected train. And now he never left his point of observation; but cursed the sluggish hours, as he watched the team now steering over the sandy plain, which seemed interminable in expanse, unmeasured by landmarks; now toiling backwards and forwards up the zig-zagged steep, with provoking seeming of being further off one hour than the last, as at each wind they turned upon their steps; now detached-liked spectres against the sky, as they crossed from one reach of the lofty sierra to the next.

All things have an end, even Turian’s anxious suspense; and as the count at last neared the magician’s cave, he descended at break-neck pace to meet him.

“There is the price,” said the count, in sad and solemn accents; “but before rendering it out of your hands, stop and consider it;” and as he spoke he removed from the treasure the brilliant red and yellow cloths, the royal colours of Spain, with which it was covered. “Here, from each province of your father’s dominions, [53] is the due proportion of the tribute you have demanded. See—will you spend it so?”

The prince darted forward to glance at the goodly sight of so much gold, but drew back with horror.

What could he have seen to turn his flushed cheeks so deadly pale?

“Count!” he cried, choking with fury, “what have you brought to mock me? This is not coin. You have brought me tears, burning tears, instead of gold.”

“It is all the same,” replied the count; “I saw you were infatuated, and I brought the money in this form, that the sight might warn you of what you are doing, and by its sad horror arrest you. There is time to return it back into the bosom of those from whom it has been wrung, and no harm will have been done. But if you persist, you will find the magician will take them for current coin.”

“Quite so!” chimed in the voice from the cave; “it is the money I like best. But I cannot stand dallying thus: if the treasure be not handed over at once, the bargain is at an end, and you never hear of me again.”

It only wanted this to quench any little spark of pity and misgiving which the old count’s judicious stratagem might have awakened. So without further loss of time [54] the prince called to the magician to come forth and take the spoil.

He was not slow to comply, and taking a handful of the weird currency out of each mule-load, rang it on the rock, where it sounded like the clanking of a captive’s chains.

“That is good,” he said in a satisfied tone, when he had concluded his scrutiny. “Now for my part of the bargain. I am not of those who fail because I am paid beforehand: you will find me as good as my word, and even better; for I will supply an item of the bargain which you, impetuous youth, never thought to stipulate for, though the most important of all. I will not only instruct you how to see Floreta, I will give you moreover the means whereby, if she pleases you, you can take her captive and bear her away.”

“Nay, interrupt me not,” he continued, as Turian, nettled at the exposure of his want of diplomacy, was about to declare that he had never thought of any other means to captivate her being required but his own smile and his own strong arm; “I must begin, and have but time to complete my directions. You see yon castle on a rock out at sea;” and as his long bony finger pointed westward, there seemed to be traced against the sky the form of a royal castle at about three days’ journey, which Turian, who had for ten days been beating about the coast, could have sworn was not to be seen there before. Nevertheless, fascinated by the magician’s [55] commanding manner, he durst say nothing but a murmur of assent.

“Then that is your haven; take ship and steer for it. When you reach the land throw down this token,” and he gave into his hand a fine coil of silken chains; “follow its leadings till it take you to Floreta, and if she please you, cast it round her, and she is yours.”

As he spoke he disappeared from sight, with the mules and their burden.

Turian now once more reminded *Conde* Dirlos of his father’s command, and bid him provide him with the swiftest galley on all the coasts of the kingdom, manned with the stoutest rowers, and that with the utmost speed.

If the wise old count shrunk from the former mission, his horror was but the greater at this one. He reminded the prince that when the king had given his consent to the adventure, he had not contemplated any other than a loyal undertaking, such as a noble prince might entertain: he would never have trusted him on one of this nature.

Turian felt the force of the reproach, but lacked the strength of character to command himself. Hurried on by his uncontrolled desire, he bid the old man remember that the command to fulfil his orders was quite unconditional, and there was no limit whatever named. [56]

The count owned this was unfortunately true, and as he could prevail nothing by argument, set himself to remedy the Infante’s headstrong wilfulness by making the journey as safe as possible. He not only insisted on having the galley examined as to its seaworthiness by the most experienced shipwrights, and selected the steadiest oarsmen to man the banks, but appointed a consultation of all the astronomers of the kingdom to name the day when they might be sure of safe passage, free from winds. It was pronounced that a storm was just then impending which would last ten days, and after that there would be ten days of fair weather, so that if they allowed ten days for their preparations, they would have time to make the journey and return in all security.

The delay seemed another age to the Infante; nevertheless he was now so near the accomplishment of his object that it passed swiftly enough in the enjoyment of the pleasure of anticipation. The count, too, found some relief to his anxieties in the fact that the storm came on at the predicted moment, giving him great confidence that the halcyon days predicted to succeed might be surely counted on.

They came duly; and a shout of admiration rose from the people on the shore as the gallant vessel moved out over the face of the blue, sunlit waters, which glittered as if showered over with every precious stone at each stroke of the [57] countless oars. And those on board were equally entranced with the gorgeous sight as they seemed to soar along over the soft bosom of the crystal deep; and the noble outline of their native mountains, peak above peak, from the verdant slopes where the cattle browsed lazily, to the wild steeps where even the mountain goats ceased to find a footing, receded with ever-varying forms of beauty from their sight.

It was not on *these* that Turian's eye rested. His glance was bent on the castle for which they were making, and his thoughts were bound up in the beauteous treasure within. Such confidence had he in the magician's word, that he had laid his arms aside and held only the silken chain that was to be his guiding line to happiness; and toyed with it, thinking how he would throw it round the prized form of the portrait's original, and how he would gaze on her when she was his.

While he was still wrapt in these thoughts they drew near to the mysterious shore, and every one was occupied in admiring the strength and noble proportions of the castle. But Turian had no thought but for the treasure it contained. Springing lightly on to the land, he lost no time in fulfilling the magician's injunctions; and sure enough the chain uncoiled itself, and, wriggling with a serpent's motion, went straight before him to a gate in the castle wall. It was unlocked, and Turian, pushing it aside, gained entrance to a sumptuous garden, at one end of which was [58] a shady arbour, and in a bank of perfumed roses Floreta herself lay asleep. How his heart beat at the sight! Just as she had seemed in the portrait; just as he had pictured her in his sleeping and waking dreams. Riveted to the spot, he stood contemplating her, as well he might, for her complexion was white as snow, or rather as pure crystal, and tinted as the fresh rose yet on the rose-tree[1].

The cautious count, fearful of some ambush, had marshalled the crew of the galley into a guard to track his steps noiselessly and be ready in case of sudden attack. The play of light upon their arms passing in sudden reflection over the scene woke the Infante from his reverie, and roused him to action. The coiling silken links readily embraced Floreta's limbs, and such was their hidden power that, though she woke at the Infante's approach, she was powerless to resist or cry.

Thus he bore her to the galley, and the men having resumed their places on the rowers' banks, in silent order they pushed off unperceived by any one on the [59] island, for it was the hour of the noontide rest.

But soon Floreta's maidens, coming to attend her rising, discovered her loss. The king her father and all the people quickly gathered their arms and ran wildly in every direction, till at last they saw the strange vessel making fast away, and they doubted not it was carrying off their princess, but they could only stand on the shore throwing up their arms and crying in powerless despair.

Turian had in the mean time removed the chain from his prize; and thus freed from the spell, Floreta, too, held out her arms towards her parents and countrymen, and cried unavailingly on them for help. Turian, incapable of contradicting her, yet incapable also of giving her up, contented himself with admiring her at a distance, and let her spend herself in lamentations at first; but when the good galleon had put sufficient distance between itself and the castle to destroy the freshness of the impression of parting, the Infante commanded his people to cast anchor that he might try his power of consoling her more at ease. And indeed, it was not long before his sweet words of admiration and his protestations of affection and devotion seemed to succeed in reconciling her to her situation; before long they were very good friends and very happy, and the sun shone and the sea sparkled, and nature smiled, and all seemed fair and bright. [60]

Nevertheless the prudent old count had his misgivings. True, there were yet several more days of the promised calm before them, but he felt he should never be easy till he had his charge safe at home again; so he urged the Infante to give orders to put under way once more, and right glad was he to feel the bark moving towards the port and in good time to reach home before the next storm.

Nevertheless,—

Quando Dios quiere
En sereno lluve[2],

says the proverb, and while they were singing and making merry, and dancing to amuse Floreta, suddenly the sky became overcast and the wind sprang up, and the waves dashed against the bulwarks, and instead of being able to row the vessel into port the oarsmen could hardly keep their seats. Then in the midst of their fright and horror and piteous cries for help, an ancient seaman stood up, and

having commanded silence, harangued the crew, and told them that they might be sure the tempest was sent them because they had the strange damsel on board; that if they would save their lives they must bid defiance to the Infante's wishes, and take him from her and cast her into the sea. The danger to all was manifest and terrible; any way out of it was preferable to succumbing, so the old man found a willing audience. The dismayed count had but time to rush in to the Infante and [61] tell him of the mutiny before the angry mariners had already burst into his presence. If they were for a moment staggered by pity at sight of the exceeding beauty of Floreta, and by Turian's agonized assurances that the fearful sacrifice would have no effect upon the storm, the old mariner's voice overruled their hesitation and rendered them pitiless as the blast.

Then at his command they tore the Infante from off Floreta, to whom he clung declaring that they should not destroy her without him, but that he would go down into the deep with her, and they bound him fast hand and foot and took Floreta, too full of terror to resist or cry, to throw her into the raging sea. But before they had completed the sacrifice, the cries of the prince, seconded as he was by the prudent old count, ever ready to second a middle course, prevailed, and instead of committing her to the deep, they set her on an island past which the bark was drifting, Turian thinking in his own mind that as soon as the fury of the storm was spent he should be able to induce them to put back and fetch her off.

The old seaman knew what was in his mind, and he knew that the work was but half done. He inveighed that the half-measure was useless; he predicted that the storm would not thereby be quenched. But it was too late to listen to him now: they were carried past the land where Floreta was; and it was beyond their efforts [62] to go back to fulfil his purpose now. Meanwhile, as he had predicted, the tempest raged higher and higher; the oarsmen were powerless: but the bark drifted nearer and nearer home; and at last, just as a great wave dashed against it and broke it up, they were brought just so near to land that they could swim to shore. One young and vigorous oarsman took charge of the old count, who was rendered more unfit for the feat by dismay at the ill-success of his mission even than by the weakness of his age. But none looked after the Infante, for he was known to be the expertest swimmer of all the country round.

It was not till the hull had heeled over and gone down that they remembered they had bound him hand and foot, and he could not escape. And so he, who was the cause of all, alone was lost. [63]

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1 Mirandola está mirando
Que bien era de mirar;
Blanca es como la nieve
Y como lo claro cristal,
Colorada como la rosa
Y como rosa de rosal. ↑

2 If God so will, it may rain with a clear sky. ↑

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THE BLOOD-STAIN OF THE ALCÁZAR OF SEVILLE.

Of all the beautiful things which are to be seen at Seville, there is perhaps none which engrosses the attention as the alcázar—so called because built after the fashion of a Moorish palace. To the traveller unacquainted with the East it affords a practical realization of the famed elaboration of Moorish magnificence. It is not very certain whether in it Pedro the Cruel erected a new foundation, or restored an old one remaining from the time of the Moorish occupation; but he certainly left nothing wanting to make it the worthy habitation of one of the most powerful monarchs of the time[1]. The present century has not been wanting to the example thus set; and by dint of the artistic care bestowed upon it, its beauties shine now as brilliantly as at the moment of their first completion. The gardens, with their [64] groves of plantains, datunas, tunales, myrtles, box-trees, and oranges, may appear stiff to an English eye; but be there in the summer, and you readily realize the luxury of paths so contrived as to be always in the shade, and which, when this even is too hot, can be cooled down by turning on a flow of icy water over the tiles which pave them.

It is in the interior, however, that the greatest luxuriance of imagination has been displayed. It is all one blaze of dazzling tints, such as, one would think, no one but

some of Aladdin's genii could have produced. The walls are panelled with a delicate embroidery-like fretwork of every gorgeous hue; the roofs cieled with seeming liquid gold, suspended in burnished drops. It is the dazzling image of all one has dreamt of Byzantine or Persian colouring; it is like being in the fairy palace which was all one large prism. It might have been imagined by mad genii, and executed by frantic fairies. It might be the laboratory where tints are prepared for rainbows and tropical sunsets, or where the painting of peacocks and butterflies, humming-birds, and exotic flowers is devised. Or it might be the jewel-storehouse of some thrice-rich monarch, to whom emeralds and rubies are plentiful as figs and peaches, and all in cabinets of wrought gold.

Amid all this splendour there is one sad, dark spot, which has outlived the wear of [65]
five centuries, to stand a witness of the judgment of Heaven overtaking the tyrant and the oppressor. Pedro the Cruel was the only Christian monarch who ever indulged himself with such a nest; and I fear the life he led within it was not what that of a Christian monarch ought to be. Not to speak of his other faults, his thirst for blood was so great as to be surpassed only by the atrocities ascribed to Nero. Whoever displeased him in any way was summarily put to death, and that sometimes amid cruel tortures, without form of trial.

An old ballad has lately been found, which arranges in rhyming order the whole catalogue of names and qualities of the distinguished people whose lives were forfeited by his hand, or at his behest, which served the people to perpetuate their detestation of his character. There was Don Garcilaso, and his little brothers Don Juan and Don Diego; the Infante of Aragon, his cousin; Don Fernando, a knight of high renown; the noble youth Don Luis de Albuquerque; and Peralvarez Osorio, who had injured him in nothing. Then the Queen of Aragon, to whom his father was brother; and Doña Blanca, his own wife; Doña Juana and Doña Isabel, high ladies both, of the Asturias; and Gutierrez of Toledo, and the Archbishop his brother; Don Iñigo d'Orozco, who fought him in the field; and Don Suero, the good [66]
prelate, Archbishop of Santiago, and also Bermejo de Granada. And besides these many more, both hidalgos and caballeros.

Thus at last his wickedness outgrew the people's patience; and when the good Henry of Trastamare rose up against him, and provoked him to fight, and slew him, they all hailed the act as the execution of the sentence of Divine Justice, and acclaimed Henry as their deliverer and their ruler in his stead; for Alonso, the son of his unblessed union with Maria Padilla, whom he had forced the people to acknowledge for his successor, had been carried off by sudden death soon after; and though the daughter of his lawful marriage had married our own John of Gaunt, all his reputation, and that of the Black Prince his father, could not outweigh their disinclination for a foreign king.

With regard to the mode of Pedro the Cruel's death, the more credited account is that his end was an episode of the siege of Montiel, where he had sought to hide himself from the victorious pursuit of Henry de Trastamare. Local tradition loves to think it found him out with poetical justice, and left its stain in the very hall which had been the scene of his wanton excesses; where others had fallen at his command, and whence the decree had gone forth for the relentless execution of his victims. [67]

1 It was completed 1364. ↑

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THE ADVENTURES OF DOÑA JOSEFA RAMIREZ Y MARMOLEJO.

Doña Josefa Ramirez was the only child of noble parents of Valencia. She grew up in every virtue, and joined the wisdom of a Minerva to the beauty of a Venus. She was hardly eighteen before various noble youths were contending for her good graces; but of them all the only one she favoured was Don Pedro de Valenzuela, who, though of noble lineage, yet did not possess the fortune or position that her parents thought should entitle him who wedded with the descendant of the illustrious houses of Ramirez and Marmolejo.

Little Doña Josefa did not think of all this; she was much attached to her boyish playmate, and hoped that as her parents were very fond of her she would one day win their consent to receive his attentions; in the mean time, she thoughtlessly listened with great delight when he came and sang a love song under her [68]
windows, and even, I am afraid, sometimes came to the *reja*[1] to give him a coy

look of thanks and encouragement.

One day, as the youthful Don Pedro de Valenzuela was thus pleasantly occupied, he had finished his song and was waiting to see if a pair of bright eyes would not come sparkling behind the *reja*, when, his thoughts being quite engrossed by this expectation, and his attention abstracted from every thing around him, he suddenly found himself attacked from behind by two men who were wrapt up in their cloaks and masked so that he could not recognize them, nor indeed had he time to think about it, for before he could even draw his sword they had stretched him dead upon the ground; he could only cry out Josefa's name, and expire.

Doña Josefa was thrilled with dread at the tone in which her name was uttered; it seemed to portend something dreadful, such as she had never known before. She flew to the window, and by what remained of the gloaming light, she saw her lover's body stretched lifeless on the ground, while the assassins had escaped without leaving a trace behind.

The terrible sight seemed to change Doña Josefa's nature: all her woman's [69]
weakness was quenched within her, and every thought bound up in the one determination of avenging the precious life which had been so cruelly sacrificed for love of her. She tore off her woman's gear with the indignation of an enraged lioness, and arrayed herself in a full cavalier's suit, with a *montera*[2] to cover her head and an ample cloak to hide her from scrutiny. Then she took a belt well furnished with arms, and a sword and blunderbuss to boot; and then a purse with two hundred doubloons; thus accoutred she wandered forth in quest of Don Pedro de Valenzuela's assassins, making her way in all haste out of Valencia, for she knew the assassins would not long have remained there.

Hiding herself in the mountains by day, and taking the most unfrequented paths by night, she wandered on till she came to Murcia, and there she resolved to take up her abode for some little time to rest, and also to learn what she might chance to hear.

Here, in her cavalier's dress, she walked about on the promenades, joined knots of speakers in the public *plazas*, and at night sat down at the card-tables and other places of resort, every where keeping her ears open to drink in any word any one [70]
might let fall about her lover's assassination. One night, as she was sitting at a table carelessly shuffling a pack of cards, she heard two gentlemen talking very earnestly, and some words they dropped made her strain all her attention to catch the thread of their discourse.

"Yes, they are gone on; I am sure of it; and some hours ago," asseverated the first speaker, as if he had been contradicted before.

"To be sure," rejoined the other, in a tone of yielding conviction; "it was not likely they should remain in the country. No doubt it is as you say."

"Excuse me," said Doña Josefa, approaching the speakers with a courtly bow, for she could restrain her curiosity no longer, "but I think you were speaking of some gentlemen of Seville.... I am of Seville, and——"

"Of Valencia," politely rejoined the gentleman, fairly caught in the trap. Had Josefa said she was of Valencia, his mouth would have been sealed for fear of betraying secrets.

"Oh, indeed, of Valencia!" she continued, assuming a tone of disappointment; and then, after a moment's pause, she added, as if indifferent, "I think you spoke as if concerned for some friends in trouble?"

"Oh, not *friends*," answered the person addressed, with a slight shudder; "we had [71]
but the most distant acquaintance with them; but they called on us yesterday to ask us to help them out of a difficulty."

"Ah! that is very often the way of the world," replied Doña Josefa, for she felt she must keep the conversation going till she could get all the information she wanted, though scarcely seeing how to bring it to the right point without exciting suspicions. "I'll warrant now it was a regular piece of Valencian roguery[3]; they came with some pitiful pretence, begging, I'll be bound; and I dare say at this moment are laughing at the ease with which their doleful story loosed your purse-strings; ha, ha, ha!"

The silvery laugh and biting tone of the young cavalier stung the Murcians to the quick; it seemed a point of honour to justify themselves from the censure of having been cajoled. The friend who had all this time remained silent, not quite liking the freedom, but now completely reassured by the noble bearing, fair smooth brow, and perhaps also by the sad but winning glance of the young stranger, here joined

in.

“You have a fine knowledge of the world, young friend, and such wise words do not often come from lips on which the hair is not yet grown. Nevertheless there was no deception on this occasion: I never saw men more blasted with fear and shame.” [72]

“Ah!” pursued Josefa as carelessly as she could, for she saw she was now on the right track, “it is easy for a Valencian to assume a look of shame.”

“But, man, these were not men used to shame; these were true men and gentlemen of blood—blood as blue as any blood in Spain.”

“Pshaw! they told you so!” rejoined Josefa with an incredulous shrug, which she knew must bring out the names.

“Why it was no less than Don Leonardo and Don Gaspar Contreras!” broke in the other speaker.

“Don Leonardo and Don Gaspar Contreras!” ejaculated Josefa, this time hardly master of her contending emotions; yet knowing the importance of playing her part to the end, she added in a tone of thundering indignation,—

“And you can stand there and tell me that Don Leonardo and Don Gaspar Contreras came before you bowed with a look of shame,—to beg alms?”

“Even so, fair sir,” rejoined the Murcians; “and if you still have doubts you can go to Valencia, and seek for them; you will not find them there.”

“And pray, sir, why should I not find Don Leonardo and Don Gaspar Contreras in their noble *palacio* at Valencia?”

“Because they dare not show their faces there,” replied one. [73]

“Because they are at this moment riding for their lives to the sea coast, and you would be more likely to find them at Cartagena,” exclaimed the other at the same moment.

Josefa had now learnt pretty well all she desired to know; nevertheless, to make quite sure of her facts, she sat down again, pushing chairs towards the Murcians, and continued in a more pacific and friendly tone,—

“You must excuse me, gentlemen, if the idea of coupling shame with the name of Contreras came upon me as so strange and unaccountable a conjunction, that I could not bring myself to accept it at first; but I am fain to take it on your honourable testimony. But pray tell me, what *can* have happened to bring this about? I have a cousin married to a Contreras, and whatever affects the honour of their house affects my own. It must have been some terrible necessity reduced them to this plight.”

“The old story—jealousy working in ill-regulated minds!” answered the elder speaker. “It seems Valencia possesses some monster of beauty, which has turned the hearts of all her cavaliers.”

“Doña Josefa Ramirez y Marmolejo!” interposed the younger Murcian apologetically, as though he thought it a reproach not to have the name of the beauty of the day on the tip of his lips.

“Well, the young lady, it seems, preferred to every one else of Valencia a certain Don Pedro de Valenzuela——” [74]

Josefa had managed to preserve her composure, in spite of her emotion at hearing her attractions canvassed by the two strangers, but at mention of Don Pedro’s name the blood fairly left her cheeks. To hide her embarrassment, she dropped her glove and stooped to pick it up, till she had summoned the colour back.

“The other gallants,” continued the speaker, not heeding the interruption, “were the more nettled at this, that he was not of so high estate as they——”

Josefa could hardly refrain from exclaiming that he was better than all of them put together; but she coughed and bit her lip, and by a supreme effort kept the tears out of her eyes.

“And when they found they were slighted, while he was allowed to come and strum night after night at the *reja*, they grew furious. None were more indignant than the two cousins Leonardo and Gaspar de Contreras. One night, as they were passing casually by Doña Josefa’s house, and saw Don Pedro standing under the window, basking in the smiles of the lady, while they had to wander by as unrecognized outcasts, their blood was up, and without reflection or premeditation, they set

upon him there and then, without calling upon him to defend himself, and killed him like a——”

“But what ails you, fair sir?” ejaculated the speaker, as he observed poor Josefa [75]
making vain efforts to look indifferent, and trembling from head to foot.

“Nothing, sir, thank you,” stammered Josefa bravely; “the wind is high to-night. With your permission I will e’en close this window.” The moment’s seclusion from the company, and the gasp of air thus gained, enabled her to appear once more a not too eager listener.

“I can now understand why the Contreras are running away like—*dogs*,” she replied, not without some little display of feeling, for she burned to bandy back against the assassins the epithet which, though it had not been breathed, had so nearly been applied to her lover.

A very little more talk elicited that the cousins expected to find a ship sailing from Cartagena in three days; in the mean time they were making the best of their way to the coast. Worn out with the long tension of suppressed emotion, Josefa was glad to retire as soon as there was a break in the conversation.

Next morning she purchased a horse, fleet as the wind, and arrived the same night at Cartagena; and here she once more set to work to find out the retreat of the assassins. In this, fortune again favoured her. For having placed her horse in a stable, and hired a room in the principal inn for herself, she sat down beside an open window, while she thought upon the plan to pursue. As she sat here, her [76]
attention was arrested by a conversation going on between two men seated under a leafy *parral*[4], which effectually concealed her from their sight.

“Where are you going to-night, so finely arrayed?” inquired one of the voices.

“Where every one is going,” responded the other; “to the house of Don Juan Mancilla, for he gives a right noble banquet in honour of two guests he has staying with him, natives of Valencia. He is to give a representation of a comedy, and many other fine things.”

Doña Josefa held her breath, and leant further out of the window.

“Something I heard of their arrival yesterday morning,” rejoined the first voice. “But why all this haste? Methinks the comedy would have been the better got up for one or two days’ rehearsal.”

“Ah, but you see, the Valencians take ship at half-past twelve this very night,” replied the other; and then in a lower key, “They are even now running from Valencia for some charge of a duel there——”

“Hold, man, hold!” warily ejaculated the first voice; “who knows who may overhear you?” [77]

Doña Josefa had overheard enough; her work now up to half-past twelve was but to learn the situation of Don Juan Mancilla’s house, and the way thence to the harbour; no difficult task, for Don Juan Mancilla’s was one of the first names in Cartagena; and near the landing-place she met a garrulous servant of the Contreras, who was easily led to speak of his masters’ movements. Between the two points lay an *alameda*, or promenade, planted with poplars, such as adorns the outskirts of every Spanish town, affording a most convenient spot for the rencontre for which she had now with beating heart to lie in wait.

The tress which on that last sad night she had severed from her lover’s fair young head, and which now alone remained of him who had been all to her, in her hand, she paced backwards and forwards under the pollard poplars, like a knight keeping watch before a sacred shrine. Her thoughts wrapt in the absorbing memories of the past, and the fantastic part fate had assigned to herself, she had taken no note of how the hours had sped by, and when the clocks chimed out the hour of mid-night, it came upon her as a sudden warning. Not many minutes more had elapsed, before she perceived two cavaliers advancing towards her, whom her eye, practised by long acquaintance, readily recognized as the game she had come so far to seek. Their loud talk, swaggering mien, lofty stature, and moreover the [78]
clanking of their swords as they walked, reminding that in Valencia the Contreras bore the reputation of the most accomplished fencers of all the country round, might have made a less resolute heart faint even then, and give up the enterprise. But Doña Josefa never flinched. With one foot firmly planted on the path, and resting on the other as a kind of prop, placed in position to support her against any attempt to thrust her aside, she stood firmly and calmly waiting their approach.

“Don Leonardo, and you, Don Gaspar Contreras!” she said, as soon as they had advanced within hearing, “know ye, who I am?”

“Another time, good friend,” said Don Leonardo impatiently, and tried to pass on.

“We are pressed, and have but time to join our ship,” said Don Gaspar; and he endeavoured, though not without courtesy, to make his way past her.

“You must hear me, Señores de Contreras,” rejoined Doña Josefa in a hollow voice; “and when you have heard me, you will never want a ship more.”

“Come, this is more than pleasantry!” exclaimed Don Leonardo, getting angry.

“Make way, good sir; you see we are pressed for time,” said Don Gaspar, more conciliatingly; for he felt it was no time for picking a quarrel.

“It is no pleasantry, indeed!” Doña Josefa had replied almost before he spoke; “but [79]
most serious earnest. Señores de Contreras, again I ask, Do you know me?”

“What does this trifling mean?” exclaimed Don Leonardo, hotly, and at the same time putting his hand on his sword.

“It means,” replied Josefa, calmly and solemnly—“It means that you are called to answer with your vile lives for the noble life of Don Pedro Valenzuela, whom you treacherously slew without so much as calling on him to draw. *My* sword is the sword of justice, not of the assassin; *yet* I call on you to defend yourselves, if you dare!”

“Good sir, you rave; we are not those you seek; and we know not who you are!” interposed Don Gaspar, putting his hand on Don Leonardo’s sword-arm, for he had already drawn.

“I have twice asked you if you do not know me,” answered Josefa. “Now, then, I tell you: I am Doña Josefa Ramirez y Marmolejo. Have I not a right to avenge the blood of Don Pedro Valenzuela?”

“Ho! ho! so brave anon, you would now make this pretence of womanhood a shield. Methinks your tongue knows not the timidity of woman, and that your arms are no woman’s toys,” blurted out Don Leonardo contemptuously, despite of Don Gaspar’s warnings.

“Draw! Don Leonardo,” commanded Josefa; “nor waste more time in words. I seek [80]
no quarter, nor—give any!”

“At you then!” exclaimed Don Leonardo, rendered furious by her impassibility, and breaking away from Don Gaspar’s hold.

Josefa awaited his onset firmly, her drawn sword extended in her hand, like a statue of the avenging angel. Don Leonardo rushing at her, blind with rage, thrust himself right upon her rapier, which pierced him through and through; and, before he had time to utter a cry, he fell a lifeless corpse at Don Gaspar’s feet.

Don Gaspar, who had no idea that there was any truth in Josefa’s declaration of her sex, felt no inclination to measure his sword against so successful an antagonist; but, in order not to appear to avoid the fray ignominiously, bent down and busied himself with the effort to remove the body of his cousin.

“It is your turn now, Don Gaspar!” said the avenging angel calmly, having just withdrawn her sword from the breast of her prostrate victim. “Stand on guard, for your hour has come!”

This confident assertion, and the conviction that the encounter could not be escaped, excited Don Gaspar almost to the same pitch of indignation as Don Leonardo had displayed, notwithstanding that he was by nature less irascible.

“Think not to find so easy a victory a second time!” he exclaimed. [81]

“It matters little,” replied the lady calmly; “you have killed my life already, when you killed Don Pedro!”

While she was yet speaking, Don Gaspar had already rushed to the encounter; and she, standing with her trusty sword prepared to meet him, sent his body to measure the ground, and his soul to its account, after the same manner that she had served Don Leonardo.

Meantime the bandying of angry words and the clash of steel had not been unheard by the guests, who were even then traversing the *alameda*, as the banquet of Don Juan Mancilla broke up. Quickly as the contest had been carried through there was still time for many persons to assemble, and there was every chance of Josefa being caught and handed over to justice. All sank away, however, before the high and innocent glance of her flashing eyes and the noble mien,

which stood surety hers had been no vulgar aim.

“The Sanctuary of S. Francis may yet be reached,” whispered an old nobleman, who perceived at a glance that the young stranger belonged to his order, which he had rather not see subjected to the ordeal of a public inquisition. “Here, boy, follow me. Courage!” he added, as he observed she had hardly energy left to move from the spot; “we shall soon be there.”

Doña Josefa, so courageous anon, felt palsied at the sight of the advancing [82]
strangers, and the apprehension of having all her motions and manœuvres sifted in the vulgar sieve of public opinion. She knew what she had done could only be judged and appreciated by the few who had felt what she had felt. This very terror at last nerved her to take the old man’s counsel; and so, wrapping her wide cloak around her, she followed at a little distance, delicacy prompting her to avoid appearing to belong to him, so that he might not be compromised through his good-nature. All those who were about at the time were men of similar position, who judged that the course adopted was the wisest, and so Josefa and her guide proceeded to their journey’s end without molestation. Arrived at the church door, the old nobleman pointed to the entrance and passed on his way.

Josefa began to explain to an old Brother who kept the door the misadventure which had brought her thither, but it was more than she could do to conclude the narrative, her feeble powers were already overstrained, and she sank fainting at his feet. For several days she was carefully tended in the hospital; and one day, when the noise of the affair had blown over, and the knowledge that she had taken refuge in the Sanctuary had quieted the pursuit of justice, she sent a messenger to the inn to fetch the swift courser she had left there on arriving, and under favour [83]
of the darkness of the evening set out to return to Valencia.

She had travelled a considerable distance without accident, when suddenly she perceived three travellers coming towards her; the moon shone brightly, and her keen eyes, quickened by natural feminine apprehension, were not slow to make out that they were of the kind most unwelcome under the circumstances, though to meet any one was awkward enough.

She had no time to consider what she should do, for the strangers were advancing at a rapid pace; nor were they slow to declare their character. The chief called out to her before they had even come up, to ‘stand and deliver.’ The only circumstance in her favour was that they stood on the narrow ledge of a mountain path, the one closely packed behind the other as one man.

“It is idle to attempt to resist us, young gallant,” cried the leader as he saw her draw her sword; “we are too many for one even as valiant as I dare say you fancy yourself; besides, there are more of us behind who will soon be up.”

Doña Josefa uttered no boast, she took up a firm position; her fine well-tempered rapier extended in her hand received them on its point, and threaded them through as they came, one behind the other.

But, alack! the strong men, in the contortions of their last agony, overstepped the [84]
narrow footing of the path, and fell over the brink, carrying in their bodies the trusty sword which had stood her in such good stead.

“There are more of us behind who will soon be up!” she repeated to herself, as with dogged determination she still held up against her misfortunes, and proceeded on her way for a wind or two of the path without disturbing incidents. One more turn and there stood before her three more bandits in the same order as the last. She had her *trabuco*[5] ready to aim, and her aim was so steady, that before they had time to perceive her purpose, her ball had pierced through the three of them, and they were sent rolling over the precipice, to join the bodies of their companions below.

Whether Josefa thought that these exploits might bring her into fresh conflict with the arm of the law, or whether the fresh horrors gave a gloomy turn to her mind, and indisposed her for venturing home, I know not; but whatever her motive, she made up her mind at this point of the journey to continue her wanderings only as far as Barcelona, and there take ship to make a pilgrimage to Rome.

Doña Josefa—*Page 84.*

The sea was not much more propitious to poor Doña Josefa's fortunes than the land had been. The vessel on which she had embarked had not been two days out before it was attacked by Algerine Corsairs, who took every soul on board [85] prisoners, and carried them off to Africa, where they were sold as slaves.

It fell to Josefa's lot to be bought by a rich renegade of Tunis, whom she served under the name of Pedro, a name she deemed she had a certain right to take. The renegade was much pleased with her soft discreet manners, and general superiority and uprightness of character; and soon advanced her to the post of steward over his household, having her first instructed in the Arabic tongue. Things went smoothly enough for some time; but when she had been in this service about three years, it happened that one day, when the master was gone out hunting, a maid-servant, who held a high place in the household, and whose forwardness the supposed Pedro had often noticed, came and made a free confession of an irrepressible affection for him, and entreated him to marry her. Josefa, much annoyed at the incident, could only answer that it was impossible: for she had not confidence in the girl to trust her with her secret.

The enraged girl, furious at the repulse, swore by Mahomet to be revenged; accordingly, no sooner was the master returned, than she went to him with every token of distress and indignation, and accused Pedro of abusing his power as steward of the house, and having sought to force her to marry him although she had resisted because he was a Christian, and the law of Mahomet forbade such an [86] union.

The master, highly incensed at the perfidy of the slave he had treated with so much forbearance and indulgence, ordered him to be thrown into a dungeon and starved to death, without hearing any defence.

Such would indeed have been Josefa's fate, but that one of the slaves who respected her brought her daily the scanty means of subsistence she was able to secure. At the end of several days the master, coming to the dungeon to see what had befallen, was greatly provoked to find her not only alive but comparatively well, and took up a cord to administer summary chastisement.

This indignity was more than Josefa could endure; to avert it, she begged him to listen to her; told him she could easily prove the falsity of the accusation under which she was suffering, seeing she was a woman.

The master was delighted to hear the exculpation of his favourite slave, and immediately had her released and reinstated in her authority, and the shameless accuser consigned to the same prison.

From this time he continued to extend his favour and confidence towards her: of all the people about him who shared his pleasures and his riches, she was the only one to whom he could talk of the absorbing agony of his soul, the remorse for [87] having renounced his religion and become a renegade. The result was that he one day announced to her that he had made arrangements for realizing the greater part of his fortune, which he divided in two parts, one of which he bestowed on her; with the other he had resolved to go to Rome in pilgrimage and endow a shrine, where he would pass the remainder of his days in prayer and penance.

He had found a merchant of his acquaintance who would take them in his ship to Alicante, whence he would start again for Rome, and Josefa would be free either to continue her journey thither or return to Valencia.

Josefa's desire of once more embracing her parents made her elect the latter course. Their plan was executed to the letter without hindrance.

Arrived once more at Valencia, Josefa was not slow to find her way to her father's palace. An old servant who had been in the house before she was born, and watched her grow up, opened the door, but did not recognize her, which she took for a presage that she might come unknown into her parents' presence also.

She found them seated side by side, and bewailing the loss of their only child.

"I have come to tell you," she broke in, "that your child is now in this very city; three years and a half she has been a captive slave in Tunis, though not serving as [88] a slave, for she was absolute master of the household of her owner. And at the end of that time he gave her her liberty together with a large fortune in money."

"Oh, sir, tell us where is she!" ejaculated Don Juan Ramirez; "let our aged eyes rest on her again before we die, so shall we be consoled for our troubles!"

Then Doña Josefa threw off her disguise, and falling on her knees before them, entreated their pardon for all her errors and all the anxiety she had given them.

Having received that, she told them she had determined to pass the rest of her days in penitence in a convent, which she did with their hearty approval; and in this kind of life she spent many years, affording a lively and edifying example to all. And thus ended in peace the tragic adventures of Doña Josefa Ramirez y Marmolejo. [89]

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1 Ornamented iron-work in front of the lower windows of Spanish houses. ↑

2 A warm hunting-cap, with flaps to cover the forehead and ears, capable therefore of serving, in some sort, as a disguise. ↑

3 The Sevillians to the present day give a very bad character to the Valencians. ↑

4 A spreading vine, trained along a horizontal trellis, so as to form a shady arbour; an unfailing adjunct to most houses in the south of Spain. ↑

5 Blunderbuss. ↑

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THE STEEPLE OF COVEÑA.

At a very little distance from Madrid you may already discern against the horizon the outline of the steeple of Coveña, which is one of the handsomest edifices of New Castile; and all the thitherward way it is before you, standing against the sky as a landmark to the traveller.

The people are so proud of having a church which bears so unusual a proportion to the size of their village, that they will not allow it was designed by any architect of less renown than Juan de Herrera, the architect of the Escorial, whom another tradition declares to have had a hand in the works at St. Peter's, in Rome.

Nor are they satisfied with the mere statement; they are also very circumstantial in their account of his connexion with it, though both are declared to be quite

apocryphal. They say he was so pleased with this work of his genius that he had it produced entirely under his own eye. He watched while the foundations were laid, [90] while the materials were collected round the spot, while every stone was laid in its place; in fact, he was never tired of looking at it: now he would take a long walk into the country to enjoy its appearance in the distant view; now he would stand in the *plaza* beneath, and gaze up at the storied decorations with which his fancy had invested it; now he would mount the interior staircase of the tower, and look down from the monument he had raised, upon the insignificant dwellings with which it was surrounded.

On one of these latter expeditions he observed that he was one day followed by Andres, his son, a boy of some fifteen years of age. The circumstance pleased him, because he had noticed with growing sorrow that Andres on many occasions had failed to display that fearless disposition which is the characteristic of a brave and generous spirit. Through an opening in the tracery he turned to watch, from a higher stage, the boy's proceedings. For a certain distance he mounted steadily enough, but in proportion as he got higher and had completed more turnings, giddiness seemed to overcome him. Juan de Herrera began to lose patience. The boy wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and sat down in a recess. Herrera felt so provoked that he could not restrain an impetuous movement; slight as was the attendant noise, it struck upon the boy's excited nerves; he started from his [91] resting-place, trembling like an aspen leaf.

"What's the matter, Andres, my boy?" cried his father, to reassure him: "it is only I, your father."

"I'm all right!" replied Andres, ashamed to be caught under a display of weakness.

"Then come on, boy; and don't sit panting like a broken-winded horse. There, put your head out of that slit in the wall, and look down and see what a fine height I have made this tower. You'll see Dolores and Pepito and Luis and Mariquilla playing in the *plaza*, and they will look like ants from this high tower."

Andres somewhat recovered from his exertions and his alarm, and, curious to see his playmates looking "like ants," summoned sufficient courage to put his head through the loophole.

For the first time the boy experienced the effect of the giddy height; he hung back and turned pale, then pressed his hands against the wall for support.

"Coward! you don't mean to say you are afraid!" exclaimed Juan de Herrera.

"Oh—no—I'm not afraid," stammered poor Andres, making a convulsive effort to look out through the slit once more.

This time he remained so long opposite the opening and so steadily, that his father hoped he had got over the first fears; but, watching him anxiously, he observed, as [92] he at length turned away, that he had his eyes closed.

Indignant that *his* son should not have as robust courage as the peasant boys of the village, and still more that he should not be in a condition to enjoy his favourite structure, Juan de Herrera, unable to master his irritation, loaded the boy with reproaches; and Andres slunk away, grieved at having distressed his father, yet unable to summon courage sufficient to satisfy his wishes.

Some days after this, the consecration of the church took place, and the municipal functionaries invited the architect and his son to a banquet on the occasion, at which were assembled all the notabilities of the place, as well as many from neighbouring villages, and even from Madrid. Juan de Herrera deemed, with more zeal than judgment, that this would be a favourable opportunity for curing his son of his weakness, and to effect this narrated to the company the circumstance stated above.

"Father, it was a passing folly," cried the boy, burning with shame; "give me an opportunity, and I will show you that I do not deserve your opinion."

There was a pause, for the boy spoke with such thrilling earnestness that the smile of derision which had been raised at his expense died away from every lip. [93]

"The *galera*[1] has just brought down the cross and ball for the summit of the steeple," continued Andres; "let me go up and place it, and I shall have had the merit of crowning your work."

"You will never dare it!" answered Juan de Herrera contemptuously.

"Let me show you I am not so bad," pleaded Andres.

“Bear in mind, boy, that if your courage fails when you get to *that* height it will cost you your life.”

“Don’t be afraid; my courage will not be wanting,” replied Andres.

“Be it so then,” rejoined Juan de Herrera; “to-morrow you shall show what you are worth,” and he clasped the boy’s hand to encourage him in his courageous resolution, and all round the table applauded his pluck.

The next morning found all who were at the banquet, and many more whose curiosity the report of the story had excited, gathered in the *plaza* round the Church of Coveña. There at the foot of the steeple lay shining the huge cross and ball, newly clad with gilding and bound with strong ropes, by means of which it was to be hoisted over the ready adjusted pulleys into its place. [94]

“If you don’t feel up to the mark, you had better give in, even now!” whispered Juan de Herrera, under the porch. “It is still time; and, mind, it is no easy task!”

“My head is quite steady,” answered Andres, piqued to find his father still doubted his daring; and, his head erect, without waiting to hear another word of warning, he commenced the ascent of the spiral stair at a rapid pace.

Not altogether free from uneasiness, Juan de Herrera went out to watch the result from the stone cross in the centre of the *plaza*. The whole crowd was nearly as breathless and anxious as the father, but before two minutes had elapsed Andres was seen emerging from behind one of the pinnacles of a platform, level with the beam on which the bell had been hung a few days before.

A shudder seized the throng, for some one whispered that he had heard the bell sound as the youth passed by, and the rest took up the words and repeated under their breath with superstitious terror, “*La campana ha tocado á muerto*[2]!”

Herrera, meantime, stood leaning against the cross a little way from the crowd, and too much absorbed to catch the report. He seemed quite tranquil and had heard no sound.

Most probably the lad had touched the clapper as he passed it. [95]

Meantime Andres was steadily mounting a step-ladder placed on the roof by which the final stage was to be reached, and from the steps was engaged in arranging the support that was to receive the ball.

The workmen below were drawing the pulleys, and the ornament had nearly reached the summit; as it rose, Andres had to mount two steps more. He raised his foot, but his courage failed.

“My son is lost, for he hesitates!” cried the terror-stricken father, in a hoarse voice.

The multitude took up the cry; but, simultaneously with its utterance, the luckless boy was precipitated to the ground, dashing against one of the buttresses as he fell.

Juan de Herrera, adds the tradition, was never seen to smile again.

One day he went up to the top of the lantern of St. Lorenzo of the Escorial, and gazed over towards Coveña. It seemed to him that he saw two fiery eyes glaring upon him from the steeple which had once been his pride.

Eight days after he was found a corpse. It was the anniversary of the death of his son. [96]

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1 A large covered waggon drawn by mules, in which luggage and passengers were conveyed together in Spain. Still in use in out-of-the-way places. ↑

2 The bell tolled a death knell. ↑

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ANOTHER FAIR MAID OF ZARAGOZA.

The title of the courageous maid who helped to defend the walls of her native Zaragoza against the assault of the French invaders, has already become a household word among us. The troubles of the early part of Queen Isabella's reign elicited another instance of feminine constancy, which has likewise received its tribute of local celebration, though exhibited in a more confined and womanly sphere.

Two sisters, Jacinta and Isabella, lived in Zaragoza with their brother, Don Froilan. Among their acquaintance were two intimate friends, Don Pablo and Don Matias, who both held commissions in the National Militia. Don Matias was a handsome, generous young man, and a general favourite, but also somewhat light-hearted and unscrupulous. Don Pablo, on the other hand, was of a more solid, thoughtful character, rather respected after long acquaintance than liked at first sight. Now the characters of the two sisters, Jacinta and Isabella, were very much like those of [97]
their two friends; Jacinta being light and thoughtless, and Isabella steady and reflective; yet in spite of this, Don Pablo was more fascinated by Jacinta's brilliant qualities than by Isabella's good and careful ways; while Isabella's good sense had taught her to prefer such a character as Don Pablo's. And it was with a bleeding heart she saw it agreed between him and her giddy sister that they were to be united for ever. Her sisterly affection, however, forbid her to do more than sigh in secret, and sigh she did many a day; not only for her own loss, but for Don Pablo, whom she sincerely respected. For her light-hearted sister, in spite of her engagement to him, used to continue to be very merry with Don Matias too.

Just before the day appointed for the wedding, an *émeute* broke out at some little distance, and the Zaragoza Militia was ordered out to quell the disturbance. The world of Zaragoza turned out to see the military array; and Don Froilan took his sisters on to the Cosa[1], along with the rest; and while Jacinta chatted merrily with both Don Pablo and Don Matias, as if they were going out to a review instead of to [98]
fight, Isabella, impressed with the danger of the situation, and the chance of never seeing her dear friend again, could hardly bring herself to bid them adieu.

Time passed on, and no certain tidings came of the fate of the two officers. Every day there were conflicting reports, but nothing reliable as to individual results.

At last a day came when the Zaragoza regiment returned, covered with laurels and with hardly any losses from its ranks.

The Cosa was thronged with people welcoming the safe return of their fellow townsmen. Jacinta was soon in earnest conversation with Don Matias, while Isabella leant against a tree for support, as her gazing eyes vainly sought Don Pablo.

Soon the truth was learnt from Don Matias. After waiting about in the cover of houses and trees and hillocks for the insurgents for some time, they had come to an open engagement with them, in which they were in a short time entirely routed by the gallant Militia, who came off with only two killed and half a dozen wounded —but one of those two left for dead on the field was no other than Don Pablo! It needed all Isabella's fortitude and self-command to avoid showing greater agony at this announcement than was consistent with her having no nearer tie than that of an intended sister-in-law, while Jacinta, who had no self-control, burst into a [99]
fearful excitement of grief.

Taking Isabella's assumed calmness of manner for indifference towards the absent, the young officer within a few hours of his return began paying her attentions. Jacinta's jealousy at this quenched all her light grief for Don Pablo, and Don Matias soon found that his suit would have far more chance of fortune with *her*. With characteristic fickleness he lost no time in urging it in the quarter where it met with favour, and pushed it so warmly that their marriage was fixed for an early day, being but a month from that on which Don Pablo was believed to have fallen.

To faithful Isabella's intense disgust, not only was the wedding so hurried on, but all Zaragoza was invited to a grand ball to celebrate the occasion. Dressed in deep mourning she refused to have any thing to do with the festivity; but, on the contrary, ordered a funeral service to be celebrated in the church to the memory of her lost hero.

It was just at this juncture, while the music of the marriage-ball[2] was sounding merrily through the open windows of Don Froilan's house, and the solemn *doble*[3] was ringing from a neighbouring church, that Don Pablo, healed of his wounds, and choosing the cool of the evening for his journey, came through the streets of [100]
Zaragoza, well wrapt up in his military cloak, intending to make straight for the house of his affianced bride. He stopped, however, at the *barbiere's* to have his hair and beard, long neglected during the campaign, made presentable. The *barbiere* is an institution in Spain which almost supplies the place of an English

club. Men go in to submit to the barber's attentions, and while they are under his hands, or waiting their turn, they have leisure to discuss with each other the news and gossip of the day.

Don Pablo was, as we have said, a serious man; his habits were reserved and homely, he had never cared for the barber's gossip, and his habit had been to manage his shaving arrangements at home, so he was no acquaintance of the barber. Accordingly, he came in on this occasion unrecognized.

"Strange are the vicissitudes of human life!" he exclaimed, as he seated himself in the barber's chair—for he was somewhat of a philosopher. "Marriage-music and funeral-bells sounding at the same time—what a strange lesson!"

"Stranger still," broke in the prattling barber, "if your worship knew what reference each bears to the same person!"

"To the same person!" rejoined Don Pablo; "how can that possibly be?" [101]

"Why, the bells are for a funeral service for a distinguished officer, lost in the late encounter; and the merry music is for the marriage of his betrothed to a brother-officer!"

Don Pablo started as if he had been shot. The barber noticed his emotion. "Your worship doubtless knows the officer of whom I speak," replied the barber.

"Ye—es, I do—o!" stammered Don Pablo, relieved to find the barber had not hit nearer the mark. "You speak of Don Pablo, of course?"

"Of course I do!" exclaimed the barber; "no one has spoken of any one else these last days. And here come some of his friends round the corner; if you want to hear them speak of him you have only to listen. I'll warrant he is the subject of their talk."

"I should like to hear what they say," said Don Pablo, whose curiosity was strongly excited by these revelations about himself; "but it might embarrass them to see so near a friend to him as I was, here."

"Step to this unlighted window, and you will hear all without being seen."

Don Pablo did as he was bid, and readily distinguished a group of his acquaintances, with Don Froilan in their midst, standing at the barber's door, lighting their cigars[4]. [102]

"How now, Don Froilan!" exclaimed Don Lupercio; "a ball at your own house in honour of your sister's wedding, and you out here!"

("Ah, poor fellow!" said Don Pablo to himself, "he won't countenance his sister's fickleness. He was always a great friend of mine.")

"Why, to tell you the truth," replied Don Froilan, "the first part of a ball is always dull work. I have set them going, and I'm off to the opera. I always enjoy the second act of an opera; it's the cream of the whole. I shall just skim that off, and then run back to the best of the ball."

("So," said Don Pablo, sadly, "this is the man I have so often helped through his difficulties! And I really thought he cared for me!")

"Now, really!" said Don Mariano, "I thought you were going to say that you had come out to attend the funeral service for your friend Don Pablo——"

("Ah, yes, that would have been more like a friend!" sighed Don Pablo.)

"A—a—funeral service? no—no, I'm not fond of that sort of thing, it's so melancholy! And then what's the use—if the fellow died, as I've no doubt he did, [103] without so much as saying an 'Our Father,' what's the use of praying for him?"

("The atrocious calumny!" exclaimed Don Pablo; "and not one of them to say a word in my defence!")

An awkward pause ensued, which was broken by the gallant young Don Antonio: "And while we are wasting our time here, your sisters are dancing away and charming every one, as usual!"

("Dancing away while the church bells are tolling for poor me!")

"My sisters—eh? No—o, not exactly; that is, only one of them. Jacinta is dancing, of course; but Isabella—a—won't—a—come in. I believe she's gone to the church instead."

(“So, indeed, there’s one of them at least who hasn’t forgotten me! And one, too, whose remembrance is more worth having than all the others’ put together!”)

“Indeed!” replied Don Lupercio; “but I thought it was the other sister who had been more attached to him.”

“Attached? ah, yes—in one way; that is, she was engaged to him; but as to attachment, that is, of the heart—between you and me—it was Isabella who cared for him. Jacinta, you see, only wanted to be married, and Don Matias will do just as well for that—ha, ha, ha!”

“You don’t surprise me,” responded young Don Antonio, who generally knew which [104]
way the ladies’ inclination turned. “Something of this I suspected too.”

“And I,” added Don Mariano.

(“Fool that I was!” growled Don Pablo; “all these butterflies saw it, and I never ventured to think of it! I looked on her as a priestess, a goddess—I never ventured to think of her in any other way. She was always so grand and grave; and Jacinta was so accessible.”)

“But, good evening, gentlemen! I shall really miss the opera, if I stand chatting any longer,” broke in Don Froilan.

They dispersed: Don Froilan bending his steps towards the opera, and the rest towards the ball-room. Meantime, sadly veiled in black, and attended by Ramon, the old and trusty family-servant, Isabella crossed the street, and entered the church as the last tolls were sounding.

“There she goes to pray for me—it is true enough!—while others are dancing!” exclaimed Don Pablo, rapturously. “But I’ll have my joke with Don Froilan yet.”

“Barber!” he cried, “send me a notary, quick! I’ve some important business which must be transacted instantly.”

“On the instant, your worship!” replied the barber. “There is one lodging, luckily, [105]
in the sixth floor of this very house.”

Ten minutes’ conference with the notary settled the affair. Then he bid him run with the paper to Don Froilan’s box at the theatre[5], and took up his station again at the window, to have the happiness of seeing Isabella once more as she came out of the church, and also to take the chance of enjoying the effect of the paper he had sent to Don Froilan. Nor did he wait long. In less time than he would have thought possible, Don Froilan came running out of the opera, hurrying to take his place at the funeral service, and give a public token of his attention to the deceased. But the doors were closed, and Don Pablo’s thoughts were diverted from her brother by the sight of Isabella, pale and haggard, her eyes worn with tears, coming out of the church, leaning on Ramon’s arm.

“What! is it too late?” cried Don Froilan, stumbling against her on the steps in the dark. “Oh dear, how hard! and I made such haste to come!”

“But why this sudden haste, brother?” replied Isabella, contemptuously. “This morning you chid me for disturbing the ball!”

“Hush, child! if I did it, it was to please Jacinta—it was quite, quite against my own inclination. Oh, why wasn’t I by to assist him in his last moments?”

“But why all this sudden grief now?” [106]

“Sudden! it’s not sudden; you know I always loved him as a brother; and here’s the proof of how well he loved me. A notary has just brought me a will he left with him before he went to the war, constituting me his heir to all he had, dear fellow!”

Isabella pushed by him with a movement of disdain, which perfectly delighted Don Pablo, and made her way mournfully into the house, attended as before by Ramon.

Don Pablo lost little time in following her. Who could be proof against so much constancy? If he had looked on her as an inaccessible divinity before, he felt sufficient encouragement now to tell her that he thought so.

The faithful Ramon was very ready to lend his assistance, and Don Pablo having taken him into confidence he dexterously managed to break the good news of his resurrection to his young mistress, who consented to come down to the ball-room and confront her brother and sister on Don Pablo’s presenting himself there too. The consternation caused by his appearance was of course very great. Some of the ladies nearly fainted. Don Froilan guessed the trap he had fallen into, and turned

away to cover his shame as well as disappointment at the loss of the inheritance. Jacinta and Matias hid their faces behind her fan; while Isabella and Pablo joined their loving hands amid the joyful congratulations of their assembled friends. [107]

1 In some parts of Spain where there is no arena for the bull fights, they are held in some large open space, called a *Cosa*. The Cosa at Zaragoza is a broad open street of the best houses, planted with trees. ↑

2 Marriages are celebrated in the evening in Spain. ↑

3 Toll—for a funeral service. ↑

4 Every one smokes at all hours in Spain. It is the custom at many barbers' and tobacconists' shops to have a piece of lighted *mecha*, or plaited tow, hanging outside the door for the convenience of their customers, who may want to light their cigars. ↑

5 It is a common custom in Spain to receive friends, and even transact business in your box at the theatre. ↑

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JUANITA THE BALD;
OR,
A DAUGHTER'S LOVE.

There lived once upon a time on the banks of the Tagus a poor shepherd named Juan; and he was as honest as he was poor, and as contented as he was honest. He had just enough wages to buy the coarse meal which supported him and his hard-working wife, Consolacion. A *zamarra*, or suit of rough sheepskin, which served to keep out the cold for several years together, was afforded him from the flock, and with weaving and knitting Consolacion provided the rest of their scanty wardrobe.

Now Juan had a large flock confided to his care, and his master reposed entire trust in him; but if he never had the provocation of being looked after, neither had he ever the satisfaction of being praised. Yet, notwithstanding this lack of all earthly stimulus, Juan was always faithful to his trust: no sheep ever strayed that he did not seek out over the barren waste and the steep mountain-side; no little [108] lamb was ever left by any sad accident without its dam, but he brought it home to Consolacion, and the honest pair reared it as tenderly as if it had been their own infant.

But if Juan's master neglected to commend his integrity, there was One who did not forget him, but kept a just account of all his actions. Thus it chanced one day, when after a long drought the herbage was dried up, and he had had endless trouble in keeping his flock together, as the poor things would wander hither and thither while seeking pasture, that at last he got led away far from home, along a wild path he had never trodden before, and the country all around him looked strange, and yet there was the track of his runaway sheep before him, and on and on he went. The way was sandy, and the sun was fierce, and at last his strength failed him; footsore and dispirited he sank down at the foot of a tree, whose shelter he vainly sought, as its foliage had long been burnt up by the parching sun, and only the bleached trunk and thirsty branches remained. Half maddened with thirst and heat, he fell into a sort of trance, and he thought he saw an ancient hermit of severe aspect standing before him, who chid him that he lay there taking his rest while his master's sheep were astray, calling him only a *zagal* (or shepherd's helper). [109]

Juan did not lose his temper at the reprimand, but meekly begged forgiveness, and endeavoured to rise that he might get him upon his way again. His strength failed him, however, and he sank once more upon the ground. Then, in the place of the hermit, he saw before him a beautiful child with a shepherd's crook in his hand, and carrying a lamb in his bosom, who told him to be comforted, for he had found his sheep, and fed them, and led them safely home to the fold. He commended too his faithful service, and told him that he was come to offer him a reward, and gave him the choice of three. The first was a large sum of money, with which he could go down to one of the rich seaports of Spain and trade. The second was a grand castle in the mountains, where he would have ease and luxury and plenty of retainers to do his bidding. The third was to retain his present humble condition, while to his hearth was added the presence of a gentle daughter.

Then honest Juan did not hesitate which to choose. "Give me not money," said he, "for money begets covetousness, and *codicia rompe el saco*[1]. Give me not power, for I was not born to it, and the proverb of our forefathers says, A fallen rich man

may make a good master, but not an enriched poor man (*Sierve á un rico empobrecido y no á un pobre enriquecido*). But give me—oh, give me a child to [110] love me in my old age! I am but a poor, worthless servant to ask this thing—nevertheless, it is the bounty of God."

When Juan woke to consciousness, the great heat of the day had passed away, and his shaggy dog was licking his face, as if to warn him that he had but little time to get home before dark. Trusting to the animal's sagacity for guidance, he soon found his way home, where the sheep were safely folded, as the beautiful shepherd-child had promised, and Consolacion was waiting on the threshold of the hut, to welcome him home to supper.

To his other virtues Juan added humility, and, indeed, without it they would have been of little value; and it seemed so much like vanity to talk of his vision that he never mentioned a word of it, till it slipped off his tongue unawares years after. Nevertheless, before a twelvemonth was out, a dear little baby was found in Consolacion's arms, completing their simple happiness.

Juanita (little Janey)—so they called her—was beautiful as a child of promise should be, but her chief glory was the rich profusion of waving hair which covered her like a veil, and rested gracefully on the ground as she knelt in prayer. She grew up the joy of her parents, and being very docile soon learnt all the domestic arts of her mother, and was never so happy as when she was relieving her of her household cares. If they had any thing to complain of with her it was that she had [111] quite a passion for admiring her beautiful hair; and when she was sent to the fountain she would sometimes waste hours looking at herself, and arranging it according to various fancies. But when her mother looked grave on her return, it was quite sufficient to keep her from offending so again for many days.

Thus many years of tranquil, homely joy passed away. Peace and gladness is not of long continuance in this world for the good, and Juan's time of trouble was at hand. First, it pleased Providence to take Consolacion to Himself; then, as a result of much weeping over her, and his great privations and long exposure to sun and weather, his eyes grew dim, and then his sight failed him entirely. Then the old dog, by whose help he still managed to keep the sheep together, in spite of his blindness, died too; and he was of no use any longer as a shepherd, and he had nothing left to him but Juanita. Juanita, it is true, fulfilled all a daughter's part, and by her industry supported him above actual want.

But her little head was always running on how his sight could be regained; and one day she revealed the result of her cogitations. "Father dear, do not all the wise people live in great cities? Let us now get us down to prosperous Segovia, or noble Toledo, or beautiful Sevilla, and let us find some of the cunning men to heal of [112] whom we have heard, and get you back your sight."

But Juan lacked the courage to undertake so great a journey and expose his little daughter to all the attendant risks by the way; and he was a man of great patience to endure what the Lord sent; and so they remained in the mountain-hut for five years more. By that time Juanita was fifteen, and quite a little woman, and her advice began to have the weight of a woman's authority with her father, and at last she got him to consent to her often-urged prayer that they should journey to seek a doctor.

Juanita's ears had been ever open to learn every story of healing from every traveller who chanced to pass their cot, and in this way she had learnt the fame of a certain Jew mediciner, who dwelt at Toledo, and to Toledo therefore she was bent on directing their steps.

A beautiful sight it was to see the venerable old man leaning his hand, withered with honest labour, on the silken tresses of his courageous child. The way was long, but there was no lack of hospitality; the admiration of the peasants they passed was every where kindled by Juan's patience and Juanita's devotion, and a bite and a sup never failed them. At last they came to Toledo; and in a great city it was not so easy to find shelter, but God warmed to them the heart of an old woman who had herself suffered and learnt compassion by suffering; she gave [113] them a bed, and Juanita's busy fingers, before long, provided means of subsistence.

Her next care was to make out the Hebrew doctor, which was not of the easiest, as those of his race were scarcely tolerated, and did not care to make themselves ostensible. However, a daughter's love overcomes all obstacles, and at last she found the means to bring her father before the wise man. Imagine her joy, when after all her labours, he pronounces with confidence that he *can* restore her father's sight! For a moment of joy, a twelve-month of anxiety, however. In another minute she has learnt that he demands 500 maravedis for the cure!

“Abate something for charity? What! charity to a dog of a Christian! Why, it was enough that he soiled his fingers with healing him, but to forego his pitiful fee too, —never! by the Holy City, never!”

Juanita could speak no word more for tears. In silence she placed her father’s hand on her glittering hair, and in sadness guided his weak footsteps back to their poor shelter.

Hard work it had been to provide subsistence for them both, and to make a little extra to have something to offer to the lone widow, who had taken them in—but how hope ever to make up 500 maravedis? If in the first days of their arrival she [114] had wasted some precious hours over her old favourite pastime of arranging her luxuriant tresses, and had taken pleasure when people called out in admiration—all that was gone by now. She sat at her little loom, work, work, work!—she never took her hands off, never lifted her eyes, never even saw that the barber who lived opposite was constantly gazing upon her. The only thing to cheer her was the placid voice of Juan, who would continually bid her be of good comfort and put her trust in God.

One day, in the midst of her toil, there came a messenger from the Corregidor of the city. His aunt had died that day, and as she died unmarried, a procession of girls equal in number to the years of her life must follow her to the grave, draped in white. She numbered eighty years, and Juanita was required to make up the eightieth attendant. Juanita could not say “Nay,” even though it cost her such precious hours.

When she came into the hall where the mourners were assembled she found to her no slight disgust that the dress she had to wear consisted in part of a great white hood. It was hard, on the only day she suffered herself to part from her work, to have to cover up her glorious hair! At all events, till the procession began to move she would throw it back. She did so, and it made her look the picture of an angel, [115] as it fell in rich curls over the white dress. At the same moment the Corregidor’s wife passed through the hall. Though younger than her defunct sister-in-law she had arrived at that age when nature sometimes thinks it right to withdraw her gift of hair, and sorely did she lament the loss. For a long time past she had left an order with a clever barber of the city to manufacture her a wig which should make good the defect, and he was to swear it was no dead person’s hair. She had a superstition that in wearing the hair of a dead person, you assumed the responsibility of all their sins, and, the good lady being sufficiently satisfied with her own position in the scale of grace, had no desire to run the risk of getting a worse one, even for the sake of the coveted wig. But a wig made of the hair of a living person was not an order easy to execute. The moment her eyes fell on Juanita’s magnificent *cabellera* (head of hair) she determined that it should not be long before it should decorate her own head.

Accordingly, she hastened to call the Corregidor aside and assure him he must procure it for her. The Corregidor knowing the attachment a maiden was likely to have for such an adornment, endeavoured to convince her of the impossibility of the task. All was of no use, save to render her more resolute. The Corregidor knew that in disputes with his wife he always had to give in at last, and so, to pacify her, [116] promised he would do his best, and to satisfy her that he did so the interview was arranged to take place in her presence.

The funeral was no sooner over than the Corregidor beckoned Juanita to follow him into his wife’s room.

Poor little Juanita never thought of resisting an order from so great a functionary, but tripped along lightly behind him.

What was her surprise to find herself severely chid for wasting the time she might spend in working for her father in the vanity of decking out her hair! Juanita did not grow angry, or deny her fault, but could not forbear asking, with great simplicity, “Was it her fault if God had given her a great mass of hair to comb out?”

“Not your fault at all, my dear child,” said the Corregidor, much relieved to find she took his admonitions so meekly. “Not your fault at all, so long as you keep it on your head; but you might cut it all off.”

“Cut it off!” repeated poor Juanita, mechanically; “what would be the use of that?”

“Why, you might sell it, child. I myself would give you fifty maravedis for it.”

“Give me fifty maravedis for it!” exclaimed the child, wondering what he could possibly want it for.

The Corregidor, fancying her surprise was dictated by indignation at the smallness

of his offer, and incited by a gesture from his wife, impatient lest she should lose the prize, hastened to reply, “Well, if that does not content you, I’ll give you 100 maravedis.” [117]

But Juanita’s astonishment only increased; so she stared at him instead of answering.

“I’d even say 150,” continued the Corregidor.

But Juanita only looked the more surprised. And so they went on, his anxiety bidding against her bewilderment, till at last he got up to 500 maravedis!

“500 maravedis!” echoed the child, as if waking from a trance at the words which brought back to memory the fee required to restore her father’s sight. “Oh, yes! give me 500 maravedis, it is all yours at *that*!” And then the thought of her great loss made her burst into a flood of tears. It was a thought which for a moment almost overpowered her strong sense of filial piety, and in the depth of her little heart she half wished the Corregidor would repent of his bargain. But no such luck; at her first sign of yielding the lady had run off to fetch her largest scissors, and in a trice she had begun shearing at the glittering spoil. Down the bright silken masses fell on the snowy drapery, and beside them fell the child’s pearly tears over her lost treasure. At last the sacrifice was complete; and poor Juanita stood in the midst of the ruin more dead than alive. [118]

Then the Corregidor counted into her lap the promised sum, and the reckoning once more woke a sensation of joy. Wrapping her hood close round her, Juanita lost not a moment in flying to conduct her father to the house of the Jew.

Her thoughts were now entirely fixed on the moment of his restoration, but even this thought was embittered by the reflection that his one reason for desiring to have his sight back was to look on her—and she was no longer what she had been!

The strange alteration in her appearance soon got whispered about among the neighbours; and she got so much stared at that she never ventured into the street but when forced by sheer necessity, and then she ran along, looking neither to the right hand nor the left, and not even perceiving how considerately her opposite neighbour the barber followed her steps, and defended her from the rudeness of the street boys.

At last her father’s tedious cure was completed, and she was admitted to see him. Some one had, unperceived by her, followed her respectfully all the way, ready to protect her at all hazards. In the *zaguan* (sort of vestibule) of the Jew’s house this faithful follower confronted her, and she recognized the gallant barber at once. Gently pushing back her hood he substituted another covering for her head. Juanita put up her hand, and, to her surprise, found it tangled in the masses of her own rich hair! She stroked it with both hands, and found it all there, just as if by enchantment. Finding her dumb with astonishment, the barber hastened to explain that the wife of the Corregidor having sent the hair to him to make up, he had resolved no one should wear it but herself, and for the Corregidora he had put together the best match he could from the store he kept by him for such purposes. They were now interrupted by a summons from the Jew, who was ready to remove Juan’s bandages. They no sooner reached the room where he was, than he ran and clasped Juanita in his arms, exclaiming, “God be praised that I can see you, my child—a few years’ blindness are well repaid when it is reserved to one to see such a daughter as you!” Then, perceiving the barber, he embraced him too, and said, “God be praised for my sight! since I can now work for my living again, and repay you, my benefactor, for well I know, though I would never tell Juanita to increase her burden, that it is you who have paid the rent of our lodging all this time! My son, my dear son, what can I do for you?” [119]

“There is one thing, father, you can do for me—one only thing, but it is too great to ask!”

“Nothing is too great to-day—ask away, boy, never fear!” The barber looked towards Juanita to gain courage, and, seeing her approving smile, fell on his knees and begged Juan to let him marry her. “With all my heart, if the wench so will,” replied the old man; “I cannot see her wedded to an honester fellow!” Juan was not slow to read in her eyes what her sentiments were, and so, without more ado, he took the hand of each to place them in one another. But both drew back. The barber, with all his charity and delicacy and taste, was very ugly, and he could not believe in his good fortune; and Juanita had one condition to lay down first. “How now! what’s this?” said the father. “Come, friend barber, explain yourself.” [120]

“Well, sir, I think it is but fair to give Juanita time to consider it all. I know I’m not so good-looking as *her* husband ought to be. Long ago should I have told her how I loved her but for this—but I dared not! I longed to offer the 500 maravedis over

and over again, but I dared not speak to her; and now the joy is all so strange I feel I must not hurry her."

"Well spoken, young man! but, Juanita, what do *you* hang back for?"

"I—I have one little condition to make;" and she turned to the barber. "I have been thinking that we have not acted quite honestly with the Corregidora. She has a superstition against wearing dead people's hair, and she has paid honourably for [121] that of a living person—so what she has bought must be taken back to her. Moreover, I recognize that all my life this hair has been a snare to me, and whenever I have been led from the path of duty it has been by its means—so I am resolved never to wear it again, and to be known in future by no other name but that of JUANITA THE BALD! What say you, are you content to marry me *now*?" The honest barber—perhaps on the whole not very sorry for a stipulation which put them somewhat nearer on a condition of equality in regard to personal appearance —only answered by clasping her in his embrace.

"What! what is all this," fell in the old man, "about hair and the Corregidora, and Juanita the—the *Bald*!—eh?" Then the barber was obliged to explain to him the sacrifice Juanita had made, first to obtain his cure, and again to her sense of honour, and her delicacy of conscience. The old man was quite unnerved by the recital. At first he was determined to resist her resolution; but his own mind was too well regulated not to acknowledge on reflection that she had chosen the good part.

Then, after blessing solemnly, both her and her betrothed, he exclaimed, "Did I not choose rightly from among the three gifts?" (in his humility he would not say *rewards*). "If I had chosen riches, they would have burst the bag and run away. And if I had chosen power, my retainers would have mocked my want of [122] knowledge, and forsaken me. But a daughter's love—what can compare with it?" [123]

1 Covetousness bursts the money-bag. ↑

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STARVING JOHN THE DOCTOR.

No one was ever more appropriately named than 'Starving John.' He had nothing to live upon, yet he had a wife and a whole tribe of children to support: how to feed them all he knew not; and as for himself it was seldom enough he got a morsel to eat!

One day the cat caught a hare, and John's wife managed to take it from him; and having made a savoury mess of it, she put it into a wallet and said to John, "Here, take this *hato*[1]; it's a lucky taste of something nice, such as you don't often get; and go out into the fields with it before those sharks of children snatch it out of your mouth."

John, who was ready to die of hunger, didn't wait to be told twice, but set off running as fast as his legs would carry him. At last he came to an olive-grove; and there, making an easy-chair of a hollow olive-tree, he sat down to eat his hare, as [124] happy as a king.

Somehow however—he could never tell how—there suddenly stood before him a dreadful old woman, all dressed in black: she had sunken eyes as dull as a blown-out candle, or a lamp-wick when the oil fails; her skin was as withered and yellow as a Simancas[2] parchment; her mouth like a clothes-basket; and her nose I don't know how to describe—for she had no nose at all to speak of.

"A pretty figure this to fall from heaven, like God's rain, on a poor fellow!" said John to himself; but as he was polite and hospitable, as a Spanish peasant always is, he nevertheless asked if she would share his meal.

This was just what the old creature wanted; down she sat, and at once attacked the hare. But it was not like ordinary eating, it was regular devouring; and, *en un decir tilin*[3], she had stowed away the whole mess between her heart and her shoulders! [125]

John was too polite to grumble out aloud, but he said to himself, "Why, the children had better have had the hare than this old hag! but *¡el que tiene mala fortuna nada le sale derecho*[4]*!*"

When his visitor had finished her meal—not leaving so much as the tail of the hare in the *ollita*[5]—she exclaimed, “Do you know, John, your hare was very good!”

“So I see,” said John, who could not repress a little bitterness. And he added, ironically, in honour of her decrepit appearance, “*¡viva Usted mil años*[6]*!*”

“So I shall,” answered the hag; “I have lived many thousands already, for I have to tell you I am no less a person than Death!”

John gave a start, and was like one struck dumb at this announcement.

“Don’t be afraid, John,” she continued, “I don’t want to hurt you; and what is more, as you have treated me so well, I’ll give you a good counsel in return. Make yourself a doctor—there’s nothing like it for making money!”

“I am much obliged to you, Mistress Death,” answered John, very respectfully, “but it will be quite return enough, if you’ll promise to leave me alone for a good [126] number of years. As to being a doctor, I’ve no notion how to set about it. I know neither Latin nor Greek; I can’t write because my hand is palsied; and I can’t read because I hate poring over those little black figures!”

“Go along with you, you silly fellow!” answered Mrs. Death; “you don’t suppose any of this is necessary? It’s I who lead the doctors, not they me. You are not such a goose as to think I go and come because they hiss me or call me, are you? when I get tired of any one, I take him by the ear and drag him off, doctor or no doctor. When the world began there were no doctors, and men lived to a good old age. But since they invented doctors there have been no more Methuselahs! You make yourself a doctor, as I advise you; and if you are perverse and obstinate, I’ll carry you off with me, *mas fijo que el reloj*[7]! Don’t prate!” she added, as she saw he was going to urge some objection; “this is all you have to do—when they call you into a bed-room look out for me. If you see me standing at the head of the bed, you’ll know it’s all up—you have only to say so, and they’ll find you’re a wise prophet. If, on the other hand, you don’t see me, you have only to prescribe a dose of clean water, with any thing harmless you like in it, and the sick person will recover.” [127]

With that the ugly old lady took herself off, courtesying like a French dancing-mistress.

“I hope your worship won’t forget, Mistress Death, what I asked you!” John cried after her—“your worship won’t visit me again for a long time to come, eh?”

“Don’t be afraid, John,” she answered, as she disappeared, “until your house crumbles to pieces you won’t have a visit from me.”

John returned home to his wife, and told her all that had happened; and his wife, being sharper than he, determined to make use of Mrs. Death’s advice, and in spite of his remonstrances spread about every where the news that her husband was a famous doctor—that he had only to look at a patient to tell whether he would live or die.

All the neighbours, however, only laughed at the idea of Starving John turning doctor in his old age, and called him “Don John” in ridicule.

One Sunday they went so far as to arrange a practical joke to show off his ignorance. A number of girls were to sit round a basket of figs, as they often did of a holiday afternoon in the fruit season, when, all of a sudden, one of them was to give a terrible cry as if taken ill, and some of the others were to carry her off to bed, while the rest ran for Starving John the Doctor.

John had no great faith in Mrs. Death’s promises, and was loath to expose himself to the ridicule of the girls, but at his wife’s urging he went along with them, when, [128] lo and behold, he no sooner entered the room of the pretended patient, than he saw Mrs. Death herself standing at the head of the bed! “The girl is very ill indeed —too ill for me to save. She’ll die before night!” pronounced John, in a knowing tone. And he went home amid the laughter of the assembled neighbours, who knew what the girls were playing at. But it so happened that the unfortunate girl had been eating the fruit too freely—that she was taken ill and died that very night!

As you will readily guess, this made Starving John’s fortune.

Far or near, there was no patient slightly or dangerously ill to whom he was not called; fees flowed in like rain. No longer was he dressed in rags; his clothes were properly made by a tailor. Instead of his pinched, woebegone look, his face grew as ruddy as the sun; his withered hands, as smooth as pork-sausages; his shaking legs, as firm as marble columns; and his empty stomach assumed dimensions to vie with the dome of a church. For his children he bought honourable

employments, and badges of office to sew on in front, and keys[8] to hang out behind. [129]

But what he spared least of all was the money required to keep his house in good repair. He even salaried a bricklayer, whose business it was to see there was never so much as a tile loose, remembering that Mrs. Death had said she would never come to visit him till his house crumbled to pieces.

Years rolled by as John's fortune increased, but as prosperous years always roll away—fast; and then came less fortunate years. First his hair fell off, and then he lost his teeth; then his spine got curved like a reaping-hook; and then he grew halt in one of his legs. One day, when he was ill, Mrs. Death sent him a bat, with her compliments, to inquire after him; but John didn't like the look of the creature, and drove it away. After that he had a cough; and Mrs. Death sent an owl, to say she would come and see him very soon, and John drove him away too. After that he had a fit; and Mrs. Death sent a dog, to give him to understand, by howling at his door, that she was on her way, and John drove him away also. But he got ill for all that, and then he got worse, and then Mrs. Death knocked at the door, so John hobbled out of bed, and locked it and put up the bar; but Death contrived to creep in under the door.

"Mrs. Death!" said John, indignantly, "this isn't fair. You told me you wouldn't come so long as my house was not crumbling to pieces." [130]

"Oh!" answered Death, "isn't your body your house—and hasn't *that* been crumbling to pieces? Didn't your strength fail first, and then your hair, and then your teeth, and then your limbs; haven't they *all* been crumbling away?"

"I certainly didn't understand you so!" answered John, dolefully, "and relying on your word, your coming now takes me by surprise."

"That is *your* fault, John," answered Death. "Men ought to be always prepared for my coming, and then I should never take them by surprise." [131]

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1 *Hato*, a portion of provisions taken out with them by shepherds when they have to be absent from home in the mountains for several days together. ↑

2 Simancas is situated at the confluence of the Douro and Pisuergo, not far from Valladolid. The archives of Spain were kept there for centuries, in a strong alcázar originally built by the Moors. ↑

3 An equivalent for our "Before you could say 'Jack Robinson,'" though I have never been able to make out the derivation of either *tilin* or "Jack Robinson." ↑

4 "Nothing goes right with the unlucky." ↑

5 Little earthen pot. ↑

6 "May your worship live a thousand years!"—a common salutation, equivalent to "God grant you long life!" ↑

7 "More surely than the clock," i.e., as irrevocably as time as we should say, "as sure as a gun." ↑

8 There used to be several sinecure offices in Spain, the symbol of which was a silver key slung over the pocket-flap on the left side. ↑

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RAMON THE DISCONTENTED.

Ramon was a discontented man. Instead of thanking Providence for all the good gifts of earth, and the promise of the joys of heaven, he was always repining at the hardships of his life, and finding out one thing after another to grumble at. Work he specially objected to. He wanted a cottage, and a pig, and a stock of poultry, and a vine, and a wife, a smoking *cazuela*[1], and plenty of tobacco; but when it came to working to pay for them, then it was quite another story. He was an only son; his hard-working parents had spoilt him by letting him have his own way, supplying him with all he wanted out of their own earnings; and so he grew up idle and apathetic, finding fault with fate, instead of putting his shoulder to the wheel: "*Estan las cosas en este mundo como cuernos en un costal—todas de punta*" was a favourite proverb of his, meaning that the events of this life are like packing horns into a bag, the points of those first put in are always making their way through and obstructing the others. And indeed, if people indulge a discontented disposition, every thing must go wrong with them. [132]

Strange, that any one can find pleasure in such an ugly habit as grumbling. Ramon had been made by nature a good-looking boy; but a sour, gloomy expression soon superseded the engaging smile of youth; and as he had never a pleasant word, his

society was gradually shunned by all the village. The last to give him up was Carmen, the bright little playmate of his childhood, but he wore out even *her* patience, and then, when he was left to himself, he grew more and more sour and morose.

In the meantime, his good old father and mother had died, and for a time he had been living on the savings they had left him; but this was soon at an end, and hunger forced home the reflection, “What was to become of him?” Then every thing seemed gloomier than ever before even—he sat down to think under the old patriarchal vine, which had shaded his father, and his grandfather, and his great-grandfather before him; but the fierce sun came through the withered branches and maddened him. He had neglected to tend it, and it had no shelter for *him*. Instead of blaming his own neglect, he turned with an imprecation upon the vine, [133] and his ill-humour overflowed on to the old house, against the wall of which he leant and which was also crumbling to decay because he had left it without repair; and upon Carmen, whose patience he had wearied, and upon fortune, whose gifts he had left waste. And in his fury he said that he would die. “Die!” echoed a little leaf of the withered vine, as it fell rustling past him, “You can’t die when you will, you must fulfil the work God has set you, whatever it be.”

“Work! I will do no work. I will die!” he answered fiercely.

“You cannot die when you will!” whispered another rustling leaf.

“We shall see!” said Ramon; and with that he took up the rope of the well, and, stalking wildly upstairs, he deliberately made a noose, into which he inserted his throat, tied one end over a beam in the loft, and placed himself on an old chest, ready to jump off and so swing tight the fatal knot which was to end his days.

He shut his eyes, and took a desperate leap ... but ... instead of drawing the noose tight, the beam above broke in twain, and the two ends came with him to the ground. He had scarcely recovered from one surprise, when he had to encounter another. On each side of him a stream of golden coins came running through the broken ends of the hollowed beam. What a sight for a lazy, self-indulgent man! [134] Ramon thought no more of hanging now. He untied the knot, gathered up the gold, and secured it in chests and hiding-places, and came down to enjoy himself once more in his old idle way.

He trod on a dry leaf of the old vine, as he passed through the garden, and it whispered,—

“What a chance for you, Ramon! Buy yourself a patch of land, and set to work like a man, and show Carmen you are worthy of her.”

“Work! while I have gold enough to last for ever? Not I, indeed!”

“It won’t last for ever, Ramon,” rustled out another falling leaf.

But Ramon heeded not. Some of his treasure he spent rationally enough, I must say, in having the old cottage repaired, and the old vine tended; but the bulk he squandered in excesses, and in a few years was as badly off as ever.

Want once more stared him in the face, and once more he resolved to put an end to his existence.

“You are not fit to die!” said the patriarchal vine; but Ramon hastened away, he had not the courage to encounter the dreadful thought.

He snatched up a rusty, disused spade—he was out of conceit with hanging. This time he would dig a deep hole in the ground, and thrust himself in head foremost, and stifle himself that way. [135]

Digging was hard work for arms so unused to labour, but he had never thought to find it so hard as it proved. He had not taken out a dozen spadefuls when the spade seemed to refuse to enter the ground any more. Had his arms grown so stiff they could not move? Or was the earth so hard he could not break it?

The evening breeze rustled by, bearing with it some leaves of the old vine; and as they passed they whispered,—

“You can’t die when you will, Ramon! Only be content to work as hard as now in a good cause, and you won’t want to die till your time comes.”

Provoked into energy by what he considered a taunt, instead of being softened by the fatherly counsel, he made one more desperate thrust of the spade into the hole. Instead of entering deeper, its rusty pan broke short off, but with a sound which showed him it had struck against something made of metal; and putting his

hand down to the place whence the sound came, he distinctly made out the shape of a copper vessel.

Here was a discovery which gave him a presentiment of another chance of good fortune. Partly with the broken spade and partly with his own hands, he succeeded in tearing up the soil around, and bringing to light a large jar heavy enough to be full of gold; and so it proved. [136]

Thus provided with means, Ramon once more commenced a new lease of his dissipated life.

“Take my advice,” said the old vine, “and put your treasure in something that will last, this time.”

This was too much trouble for Ramon. He went on in his old reckless way, spending and taking no heed.

But during all the years of neglect, the brambles had overgrown his ground; and his uncultivated place afforded a cover for idlers and vagabonds. So it happened that when he was making one of his nightly visits to his treasure he was overlooked, and, as you may readily imagine, by the next occasion the treasure was *gone*.

His rage at this discovery was unbounded: he resolved now once for all to have done with life, and let nothing interfere to prevent him.

As he lay in bed that night, he contrived a plan to prevent all possibility of escape, and with the first rays of the morning sun he sallied out fully equipped.

He bore a rope and a blunderbuss, and he bent his steps to a crag which overhung the sea, where he had marked a tree whose branches spread over the briny waves. Tying his cord to a branch, he held his blunderbuss ready to blow out his brains if the noose was too slack, while, if the rope should break, he would at least have a good chance of drowning. [137]

Off he leapt with the rope round his neck; but the noose did not draw itself tight. Faithful to his plan, he pulled the rusty trigger, but, like every thing else belonging to Ramon, the gun was out of order, and didn’t go off; but as he hung struggling in the air the old well-rope broke, and down he fell splashing into the sea. There was no easy drowning for him, however; the water was not so deep as he had imagined, and he was left floundering in the waves, and bruised about among the sunken rocks.

Ramon had no fortitude; at each bump he could not restrain an exclamation of pain, and the distressful cries attracted the attention of no less a person than Carmen, who was gathering *esparto grass*[2] on the wild coast at no great distance.

All her former womanly compassion returned when she saw her poor Ramon in suffering and distress. Without an instant’s hesitation, she caught up a hank of strong *esparto* rope, which she used to tie up her bundles, and hurried to the water’s edge. Making one end of it fast to a rock, with the vigorous exertion of an arm strengthened by labour and directed by intelligence and affection, she contrived to throw the other end within reach of his grasp. [138]

Ramon, who by this time had been long enough within sight of the terrors of death to feel his wish to encounter it considerably cooled, no sooner saw *who* was steadying the line, than he felt all the love of life which is implanted in the heart of man revive with its full vigour.

He caught the rope and twisted it round his arm, and with its aid breasted the breakers. By the time he reached the shore, however, the exhaustion consequent on so much excitement and exertion overcame him so completely, that every remaining spark of ill-will in Carmen’s bosom was extinguished, and her only thought was how to restore him to strength.

Her exertions were blessed with success, and his weakness found scope for all her womanly sympathies, while her tender care roused all the better qualities of his nature into action. Her smile mingled with the visions of his feeble state, and warmed all his prospects of the future.

When he dreamt of the dreary old house and its haunting associations with the guilty past, he fancied he saw the sunny halo of her presence dispelling all its gloomy phantasms, and her playful innocence silencing even the convicting warnings of the stern old vine. Shared with her, even labour seemed to lose its repugnance.

As soon as he was well enough, he opened to her his resolutions full of repentance,

which, with a woman's instinct, she was forward to foster. [139]

You will be pleased to hear that after all these lessons, crowned by Carmen's winning confidence in his promised amendment, Ramon set himself seriously to follow a new line of conduct. Carmen showed her faith in his penitence by marrying him, and he took honest care that she should never repent her generosity.

The old cottage once more looked homely and inviting; and in the summer evening, when Ramon and Carmen sat resting beneath the shadow of the old vine, now sturdy and fruitful under the culture it received, and watching the gambols of a troop of *chiquillos*[3] whom God had given them, the leaves, as they fell rustling about them, whispered playfully in Ramon's ear, "You don't want to die now?" And Ramon in revenge plucked a bunch of ruddy grapes, and distributed it among the happy party. [140]

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1 Large earthen pot, used by the Spanish peasants for cooking. ↑

2 Esparto grass is a fibrous plant which grows in great abundance in the south of Spain; it is imported into this country under the name of Spanish broom, and is used for making rope, canvas, mats, paper, and for many other useful purposes. ↑

3 Nice little children. ↑

[Contents]

THE BALLAD-MAKER AND THE BOOT-MAKER.

There was a minstrel who went travelling about the country from time to time singing sweet songs which people loved to hear. His music was not like the music of the Spanish people, for he came from the kingdom of Provence, and every one thronged to hear the strange sweet melody. And when he had passed on, and there was no one left to sing as he sang, people tried to remember his words and his tones, and to sing like him.

At one of the towns where he passed there was a boot-maker, who, as he sat all day alone at his last, diverted himself with singing; and as he had sung a good deal, he thought he could sing very well. He was much delighted with the minstrel's songs, caught up a good many of them, and never tired of singing them —after his fashion. But from being quite ignorant both of music and of the Provençal language, he made, as we should say, a great mess of it. Yet, as the people knew no more about it than himself, they were very well pleased to listen to him. [141]

So, a long time after, when the Provençal minstrel came back that way, they would not admit him, but cried out, "We have one of our own people who sings your songs for us as well as you, and we need no Frenchman here."

Now the minstrel was one greatly devoted to his art, he did not merely sing for sordid gain; so instead of being angry because he was supplanted, he was really pleased to hear that the people in that far-off town had learnt the language and melody of his dear Provence; and he said he would hear the boot-maker himself.

Imagine how great was his annoyance and mortification, when he heard the beautiful ballads lamed and spoilt by the rude, unlearned attempts of the boot-maker!

"Is it possible," he said, "that this man has been deluding all the people into the idea that what he sings is like my songs? And how can I prevent his going on keeping them under this error?" Then he bethought him what to do. He went by night to the boot-maker's workshop, and putting all the wrong pieces of leather together, he sewed them up into all sorts of foolish, useless shapes.

When daylight returned, and the boot-maker came to his work, he was in a great fury at what was done, and began shouting to the neighbours to come and avenge him, for the Frenchman had spoilt all his work. Then they all came running helter-skelter to exercise summary justice on the minstrel. [142]

But the minstrel stood up and confronted them, and said, "Good people! first hear me. This man is a maker of boots and I am a maker of ballads. True I have spoilt his boots, I do not deny it; but he first spoilt my ballads: what I have done is but fair. If you will hear us sing one after the other, you will yourselves give judgment in my favour." So the people told the boot-maker to stand up and sing, which he did in his clumsy droning way, with plenty of false notes and mispronunciations.

After him the minstrel stood up and warbled his song in tones so soft and sweet, that the people wondered how they ever could have listened to the other, and with one voice they cried out, “The minstrel is right! The minstrel is right!”

Then the minstrel, who bore no malice, and had only acted out of love for his art, repaid the boot-maker amply for all the damage to his leather, but took a promise of him that he would never sing his songs again. [143]

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EL CLAVEL[1].

The carnation is the flower of predilection of the Andalusian peasant. His cottage does not seem like home without its scent; nor is the maiden’s toilet complete without one of its glorious blossoms placed behind her ear, in the ebon setting of her massive hair-braids: it is the token of gladness in their festivals; of love, where coyly offered with a trembling hand. The people sing of its perfections and its meaning in a thousand little ditties.

Among all the trees of the wood
The laurel bears questionless sway.
What maid can compete with my Anna?
What flower, with carnations, I pray[2]?

They always speak of it, thus, as only next in order to female beauty, and the amorous swain is continually raising the comparison. [144]

To January’s biting frost
No carnation trusts its charms,
The tints that Heav’n thy cheeks has given,
Are dyed ingrain and fear no harms[3],

he sings; or perhaps,—

My carnation was raising a plaint,
I ask’d it to tell me its grief,
And it said that thy lips were so fair,
Of their charms it would e’en be the thief[4].

The one his fair has given him he declares binds him to her for ever.

The carnation which thou gav’st me,
On holy Thursday last,
Was no flower, but a fetter
To bind me to thee fast[5].

The one she nurtures he watches as a token of all that is dearest and most beautiful in her. [145]

My maid has a fav’rite carnation
Which she watches both early and late;
I give it a kiss on its petals,
Whenever I pass by her gate[6].

And she in her turn guards her charge with a jealous eye.

A ruddy carnation have I,
But I keep it secure from the cold,
And I shade off the gaze of the sun,
Lest it tarnish, if he were too bold[7].

Such a carnation was once thus tended by a poor village girl: it had grown up and blossomed and put forth its deep, rich hues under her care, though she was so poor that she had nothing to grow it in but a broken *olla*[8]. Nevertheless when she thought of the happy day when it should become a love-token to one worthy of her, she took such care of it, covering it up when the sun was too hot, watering it with water from the purest spring, sheltering it from the wind, bringing it into her room to guard through the night, lest any evil should befall it, that never carnation flourished so gloriously; it was her only flower, the object of her whole care. [146]

One day there came into the garden a *maja*[9] in her gala costume. According to the pretty Andalusian custom, she carried a bunch of bright, sparkling flowers twisted

into her raven hair behind her left ear.

“Ah!” cried the handsome carnation from the depths of its broken *olla*, “why should it not be my lot to adorn the head of this lovely creature, instead of being abandoned to the care of a penniless peasant?”

The *maja* smiled, and passed round the garden two or three times, to see if the carnation persisted in his idea. Every time her black veil caught, as she passed, in the sharp edge of the broken pipkin, the carnation wafted a soft sigh,—

“Ah, why was I not born to adorn that shining hair?”

The *maja* deferred no longer to fulfil his wish: throwing the bunch of showy flowers on to the ground, she plucked the carnation and plaited it into her hair. [147]

Right proud was the carnation to find himself thus grandly enthroned; far too proud to have a thought of compassion for the other flowers cast away for his sake; too triumphant even to smart under the puncture of the hair-pin which fixed him on the *maja’s* head. Many a scornful glance he cast at the broken *olla* which had been his nursery, and the cot of the lowly child who had nurtured him.

Thus he was borne about, displaying his beautiful hues in the sun, and charming every one with his perfume all day. Then night came: the *maja* stood at her *reja*[10], looking out for her serenader. He came at last, and brought in his hand a beautiful white rose; the *maja* stretched out her hand to receive it with delight; with loud and joyous thanks she placed it on her head, flinging the hapless carnation from her without a thought.

Instead of blooming on his lordly stalk as at the first, the pride and pet of the peasant maid, he was soon trampled to atoms by a drove of pigs, passing on their way to market! [148]

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1 The Carnation. ↑

2
Entre los árboles todos
se señorea el laurel
entre las mujeres, Ana
entre los flores, el clavel.

↑

3
En énero no hay claveles
porque los marchita el hielo
en tu cara los hay siempre
porque lo permite el cielo.

↑

4
El encarnado clavel
viene publicando agravios
porque no le han hecho á el
hermoso como tus labios.

↑

5
El clavel que tu mi diste
el día de la Ascension
no fué clavel, sino clavo
que clavó mi corazon.

↑

6
En una teja de su casa
crió mi niño un clavel
y quando á su vera pasa
le da un besito en la sien.

↑

7
Tengo un clavel encarnado
á la sombra y bajo llave
para que el sol no lo vea
y con mirarlo lo aje.

↑

8 Pipkin. ↑

9 A name employed in Andalusia to designate a person who wears the national costume with great ostentation of correctness, and is altogether what we should term showy. ↑

10 See p. 68 and note. ↑

[Contents]

THE ILL-TEMPERED PRINCESS.

There was once a poor young knight, and he went out into the world, to seek adventures and do knightly deeds. As he went, he met a man standing in front of a long narrow tunnel in a rock, and blowing through it with his cheeks stretched like two ripe pomegranates, to whom the knight called out, “Halloa! fellow, what do you do there?”

And the man made reply, “Disturb me not, your worship, for with my breath I am turning five hundred and thirty-two mills.”

So the knight asked, “Then who are you?”

And the man made answer, “I am Blowo, son of Blowon[1], the good blower.”

Then the knight said, “Will you come out with me to seek fortune?”

And the man made answer, “Your worship is not readier to ask than I to accept, for I am tired enough of blowing.” So he gave one more good strong blow, enough to [149]
set the mills twirling for a long time, and walked on behind the knight.

A little farther along they came upon a man toiling up the hill-side, with a load of a hundred and thirty-two hundred-weight upon his back.

To whom the knight called out, “Halloa! man, you carry more than a waggon with two yoke of oxen! Who are you?”

And the man made answer, “I am Porto, son of Porton, the strong porter.”

Then the knight said, “Will you come out with me to seek fortune?”

And the man made answer, “Your worship is not more ready to ask, than I to accept, for I am weary of this burden.” So he laid the weight down by the road-side, and walked along behind the knight.

A little farther on they came to a long stretch where the road was very straight, and by the side a man walked up and down twisting a rope, to whom the knight cried out,—

“Halloa! fellow, what do you there? and who are you?”

And the man made answer, “I am Ropo, son of Ropon, the cunning rope-maker, and I make ropes which none can break.”

Then the knight said, “Will you come out with me to seek fortune?”

And the man made answer, “Your worship is not more ready to ask than I to [150]
accept, for I am weary of twisting this rope.” So he left there his rope by the road-side, and walked along behind the knight.

A little farther on they came upon a man crouched down by the way-side.

To whom the knight called out, “Halloa! fellow, what do you there? and who are you?”

And the man made answer, “I am Listeno, son of Listenon, the ready listener.”

So the knight said, “What are you listening for?”

And the man made answer, “Blowo has left off turning the mills, and I am listening for the wind to come down from the mountains of Burgos.”

“Fellow! the mountains of Burgos are a hundred leagues off.”

“What does that signify, if my hearing reaches as far?”

Then the knight said, “Will you come along with me and seek fortune?”

And the man made answer, “Your worship is not more ready to ask than I to accept, for I am weary of straining my ears.” So he set up three flags, that all the country might know the wind would be there in three days, and walked along

behind the knight.

Then, after three days' journey, they came in sight of a magnificent castle, extending half a mile every way over the top of a mountain, but all desolate and in ruins; and the way up to it was overgrown with interlacing brambles and briars, so that they could hardly pass through. Then to increase their difficulty, a heavy storm came on, which would soon have wetted them through; but Blowo cried out, — [151]

"Never fear, your worship; for I will soon clear the air."

So he blew a mighty blast, and sent all the big thunder-clouds travelling back to the Sierra; and they went on toiling up the brake.

When they came up to the castle, they found there was no door or opening, nor any way in. Porto, Ropo, Listeno, and Blowo wanted to give up the attempt, and pass on farther; but the knight would not hear of abandoning the adventure.

"If your worship is so determined," said Porto, "I'll open a way for you."

So he broke off a huge piece of rock as big as two men, and, standing a hundred yards off, he flung it against the wall, with a noise that could be heard a hundred miles off. The wall trembled and clattered; but it was held together by a stronger than human power, and all Porto's great strength could produce no effect on it.

"Let us go away from here, Master," pleaded Ropo, "this is no place for us. There is something wrong about this place; and the blessing of God is not here." [152]

"No," replied the knight, "we will first learn all about it; there may be work for us."

So they continued walking round the walls to see where they might effect an entrance, and all to no purpose. By and by Listeno exclaimed, "I hear some one cry;" and they all listened, but could hear nothing. So Listeno made them follow him in the direction whence the sound proceeded till at last they were near enough for the others to hear the sound also; and they went on following it up, till they came to the mouth of a great well all grown over with climbing-plants; when they had cleared these away, the hole looked so black and deep, it seemed as if it went down to the centre of the earth, and up the shaft there came sounds of a woman's wailing, so loud and pitiful, they were all moved to pity, and anxious to run to the relief of the distressed person; but there was no means of telling how to reach the bottom. Then Ropo came forward, and said, "We will all go abroad, and gather five thousand bundles of *esparto*, and *palmito*[2] grass, and all five shall set to work to make a long rope; and with that we will reach the bottom." [153]

So said, so done. They gathered five thousand bundles of *esparto*, and *palmito* grass, and they all five set to work under Ropo's directions and twisted away at the rope; and now and then they tied a fragment of rock to the end and let it down, to see if it reached the bottom. They went on thus for five years, and at last it splashed the water, and when they let it down again it sounded on the rock, and they found only a few feet of the rope was wet, for the water was not deep.

Then Listeno put his ear to the top and told them it was not standing water, but that a brook ran through, along the bottom of the cave. As they were twisting the rope, they talked away about the great deeds each would do; and each had a conjecture as to what they might find at the bottom of the well. They all thought they should find a treasure, and Porto said he would take it up on his shoulders and carry it home for them, though it should weigh as much as all the lead of the Sierra Almagrera[3].

But when the rope was finished, and it was a question of who should go down, not one of the knight's followers, though they had been boasting so loudly before, would venture down into the well. So the knight laughed, and said *he* was not afraid; and one end of the rope having been lashed tightly to a rock, the four followers undertook to pay it out steadily, and down the knight descended into the black, gloomy depth. [154]

Day and night he went on steadily descending for three days and three nights, and at the end he came into the water. It was not more than breast high, so he waded through it for several yards till he came to a place where the bank widened sufficiently for him to get out and walk along it; and then he came to some trees, and through the trees was an open space lighted by a lurid light which came from a deeper cave. On a sloping bank, covered with shining grass and strange flowers, lay a beautiful princess all dressed in white, and decked with shining jewels; and as she lay, she moaned and cried and prayed for deliverance. So the knight was hastening towards her, and drew his sword to cut the bonds which confined her, but at that instant up started a fierce demon whom he had not observed before, as

he lay coiled up at the mouth of the cave.

The Ill-tempered Princess.—*Page 154.*

“Not so fast, fine *caballero*!” he cried, “for she is mine, and you will have to fight me before you can touch her.” The knight disregarded the menace, and continued his way towards the princess, but the air was stiff all around him—though he could see no hindrance, he found he could not make any way towards her. [155]

“Ha! ha!” roared the demon, “my fine *caballero*, you’ll find you will have to do with me at last!”

“And who are you?” shouted the baffled knight, “and what is this beautiful princess to you?”

“I am bound to answer the knight who asks that question,” answered the demon, “or it is little you would have learnt from me. Know, then, that this princess was the only daughter of King Eurík, to whom belonged all the country as far as eye can see; and she would have succeeded to his kingdom, but her temper was so violent, no one could bear with her. Upon the least contradiction she would order a subject to be executed; and her arbitrary conduct was continually involving the kingdom in discontent and trouble. Her father, who tenderly loved her, used to coax her and use every endeavour to soften her, but with no avail. At last, one day she provoked him so sore that in his anger he exclaimed, ‘Go to the horned one!’ When I heard myself called, I hastened to seize her, but, notwithstanding all my speed, before I could arrive he had revoked the curse, and so I was tricked out of her. This happened several times, but each time fatherly fondness was quicker than my utmost haste. At last, a day came when she excited him greatly, and he [156] said again, ‘Go to the horned one!’ and before he could recall the words that time, he had fallen down a lifeless corpse. So now she is mine, and mine she must remain till some knight will win her in arms from me, and marry her, and restore her to her castle and her kingdom.”

“That will I!” said the knight stoutly; for though he feared the lady’s violent temper after what he had heard, his devotion to chivalry bound him to use his best endeavours to deliver her.

Accordingly he drew his sword, and called to the demon to come on. “Remember

one thing," said the demon, "if you should win her, she is yours for ever; *I* take her back no more."

Meantime, Listeno, at the top of the well, had been reporting to his companions all that he heard going on below, and their curiosity getting the better of their fears, they let themselves down by the rope, and all four arrived in time to witness the terrible contest.

Never was such a fight seen in this world as that between this knight and the demon; and at last the knight cut off the demon's ear. No tongue could describe the demon's rage at finding his ear in possession of a mortal.

"Give me my ear!" he cried in tones so sharp that they almost stunned Listeno's sensitive hearing powers.

"Never," replied the knight, "or at least not without a heavy ransom. In the first [157]
place I exact that without further ado you reinstate the Princess in her castle and all her power." The demon stamped and raged, but the knight was firm. The demon was ashamed to go home without his ear, so he thought it best to comply.

The Princess was restored to her throne, the castle was restored to its strength, the garrison was restored to the ramparts, the servants were restored to the halls. The knight married the princess; great rejoicings and festivities were celebrated, and to his four followers were given places of trust and consequence in the palace.

The demon often came to beg for his ear, but the knight felt that at some time or other he might have need of him, so he would not lose his hold over him.

For a time all went well enough, but by little and little the Princess forgot her years of adversity and the debt she owed the knight: she grew more and more wilful, and before a year was out she had become so violent again, that he grew weary of his life, and declared he could no longer endure the continual turmoil. Remonstrance and coaxing were alike unheeded, and it was vain that he tried her father's remedy, for the demon had sworn never to take her back.

In this strait Porto reminded him of the ear he held in hostage, adding, "I will take
it upon myself to deliver you of her." So putting the bottle of brine in which the ear [158]
was kept into his pocket, he swung the Princess over his shoulder, and all her struggling was useless against "the son of the strong porter."

Thus laden he went to find out the demon. "You are to take back this princess, she is only fit for your company," he said, when he had found him.

"Not I!" answered the demon, grinning: "I told your master when he *would* have her he must take her for good and all."

"Do you know this ear?" then asked Porto, showing him the bottle.

The demon clutched at it.

"Not so fast!" cried Porto. "If you want to have it back, this is my master's condition: you must take back the princess along with it."

So, crest-fallen and glad to get his ear back on any condition, the demon accepted the bargain as it was dictated to him; and the princess who could not command
her temper never found another knight to deliver her. [159]

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1 *On* is the Spanish augmentative. ↑

2 A tall fibrous plant, which covers whole plains in the south of Spain, so called because its spreading leaves give it a certain resemblance to dwarf palms. ↑

3 The Sierra Almagrera is near Cartagena. The mine whose riches have been thus celebrated in a popular tale for many a century, is just now being vigorously worked by an Anglo-French company. ↑

[Contents]

THE HERMIT AND THE FIG-TREE.

There was an old man of Toledo who had one son, whom he brought up in the fear of God. Now it happened that this old man had to go to a distant town of Estramadura, to receive some money of a creditor, and the creditor dying, his heirs disputed the debt, and drove the old man to a lawsuit which kept him absent many years. When at last the suit was just decided in his favour, the old man fell ill and died. Meantime the son, growing uneasy at his father's prolonged absence,

arranged his affairs as well as he could, and prepared to take the journey to see after him. Calling in his three clerks, Jacinto, Gonzalo, and Diego, who were all men whom his father trusted, and whom he therefore respected, he divided his property in three parts, and to each he gave charge of one part, leaving it to each to do the best he could for him, saying, “The wisdom of your grey hairs will do [160] better for me than any instructions my inexperience could give you.”

“If the Lord bless it, it shall increase; and if He curse it, it shall not prosper,” answered Jacinto, the eldest; “behold I am nothing in the matter;” and he shook his venerable head, and raised his eyes to heaven.

“Whatever I have done for your father I will continue to do for you,” said Gonzalo, the second in order, and hurried back to his papers as if it was wrong to waste a moment in talking.

“I will endeavour that you shall have nothing to complain of,” quietly replied Diego, the third.

The young man was pleased with what they said, and without further loss of time set out on his journey.

The weather was fair, and his father’s friends by the way received him hospitably; but crossing the Sierra[1], a violent storm came on, and he would soon have been drenched with rain. Right glad he was to see, perched on the mountain-ledge, a hermit’s cell, where he readily found shelter. In the morning, when the sky was serene again, he rose to take his leave; and as he stood on the threshold thanking the hermit for his care of him, he could not forbear pausing to admire the beauties around him. Far away stretched the plains below, studded with smiling cities and [161] watered by the mazy windings of the rivers, and shaded by dark groves of ancient cork-trees; behind him were rocky heights reaching to the sky, presenting every degree of rich vegetation and solemn barrenness. But what attracted his sight most of all was a luxuriant plantation of fig-trees, which made a complete bower of the hermit’s cell.

“How successful you are with your fig-trees!” said the traveller; “I never saw so fine a show. You have three, one as fine as the other—it is impossible to say which of them is most flourishing; and to judge by the fruit you gave me, which doubtless is their produce, they are the finest trees in Spain, and that is saying a great deal. I must add too, after your liberality with them, that you put to shame the proverb, —

“En tiempo de higos
No hay amigos[2].”

“For what you say of the proverb, son,” replied the hermit, “I have no merit, for it is the very essence of my rule of life to call nothing my own, according to our Lord’s counsel. These figs are the gift of God, to me, or to you, or to whomsoever is here to need them. But for the rest, you judge according to the measure of the [162] inconsiderateness of your years. Nevertheless, you seem to me a good youth, and I will therefore show you something which may be of use to you in your dealings with the world. Know then that but one of these fig-trees is really what it seems; the other two are worthless. That is, worthless,” he added, “as bearers of fruit, for there is nothing that God makes but has its worth, and even these trees which bear no fruit are useful to give shade, and for other purposes besides.”

“You surprise me,” said the young man; “I never saw trees of more equal promise!”

“Nevertheless, it is as I say; and if the season of figs were not just over, according to our Lord’s saying, by their fruit you should know them, or, as you say in the world, “*al freir, lo vereis*[3].” Meantime, learn, my son, not to judge of men and [163] things by their appearance, but wait and see what their fruit is like.”

The sun was now beginning to make way above the horizon, and, fearing to be overtaken by the heat, the young man was obliged to set out on his journey without further parley than promising to visit the hermit on his return.

Great was his grief, when he arrived at the end of his journey, to find his good father had been so suddenly called away, and instead of being clasped to his bosom, to find the last earthly communication he could ever receive from him was a scrap of paper, on which, at intervals of his death agony, he had convulsively written down a few directions to guide him in entering into possession of his worldly goods, mingled with counsels to him to continue to direct all his dealings according to the fear of God.

This sudden death had thrown matters into some confusion, and it took a

considerable time to set all straight again; it was some ten or eleven months before the young merchant had to re-cross the Sierra in a homeward direction.

It was a brilliant summer evening when he came upon the hermit's cell again. The old man was sitting making his meditation before the door. Occupied with grief and care, as he had been during his absence, the bereaved son had forgotten all about the fig-trees; but, on looking around, he saw that something was changed, [164] and soon had a clear demonstration of what the hermit had told him. One noble tree was laden with the ripe green and purple fruit; the soft, downy skins seeming ready to burst with the rich and luscious burden within, while the broad leaves spread out their hands and shaded them from the too great heat, and fanned them gently when the day was sultry.

The second tree was covered with luxuriant leaves as before, but not a single ripe fig was on it—there were a few young green beginnings, but too small and sickly to have a chance of ripening that season.

The third tree was in lamentable plight; its attenuated climbers clung by habit to the rock, but the sap and life and energy were gone, and it seemed only fit to be cut down.

"Well, father, I see you were right as to the figs," said the young man, candidly. "There is only one of them that is a good tree after all—but it is wonderful how well favoured they looked last year!"

"Learn, my son, the counsel of the aged and the words of the wise," replied the hermit; "for as it is with trees, even so it is with men. There are many who seem to you alike honest and worthy to be esteemed, while their inner life is as different as was the fruit-bearing principle of these trees." [165]

"But, father, will not the good be known by their good deeds and maxims, and the bad by their evil lives and counsels?"

"Even so, my son, but the difficulty is to discern which are good and which evil. This is not so easy as you seem to think; for instance, you see two men both apparently pious and charitable, while the one who appears most so, very possibly only gives his money to the poor that he may stand well with the world, that the poor may look up to him, and say, 'There goes one who is like a king among us;' the other, whose liberality you noticed less, drops his hardly-spared coin noiselessly into the *capillo*[4], and sallies forth perhaps in dead of night to carry his alms to those who would blush to receive such assistance by day. One man appears to you calm and placid because he is of a phlegmatic nature, and has no effort to make in order to appear equable and ever patient; while another, whom you judge to be hasty and passionate, may be all the while struggling to conquer a hot and violent temperament which requires the courage of a hero to keep it within bounds."

"I see your moral, father," replied the young man; "and I have no doubt I often judge of men as I judged your fig-trees."

"That one," continued the hermit, pointing to the one whose fruit was even then [166] affording a delicious meal to the birds, for the hermit called nothing his own, and the birds of heaven were welcome to share his stock, "that one was always a good and fruitful tree, and its praise is among its people, for you will find many a village about here which boasts a graft from the hermit's fig. The second one, which presented so fair a show, has something amiss which it hitherto has passed my skill to find out—though I have one remedy more to try, which *may* recover it. And the third had a worm at the root which destroyed its vital power."

The young man passed on his way next day, and, as he journeyed, the figs of which the good hermit had given him ample provision put him in mind of his parable, and set him musing on its application. These musings weaving themselves in with his anticipations of the condition of his affairs at home, he began to consider whether the three clerks, to whom he had entrusted his property, were in any way like the fig-trees, and whether Providence had not sent him this lesson to be his guide in his future conduct.

Possessed with this idea, he resolved to put them to the test. The sun and air of the mountains had dyed his skin; sorrow had marked his face with lines of care and tinged his hair with grey. By means of a false beard and a travelling merchant's dress he reckoned he could be safe from recognition, and as a stranger learn their [167] respective worth from their own lips.

Equipped in his disguise he presented himself at his own house, and found all three in their place, with every evidence of diligent application. So he opened the terms of his pretended business to them, and found them all ready to negotiate

with him, each in his degree—each conducted his matter with every token of due shrewdness and integrity.

It had been part of his plan to tell them the news of their master's death, and try them by watching the effect of this intelligence upon them, but when he saw all so well-ordered he judged there was no need for further trial, and so contented himself with resuming his own attire and returning in his own person to the house.

The clerks greeted him with a joyful welcome, and received the news of his father's death with becoming expressions of sorrow, and the young man congratulated himself on having such trusty stewards of his goods.

After he had been back a day or two, he requested them to prepare for him the account of what they had done since he left, so that he might know how his affairs stood, and once more assume the direction of them. The proposal received a ready assent, and a day was fixed for going into the matter. But when the appointed day came, what was his astonishment to find only Diego in his place? His accounts [168]
were ready and all in good order; he had administered faithfully the portion of property entrusted to him, and handed it back increased by the efforts of his prudence and skill.

From Gonzalo he found a letter informing him that he had had the misfortune to be unlucky in his speculations with his property, and had lost the whole of it, consequently he had no account to render. Losing patience at this attempt at deceit, the young man had him brought before him, and asked him how he dared tell him so, when he knew that only so many days before he had been negotiating with a merchant he knew, and he named the name he had assumed in his disguise. Gonzalo was not at all disconcerted: "Oh, that business was done with my own money; though I was unlucky with yours, fate would have it that I should be very successful with my own, and out of my own earnings I have created a capital which I have multiplied an hundredfold."

When the young man heard this unblushing statement, he was filled with indignation, and insisted on taking him before the judge. But it was all to no purpose, Gonzalo had managed his fraud so cleverly that it could not be proved against him; he had to be let go scotfree.

As for Jacinto, *he* never showed himself at all, nor left any explanation. He had remained up to the hour, trading with the benefit of his master's name and capital, [169]
but the moment there had been talk of giving up accounts he had gathered up all that was in his charge, and fled with it out of the country.

More grieved by the faithlessness of those he had trusted than by the loss of his gold, the young man shut himself into his chamber, to muse upon what had befallen him, and upon the uncertainty both of friendship and riches. When he reflected on the temptations which money had offered to Gonzalo and Jacinto, he was appalled at the thought of those which might be in store for him, if he continued in the pursuit of business. He thought of the peaceful hermit, whose warning parable had just received such a striking illustration. He thought of his placid content with the weather—such as God sends it—to warm him, and the fruits of the earth—such as God gives them—to nourish him. He thought of him far removed from contentions and greed of gain, and sharing his frugal meal with the stranger, the wayfarer, and the birds of heaven.

When he came down from his chamber, he called Diego to him, and commended him for his faithfulness and diligence. "And," said he, "I now give you full possession of all that you have so justly administered. For me, I have chosen a life free from care, where I shall have no use for money." [170]

But when Diego heard it, he said, "Nay, but I will go with thee. To save my master's goods for his son was my work on earth; now that is fulfilled, no desire have I to continue amid its weariness and perils."

So they left the money to found an hospital where poor orphan children might be taken in and taught the way that is right. And they went into the Sierra, and built them huts and planted them fig-trees, and passed their time in holy meditation and in praising God. [171]

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1 Literally, a *saw*. Spaniards call a ridge of mountains so, from the resemblance of the outline to the teeth of a saw. ↑

2 "In the season of figs no one remembers his friends." In other words, though when in want men gladly remember their acquaintance that they may apply to them for assistance, in prosperity they are as anxious to forget them, that they may not be called upon to spend for them. ↑

3 "In the frying, you shall see." Equivalent to our "The proof of the pudding's in the eating." The following is told as the origin of this Spanish proverb:—A good housewife having frequently had

occasion to find fault with the quality of the charcoal the village dealer sold her, was highly delighted when another one set up who professed to sell a better kind. “But how am I to know yours is any better?” inquired she. “*Al freir, lo vereis*” (“when you come to fry with it you will see if it doesn’t give a clear fire”), he replied, for as his wares were good they needed only to be proved: *taberna vieja no necesita rama*: good wine, or, more literally, an old established tavern, needs no bush. ↑

4 A short wooden column supporting an alms-box in Spanish churches. ↑

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TOO CLEVER BY HALF.

A blind beggar, who, like all other blind beggars, was led by a *lazarillo*[1], was once going his rounds, and directed his guide to take him past a house where he was in the habit of receiving help.

The good wife of the house gave him a fried sprat[2]. The lazarillo was a mischievous urchin, and on this occasion very hungry, so he ate the sprat himself, and told the blind man they had given him nothing. The blind beggar, however, who knew the smell of fried fish well enough, charged him with the theft, and gave him a good drubbing in punishment.

Presently, as they went along, the mischievous lazarillo led him through a troop of children, running about at their play: one of them, darting between the legs of the [172] blind man, tripped him up. “You young rascal!” exclaimed the provoked beggar; “why didn’t you take better care where you led me?”

> “If you were so clever at smelling the sprat,
> How came it you couldn’t, too, smell out the brat?”

cried the lazarillo, running off to escape a second drubbing. [173]

1 The name given to a boy serving as guide to a blind man. ↑

2 The Spanish sprat found in great abundance in the Mediterranean, called *sardina*, much larger than ours, those selected for frying being generally five or six inches long. ↑

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THE WIND’S STORY.

“I wish you would not be so fond of choosing this nasty old ruined house for our playground, Lolita!”

“Oh, don’t you like it, Ana? I do so love to come here and listen to the tales the Wind tells me, as it moans through these crumbling walls!”

“The tales the Wind tells you, *hermana*[1] dear! what can you mean?”

“Oh, I forgot! you don’t know the Wind’s language; but I do, and I love to listen to it.”

“Oh, Lolita dear, do tell me what the Wind tells you! What does it say about this ruined cottage?”

“Why, it told me *such* a strange story, Ana! It said to me, ‘A long, long while ago, when I was one day dancing happily this way on a sunbeam, this old ruined cottage was then just built; all was then bright and new within and without; the cock strutted about the yard, keeping his fowls in order, and shouting, “*Qui quirri qui!*” the hens gathered their chickens under their wings, crying, “*Cá, cá, cá, cá!*” [174] the cat sunned himself on the projecting roof, and frightened the birds from the cherry-tree that shaded it; and the dog ran about wagging his tail, and keeping them all in order, with one eye at least ever open for the rabbit that would poach in the lettuce-bed. On the sunny side of the house was a magnificent *parral*[2], where every evening might be seen Pepito and Dolores sitting together in newly-wedded bliss. Pepito would be sawing or nailing wood, which was to make a cradle, and Dolores, stitching away at little fine bits of clothes that looked as if they were meant for a fairy. They were so happy, that whenever I was sent that way I used to step aside and ask my sister the Breeze to sweep round that corner for me, because I am rough and she is gentle; and I used to love to watch how

pleased they were with her refreshing visit, after the burning heat of the day.

"'But it happened one day that I had to go a long, long journey: some pirates were ravaging the sea, and I was to kick up a storm which would frighten them away from some poor and hardy sailors who were not strong enough to encounter them; and then I had to sweep round the north of Africa, to disperse an army of locusts that were preparing to ravage the land and destroy the work of the husbandman. [175] So I passed through the *parral* as gently as I could, and kissed the young couple under it, and went lightly on my way.

"'It was some months before I was sent to Spain again, but the first chance I had I went as near as I could to this cottage; and as I came along, my attention was attracted by another cottage, which seemed to me something like it, so I looked in: there was only one cheery old man inside it, and he was making preparations for a journey. "Won't they be pleased to see me? How little they think I could come so soon!" he muttered, as he put his bundle together. I made the air clear and fresh for his journey, and passed along.

"'As I went over the mountains, I came upon a couple of muleteers directing a file of laden mules; they looked hot and wayworn, so I blew the dust off them, and cooled their feet, and the hoofs of their beasts. As I came near I recognized my friend Pepito, but he no longer looked so happy as of old; his expression was dark and anxious, and it grew gloomier as he listened to some sombre tale his companion was telling.

"'"Are you sure—certain sure?" he exclaimed.

"'"*Mas cierto que el reloj, hombre*[3]," replied the sinister companion, whom I now also recognized for a fellow of very bad reputation in Pepito's village, and who was [176] said to have vowed vengeance on Dolores because she had married Pepito instead of him.

"'"And if I turn back to-night, I shall find him of whom you speak in my cottage?" continued Pepito, in an agonized tone.

"'"No doubt of it," returned the other.

"'Now I would not believe any ill of Dolores, so I tried what I could to divert their attention. I threw myself so violently against the face of the leading mule as to make her miss her way, and nearly step over the brink of the precipice which the path they were travelling bordered; but Pepito was a practised muleteer, and caught her head in time to prevent an accident. Then I blew his hat over the edge, but he was as good a mountaineer as muleteer, and readily climbed down the steep side after it. I could do no more.

"'Damp mists were gathering along the banks of the Guadalquivir: my mission was to disperse them before they became injurious to health. I might not tarry, so I passed on my way, sighing through the tall trees. But before the sun rose next morning, I contrived to reach Pepito's cottage. No one was stirring, but I easily made my way in through the open windows. There lay in the bed in calm and peaceful slumber, the old man whom I had seen making up his bundle in glad expectation of his visit proving a joyful surprise. The doors and casements rattled [177] for fear, as they always *will* do when they see me coming, and I was vexed to find my curiosity had thus disturbed the old man's sleep. But there was something worse than my coming to rouse him. First there was a noise of footsteps under the window, then the barking of the watchful dog, then the sound of some one climbing up the wall, then groping his way through the window. The old man started in his bed, nerved with the consciousness that he was the guardian for the time of his son-in-law's property; he hastily disengaged his *navaja*[4] from his belt by the bedside, and stood up to grapple with the intruder, who, similarly armed, advanced straight into the room with an assurance which showed he was no stranger.

"'Then I perceived that Pepito, misled by his perfidious friend, had returned in the night-time, so as to prove the truth of the report given him. When he found himself confronted by a man's arm, he felt no longer any doubt, but closed upon him in rage and fury. I had no heart to stay and see the result of a fight between two armed and desperate men, but I set up my loudest and most desolate howl, and swept madly through the *pueblo*[5]. I made the branches of the trees crack, and the fittings of the houses clatter; wherever I saw a door or gate open, I set it banging to and fro, and by a supreme effort, I even moved the great church-bell so that it [178] gave one or two deep tolls. Thus wakened, the people soon heard the cries and recriminations of the combatants, and ran out of their houses in numbers to track the sound.

"'It is part of my fate that I must ever be moving onward; I can never stand still

and never go back, though I can make a grand sweep over a large tract of country, and so come round again to a place after a time. It was a long time, however, before I was able to work my way round after this, but one day I happened to overtake my sister the Breeze, and knowing the interest I had taken in the young couple under the *parral*, she immediately began telling me about them; I desired nothing more than to learn what had befallen them.

"'"Oh," she said, "I hope you will never have to go by there again, you couldn't bear it!"

"'I began to suspect what had happened that fatal night. "Then the neighbours were not in time to part the men after all?" I exclaimed.

"'"They were parted, but both died of their wounds next day."

"'"And Dolores?"

"'"Dolores was so horror-stricken at the dreadful sight, that she entirely lost her reason. Some good people have taken her quite away, far, far off, thinking she may get better in an entirely different scene. But all the time she was here, I used to [179]
stir gently through the room to fan her burning forehead when the air was sultry; and I often looked deep into her eyes when they stared so wildly, seeking for Pepito and her father, who she always thought were coming to see her, and I always saw there a look which told me she was not long for this world."

"'"God take her in His mercy!" I exclaimed. "And the *parral* and the cottage, what of them?"

"'"All left desolate. The hares and the foxes have the grapes to themselves. No one will go to live in the house. No one will even pass by it if they can any how avoid going that way; and I hope you will keep away from it too, brother, for the sight would make you sad indeed."

"'Our ways parted here; and I was not sorry, for my heart was too full for more talk. I need hardly say that on the first opportunity I went to see how the old place looked. And sad enough it seemed; sadder even than now, because the memory of Pepito and Dolores was fresher upon it.

"'I feel so sad whenever I am there, that I moan and sigh, and the simple people say it is Pepito and his father-in-law crying out against each other. Sometimes, wild with anger, I feel ready to crumble the whole place to atoms—and then I dash down beams and stones and branches of trees; and then, again, I fear to lose all the traces I have loved so well, and I blow sand and mould and seeds of creeping [180]
plants to bind the scattered portions together, and root them again to the spot.'

"That's a dreadfully sad story, Lolita; it has made me feel shyer than ever of this dreary place."

"The Wind's stories are always melancholy, Ana dear; though you don't know his language, you hear that his tone is always plaintive."

"Then I don't want any more of the Wind's stories. I'll tell you what I like. I like the sights I see in the Sunbeam."

"Oh, tell me what you see in the Sunbeam!"

"Then you must come out of this dreary place, and sit down with me on the sunny bank yonder, and I'll tell you what I have seen." [181]

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1 Sister. ↑

2 A vine trained so as to make an out-door sitting-room. ↑

3 "More certain than the clock, man." ↑

4 Large folding dagger-knife. ↑

5 Little town. ↑

[Contents]

WHAT ANA SAW IN THE SUNBEAM.

"When I lie on the *tomillar*[1] and look through the sunbeams," said Ana, "I see all the little sprites getting ready the beautiful colours to paint the flowers and the insects, and the clouds, and others that dye the tree-leaves green and gild the old

walls, and others that teach the insects to hum and the birds to sing, and little children to smile.

“Do you know, Lolita,” pursued Ana, “when a little baby is put into the cradle for the first, very first time, if the Sunbeam plays upon it, the little sprites always look after that baby, and never forget it, but when it is grown up into a big man or woman they still continue their care. There was once such a little baby, Lolita, born in a poor little cottage; such a poor little cottage, Lolita, that there were no shutters to the windows of any kind, when it was ever so hot the sun all came in, and made the air suffocating, unless the poor mother could pin up an old dress; [182] but it was not often she had one besides the one she had on. So it happened that when this little baby was born, Lolita, the sunbeams were streaming in, with the little sprites all basking in them, and the sprites kissed this little baby, and said, ‘Dear little girl, we will never leave you; only be good, and so long as you are good we will see that you shall want for nothing at all.’

“A very little while after, Lolita, that little baby’s father died, and you might have said the sprites had forgotten her; but it was not so. They kept their word exactly. She did not know her father had died. Her mother was there, and took care of her, and she was too little to know that other children had more pleasure, so she wanted nothing.

“She did not even know, Lolita, the labour her poor mother had to work for them both, and even when she sang her to sleep with her sad, ceaseless song,—

“En los brazos te tengo,
Y considero,
¡Qué será de ti, niño,
Si yo me muero[2]!”

she knew nothing of its meaning; her little face was pressed close and warm [183] against her mother’s breast, and a flower or a fruit, which the sprites had painted for her, was enough to complete her happiness.

“Before Pura—such was her name—was two years old, her mother died too. But the sprites had not forgotten her, Lolita: her mother had a sister, and when this sister came to the funeral, they had painted Pura’s cheeks with such fresh, clear tints, and lit up her baby face with such a bright, sweet smile, that her aunt would not part from her, but took her home and brought her up as her own child, and was to her as a mother.

“The sprites played with her now just as before; and when she was asleep they used to dance on her bed, and say, ‘Dear little girl, we will never leave you; only be good, and so long as you are good we will see that you shall want for nothing at all.’

“Meantime, Pura grew up to learn to be useful: she worked in the garden, and kept the house tidy, and fetched the water from the fountain, and did all that *Tia*[3] Trinidad wanted. She was very good and very obedient, and never wasted her time; her only amusement was lying on the thyme-bed in the sunshine, because [184] then the sprites painted such pretty dreams for her.

“But *Tia* Trinidad was growing old, and after her there was no other aunt, nor any relation to look after Pura; and though she would not say it aloud to vex Pura, who was always bright and gay, she yet continually repeated in her own mind, just as the poor mother used to sing,—

“En los brazos te tengo,
Y considero,
¡Qué será de ti, niño,
Si yo me muero!”

“So things looked very bad again, Lolita; but the sprites had not forgotten Pura, as you shall see.

“*Tia* Trinidad earned her living by waiting on strangers at the little inn down in the village, and as few people came that way, she was often many days without earning a *‘chavo*[4]. One day, however, there came a great gentleman who had returned from the Indies with a great lot of money; he said he had roamed the world long enough, and seen enough of great cities; he meant now to settle himself in some quiet, remote village, and the only thing he wanted in this world was a nice, good, industrious wife, who would make his home smiling and happy. [185]

“‘Then I can fit you to a nicety!’ broke in *Tia* Trinidad, who had been seized with a most diligent dusting fit all the time the traveller had been detailing his plans to the *Cura*[5] of the village, and had not missed a word.

“‘Can you?’ said the traveller, not at all displeased at her boldness.

“‘That can I,’ continued *Tia* Trinidad, earnestly; ‘and there isn’t a girl to match her in Madrid, and the *Padre Cura* will bear me out!’

“‘What ... Pura, you mean ... I suppose?’ said the *Cura*, somewhat embarrassed between his desire to speak the truth, and his fear of crushing the—as it seemed to him—exaggerated ideas of his poor parishioner. ‘Yes, Pura is a good girl enough;’ and he paused to think how much he could say in her favour; ‘young, and—pretty, and—simple, and—lively, and—notable altogether, but——’

“‘Well,’ interrupted the traveller, hastily, ‘out with your *but!* for you have named the very qualities which go to make up my ideal of a wife; speak, *hombre*[6]!’

“‘Well, I mean—I mean, only that she is a little—a little—what shall I say?—a little *homely* for *your* wife——’

“‘*Homely*, is it? Oh! if that’s all, we sha’n’t quarrel. I don’t want any of your fine [186]
ladies who are only thinking of setting themselves off, and attend to nothing but their toilet! Come, good woman, ask your young friend to allow me to come and see her to-morrow.’

“Too overjoyed to answer, *Tia* Trinidad set off on the instant at full speed, and ran so fast you could not have told what her gown was made of as she passed. When she reached home, out of breath, she told her niece to adorn the house, and dress herself in her best, for she expected a visitor next morning.

“Pura—who, though now seventeen, still kept up her simple habit of doing whatever she was bid with alacrity—fulfilled the directions given her with great exactness and success, and never thought of asking who or what the visitor was, or what business brought him.

“When the traveller called next morning, and found the room so smiling, the sunbeams playing through the muslin blinds upon the snow-white curtains, the brightly-tinted flowers—which, by the way, the sprites had painted on purpose—so tastefully arranged, and Pura herself looking so neat, and with no thought of display in her head, he was delighted, and left with an air of satisfaction, which convinced *Tia* Trinidad that all was going on right. Only, as he was going away, he turned and asked *Tia* Trinidad if Pura could make lace; and *Tia* Trinidad, who [187]
deemed her niece such a pearl that there was nothing she could not do, without thinking, answered “Yes.” Nevertheless, poor Pura had had too much labour with the garden and the house-work all her young life to have had leisure for indoor occupation. She could take a turn, indeed, at her aunt’s spinning-wheel; but such an accomplishment as making lace she had never practised.

“‘Why did you tell the gentleman I knew how to make lace, when I don’t, aunt?’ she exclaimed, for she could not bear an untruth about the least matter.

“‘Well, I did not know what to say, all in the surprise,’ replied the good aunt. ‘It seemed as if I should give a false impression of your habits, which are so industrious, if I said you could not do any thing he expected of you.’

“‘Then why didn’t you say that I could spin, and scour, and dig?’ answered Pura, ingenuously.

“‘Dig, and scour, and spin, indeed! Fine recommendations for *his* purpose,’ rejoined the aunt, mysteriously; and before Pura could ask what on earth this ‘purpose’ was, a messenger brought in three bobbins of fine black silk, for her to make into a piece of lace, as a proof of her skill.

“‘Oh, aunt, what shall we do? What *shall* we do?’ sobbed poor Pura, who could not endure to be thought a deceiver.

“‘Don’t worry, child,’ returned the aunt, ‘something or other will turn up. There’s [188]
nothing so easy as making lace, after all, and three bobbins are gone like winking. You *must* get through it somehow, for your fate depends upon it.’

“Pura went to bed that night crying; and cried herself to sleep. But very early in the morning, very early indeed, Lolita, the sunbeams woke her—you see the sprites never lost sight of her. And three beautiful sprites—the three who had most care of her—came floating down the Sunbeam. Without saying a word, they took up the bobbins of silk, for they had brought every thing with them that was wanted for making lace, as if they had known all about it, and, rattling them about, *en un dos por tres*[7], they turned off a splendid mantilla, all made out with flowers, and birds, and every thing you can think of, and then threw it on the bed, and disappeared before Pura had time to recover from her surprise.

“When the stranger called next day, and saw this extraordinary proof of industry and skill, he could hardly believe his eyes, and went away more pleased than the day before.

“‘Didn’t I tell *á su merced*[8] that she was a jewel?’ whispered the old lady.

“‘I begin to think you did not exaggerate,’ answered the traveller. [189]

“And then, turning to Pura, he asked her if she was as perfect in household duties as in accomplishments; whether, for instance, she understood cooking.

“‘*¡Pues no ha de saber cocer*[9]*!*’ interposed the aunt, without allowing Pura time to speak; for she knew the good girl would have answered the strict truth; and she thought as the sprites had got her out of one scrape, they might be trusted to get her out of another.

“In the evening, the messenger came again, this time followed by two other porters, each carrying baskets of provisions, which they set down, with the message that Pura was to make a famous *olla podrida*, and the gentleman would come in and dine off it the next day.

“Pura’s tears fell fast on the beautiful market spoil, on which *Tia* Trinidad stood feasting her gaze. Never had such a provision of generous diet stood within sight of her hearth! But Pura only reflected on her incapacity to deal with such choice materials, and she knew there was no help to be got from her aunt, to whose *cuisine* even a piece of bacon was a rare delicacy.

“Pura went to bed that night as sad as the night before, for she kept saying to herself, ‘Suppose the gentleman should think it is I who have been deceiving him!’

“But the sprites did not forget her, Lolita. Very early in the morning—very early!— [190]
they came in on the Sunbeam, as bright and as beautiful as before; and in a trice they had laid the fire in the stove and blown the charcoal into a fine red glow; then, while one took down the large *ollas*[10] from the shelf, and filled them with water at the well, one was busy plucking the fowls, and another washing and preparing the vegetables. The vegetables were soon put on in one *olla* with the bacon; and then the fowls, the ham, the sausages, the tripe, the pigs’-fry, the rolls of lean meat nicely larded and stuffed, all set to stew in another, and all seasoned with the greatest care and delicacy. The whole morning Pura watched the sprites. And though *Tia* Trinidad saw nothing but the Sunbeam playing about the kitchen, Pura saw them, as they carefully skimmed the pots, added to the liquor or the flavouring, made up or slackened the fire; then, an hour before dinner-time the contents of the two *ollas* were mingled with care, and once more set on to simmer, while with herbs, and bread-crumbs, and garlic, pimento, and parsley, certain *albóndigas gruesas*[11] were being made ready, and fried in sparkling oil to a fine golden hue, ready to drop into the *olla* the moment before serving up.

“The traveller came, faithful to his appointment, and the delicious odours of the [191]
olla met him directly he entered the garden-gate, overpowering the perfume of the carnations on the window-sills. Proudly *Tia* Trinidad bore in the lordly dish, for she knew that never in the palace was a more perfect stew served. The traveller dined with undisguised satisfaction; he confessed it was the *ne plus ultra* of cooking. Nothing was wanting, of nothing was there too much, every thing was in its due proportion and proved the handiwork of a true artist in cooking.

“‘As you understand so well how to prepare this homely dish,’ he said, at the close of many compliments, as he took leave, ‘I am sure your delicate taste must be equally faultless at confections—I shall ask you to make me a *turron*[12] to-morrow.’

“Pura, struck dumb with perplexity, was vainly striving to frame some speech by means of which to explain how little part she had had in the performances he had been led to ascribe to her; but while she was yet thinking, her admirer had already plucked a carnation for her hair, and, raising his hand in affectionate farewell, had taken his departure.

“*Tia* Trinidad busied herself with putting by the remains of the abundant meal: there was meat enough to last her frugal needs a week, and more, and some to spare for a poor neighbour besides. [192]

While she schemed and portioned, Pura, torn by conflicting thoughts, stood still, with the carnation in her hand, gazing after the form of the stranger as he disappeared among the trees, and wondering why she had not courage to run after him and explain all.

“She stood thus leaning against the window-pane, and still gazing, perplexed, hours afterwards, when the same messenger who had visited her on the two

evenings before, again appeared, with a load of almonds and filberts, pine-kernels and walnuts, honey and eggs. Pura took the things from him with a heavy heart, for she was much too humble and simple to expect that the sprites *could* be so kind as to help her again; so she went to bed in as great distress as on the preceding nights. Nevertheless, early in the morning—very early, very soon after sunrise, that is as soon as the sun was up high enough for his beams to get in at her window—in came the three sprites, and, without saying a word, set to work, just as they had the day before; then began such a wonderful bruising, and pounding, and mixing, that Pura soon lost all fear of the work not being performed as perfectly as on the two former occasions. They had not yet half finished their mixing, when all of a sudden she noticed a soft buzzing sound, like the humming of bees, but all in beautiful melody; and then she saw the Sunbeam full of sprites of every hue like living flowers. They were the genii of the flowers, and they wore the [193]
very forms of the flowers, their bright petals making so many wings, and they came and poured each its own perfumed nectar into the confection, giving it a flavour such as no *turron*, of earth at least, ever possessed before.

"'We have done all these things for you,' said the sprites, when they had completed their handiwork; 'now, we want you to do one thing for us.'

"'Oh, whatever you like! only tell me any thing I can do!' answered Pura, with a ready grace.

"'Well, it is this. We know three poor girls, very poor and very sick; they are all terribly deformed cripples. They are so deformed and so ugly that they live in the hospital, and never get asked any where. It would be such a pleasure to them to come to your wedding-fête. They will be no ornament to it, I know; but still, will you let them come?'

"'Oh, yes; to be sure, poor things;' answered Pura, with grateful and charitable alacrity; 'that is, whenever I get married. But who would marry a poor penniless orphan-girl, who can do nothing? More likely I shall have to go to the hospital too, when aunt dies.'

"'Oh, no; you're going to be married very soon, to that traveller who has been here so often.'

"'What; to that kind, handsome gentleman!' cried Pura, in raptures. But a moment after, a cloud stole over her joyous countenance; and, hiding her face in her hands, [194]
she said, sadly, 'No; *that* can never be. I dread even to meet him again, because we have been deceiving him. Oh, it was very wrong; I would not have done it for the world if I had had time to speak. If he wants to marry me, it's because he thinks I'm so clever; and when he finds I can do nothing he will turn his back, and that is not the worst. When he finds he is deceived, and I can do nothing, oh, how he will despise me!' And she sobbed again.

"'No, it is not because you are clever,' answered the sprites; 'it is because you are good. If you have not learned more, it is because you had not the opportunity. You have always been industrious at doing what you did understand; and as to deceiving him, that has never been your will and intention. So cheer up! we will make it all right. Only don't forget to invite the three poor girls from the hospital to the feast.' And the sprites floated away on the sunbeam.

"'Be sure I shall not forget them, poor things!' cried Pura after them.

"The next day the stranger came again; and having tasted the exquisite *turron*, which seemed indeed to have been perfumed by no ordinary taste, he told *Tia* Trinidad he hoped she would let him marry her niece at once.

"There was nothing the old lady desired more; for she had inquired about him [195]
meantime, and found he was a worthy man, as well as abundantly supplied with this world's goods; so all was speedily arranged.

"To her surprise, when she came to announce her good fortune to her niece, and to arrange preliminaries with her, she found she was any thing but pleased, and only burst into tears.

"'Why, child! what ever is the matter with you?' she exclaimed. 'You don't mean you don't like him? I'm sure he has spoken kindly and fondly enough to you. And what is more, he has spoken kindly and fondly enough behind your back, too; which shows his esteem is genuine, and no mere flattery.'

"'That's it. That's just what makes me so wretched,' sobbed Pura.

"'What, wretched to think a good man loves you!'

"'No, aunt, no; but to think that he is so good and so kind, and we have been

deceiving him. When he finds I can do none of the things he has fancied I am so clever at, what will he think of me? With what face can I meet him? Will he ever respect me again?' and she sobbed harder than ever.

"'Nonsense, child, don't take on like that,' responded the aunt. 'You've got through it all so far. Do as I bid you, and it will all come right in the end.' [196]

"Pura, used to obey, and trusting in great measure also to the promises of the sunbeam-sprites, prepared to do her aunt's bidding, though with somewhat mixed feelings.

"When the wedding-day was fixed, and all preparations made, Pura did not forget to go out early into the *tomillar*, and ask the sprites of the sunbeam how she should find their protégées, the three cripples of the hospital. 'Leave that to us,' said the sprites. 'You have done your part in remembering them. We will take care they have the invitation; only give us the token by which they may be sure of being admitted.'

"'A red and white carnation will suffice,' answered Pura; and a cloud overshadowed the sunbeam.

"The wedding came, and the *fêtes*, and the cripples. A pitiable sight they were, indeed. They were still young; but their distorted forms only made their youth a motive for greater compassion. The back of one was curled over so that her chin touched her waist, and her arms were so short they were no longer than the fins of a fish. Those of the second were so swollen that each was the size of her whole body, and you could scarcely tell which was which; and on her forehead was a great swelling like the horn of a rhinoceros. The skin of the third was all shrivelled and seamed with scars, and her eyes were red all round, and stood out from her head worse than those of a lobster. [197]

"'Pura!' exclaimed the bridegroom, as they made their approach, 'how on earth did these three scarecrows get in? they are almost enough to cast an evil eye on our happiness.'

"'Say not so, beloved,' replied Pura; 'they are three poor girls who might have been as happy as you and I, but that misfortune overtook them. Their life is sad enough, shall we not try to make them glad for once, on our own happy day?'

"'Sweet child, you are right, and I was hasty,' answered the bridegroom; 'but how did you come to know them?'

"'Some one who was very kind to me seemed to take an interest in them too, and asked me to invite them, that they might have one bright day at least.'

"'Then, if that is the case, they have my heartiest welcome; I had rather see them here than if they were the highest duchesses of the land.'

"And with that he sent the friend who attended to marshalling the guests, to put them in the best places, nearest to the bride and himself.

"Nevertheless, he could not get over his curiosity, to know why they were formed in such an extraordinary manner; and when the conversation began to get sufficiently general and familiar, he went up to the first, and after an exchange of ordinary compliments, and feeling his way by little and little, at last allowed [198] himself to say in the politest tone,—

"'*May* I ask, dear friend, how it is your back comes to be so bent, and your arms so very short?'

"And while he waited in great perturbation, lest he should have offended or hurt the poor thing, she answered cheerfully enough,—

"'By all means, I am not at all ashamed of it. I used to be a famous hand at making lace, and my step-mother, finding she could make a lot of money out of my work, kept me at it so hard that from bending over it so much my back never came straight again; and my arms, from continually twisting the bobbins, got quite worn away and screwed like into the sockets, and never *would* come out any more.'

"'Indeed!' exclaimed the bridegroom, almost abruptly, for his alarm got the better of his courtesy; and with that he sprang to the side of his bride, and exacted from her a promise that she would never never make any lace from that day forward.

"Pura gave the promise willingly enough; and, his composure somewhat restored, her husband before long found his curiosity lead him to the side of the second 'scarecrow' guest, to ask her why her arms were so *very* thick, and why she had such a bump on her forehead. [199]

“‘Because,’ she answered, in a tone which seemed to show she was pleased to have the opportunity of explaining the circumstance, ‘because I used to be a rare hand at making *almendrado*[13] and *turrones* of every kind, and from continually pounding, pounding at the almonds and nuts, my arms grew as thick as you see; and as I often knocked my forehead with the big pestle we used, I got this ugly bump.’

“With greater trepidation than before, he darted, at hearing this, to Pura’s side, and taking her hand in his, required her to promise him with the greatest solemnity that she would never touch any confectionary again.

“Encouraged by the good-natured reception his curiosity had met with in the two former cases, he soon found himself by the side of the third cripple, asking her why her eyes were so red and goggled, and her skin so scarred.

“‘Because I was a famous cook,’ was the answer. ‘I was married very young, and my husband was very particular about his dinner. I never could be away from the cooking-stove, there was always something to be got ready; and that injured my eyes. And worse than that, one day I had a frying-pan in my hand, full of boiling oil, and I was just going to drop in the chops, when bang went a pane of glass. Some one had frightened the cat, and in he had bounded through the window, [200]
scattering the glass right and left. The noise gave me such a start, that I upset the frying-pan over the heated stove, the oil flared up in my face, and burnt me all over as you see me.’

“Without retaining sufficient self-command to say the few words of sympathy and consolation which would not have failed him at another time, he hasted back to Pura, and insisted that then and there she would promise him never to touch a frying-pan or an *olla* more.

“Then Pura understood why the sprites had bid her invite the cripples to her wedding; and she had her reward for her charity. And you see, Lolita, dear, how they kept their promise. So no wonder I am fond of looking into the sunbeam.” [201]

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1 Bank of wild thyme. ↑

2 “While in my arms I hold thee,
I ask myself alway,
What fate I leave thee to, child,
If call’d by death away.”

↑

3 Aunt. It is also a title of respect and endearment, much in use between intimate friends, especially among the lower orders in Spain. ↑

4 *Ochavo*, a coin about equal to a farthing. ↑

5 Clergyman of the parish. ↑

6 Man. An ejaculation with which the Spaniard frequently interlards his conversation. ↑

7 As we should say, “like winking.” ↑

8 Your worship. ↑

9 “I should think she *did* know how to cook indeed!” ↑

10 Earthen pots. ↑

11 Something like our forcemeat-balls. ↑

12 A sweetmeat in as general adoption in Spain as our toffy. ↑

13 Sweetmeat composed of pounded almonds and honey. ↑

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THE PEDRO JIMENEZ GRAPE.

There was a well-to-do vine-grower named Pedro Jimenez, who cultivated a small tract of land on which his fathers had lived for many generations before him, and had been known throughout the district for men of undoubted *pundonor*, by which word Spaniards express the most scrupulous nicety of honourable conduct. Blessed with all other worldly advantages, Pedro Jimenez had one great trial—he had no child to whom to transmit the name he had received from his predecessors, and himself borne so creditably. When he reflected on this, there was one thought in the background which used to distress him. There was living at a sufficient distance to be quite unknown to his neighbours, a poor relation of his wife, whom he assisted frequently in secret; but he had never let the knowledge of the

humiliating circumstance transpire. Yet he knew that this poor hard-working man with difficulty kept his family above want; that the greatest delicacy in which they could ever indulge was the dish popularly called *duelos y quebrantos* (sorrows and troubles), a stew made up of the poorest odds and ends and leavings[1], in bitter mockery of the favourite Spanish *olla podrida*, which is a compound of the most succulent meats and vegetables. [202]

Conscience would whisper in Pedro Jimenez's ear, "Here, in this poor fellow's son, is an heir whom you may adopt; take him from the present temptations to discontent and dishonesty with which privations ply him, and bring him up according to the traditional maxims of your house." But when he thought of the details of bringing the ragged lad to his respectable homestead, and the neighbours pointing to him as the relation of the wealthy Pedro Jimenez, his courage failed him, and he turned from the idea. So years passed by, and this thought remained the weak point of Pedro Jimenez's otherwise irreproachable character.

One evening, as he was strolling through his vineyard, admiring the beautiful clusters of grapes which were his riches for the coming year, he was disturbed by the mournful howling of a dog, proceeding from the road-side at no great distance. His kind heart prompted him immediately to follow up the sound, and he was not long before he came upon a saddening sight. On the ground lay the prostrate form of a delicate youth, foot-sore and travel-worn, and now brought to a state of unconsciousness through exhaustion; by his side there lay a large shaggy dog of pitiable aspect; his bones almost protruded through his skin, his eyes were glassy and wild, and he trembled in every limb. His melancholy howling grew fainter and fainter, and by the time Pedro Jimenez got up to the group, he saw he was past the reach of help; with one more distressful howl, he rolled on his back and expired, having spent his last breath in summoning aid to his young master! [203]

Pedro Jimenez lost no time in raising the youth in his arms, and bearing him to his own comfortable home, where his wife's kindly care soon restored him to animation. Refreshed by her attentions, he was soon able to tell his tale; and what was the surprise of the good couple when they learnt that the poor child they had so charitably entertained, was no other than the son of their poor relation. Nevertheless his history was a sad one. His father and mother had both fallen victims to an epidemic disorder in their village; kind neighbours had taken in the younger children, a convent had provided for two older girls; and the eldest boy, having been used to labour all his life, had manfully resolved to be a charge to no stranger, but had set out to seek the advice and direction of the only relation he had to look up to, in finding work by which he could support himself, and lay by enough to portion his younger sisters. As the weary boy told his tale of domestic heroism, Pedro Jimenez's better nature stirred within him. He no longer stifled the dictates of conscience, no longer suffered himself to be governed by a false and foolish fear of human respect, but took his young kinsman by the hand, told him he was proud of his spirit, and that as Heaven had denied him direct heirs, he would henceforth make it depend entirely on his own good conduct to become the heir to his comfortable competence. [204]

The orphan lad was overjoyed at the prospect. In his little world the name of Pedro Jimenez had all his life stood as the embodiment of all that was respectable, and desirable, and worthy of imitation. To be suddenly elevated to the position of aspiring to one day himself inheriting that honoured name, with all its contingent advantages, was greater happiness than he had ever dared to entertain in his wildest dreams.

Pedro Jimenez had every reason to be satisfied with the decision he had come to. All the neighbours who were sufficiently men of worth to make their opinion a matter of consequence, far from looking down on him for the disclosure, warmly applauded his generosity; and in return for the few worthless ones whose acquaintance he lost by it, he won for himself the affection of a devoted son. The old man had never known a greater pleasure than that he now found in taking his adopted child out with him day by day, and instructing him in all the various arts of treating the vine—the mode of planting and culture, the vintage, the pressing of the grape, and the disposal of the wine; and to all this, his young charge listened with an earnestness and intelligence that repaid all his care. His frugality, and industry, and straightforward manly conduct on all occasions—his almost feminine kindliness of manner in supplying to the best of his power the offices of the old wife, when God took her home, all rendered the old man quite easy as to the future successor to his name. [205]

At last the time came when Pedro Jimenez the elder, full of years and honour, was called to his account; and as his adopted son turned to meet the desolation of the lonely house, there was one thought of consolation to gild his bereavement, the sense that he could make his whole after-life a token of obedience to the upright

maxims of his benefactor, in whose stead he now stood.

While our hero had been living in rustic tranquillity in the remotest part of the south of Spain, great events had been stirring Europe. The tumultuous tide of the French Revolution had overflowed the Peninsula. I will not detain you with any thing you can consider a dry epitome of history. Suffice it to say, that in consequence of the troubles in which his country was involved, young Pedro Jimenez was called to join the army. [206]

Having felt, as I hope you have, some interest in the honest pride with which he was on the point of entering on his inheritance, I am sure you will sympathize with the sadness of heart which now overshadowed him as he was obliged to abandon his fair homestead just as it had become his own. “It is well the old man never suspected it would come to this! ... and then peace must come and restore me to my home some time or other,” he used to say to comfort himself during the weary march or tedious drill. There was, however, yet a heavier trial in store. It was the policy of the intruded French ruler to send away the native troops out of their country, and replace them with French troops. Now it happened that Pedro Jimenez was attached to the regiment of General Romano, which was one of those selected for foreign service. Ordered to the banks of the Rhine, poor Pedro Jimenez seemed farther than ever from the fulfilment of his darling hopes. He had perhaps felt the defence of his country some compensation for the separation from home; but to fight for the unjust aggressions of one who was the usurper of the throne of his native land was surpassingly hard. When not joining his comrades in lamenting their hard fate, he would wander over the country, trying to find any incident which might remind him of his beloved Andalusia. His attention was thus [207] arrested by the vines which he found growing on the heights around. The knowledge of the subject he had acquired during so many years’ apprenticeship, and under so experienced a master, now proved invaluable. His practised eye readily distinguished among the varieties presented to it a superior variety adapted to the soil and climate of Andalusia, and he determined, whenever Providence was pleased to give him an opportunity of returning, that he would provide himself with the means of propagating this stock in his own plantation.

Nor was this opportunity very long withheld. General Romano, though scarcely taller than the length of an ordinary man’s arm[2] bore in his little body a large and loyal heart: by dint of persevering efforts, he succeeded in making a way of escape for his whole regiment, shipped them, and carried them safely round to a friendly port of Portugal, and thence draughted them all back into Spain, where they did good service under Wellington.

Pedro could hardly believe his ears for joy, when the mysterious order was transmitted to him, to prepare for the secret return: yet he did not in his transports forget the coveted vine. The plant thus obtained, tended and preserved with much care and anxiety through the voyage, might still have been condemned [208] to perish, had he been called to active service; but the rough life and the long voyage had impaired his health. After several months in hospital, during which time, you may be sure, he did not neglect his precious plant, he was sent home invalided.

He found his own *viña* in a sad state of neglect; but his native air having soon restored his strength, he was able within a few years more, not only to bring it round again, but also to produce a goodly show from his newly imported vine-stock. And from this vintage it is—the Rhenish stock planted in Andalusian soil, and cultivated with tender care and intelligence—that we get the choice variety of sherry wine (you can ask Papa to let you taste it some day at dessert) called “Pedro Jimenez.” [209]

1 There is so little trace of flesh meat in it that it was allowed on fast-days. ↑

2 Tamaño como del codo á la mano. ↑

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ST. MARTIN IN SPAIN.

About the time that the Pedro Jiménez vintage was coming into growth, a favourite old vintage of Spain was just becoming exhausted, or for some reason going out of fashion,—the white wine of San Martin, so called from the locality of its production in Castilla la Vieja, not far from Toledo.

Now it happens that in Spain—where Christianity has woven itself more familiarly perhaps than any where else into the home traditions of the people, and every

class and state of man has assigned to it a special patron—that St. Martin is counted the patron Saint of drunkards. “Patron Saint of drunkards!” you will perhaps exclaim; “what have Saints got to do with drunkards?” But think a little, and remember how mercifully our Lord associated “with publicans and sinners,” that He might reclaim them, and then you will say it is not so strange after all. Drunkards are very few in Spain, so few that there is no idiomatic word to call [210] them by—nothing but the popular mocking expression *borracho*, which is simply formed by putting a masculine termination to the word *borracha*, a wine-skin; for you know it is the common practice in Spain, to store all the wine that is intended for use within a short period, in skins instead of barrels. And very curious it is, I assure you, when you are travelling in Spain, to see great skins of pigs and goats, sometimes with the hair still on, hanging up in the wine-shops, swelled out to their utmost extent with wine.

I was curious to find out how St. Martin came to be reckoned the *male-wineskin’s* patron; and in course of my inquiries, came upon two or three little traditions which may amuse you.

One was, that in a church much frequented by large numbers of the poorer peasantry, there was, among other pictures, one representing St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar, according to the legend you have all heard. But it happened that the painter, in the plenitude of his idealism, had made a slight alteration in the usual treatment of the figures. Instead of putting a beggar kneeling by the wayside and sturdily asking alms, he had drawn one lying down in the extremity of exhaustion, and with scarcely a rag to cover him. St. Martin, instead of being in the act of cutting his cloak in halves with his sword, as you usually see him, was tenderly placing the already severed portion of his garment [211] over the shivering form of the beggar. But the execution of the picture was not equal to the conception: the livid face, with its red and purple lines, by which the painter had thought to depict the effect of cold and want, was taken by the people to show forth the swollen features of a drunkard, and the attitude of exhaustion, for one of helpless intoxication. St. Martin’s part in the picture was reckoned to be the saving him from the ridicule of the passengers, by covering him up. This act of patronage, so assumed, was reckoned to extend to all victims of drunkenness.

Another story told me, was, that it arose from a waggish remark made by an Andalusian on another and more normal picture of St. Martin. Andalusians are famous for their wit. It is said that the soil of Spain is adapted to produce every thing required for both the necessity and luxurious enjoyment of human life, except spices; but that this is supplied by the spice of Andalusian wit, for an Andalusian hardly opens his mouth but to say something witty.

An Andalusian, then, being asked what he thought of a certain picture of the legend of St. Martin replied, it represented such a piece of folly that none but a drunken man could have committed it. And the connexion thus once set up between a Saint and the condition of inebriety, though in jest, was sufficient to [212] fasten on him the patronage of the inebriate.

But for my own part, I am inclined to think that the vintage of San Martin, though now seldom spoken of, having at one time been regarded all over Spain as the first vintage of the world, popular tradition naturally ascribed the care of those who partook of it to the Saint whose name it fortuitously bore.

In inquiring thus about St. Martin, I found that Spaniards have a jesting way of calling one San Rorro also, patron of drunkards; and this puzzled me, as I could find *nothing like* San Rorro in the Calendar. Then I learnt that *rorro* means a child just beginning to walk. Now a drunken man staggers much in the same way as an infant first learning to support its own weight; and thus “San Rorro” is merely a punning allusion to this similarity. But the Spaniard, who, as I have said, weaves his Christianity and—I may add—his innocent jest into every thing, remembering that the Divine Infant must have tottered too in His first early efforts to walk, sees a connexion here which may suggest an occasion for Divine pity and patronage. Certainly the common immunity from bad consequences of their falls, has led all countries to fable about a “special Providence for drunkards.” [213]

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MARVELLOUS STORIES.

After recording so many marvellous stories, it seems not out of place to give two or three instances of how marvellous stories rise in popular imagination; from which it is not difficult to infer how other stories have received their marvellous dress.

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I.

ST. MICHAEL'S FEATHER.

There is a town in Spain where a feather is preserved which is reported by the common people to have been shed by the Archangel Michael on the occasion of a miraculous visit to the place. An archæologist who was at great pains to investigate this matter, after spending much time over the inquiry, traced it very satisfactorily to an occasion in which, some hundreds of years ago, an *Auto Sacramentale*, or, as we say in English, a *Mystery Play*—that is, a dramatic representation of a religious subject—was being shown, in which St. Michael was one of the *dramatis personæ*. A feather having fallen from the wings employed on the occasion, was picked up and preserved with the care which so religious a people naturally bestowed on any thing connected, however remotely, with a sacred matter; and in process of time, the local circumstances being forgotten, the feather was ascribed to St. Michael the Archangel himself.

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II.

"EYES TO THE BLIND."

Alfonso Tostato, an Archbishop of Alcalá de Henáres in the Middle Ages, wrote some commentaries on the Bible which were regarded as a work of great piety and erudition. Difficult passages were elucidated with so much plainness, that it was said metaphorically in his epitaph, that his works enabled the blind to see[1], which sentence getting to be reported among the common people, it was confidently believed that in virtue of the services rendered by his works to the Word of God, any blind person who could be brought within reach of his writings would be instantly restored to sight.

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III.

THE FLOATING CHEST.

Cardinal Ximénez, who founded the celebrated University of Alcalá, was desirous to spread the knowledge of these commentaries, which were falling into oblivion; and he thought to render a service to religion by having a new edition of them published. As the art of printing was at that time more developed in the Republic of Venice than in Spain, he found he could bring it out more advantageously there; accordingly the manuscripts were packed and sent thither.

It happened, however, that crossing the Mediterranean, the ship in which they were was overtaken by a tremendous gale; and to save the lives of the passengers, the captain ordered all the merchandize to be thrown overboard, so as to lighten the ship. The chest containing Alfonso Tostato's works was cast into the sea with the rest.

Next morning, when the danger was past, the person who had been entrusted by Ximénez with the care of the manuscripts was in great distress at the irreparable loss: not daring to return to Spain, he wandered along the shore, hardly knowing what he did, when, lo and behold! to his intense delight, there appeared suddenly, floating in the sea, the identical chest, the loss of which was the cause of his mortification. A boat was quickly despatched to haul it in with great joy, and the event was commonly regarded as a marvellous interposition. But it would seem that the sagacious Ximénez, foreseeing the possible calamity, had ordered that the chest should be constructed of the lightest wood; and all who have ever had a swim in the Mediterranean know the peculiar buoyancy of its waters. Perhaps we may now account for the chest floating.

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IV.

THE WHALE OF THE MANZANÁRES.

A modern Spanish writer gives the following solution of a popular tradition that a whale was once seen making its way up the Manzanáres. The Manzanáres is a singularly shallow river, at certain times of the year not half covering its bed, which rendered the tradition still more marvellous[2].

The solution is this: “A wine-merchant living on its banks was once unfortunate enough to have an accident in his storehouse or cellar, by which a number of wine-skins were sent floating down the stream. The wine-merchant ran along the bank, calling on the neighbours to arrest the float, the rather that one of the skins was full of wine; and as the danger of losing them increased, he went on crying frantically, “*Una va llena!*” (“One of them is full!”) [217]

Now Spaniards make but a scarcely perceptible difference between the sound of *b* and *v*, so that his cry sounded in the people’s ears like *una ballena*, which would have meant *a whale*! [218]

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1 “... Su dotrina así alumbro
Que hace ver á los ciegos.” ↑

2 Dumas has indulged his wit at the expense of the unfortunate river, and tells us that his son, being overcome by heat one day at the opera, the bystanders brought him a glass of water; but he refused it with admirable self-sacrifice, exclaiming, “Take it to the poor Manzanáres, its necessities are greater than mine.” ↑

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THE SUN OF WITTENBURG.

Among the engagements fought by the Duke of Alva in the Low Countries, no victory was more hotly contested and more hardly won than the battle of Wittenburg, in 1548. Some who were present at it, when they came back to Spain, magnified, as old soldiers are wont, the wonders of the day; and among other extravagant exaggerations, it was reported that the sun had stood still to give the victorious Spaniards time to pursue their enemies.

When the Duke of Alva returned, Charles Quint inquired of him his account of the event. The Duke, who did not wish either to compromise his veracity or diminish the honours of the day, replied, “Sire, I had too much occupation on earth for my thoughts to have leisure to observe what took place in the heavens.” [219]

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MERINO.

You have often had to wear a merino frock and merino socks, I dare say; but perhaps you do not know that the fine soft wool of which these are made comes from Spain. It is more interesting to know that there is a tradition which says that the particular breed of sheep from which this wool is taken, came originally from England; their coats improved greatly in quality under the genial climate of Spain, and some people have supposed that the name *merino* is a corruption of *trans marino*, because they came from *over the sea*. Others derive it from the word *Merino*, an old title in use in the kingdom of Leon, meaning an overseer, and think that the sheep, having on their first arrival been given into the care of a Merino, or overseer, the name continued to be applied to the animals after it had ceased to denote the office.

Others, again, derive it from the word *merino*, which denotes the migration to which these sheep are subjected; for in the hot weather, when the grass of the [220]

lowlands gets withered up, they have to be driven into the mountain pastures.

There is some doubt as to the date of the importation of the sheep; but most probably they were taken as part of the dowry of Catherine, daughter of John of Gaunt, when she went to marry Don Enrique III., King of Leon and Castille. [221]

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KING VAMBA.

During the time that the Goths governed Spain, there was once an interregnum. The stock of the last dynasty was extinct, and every one who could collect a few supporters set himself up to rule over the rest, so that there were several calling themselves kings at once, and fighting with each other for the mastery. Of course this led to the greatest confusion, for there was no one to keep order.

At last, as they found they could not agree among themselves, they sent to Rome to ask the Pope to decide for them. So the Pope went into his oratory, and prayed God to tell him which of all the candidates should be King of Spain. But when he came out again to the envoys, he told them that none of the pretenders were worthy to wear the crown; that he who was to be King of Spain would be found ploughing his land with a grey and white ox, and a priest walking by his side; that [222] he would be found somewhere in Andalusia, and that his name would be Vamba.

The envoys came back to Spain in no very cheerful mood; for they said, “How shall we find this man?” And then they searched Andalusia over, and could find no one whose name was Vamba. Just as they were going to give up the search in despair, as they were passing through a bank planted with canes they heard a woman with a basket on her shoulder call out, “Come and dine, Vamba! You seem to forget it is twelve o’clock!”

When the envoys heard that, they turned round again, and saw a man ploughing in a field with a grey and white ox. So they went back, and threw themselves on their knees before him, and spoke in this manner,

“Give us your hands to kiss, your majesty!”

But Vamba, full of astonishment, and at a loss to understand them, thought they must want to kill him; and exclaimed, trembling, “Spare my life, *Señores*! Why do you seek to take it?”

But they answered, “We have no such thought, Vamba. Far from it. The Pope who now reigns in Rome told us that you were to be our king; and our king you must therefore be.”

But Vamba, who could not believe they were serious, stuck the *vara*[1] he held in his hand for a goad, into the ground; and said, laughing, “When my *vara* shall take [223] root, and bring forth flowers, then will I believe that I am King of Spain!”

Then, behold! before he had finished speaking, the *vara* became covered with leaves, and from its branches sprang beautiful flowers.

When Vamba saw that, he hesitated no longer; but called his wife Sancha, and his children, and went along with the envoys to Toledo, which was the capital of the kingdom of the Goths.

The envoys sent messengers on before, to tell the Council of the kingdom that the king was coming. The Council rose in a body, and went out to meet him; and all the people followed behind, and the joy-bells were set ringing.

Thus King Vamba made his entrance by the Gate of Cambron, the noblest gate adorning great Toledo; but when he saw the Alcaide of his palace bearing the sword before him according to custom, he begged, in his humility, that he would not bear a sword, but that his children might go before him to show that he loved peace and love, rather than war and strife; and so he went on into the city.

And all the people looked out of their balconies, and cried,—

“Toledo and Spain for Vamba!
And also for Queen Sancha!”

But as the cry swept over the bosom of old father Tagus, the golden Tagus who [224] reflects the glories of all Spain, he bore the cry along gladly and soft, but yet

inverting the order,—

"All Spain hails thee first,
And then her chief city Toledo!"

Thus they conducted the good king to the palace, and there they led him to the bath; and then they trimmed his red *melena*[2], and arranged it so that it might not fall into his eyes; and they combed out the hair of his beard, but left it long and noble; and they put on him a royal robe with gold embroidery and an ermine collar, though he would have it sober in colour, and on his breast a blood-red cross.

Queen Sancha, too, they arrayed in a robe of green velvet, with gold and jewels round the border, her beautiful golden hair unbound, falling loose over her shoulders and reaching down to her palfrey.

The ladies went before, and strewed the ground with flowers, and filled the air with benedictions.

And thus they went forth to the cathedral to be crowned. And all the people ran to their balconies as they passed along, and cried,— [225]

"Toledo and Spain for Vamba!
And also for Queen Sancha!"

But as the cry swept over the bosom of old father Tagus, the golden Tagus, who reflects the glories of all Spain, he bore the cry along, gladly and soft, but inverting the order,—

"All Spain hails thee first!
And then her chief city Toledo!"

Like King David, taken from the sheep-fold to be ruler of the people, Vamba made a very good king. His reign is spoken of in history as "the era of wisdom and justice." He had not, like later sovereigns of Spain, to fight the Saracen intruder on his own soil; but he did more, he crossed the sea to check his advancing power on the African coast, and returned towing two hundred and seventy vessels which his prowess had taken from the enemy. If equal determination had been shown in succeeding reigns, the Moslem had never obtained a footing on Christian soil.

Nevertheless, though respected and beloved by his subjects, Vamba was destined not long to enjoy the peace he so ardently loved. The ambitious men who had been contending for the crown before his accession, continued unyielding and restless. Pretenders rose up in Navarre and the Asturias, and Ilderic, Count of Nimes, at the same time set up the standard of revolt in the Gaulish provinces. Vamba [226] marched in person against Navarre, and sent Paulo his general to Nimes. But Paulo, instead of going to chastise the rebel, procured, on his own behalf, the assistance of Remismundo, Duke of Cantabria, and proclaimed himself king. Vamba, though he had been made king without his own seeking, determined that the sceptre entrusted to him should lose none of its authority by his remissness, and had no sooner restored peace within the kingdom, than he set out against the more distant insurgents, whom he soon reduced to obedience also. Paulo was taken prisoner at Narbonne, together with the bulk of his adherents; at the intercession of the Archbishop they were all pardoned, except Paulo himself, who was found hidden in a cave.

When brought before him, Vamba said to him, "I conjure you now before God to tell me, have you any complaint against me, have I ever done any thing to justify your revolt?"

"Since you ask me in God's Name," replied Paulo, "I cannot but speak the truth. And I must therefore say, that never have I received evil at your hands, but on the contrary signal favours. I was always highly honoured by you, and it was the devil who led me astray."

Then the king forgave him the penalty of death, but he had his eyes put out, and took him captive to Toledo with a rope round his neck. [227]

You might think that Vamba would have had peace, now that he had subdued all his enemies, but it was not so; another noble, Erviga, rose up against him and usurped his authority. By this time Vamba was old and worn down with care. Sancha was dead, and his race seemed well-nigh run. Erviga, though unjust in seeking to take the crown by force, was a brave leader and had the qualities necessary for a good ruler, therefore the good Vamba, instead of spending the blood of his subjects in fighting for a position which he had so little strength left to maintain, settled the question by retiring into a monastery and recommending the people to accept the rule of Erviga. [228]

1 A long, thin, pointed stick. ↑

2 *Melena* is used to signify shaggy hair, when peasants or others leave it uncut and uncombed. ↑

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DOÑA TEREA.

Alfonso the Fifth of Leon was but an infant when his father's death laid on him the charge of resisting the advance of the Moslem, which was the inheritance of all Spanish sovereigns for so many centuries. His mother, Elvira, ruled the kingdom during his minority with great prudence and courage, defeated the Infidels in several encounters, and cultivated in her son all the qualities of a great sovereign. So well did her instructions prosper, that at the age of fifteen he was called to reign in his own name; and from the seclusion of a convent, whither she retired when the country no longer required her, his mother had frequent occasion to return thanks to heaven for the noble qualities her boy exhibited. For many years he continued the pride of the nation and the dread of its enemies; prosperity blessed the people at home, and their borders were continually enlarged by the success of his arms. [229]

Success, though pleasant, is not always good. Alfonso, under its influence, at one time grew heedless of the dictates of his religion. On one occasion, being about to conclude a treaty of peace with Andalla, the Moorish king of Toledo, that prince asked the hand of his sister, Doña Terea, as one of the conditions of the treaty. The king's counsellors were struck with horror, at the thought of handing over a Christian maiden to an Infidel husband, the people expressed their indignation aloud, and Doña Terea herself implored piteously to be spared.

As I have said, success had spoiled Alfonso's nature; he was so accustomed to succeed in every thing, that he could not bear to be crossed even by righteous counsel. It seemed something fine to do what every one else was afraid of; he would not show himself so weak, not he. He would give his sister to the Moorish king in spite of them all, and show them he was superior to their prejudices. Besides, he further justified it to himself, because Andalla undertook on this condition to help him in his campaign against the other Moorish kings; forgetting that we must never do a wrong action for the sake of any advantageous result we may fancy it will bring.

Doña Terea, on the other hand, felt the full misery of her situation. No specious arguments blinded *her*. She felt it both wrong and repugnant; and besides, there [230] was many a gallant, handsome knight ready to risk his life to win her love, and on whom she might have bestowed it in joy to herself and without violence to her conscience. Too young to have fixed her choice, she still had her secret preference dearly nursed, but not yet acknowledged so as to give the object of it the right to stand forth as her defender.

Now, a blight was over all her hopes; her bridal day, instead of an occasion of hope and gladness, was to be a day of desolation and despair. The prelates and great men of the kingdom offered themselves willingly to represent her grief to the king; but they could not move him, and when he sent the envoy who was to conduct her to Toledo, she was found in an agony on her knees, imploring deliverance from on High. Even this, however, did not move the king's heart; and poor Doña Terea was dragged off, more dead than alive, to be the Moor's bride.

Her beautiful golden hair—a romance of the time particularly records the tint—hung untended over her shoulders; the colour had fled from her tear-worn cheeks, and the expression from her dark-glancing eyes; for it seemed as if God, on whom she called so passionately to deliver her, had forsaken her in her hour of need.

And thus she was brought to Andalla, King of Toledo, who was too much pleased to [231] have a beautiful Christian maiden for his bride to listen to her appeal to his magnanimity to release her. But when she found that all her gentle supplications were of no avail, she seemed suddenly inspired with a fire of queenly indignation; and, assuming a commanding attitude, she said solemnly, "Moor, of another law far removed from mine, know that I desire not to be united with thee, and thy presence is a burden to me; but if thou art sacrilegiously determined to marry me against my will, know that we Christians each at our baptism have a guardian angel given to us, to defend us from the power of evil; and so sure as thou respectest not the difference there is between thy belief and mine, that guardian spirit shall vindicate me and smite thee with his two-edged sword."

But Andalla only thought this exhibition of indignation made her look prettier; and

laughing at the threatened visitation, persisted in making her his wife. His neighbours counted him singularly lucky in the possession of such a prize; and he thought himself happy indeed. Nevertheless, from the day of his marriage, a strange illness had assailed him. Though still in the prime of manhood, an unaccountable weakness overtook him; first his sight failed, and then his hearing, then his taste, then his strength; and all the clever physicians of the Moorish dominions failed, not only to give him any relief, but even to guess at the cause of the malady. [232]

Driven thus to think within himself, he recalled the solemn warning of Doña Terea, and fear overtook him that her words were coming true. The moment he realized his danger, he sent for her and asked her if she still wished to return to her own country; to which she of course replied, that it was what she must always most desire. So he summoned the most honourable men of his kingdom, and gave Doña Terea in charge to them, and sent them to convey her back to her own country; and, moreover, put in their hands priceless presents of gold and precious stones, to make amends in the best way in his power, and also to testify that he did it to satisfy the scruples of the princess, and not out of any disrespect to the Christian king, of whose religion he now stood in great fear.

And Alfonso the Fifth, what became of him? Had he heard the Moorish king's embassage, he too might have been brought to the knowledge of his error, and to repentance; but when it arrived at the capital of Leon, he was already gone out on an expedition in which, by his unholy alliance, the infidel forces were mingled with his own. In high spirits, they marched along, crossing the Douro, fearing no opposition, for the Moorish population was at the time divided by many internecine feuds, and were hence precluded from assembling against him in any large numbers. Thus he came to Viseo, a strong place defended by a considerable garrison. Alfonso determined to lay siege to it. The army was accordingly encamped before it, and wise measures for its reduction promulgated, for Alfonso was a skilful general. Never doubting of his luck, however, he neglected those precautions which would have suggested themselves to a less successful man. The weather was sultry, and the heavy armour irksome. Alfonso, unused to restraint, heedlessly cast his cuirass aside, yet, with his accustomed bravery, showed himself under the walls as before, too self-confident to listen to counsel. [233]

A sharp-eyed Moor upon the battlements detected the advantage he had given to his enemies, and letting fly a poisoned arrow aimed with the nice precision which the greatness of the venture inspired, gave him a mortal wound.

Thus he was cut down in early manhood, and the care of the kingdom once more left in the hands of an infant.

But Doña Terea reached home in peace; and passed the rest of her days praying for the brother who had so sadly wronged her, in the Convent of Las Huelgas—one of the present architectural glories of Spain. [234]

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THE IRISH PRINCESS[1].

I was born in Venice the renowned. When I had completed my twenty Aprils, my father called me to him one day, and said to me, "Dear son, I have overflowing wealth of possessions, and in silver and gold twenty thousand doubloons fully told; you are my only heir, and I am infirm and stricken in years. I am thinking of selling the good ship, that even now lies anchored in port."

To which I replied, "Father and lord, observe, the possessions, silver and gold, may all in an instant be reduced to nothing. But freight the good ship now with rich merchandise and wares which shall profit in exchange."

A few days after this, I sailed forth in the good ship, well freighted with precious stores; her linen sails filled out with the soft wind, and her keel ploughing the *berdinegros*[2] waters of the crystal main. [235]

Thus to Tunis we came, where my affairs succeeded prosperously. My merchandise was all disposed of to great advantage in a short time, and before leaving the port I wandered forth to see the town. Passing by one of the great public squares, I saw some Turkish sentinels walking up and down, guarding a dead body; I addressed them, asking why they did not inter it.

"Because," said they, "he was of the Christian people, and in his days of life traded

with his ship, wherefore a Turk of great consideration in our city, and a friend of his, entrusted to him a thousand ducats in silver, with which he bought great provision of cloth, and sent his servants to trade with it, while he remained in Tunis. The ship left the port with a prosperous wind, but before four days were out, a *balandra*[3] came in, bearing the news that the ship had been overtaken by a tempest, and all the merchandise had gone down into the boiling deep. With that the Christian merchant was so overcome, that he fainted and fell down dead, and we hold his body in bail for the thousand ducats he owed the Turk."

To which I replied, "I will pay the sum you have named." And then, taking the body [236]
on my shoulders, I carried it to the church of Serafic Francis, which there is in Tunis, to give it burial, and paid the stipend of the priest who should say a hundred masses for the soul's rest. Then I returned to pay the debt to the Turk.

Scarcely had I passed the threshold of his house, when I heard the sound of great wailing and lamentation, as of one taking leave of life.

So I turned and asked two turbaned renegades who stood in waiting, what meant the wail. And they said, "There came to Tunis a female slave, a captive Christian, causing envy to all the womanhood of this place, so beauteously had Heaven arrayed her. Her our master bought, with the intention of making her recant and marrying her. But she said to him, '*Señor*, it is vain you weary yourself, to persuade me to do this thing, for never will I deny my God and His laws, though to lay down my life I am ready.'

"When the master heard this he was wroth, and taking her by the shoulders let her down into a *mazmorra*[4] under his house, binding her with a heavy chain, and feeding her day by day with but six ounces of coarse bread and half a pint of water."

Hearing that, I said I would buy the maid, and redeem her; but they answered it [237]
was vain. The Turk would not part with her to any one, and in mockery he had set her price at a hundred millions. So I saw I must have recourse to stratagem, and asked accordingly whether the maid had declared herself a Christian, and they answered, "No, she had only spoken of her God and of His law," then, while I bethought me how to arrange my plan, they exclaimed suddenly, "Here comes the master;" and the moment that he entered the house, eagerly prostrating themselves at his feet, they said:—

"Great lord of this mighty *alcázar*[5], behold a man who comes to pay the debt of the dead Christian, and who is also desirous to buy the maiden, the slave."

Nor was I sorry to find myself thus launched into the middle of the business, but I stood perplexed, praying in my own mind that God would give me some well-conceived idea which should serve for the redemption of the maiden.

Meantime, I counted out the sum that was due from the dead man; and then I said, "Know you that this Mustafa, my sister, whom you keep in your *mazmorra*, feeding her with the bread of affliction, is the most pious Jewess of our nation, and that in this you do a great wrong?"

I could proceed no further, for the Moors think it a terrible discredit to have any [238]
Jew within their precincts; and this one flew into an ungovernable rage at the bare idea that he had been harbouring one; plucking out his beard by handfuls, he cried out with a loud voice of desolation,—

"Woe is me, for my fame and my honour before my people is gone, now that I have suffered this scum of the earth to be with me! Let her be thrust forth from my gates."

So his servants ran and took her up, more dead than alive, and putting her into my arms drove us forth with ignominy and imprecations.

I was no sooner in the street, than I gave great thanks to God for the rescue He had provided, and then I bore her along to the church, thinking she needed the rites of sepulture; but I had scarcely entered the sacred place, than she opened her eyes and breathed. So I gave her such means of refreshment as I had about me, and by degrees the sad lady came to herself; and to give her greater consolation, I bid her observe she was no longer in the estate of a slave, but that by the mercy of Heaven she was redeemed and free.

As soon as her strength had begun to return, I deemed it prudent to run no risk of danger from the Turk, and therefore used every possible diligence to conduct her to the harbour, where at once we went down into my good ship, and giving the crew word to get to sea with all despatch, we were soon steering swiftly between two azure fields. [239]

Thus we came to Venice, my country, where I found that during my absence my dear old father had died; and I should well-nigh have died of sorrow too, but that I had the charge of the beautiful captive lady upon me, and I had to provide for her welfare.

One day I took her aside, and asked her respectfully to tell me what country she was of, and who were her people; but she shook her head in a melancholy way, and bid me ask her nothing, but that with time I should learn all her eventful history. For she came from a far country, and she was not bold enough to propose to me the travail and peril of bearing her home.

“But,” I replied, “most beauteous Diana, I asked the question that in the end I might have become thy beloved husband, and if I am not worthy to know thy country, what shall become of my hope.”

And she—“From this day I will be thy beloved wife, for it is thus meet that love should be paid with love.”

When I heard this answer, I was beside myself with joy, and instantly arranged every thing for the marriage festival, which was celebrated with great pomp and rejoicing, *cañas*[6] and *alcancías*[7], music, jousts, and dancing. Among the people [240] who collected from all parts to enjoy the sports, was the captain of one of the ships in port, and he fastened himself on to me with every exterior token of friendship: I too was taken with him, and we were soon inseparable. Nothing would satisfy him, but that one fair bright morning when our fêtes were over, we should come down to this vessel that he might give us a banquet there.

After this there was dancing, and singing, and much merry-making; and while we were enchanted with the dulcet tones of the marvellous instruments his minstrels played, we failed to perceive we were being carried out to sea.

It was about six in the evening when my beloved bride came and took me by the hand, and said, “Without doubt there is some perfidy, for my heart is filled with fear, and my soul is troubled.”

So I took her hand, thinking to reassure her by taking her on shore. But when we came upon the deck, there was nothing to be seen all around but sea and sky, and sea and sky.

My bride, when she saw that, fell into my arms in a swoon; and the cruel captain and half-a-dozen of his men urged by his command, fell upon me, and tore her [241] from me, and cast me into the sea.

“O Holy Virgin of Carmel,” I cried, “and thou S. Anthony of Padua, and Santa Barbara the glorious, and thou my guardian angel, pray for me now, that I perish not in this dire distress!”

As I uttered this petition, I felt a plank of wood strike against my breast; and on it I skimmed the waters all night, and by the first streak of dawn merciful Heaven commanded the waves to throw me upon a soft sandy shore. I could not refrain from kissing the ground which brought me safety; and as I rose up again, I beheld a holy hermit coming towards me, who led me to a little hut, where every day he brought me a basket of sufficient food.

At the end of six months, the hermit came to me very early one morning, and bid me go stand upon the shore, for there a vessel awaited me in which my passage-money was paid.

At the shore I found the vessel, and embarked as the hermit had directed me, not knowing whither we were bound.

At last, after six months’ sailing, we came opposite the coast of Ireland, and as we drew near shore, “Friends,” said the captain, “it is necessary that this letter and this folded paper be taken to the illustrious King of Ireland; which of you will undertake the charge?” [242]

The crew answered, “*Señor*, let the Venetian take them.”

And I, having no aim before me, cheerfully undertook the commission; and springing on shore, went straight to the royal palace, where I found myself in presence of Cæsar’s majesty, into whose august hands I delivered the folded paper.

This having opened, he read aloud these words:—“Illustrious Lord! most powerful King of Ireland, the bearer of this letter is a physician of great renown; the sickness of thy daughter, which none can cure, shall flee away at the very sight of him.”

Then I was troubled, and would have explained to the King how I was no physician, and the way in which the lot had fallen upon me to bring the letter, which might equally have fallen on the most ignorant sea-boy aboard; and in truth I knew no more of medicaments than the lowest sea-boy of them all.

But the King was overjoyed at the prospect of the healing of his daughter, and would listen to no explanations. And in proportion as he manifested his joy, my dismay increased, for I feared his anger when the undeception came.

Meantime, at his command, I was ushered into a vast hall, where were assembled a thousand lords. But, gentle reader, you will well believe me, it was not upon one of them I looked, for at first entering my eye lighted upon a casket covered with [243] emeralds and brilliants which I had given to my beloved bride on the day of our espousals.

I threw myself upon it, crying, “Beautiful Isabela! Ah! where art thou? Where art thou mourning over my grief, as I mourn over thine?”

She, who lay sunk down in the depths of her white couch, at hearing these words darted up from it, and flinging her arms round me, embraced me.

I knew her as our lips met; and full of a thousand joys, we sat talking over the past, forgetful of all present.

And first, I asked what had become of the wicked captain.

“Oh, he!” she said, “when I told my father what he had done, he sent and had him put to death.

“And now,” she continued, “did I not tell you that time would reveal to you all about my history? For now that you have seen who and where I am, there is little left to tell. While I was yet little more than a child, my father would have married me against my inclination to a prince of Scotland; and I, knowing his intention, went out from the palace in the night, disguised, upon a swift mare, and when I had ridden a long way, I came to the sea-coast. I found a ship into which, thoughtless child, I sought refuge, only caring to get away from the prince of Scotland. [244]

“But they were corsairs who manned the vessel; and they carried me off with them to Tunis, where you found me, and set me free from that terrible suffering.”

While we were talking, the king came up; and as I was yet musing on the marvellous direction of Providence, by which the lot had fallen on me, rather than another, to come on the embassage to the palace, without which I had been like never again to have met my bride, it fell into my mind that I had yet the letter to give to his Majesty, which having reached to him, he read thus aloud:—

“That I rest in holy ground, my soul at peace, is due to thee; therefore, when the perfidious captain threw thee into the deep sea, I was there; I provided the plank which carried thee to shore; I was the hermit that received and nourished thee; I was captain of the ship that brought thee to Ireland. And now live long with thy good spouse, and rest after many misfortunes, even as I rest in the eternal habitations.”

Then I knew that it was the soul of him I buried at Tunis that had thus befriended me.

Not very long after this the king died, and all the people acclaimed me as their sovereign, where I have been reigning ever since, full of happiness and glory. [245]

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1 Though neither of the persons in this piece are Spanish, nor the scene laid in the Peninsula, it is thoroughly Spanish in character, and the subject of one or two popular ballads, and several dramas, by the best authors. ↑

2 Dark green (*lit.* black-green). ↑

3 A small coasting-boat, carrying only a boom sail. ↑

4 A word borrowed from the Turkish, to signify a dungeon, and used when speaking of a Turkish prison. ↑

5 Moorish palace. ↑

6 A Spanish game, forming a sort of mock tournament, the combatants being armed with canes instead of lances. ↑

7 A Spanish game, consisting in pelting each other with *alcancías*, or round earthen pots, in which flowers and other things were enclosed before they were baked (in the sun), and which fell out when broken against the shield of those at whom they were thrown. I do not know if these games were also in use in Venice, or if their introduction here is a vulgar error. ↑

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EL CONDE FERNAN GONZALEZ.

Conde Fernan Gonzalez was a bold lance. Restless as brave; when not engaged in chasing the Moors, he kept his appetite for noble exploits whetted with the dangers of the chase.

One day, the furious course of a wild boar, and his own impetuosity in the pursuit, led him far away from his companions, and the hills and leafy oaks of Lara soon hid him from sight. On went the boar, and on went the *Conde* after him, till, in the thickest of the forest, the brute took refuge in a hermit's cell long deserted and forgotten, and overgrown with ivy. The trees grew so close round the spot, that the horse could not go through for the low interlacing branches, so Gonzalez dismounted, taking his sword in his hand, and wrapping his cloak round his arm by way of shield[1]. Cutting his way through to the low doorway, he found the boar [246]
lying panting at the foot of a little altar which was there.

The good Count would not hurt the animal under such circumstances, so he put up his sword into the sheath, and, before he turned to go, knelt to offer up a prayer upon the sacred spot.

Suddenly, as he knelt, there appeared before him a vision of the former inhabitant of the place. He was a venerable man, dressed in white, with bald head and a long grey beard, his feet were bare and he leant upon a crook.

"Good *Conde* Fernan Gonzales," he said, "Behold, the King Almanzor[2] is even now preparing to come out to meet thee. Now, go out and give him battle, and be of good heart; for though thou shalt be badly wounded, and the infidels shall spill much of thy blood, yet shall a hundred of them fall for one of thine. God guard thee, *Conde*, and that which thou shalt do this day shall resound throughout all Spain. But this sign must come to pass first; and when it is fulfilled do not lose courage, for all that are with thee shall be stricken with fear and ready to flee away; but only stand thou fast, and the day shall be given thee. After that shall come days of peace; and a good wife shall be given thee, who shall be called Sancha. And now return to Lara, for thy people are seeking thee with fear and [247]
anxiety; and when these things come to pass, remember the hermit who foretold them."

Then, without answering him a word, the good Count rose from his knees, and, mounting his horse, rode back to Lara. There he found his people, all running hither and thither in search of him. But he, without telling them what had befallen, ranged them in order of battle, and went out to meet King Almanzor.

Thus they went their way, and sure enough they were none too soon; for even as the hermit had said, King Almanzor was on his way to meet him.

When the followers of Gonzalez saw the host that was marching towards them, they were stricken with fear, for they were but a handful. But Gonzalez, seeing their disorder, turned and said to them, "It is a shame, noble Castilian knights, to flee at sight of an infidel host; for who is there that can stand against our banner and our arms? At them! my friends, at them! Let there be not one of us wanting!"

With that he set spurs to his charger, and rode into the midst of the Moors; and he did so valiantly, that all his followers dashed into them with like impetuosity, and none could stand before them; and for one of them that was slain, a hundred of the infidels lay stretched upon the ground. But the good *Conde* was wounded, and his blood was poured out upon the ground; yet they pushed their way into the camp, [248]
where they found much precious spoil.

And when they divided the treasure, Gonzalez remembered the hermit, and set aside a portion of his share; and with it he built the church of San Pedro de Arlanza. [249]

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1 A common practice of Spaniards, even in street fights, to the present day. ↑

2 A formidable leader of the Moors in Spain of the tenth and eleventh centuries. ↑

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THE FIRST TUNNY FISHING.

There was once a fisherman named Pepe; he was very good, and very poor. He never went out to fish without first kneeling down and asking a blessing on his labours; he never lost his time in drinking-bouts; he brought his children up to be as honest and industrious as himself; yet nothing prospered with him. He toiled the livelong day, and often far into the night, yet he could scarcely earn enough to keep his family above want. If ever there was a storm, it was sure to be Pepe's boat that would be swamped. And if ever there was a rich shoal of fish came within his ordinary fishing-ground, it would be sure to happen when he was ill, or his gear was out of order, or when, for some reason, he could not avail himself of the blessing.

What was most remarkable was, that under all this misfortune Pepe was always cheerful. As the beautiful Spanish proverb says, he was like the sandal-wood, perfuming the axe which strikes it low[1]. He not only never complained, and [250] continued at his toil steadily day by day, but he was always praising God for what He had given him—his wife, his children, his humble hut, his strong arms. "Put your trust in God, and your feet diligently along the road[2];" so he used to say, and so he used to act.

One day he had gone out as usual, and, as often happened, had taken nothing. It was no use going back with an empty bag; he persevered another day, and another, though he had nothing but a loaf to live on. The sun above was like a furnace, the sea below like a lake of fire. Pepe crept under the shadow of his sails, and was so exhausted with heat and hunger that he fell into a swoon.

He saw himself lying at the bottom of his boat, but not alone. There was One lying there also, who slept too. His raiment glistened, and a light of glory surrounded Him, which paled that of the blazing sun. By and by the sun went down, and it seemed that night came on, but He was still there; and the wind rose, and Pepe's little boat was tossed and buffeted, and Pepe was ready to cry out with alarm. Then he thought, "While He is here, no harm can come; I will keep His slumber sacred." So he looked out on the fury of the storm, and waited. Then that shining One arose and waved His hands abroad towards the winds, and there came a [251] sweet melody from His mouth, which said, "Peace! peace!" Then suddenly all was still and bright again, and the soft breeze echoed back the music of "Peace! peace!" Then Pepe, when he saw what He had done, fell on his knees before Him, and said, "Lord, as Thou hast done this, send me now a draft of fishes, that my net may be full." Then the Bright One stretched out His hands over the sea; and there rose out of the rippling waves great handsome fishes such as Pepe had never seen the like. They were of the height of a man in length, and their skin shone like silver interwoven with many colours, and their fins of gold. Docile at His gesture, they rose gently over the side of the boat, and laid them obedient at His feet. One by one, on they came till—appalling sight!—the boat began to sink under their priceless weight.

For one moment Pepe's heart almost fainted within him at seeing the rich prize sink away again just as it was within grasp, and with it his boat, his tackle, all that he had to call his own! But his eye rested on the Bright One who stood there, and his faith and confidence returned. He observed that some folds of His glistening mantle, as it hung loosely from His shoulders, floated on the waves which were now meeting over the place where he stood. Confident that it would bear him up, [252] Pepe stepped on to it, as on to dry land, while all his earthly treasure sunk out of sight.

Then Pepe woke. The sun had nearly set; a light breeze was gently carrying off the superfluous heat of the day; but his bark was empty, no Bright One sat in it, no beautiful fish lay there. Pepe listlessly looked over the side of his boat; the influence of his dream was yet upon him, and he could not restrain a look after his sunken prize. What was that? Something large and shining swam under his boat, surely! Hastily Pepe detached a little lamp which always burnt under a cross hung on the mast, and looked down into the clear blue waters, when lo! as if attracted by the light, the shining fish turned their small bright eyes towards it, as if they took the unwonted light for the rising sun, and swam straight at it almost within arm's length. Pepe was now at no loss what to do. Taking a large hook which lay in the bottom of his boat, he lashed it firmly to a long spar, and then hanging the lamp over the side of the boat, he prepared to seize the finny prey with his improvised harpoon. The lamp attracted them as before, and now came the

struggle. Pepe was a small man, and the first fish he tackled was a foot taller than himself and well-nigh pulled him over the side of his boat. Pepe was glad enough [253]
to let him go, even at the cost of his weapon, which the fish carried down into the deep with him. Pepe was, as you know by now, one who never lost heart; he pulled out his *narvaja* (or long-bladed knife with a cross-hilt), and tied it to another long piece of wood. Pepe was gaining experience; this time he selected a smaller antagonist, and great was his joy when, after a brief encounter, he landed him safely in the bottom of the boat. Pepe was not avaricious, more anxious to share the good news with his family than to obtain a large haul, he only waited to take one moderate-sized fish more, and then he was off to his home.

Great was the joy in the village next morning, as the news of the new source of industry spread. Some were frightened, and said there must be witchcraft in it; but when they saw the trade prosper, they were glad enough to take it as the good gift of God, and from that time to this the Tunny fishery has never failed to enrich the dwellers on all the shores of the Mediterranean. [254]

1 Como el sándalo que perfuma el hacha que le hiere. ↑

2 La confianza en Dios y los pies en la calle. ↑

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“WHERE ONE CAN DINE, TWO CAN DINE[1].”

In the days when our Lord walked on earth, it happened that one night He and St. Peter found themselves far from any city or village, on a bleak and desolate plain. Weary and footsore, it was with great delight St. Peter descried at last a light from a woodman’s cot. “Lord, let us rest here, let us pass the night under this shelter,” said St. Peter.

They knocked at the woodman’s door; he was a good-hearted old man, and he welcomed the belated travellers with no grudging greeting. He heaped up the dry fagots and made the hut shine like a gilded palace with that brilliant blaze which no wood throws out like that of the olive-root; and such humble fare as he had he set before them without stint.

The bleak wind moaned without, through the lofty *alcornóques*[2], and rattled the ill- [255]
fitting door. But presently, above the moaning of the wind and the clatter of the planks, they heard a hand knocking outside. The woodman opened, and was rather taken aback to find two more wayfarers at the door. “Never mind,” said St. Peter, “it’s only some of our people, it’s all right, ‘Where one can dine, two can dine.’” A little embarrassed, the woodman scratched his head, as he thought of the slenderness of his stores, but made no opposition, and the strangers passed in. The wind moaned on, and another knocking came. The woodman opened, and found two more guests standing without. St. Peter, who had fancied he heard the soft voice of St. John murmuring a favourite canticle as he passed, rose to see who it was, and soon recognized the waving hair of gold of the youngest Apostle. “All right,” said St. Peter, “let them in, they belong to our party too, ‘Where one can dine, two can dine.’” The woodman, more and more puzzled, stood by and let them pass. He had hardly sat down when another knock was heard above the storm. With his habitual readiness, the woodman opened, and found two more strangers begging admittance. St. Peter, who seemed to have a natural aptitude for the office of doorkeeper, once more encouraged him to let them in, assuring him they all belonged to the same party; and after another knock, the number of the [256]
Apostolic college was complete.

The woodman looked wistfully at the empty table. He was the most hospitable of woodmen, and gave his last crumb without a grudge; but he was aghast at the thought that for the thirteen guests who had honoured his roof, there was not sufficient to help round; and he slunk away quite ashamed at the apparent but unavoidable stint.

Then He who first came in with St. Peter, rose and gave thanks, then broke the bread and passed it round, and called on the woodman to come and take his place among them. With fear and trembling the woodman sat down, and with fear and trembling he saw his few barley-loaves and his few grapes and fruits pass round and round till all were filled, and there remained over and above to them that had eaten a larger provision than he had ever seen under his roof before; but he durst not ask *who* was his guest, knowing it must be the Lord.

Then they lay down and slept, each wrapped in his travelling mantle, and in the

blaze of the olive-root fire. In the morning when they rose to depart, the woodman, alarmed at what he had seen the night before, durst not ask them whither they went, but let them depart in silence. St. Peter, however, remained behind, and after thanking him for his hospitality, told him to ask what boon he would, and he would grant it. The woodman was a man of few wants, and after he had thought a minute, he answered that he was content with his humble lot; he did not want it changed. His only amusement was now and then a game at cards, when the season of wood-felling or any other chance brought an accession of companions to his hut for a few nights; and it would be a pleasure if he might always win whenever he played. [257]

St. Peter looked grave; he did not much like giving an encouragement to card-playing; but then he considered the poor fellow's irreproachable character, his life of privations, and moreover his own unconditioned promise to grant his request, and finally, that each success, while it would do no harm to the well-regulated old man, would serve as a discouragement to all the other players; so he ended by giving his consent, only reserving one condition, that he should never play for stakes sufficiently high to injure his companions; and then hasted on to join the rest of his party, who had made some way while he was parleying.

"'Fortune is certainly for those to whom she comes,'" moralized the woodman when he was left alone, "'and not for those who seek her[3].' How many are there who would have given their ears for such a chance as I have had to-day; and it is given to me, who, being already gifted with content, want for nothing!" [258]

Time passed on, and the woodman, being a just man, never abused the favour he had received, which however served, by the satisfaction which success always confers, to cheer his solitary life. At last the time came when the measure of his days was full; and resigning his spirit to the care of his Lord, it was carried by his angel to the realms above.

Now, all through his life it had rankled in his mind that he might have made a better and less selfish use of the gift St. Peter had bestowed on him, when now, for the first time, it occurred to him how to apply it. Then he turned to his angel, and begged him to stop on his way, at the bedside of the first poor dying man they passed whose soul was most in danger of being lost. The angel, who descried some charitable design in the request, bore him to a room in a great city where an *escribano*[4] lay at the last gasp. The demon of avarice sat on his pillow, straining to clutch the passing soul, while his young son and a clergyman knelt beside him, entreating him to be reconciled to God. "Caramba!" exclaimed the woodman, "surely, our Lord died for all, without even excluding *escribanos*!" As the good angel hovered over the bed, a gentle sleep fell on the dying man, and the demon relaxed his watch. [259]

"Come, now," said the woodman, "you can't do any thing while the man's asleep, let's have a game at cards to wile away the time." "Agreed," said the demon, for cards being invented by his crew, he thought himself safe to win; "but how shall we manage about the stakes? You see you've had to leave your pocket behind you, so how will you pay me?" "I'll stake you something better than money," replied the woodman. "What say you to staking my soul, which is on its way to glory, against this *escribano's* soul, of which at best you are only three parts sure?" "All right," said the demon, who thought it one of the best chances he had ever had.

The woodman let him cut and shuffle and play what tricks he liked with the pack, secure of his success; and in less than half an hour his triumph was secure. The demon could not believe his eyes, but could not, either, deny his defeat; so, putting his tail between his legs, he laid his ears back[5] and disappeared through the floor, quite ashamed of himself.

While this was going on, the *escribano* had awoke from his refreshing sleep; freed from the solicitations of the demon of avarice, he no longer refused the ministrations of the minister of the Church, but had expressed his contrition for the sins of the past, and was ready to depart in peace with God and all the world. [260]

When the woodman arrived at the gate of Paradise, accompanied by the soul of the *escribano*, St. Peter called out, "Who goes there?" "I, of the hut on the bleak moor," replied the woodman.

"Yes, you I know," replied St. Peter; "but you don't come alone—who is that black soul with you?"

"No, Señor, I don't come alone, because I thought God loved to see men in good fellowship. This poor soul is only black because, being an *escribano*, some of his ink has stuck to him."

"There's no admittance here for *escribanos*," replied St. Peter, "so creep in alone."

“Nay, Señor; but I said not so when you came to my hut on the bleak moor and brought other twelve with you. Doesn’t ‘Where one can dine, two can dine,’ hold good here also?”

St. Peter could not say nay, so he turned his back while the woodman took up the soul of the *escribano* on his shoulders and crept in under the shade of the eternal groves. [261]

1 “Un convidado convida a ciento.” ↑

2 Cork-trees. ↑

3 “La fortuna es por quien la encuentra y no por quien la busca.” ↑

4 A kind of notary or attorney, who is spoken of in the popular language of Spain with as much abhorrence as the “publican” in the Gospel. ↑

5 *Agachó las orejas*—a metaphor which readily suggests itself in a country where donkeys and mules are so much in use. ↑

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HORMESINDA.

At the period of the Moors’ most complete dominion over Spain, Pelayo, the noble scion of her ancient kings, stood almost alone in the defence of his country. Undismayed by the misfortunes of his race and people, or by the oppressive rigours of the conquerors, he never tired of rousing his brethren to a sense of their shameful condition, and stirring them up to the desire of again restoring their religion and the throne of their native rulers.

Meantime, his sister Hormesinda, no less ardent and patriotic, but weaker and more short-sighted, had thought to benefit her people by sealing a compromise with the invaders. Forgetful of the religious laws which forbid such a union, she married Munuza, one of the Moorish chiefs who reigned at Gijon, and for a few years imagined she had effected wonders because she had induced the conqueror to mitigate his oppressions.

Pelayo, however, was almost more distressed at the contamination of his sister, married to an unbeliever, than by the bondage of his fellow-countrymen; and being on the point of leading the people he had collected to an attack on the Moorish Alcázar, he first obtained an interview with her, within the king’s private apartments, with the view of inducing her to abandon her infidel lord. [262]

Hormesinda, however, had chosen her path, and could not now escape its leadings; the interview was both stormy and touching. Pelayo, unflinching in his morality and patriotism, could find nothing to say to her but words of reproach. And Hormesinda could only urge, that though she might have been wrong in marrying the Moor, yet, now her word, and life, and love were pledged to him, she could not leave him.

Munuza despised the Christians, and so Pelayo had no difficulty in gaining access to Hormesinda accompanied by the venerable Veremundo, his father; but a Jew in Munuza’s service having betrayed the information that he had no less a person than Pelayo himself in his power, he ordered him to be captured and thrown into a dismal dungeon called a *mazmorra*.

No sooner did Munuza know that he had nothing to fear from Pelayo, than it became evident his moderation towards the Christians had been dictated less by Hormesinda’s representations than by dread of Pelayo’s reprisals, for he now began to add to the burdens of the conquered, without mercy. To crown all, he issued a decree by which all who would not make themselves Mohammedans were declared to be slaves. [263]

This measure completed the indignation of the Christians; and when it became known where Pelayo was held in durance, it needed but little urging of Leandro, his brother, to lead the outraged population to the assault of the Alcázar of Gijon.

The impetuosity of the despairing population was irresistible. Munuza, inclined to despise them at first, found himself surrounded before he was aware, and sallied out with his reserve to give life to his troops and repel the insurgents. He had no sooner left the precincts of the palace than Hormesinda took advantage of the circumstance to set free her brother, who was thus enabled to show himself at the head of his people like a miraculous apparition, inspiring them with courage to drive all before them.

Munuza, obliged to escape for his life, re-entered the Alcázar, where Hormesinda awaited him with feminine tenderness, desirous only to make a bulwark of her body between him and Pelayo's fury. Munuza, however, had doubtless courage, though it was the courage of an infidel; and not only refused to owe his life to the protection of a woman, but recognizing that it was her hand alone could have set [264] his captive free, stabbed her and himself just in time to die at the entering feet of Pelayo and his victorious host.

This victory of the Christian arms was the first-fruits of many others, which, hardly fought through succeeding centuries, restored at last the whole of Spain to Christendom. [265]

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FILIAL LOVE BEFORE ALL.

Among the countless romantic chronicles of heroism which form the basis of the popular literature of Spain, there are none more multiplied or more interesting than those relating to the Cid Don Rodrigo. His valorous services against the Moorish oppressors of his country were never forgotten by its grateful people; and every campaign, every act of his life became the theme of a chronicle or a ballad. It is scarcely remarkable that one so noted for his dauntless demeanour through life should have been a good and dutiful son in his youth; nor that one of his most celebrated deeds was prompted by the dictates of filial duty.

His father, Don Diego Lainez, was one of the most valiant knights of King Fernando of Castille. The king valued the old man, and loved to distinguish him with his special favour; but when he chose him for the governor of the young prince his son, he did it not so much to secure him the wisest counsellor of his [266] kingdom as to honour the old man before his people.

Now at King Fernando's court there was a noble, the Conde Lozano, as valiant and celebrated as Don Diego, but far from possessing his virtues.

Conde Lozano no sooner heard of Don Diego's elevation than his heart was filled with rage and envy, which blinded his reason. Without stopping to consider the folly and wickedness of the action, he hastened to meet the venerable Don Diego, and loaded him with vituperation. Don Diego, with Christian moderation, strove to appease him.

Conde Lozano had a daughter who had all her life been the playmate of Don Diego's son Rodrigo. Nothing could be more devoted than the love of the two children for each other; and their union had been long looked upon by both as only waiting their coming of due age for its celebration.

This consideration Don Diego at last resorted to, thinking that the Conde had only to be reminded of such a tie to staunch his indignation. But it was far otherwise. "Indeed no," he replied with bitter irony, "now that his father has received such a distinguished position, the youth ought to have very different ideas. There is nothing to which he may not aspire now; and his flight shall certainly not be cut short by being tied to my poor daughter."

"It is not his father's position that can make any difference in his prospects," [267] firmly responded Don Diego; "he must win his own claim to honour by defending his country against its invaders, as all his ancestors have done."

The Conde was in that state of unreasonable humour which takes offence at every word.

"His ancestors, indeed!" he exclaimed. "Why do you remind me of them? Have they done more than I?"

"All Spain speaks of their valour."

"Then Spain unjustly lavishes on them praise due to me!"

"The king acknowledges it in the honour he has conferred on my person!"

"It is your old age, not your merit, that moved him; had he thought of merit, he would have given the office to me!"

"The best proof of where he considered merit to be, is seen by looking where he conferred the reward!"

“You mean to say, that I have *no* merit!” cried the Count, now losing all command of himself; and before Don Diego could show him that was not what he had said, he dealt him a blow on the face, and at the same time threw his sword on the ground, to show that it was a premeditated affront, and he had done it rather than afford him the satisfaction of a fair fight.

It is hardly possible in these days to realize the full extent of such an insult. In the [268]
semi-barbarous code which a life of continual warfare kept up, nothing but the life-blood of the offender could wipe out such a stain. Rodrigo came in while his father was yet chafing under the affront, which was not only regarded as personal, but as an injury to his whole house and lineage. It needed only to tell young Rodrigo, to rouse his choler, for the blood of his ancestors flowed warm within him, and young as he was, he knew that upon him devolved the duty of asserting the honour of his house. His father had no need to urge him. “You shall see, father, that I am not unworthy of the blood I inherit from you.”

“But there is one thing I have to tell you; yet one thing, which is like to cool your courage more than the fear of essaying your first arms against a tried warrior. Know that he who, with the five darts of his right hand, struck through the grey beard of my old age, was none other than——”

“Tell me but his name, and I will smite him, whoever it may be!” interposed the impetuous youth.

“He was none other than Xiména’s father!”

The shock, so unexpected, was almost more than Rodrigo could bear. The mantling colour fled from his cheek. What were now to become of all the hopes of his young life? Either he must suffer the affront to remain a stain on the honour of his house, [269]
or he must avenge it, and for ever give up Xiména. No! his father’s honour was before any other consideration. Whatever it might cost him, he must, must assert *that*. And he hesitated no longer.

The Conde Lozano received him with all his superciliousness, asked him what he wanted with him, called him a “plucky little boy,” and bid him do what his “dad” had told him, “like a good child.”

Rodrigo felt too deeply the force of his wrongs and sufferings to have any heart to bandy words with him; he had come to demand satisfaction, and, by his knightly honour, the Conde could not refuse.

So they went out into the open, and drew their swords, leaving it to God to declare the right, for indeed, “the battle is not to the strong;” and so the sword of the stripling prevailed that day, and the bold, proud man fell vanquished at his feet.

The lifeless body of her father was brought in to Xiména. Helpless and filled with horror, she hastened to the presence of the king, to demand justice, little dreaming it was her Rodrigo she was denouncing. The king, equally ignorant of Rodrigo’s part in the matter, readily promised it, and gave orders for the arrest of the offender. But in the meantime Don Diego came in to denounce himself as the instigator of the deed. In his own manly way, he detailed the provocation he had [270]
received and the prowess of his son, and offered his own grey head in reparation, if the king judged that blood so shed called for justice.

The king refused to decide a matter of so great moment without his council, and put off considering the case till it should meet; meantime Diego was suffered to go at large, on *parole* that he would not leave Burgos.

The knight immediately sought out his gallant boy, whom he found trying to make his peace with and console Xiména; but Xiména would not be comforted. Only when he told her how miserable he was, she consented to listen to him; and then he reasoned with her, and asked her, Spaniard as he was, what *could* he have done otherwise? Had he preferred his own love for her to his father’s honour, would she have smiled on him *then*? Would she not have spurned him with contempt? She could not deny that. She admired his filial love and bravery; but her loss was fresh upon her, and she could not bear to see the sword which had executed her father hanging by *his* side.

Then it was Don Diego came in; and the meeting between the aged sire, proud of his noble son, and the son who had preferred filial duty before every other consideration, was a touching one; but fate required it should be brief. Don Diego was obliged to tear himself from his arms, and advise his leaving Burgos [271]
immediately; for, he said, “prudent and pious as you are, it is well you should not be taken; for when a man is taken and placed on trial, there is at least an *idea* of guilt passes upon him. It is better, my son, to avoid even this.” And so he sent him to the wars and told him to come back conqueror of the Moors, and the brightness

of his fame should thus disperse the cloud which now hung over him.

Rodrigo was loth to part from Xiména without a sign of reconciliation; but his father urged his immediate departure, and his filial piety again prevailed. “I hear and obey,” he meekly answered, and so he went to fight the Moors.

A year and a day had passed away, and Count Lozano was quite forgotten, when all Burgos was set rejoicing at the deliverance which a young knight had effected over the Moors.

The king was keeping high court, when one day the venerable Don Diego came before him, bringing the standards which the young knight, his son Rodrigo, had taken. He told of how he had overcome hardship and peril, had cleared the roads of marauders, had fought his way up to Celin, the Moorish King of Mérida, had called him to meet him in single combat, had overcome him, and set free five Christian kings whom he held in cruel chains. [272]

The narrative was received with joyful acclamations, the trumpets sounded, and, at a sign from the king, admission was given to the youthful hero, who threw himself at the monarch’s feet. Fernando raised him in his arms, and presented him with honour to his court. His pardon was assured, and old Don Diego was radiant with joy.

Suddenly, however, there was a commotion in the assembly; Xiména demanded audience of the king. She had come to ask whether any amount of honourable service could neutralize a sentence of death incurred—and if not, why was Rodrigo treated with honour, instead of being imprisoned as a criminal?

Now, Fernando could have explained to her the motives on which he had acted—could have bid her remember how it was Conde Lozano who had called down on himself the retribution he had suffered—could have pointed out the dangers that surrounded the kingdom, and the need in which it stood of men of fearless mind, such as Rodrigo; but, with the wisdom of a Solomon, he took a line which was better than argument. “If such is your will, maiden,” he replied, “I have nothing to say. You are the only living representative of the deceased Conde: if you maintain your charge against him, it is not for me to withstand it. Guards, lead Don Rodrigo to prison!”

Don Diego, with all his fortitude, could not keep himself from falling on his son’s neck in an agony of despair. Rodrigo himself was shaken by his father’s grief. And all the nobles gave signs of compassion at the misfortune of one so young and brave. [273]

Xiména had kept herself proud and erect while the gladsome welcome had sounded in her ears as an injury to Conde Lozano’s memory. But when she saw the scene of mourning around her, despair took possession of her too, and she fell into Urraca the Infanta’s arms.

“It is because you would not take my advice, and look at him,” whispered Urraca. “Had you looked on his noble face, you never could have done it.”

“I knew it, and therefore I dared not look,” she replied.

“Look at him now,” pleaded Urraca.

The guards were leading him out, and his head was bent to the ground; but at that moment their eyes met, and both felt that he must not die.

That night he was in his prison. She could not rest in her chamber: the guard had respect for her orders, for she was an earl’s daughter, and he let her stand behind an arch where she could hear him talking with his faithful esquire.

“Think no more of Xiména,” said the esquire: “she loves you not.”

“Nay, say not so,” he answered. “Wrong her not. I know she loved me, and she could not change; therefore she loves me yet. As she was to me when I encountered the Conde, so was I to her when she denounced me to the king; and in what she has done to honour her father’s memory, she has shown her true nobility.” [274]

“It may be very grand,” said the esquire, “but it is yet hard you should have to die.”

“Hard! Of what use would life be to me if Xiména will not be mine? I have only one use for it; and if she requires it of me, it is a joy to yield it up at her behest.”

When Xiména heard him express so much devotion for her, and judge her so justly and tenderly, she could bear to hear no more, lest her tears should betray her. She withdrew to her chamber, but could not sleep; but when her tired eyelids, weary with watching, closed, there seemed to come a sweet, soft voice, as of an angel, which spoke of pardon and forgiveness, and of mercy more sweet than justice. And before her eyes there floated visions of terrible Moorish hordes encompassing her native land, spreading fire and sword over its smiling plains; and there rode out against them a single youth, clad in bright armour, and wherever he raised his flashing sword the ranks of the enemy gave way and fled before him.

And when the morning light came in, and chased these phantasms away, she rose and went to the king, and asked the liberation of him whose condemnation she had sought yesterday. [275]

Then the king saw that his stratagem had answered well, and that he had done right to trust to her woman's heart. So he ordered Rodrigo to be brought forth, and pronounced him free. And then he joined their hands and gave them to each other, and told them they were worthy of each other, for each had preferred a father's honour before the love of their own heart; and now it was his royal will that they should forget the past, and live for each other in the future. [276]

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RAGUEL;
OR,
THE JEWESS OF TOLEDO.

Alfonso VIII., King of Castille, succeeded to his throne in troublous times. His native country was overrun and subjugated by a people alien in nationality and religion, and his own particular dominions were a prey to civil dissensions, which had gathered strength during his minority. The Pope, Innocent III., seeing how he was beset, had called on other Christian nations to assist him in resisting the encroachments of the Moors; and these auxiliaries had unhappily shown themselves disorderly and rapacious, wasting the territory they had come to protect. By his prudence, Alfonso found the means to remedy all these disorders in turn. His French, German, and English allies he dismissed to their own homes without involving himself in any quarrel with them. He established tolerable order and harmony among the rival families of the nobility, and he struck a blow against the Moors which they never recovered, and which deserves to be remembered as one of the noblest achievements in the history of Christendom. After driving their hordes before him across the Sierra Morena, he gave them battle at a place called Las Navas de Tolosa, undismayed by their overpowering numbers. During the early part of the day, it had seemed impossible to resist their countless hordes. "Father," said Alfonso, turning to the Archbishop of Toledo, "here are we called upon to lay down our life for the Faith." "Nay," answered the prelate, with almost prophetic instinct, "say, rather, here are we called to establish the triumph of the Faith." The cross-bearer, filled with ardour at the words, rushed into the thickest of the fray; the Christian soldiery hastened to protect the venerated sign, and so great was the enthusiasm which Alfonso's bravery kindled, that the infidel host was entirely routed, and its commander ran away into Africa. [277]

Yet, notwithstanding his bravery and his wisdom, Alfonso, like King Solomon of old, found it a harder matter to govern himself than to govern his kingdom; and though he had vanquished his adversaries, he suffered himself to be led away by his passions. [278]

At Toledo, now a splendid ruin, then the magnificent capital of his kingdom, was a beautiful Jewish maiden, named Raguel or Rachel, for whom he conceived a strong attachment. Now the precepts alike of his religion and of his high position precluded his union with a Jewess and an obscure person, yet for all this he refused to part from her. The voice of the Archbishop, which had so notably animated his drooping spirits on the field of battle, was powerless with him now; and he warned him in vain for seven years.

Mindful of the services he had rendered them, and for which they had awarded him the appellation of "the Noble," the people bore with the scandal all these years in silence, though with averted faces; but at last, when they found him gradually more and more unmindful of his former virtues, and all his prowess forgotten that he might squander his time and his revenues on the fancies of the Jewish maiden, murmurs began to arise, and they determined to deliver their

noble king from her enchantments.

Hernan García de Castro and Alvar Fañez, two of the highest nobles of Castille, were foremost in leading the resolve of the people, and urging it on the king. They had never failed his summons in the hour of danger, they had fought bravely by his side against their country's enemies, and their virtue and valour gave weight to their words. Yet the king was so tardy in attending to them that the people lost all [279] patience.

The king was keeping his court in the sumptuous Alcázar, the palatial fortress whose ruins even yet strike the traveller with admiration. Abandoning himself to the enjoyments of the delightful spot, Raguel and he sat one day, surrounded by their favourites and flatterers. "May divine Raguel's surpassing beauty ever continue to be the aurora of Toledo, ever enamel its brilliant sunlight!" said one of their minstrels, to the accompaniment of his joyous instrument.

"May she rejoice in her surpassing beauty as many ages as there are sands of gold[1] under the limpid torrent of crystal Tagus!" responded another.

Suddenly there burst on their affrighted ears the noise of a tumultuous gathering of people. The venal minions fled. The king, still worthy of himself, rose to show himself to his people, and Raguel was left alone to hear her sentence pronounced in ominous shouts from without:—

"Muera Raguel, para que Alfonso viva!"
"Rachel must die, that Alfonso may live!"

García de Castro stood between the king and his angry people. The king called him [280] a traitor; and he knelt and laid his sword at his feet, offering willingly to receive sentence of death if he could be proved a traitor, but insisting on being heard first. He then exposed to the king the wrongs of which his people complained. He asked him of what use were all the laurels he had gathered in the earlier part of his reign, if they were to be hung up to wither out of sight.

"Corn cannot ripen if the sun withhold its rays, flowers will not flourish if the gardener neglect to water them, neither can the Castilian people prosper if their king hide himself from them." So well did the intrepid García plead the right cause, that the king, overcome by his righteous arguments, promised to be himself again, to dismiss Raguel, and live once more for his subjects.

Delighted with his promise, the people returned peaceably to their homes.

The king, however, was not so strong as he thought. He imagined he had conquered himself, and went to take leave of Raguel. But the beautiful Jewess had no idea of letting him off so easily. Decked in her most captivating attire, she came out to meet him, and with her graces and tears succeeded so well in undermining his determination, that his promise was forgotten; and, like the phœnix from its ashes, Raguel rose more powerful than ever, and more dangerous too, for now a [281] struggle had begun between her and the people—one or the other must be vanquished.

Infatuated by her entreaties, the king went so far as to place her on the throne. The indignation of the Castilians at seeing a low-born Jewess on the ancient seat of their monarchs, can scarcely be conceived; but it overflowed all bounds, when decree after decree went forth, heaping taxes on the Christian population and exemptions on the Jews—when proscriptions and executions of the highest in the land were threatened, and the noble García himself was sent into exile.

In this last step Raguel had outwitted herself. García gone, there was no one to act as moderator of the people. They rose in mass and stormed the palace; assembling in the basilica, they solemnly pronounced her worthy of death as an enemy of their king and country, and with desperate resolve drew their swords and turned to execute their award on the spot.

The king was absent on a hunting expedition; but García, who had heard of the new rising of the people, risked his life by infringing the sentence of banishment in order to save the life of his persecutor.

He succeeded in reaching her before the people had made their way into her apartment, and telling her of her danger, urged her to fly. But, loth to lose her high position, she refused, calling on her guards to defend her. The Castilian [282] guards, however, refused to draw on their countrymen in defence of a Jewess. Meantime the people streamed in, and rushed upon her.

"Stay," said García, "stain not the bright steel of your Toledan blades with blood which belongs only to the sword of the executioner."

And his voice acted for a moment like the spell upon them.

But they were determined not again to leave it in her power to trample on their ancient institutions, and once more turned to slay her.

Then Alvar Fañez drew from his hiding-place behind the throne, a trembling Jew, who had been Raguel's minister in her elevation, but had not the courage to defend her now, and compelled him to be her executioner.

The king, hastily recalled from the chase, arrived but in time to see her expire. In the first burst of grief and fury he would have steeped his sword deep in the blood of his subjects; but once more the good García interposed, and by his temperate counsels recalled him to reason. When the violent throbbing of his agony had subsided, he acknowledged that his people had acted as a wise surgeon, that he alone had been in fault, that his punishment was deserved, and once more he was hailed as

ALFONSO EL NOBLE. [283]

1 The soil of the bed of the Tagus is a yellow sand, which gives its water rather a muddy appearance. Poets, however, see things with a different eye from ordinary mortals, and have turned it to gold in their verses: "el dorado Tajo," the golden Tagus, is their common appellation for it. ↑

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DON JAIME DE ARAGON.

The good King of Aragon whom men call Jaime, was wondrous brave. Day and night he bethought him by what new means he could increase the glory of the Christian faith, and lay low the power of the usurping Moor.

He called together the nobles of every degree belonging to his kingdom, the archbishops and prelates, and all the orders of knights, and summoned them to meet him in his good town of Zaragoza on a certain day.

When they had all come together, he spoke thus to them:—"My soul is greatly grieved that our fair Island of Mallorca[1] should remain in the hand of the Moor; the voice of our Divine religion is silenced, and Al Korán is openly taught. The noble seaport of Valencia, too, so rich and flourishing, which the Cid won back for us once, to our shame is now retaken by the infidel. Now I have resolved that I will spare nothing, not even my own life, to recover these two strongholds. For I trust [284] in the protection of Christ, that He will give us the victory according to our prayers. To this end, then, I have called you together, to tell you this my resolve, and to seek your counsel as to the means of compassing it."

To which they all responded with a shout of confident joy:—"Be it done in the Name of God, that which his Highness desires; for in an undertaking so honourable our goods and our lives shall not fail him!"

The bearers of all the noble names of Aragon sent forth their sons that day; and Barcelona by the sea welcomed them, and gave them all provisions for the undertaking with no measured hand. She found them ships too to take over their arms and men. And when the king found all was ready and nothing wanting, he took his place on the ship, and his nobles followed round him. At break of day next morning the trumpet gave a blast, and so they set sail, that gallant host, with shouts and tears of joy, all the brave colours waving which they had borne in many a fight. The cross they bore aloft, and the Virgin Mary's image, and that, too, of St. George, who always watched over Aragon.

Proudly they skimmed the water, the oars of the galleys cut the waves, and the white sails cut the air; for they knew that there gazed upon them, from out Monjuy [285] so high, the ladies fair they had left behind, praying for victory.

Now as they neared Mallorca, the Moors were all amazed; to their shores they rushed in sudden haste, striving vainly to drive back the Christian host. So a bloody fight ensued; but the Christians won the day; and with the help of God the cross was raised once more on all the islands near.

They then came back by Valencia, laid siege to its strong walls; nor could its fortifications stand before their impetuous onset. So good King Jaime of Aragon came home covered with glory and renown. [286]

[1] Majorca. ↑

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DON ALONSO DE AGUILAR.

The hosts of King Don Ferdinand were gathered under his banner to go out and recover Granada from the dominion of the Moors. All the nobles of Spain were there in their strong shining armour of wrought steel inlaid with gold. It was St. Michael's day in the morning, and the king called the principal of them into his tent, and thus said to them:—"Who will be the knight who, to show his prowess and to cover his name with glory in succeeding generations, will go up for me to the Snowy Sierra[1]."

But the nobles looked one on the other, and no one said "I will;" for if it was a perilous adventure to go, the return was utterly uncertain. And for the fear that filled them, you could see their very beards tremble.

Then arose Don Alonso, who was called "of Aguilar," and said, "Good King, I will go. This enterprise is such as I seek. I have no desire in life but to die defending [287] my country from the infidel folk; and may Christ give me the mastery!"

So he put on his armour before the king—his armour all damascened with gold, and bestrode his noble steed, and slung his broad shield on his arm, and took in his hand a stout lance with a sharp iron head. Right valiant he looked in his might as he rode at the head of his troop.

And they crossed the Snowy Sierra and soon came in sight of the Moors. And the Moors poured down upon them so closely that they were well-nigh overwhelmed by numbers. Then the Christian ranks gave way, and began to fly from the face of the Moor.

Now, when brave Don Alonso saw them give way, he called to them with a mighty voice and said, "Turn! *caballeros*, turn! Turn back to the battle; for though they against us be many, a coward still is he who shows fear! Remember the mighty deeds of your old Castilian fathers. Better is it here to die in the noble profession of arms, than to crawl back to your firesides and live a dishonoured life. Thus dying you will live, for your fame shall be sung throughout Spain; for life soon comes to an end, but honour dieth never!"

At these generous words they felt their hearts come back; each seemed filled with a giant's strength, and fought till the Moors stretched him dead. [288]

Don Alonso remained the last, still brandishing his gory lance, and ever and anon charging the Moors with an impetuosity none could resist.

But when the Moors saw their heroes thus mown down, wounded and dead, with one consent they agreed to attack him on all sides at once. There he sat erect on his charger; his eye was full of fire, his shield shone bright on his arm—dented, indeed, but not pierced, and in his hand his stout, unbroken lance. But though his horse was so high, there lay round him such a heap of slain, that when the Moors came to the attack, as they climbed on the fallen bodies they found themselves raised to his level.

On they came with frightful *algazara*[2]; and, stout in each other's presence, they charged, and thrust, and charged again. The boldest ventured in front, but before they came within reach of his lance their brethren had pierced him from behind; and before he could turn to repay them, those who had been in front thrust him in the side. And they thrust his bonny horse, too; and the horse and his rider fell there, where they stood, crowning the mound of the slain. Sixteen lances had pierced Don Alonso—pierced him through and through.

But Don Alonso that day had inflicted a loss on the Moors which filled them with confusion and dismay. Then, from out their ill-guarded camp, came running a [289] Christian captive; it was she who in days gone by had brought up the young Don Alonso.

Guided by the instinct of a mother, she at once descried his form as it lay crowning the heap of the victims of his prowess.

So she fell on his neck and wept, and wept till she swooned away, and wept when she woke again. And she stroked his long, dark hair, and his cheek that was ashy pale; and his eyes, that could never more see her, she closed with a mother's care.

Then she wrung her fair, white hands, and she raised her cry to God; and her cry must have pierced the clouds as it pierced the hearts of men.

“Don Alonso! my Alonso!” she cried. “Now, God receive thy soul; for the cruel Moors have killed thee, the Moors of Alpujarra! And now all Spain shall mourn thee, mourn thee as a mother mourns, lamenting thine early death! And King Ferdinand shall mourn thee, for he has never a knight like thee! Aguilar and Montilla shall mourn thee, for they’ll ne’er have a lord like thee! And all the host shall mourn thee, for not one has a comrade like thee! But the angels in heaven mourn *not*, for my boy is among them with joy; for he died resisting the pagans who devoured his country fair.”

So she tried, but in vain, to smile, for her mother’s heart was weak; and in the effort it broke, and she fell icy cold at his feet. [290]

Now an ancient Moor came by, whose beard was long and grey; and she lay so helpless there, he saw he had nothing to fear, so he drew his scimitar, and with stealthy steps crept near and severed her dying head, holding it up by the long dark hair.

By the long dark hair he bore it, to lay at the feet of the king. Now the Moorish king rejoiced when he knew Don Alonso was dead, Don Alonso of Aguilar; so he told them to take his body, and that of his mother as well, and bear to Don Fernando, the king.

And Don Fernando said, “Good service this day was done by Alonso of Aguilar; and though by the Moors he has died, his memory yet shall live; his deeds shall clothe every knight, in the fancy of every Moor, with power to equal the prowess of Alonso of Aguilar.” [291]

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1 *La Sierra Nevada* traverses the centre of Granada. ↑

2 The noise and tumult of the Moors’ war-cry. ↑

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THE BLACK CHARGER OF HERNANDO.

Hernando was a poor knight, who had spent all in the service of his country. He had nothing to call his own but his stout armour, his high-couraged black charger, and his bold lance; and with these he was ever in the thickest of the fray against the Moors. But at last his turn came; and in return for the losses he had caused them, the Moors contrived to surround and slay him.

Now, when his black charger knew that his master was wounded to death, like a valiant steed true to his Christian master, he turned and bore him out of the fight to a lonely dell, where a pious hermit might minister the last consolations of religion to his parting soul. But a sordid Moor, seeing the helpless dying man thus borne along, determined to possess himself of his stout armour and his bold black charger; he followed with fruitless attempts to arrest the gallant beast until it pleased him to stop before the hermit’s cell, where it waited patiently while they [292] lifted the sacred burden down—the hermit and the Moor together; for the Moor desired to possess himself of the outer shell of his armour, and the hermit, the inner shell, namely, his body, that the kernel, that is his soul, might go up holy and clean before God. Then his soul had scarcely passed away, when the Moor stripped him of his armour, and packed it all safely on the back of the black charger, and prepared to lead him home, for he was afraid himself to mount him. But the black charger no sooner perceived his dear master’s remains safe in the care of the hermit, to bury them, and his armour safe in his own, than he started off at his wildest speed, leaving the Moor who had ventured to lay his infidel hands on the reins, to measure his length in the dust. And on and on he went, nor stopped till he reached Hernando’s hillside home.

Doña Teresa, his wife, had never ceased every day to look out for her Hernando’s return. And when she saw his black charger, bearing his empty armour, she knew at once all that had come to pass; and like a noble Christian spouse, she had the strength to thank God that her Hernando had spent his life in the service of his religion and his country. Then she took his precious armour and laid it safely by, and she caressed the gallant black charger, and led him away to his fresh-littered [293] stall.

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Then every day she tried the armour on the young Hernando, and made him bestride the black charger, that he might be a valiant slayer of Moors like his father.

Now young Hernando was slight, and young Hernando was pale. And he shrank from the cold, hard armour, and the tall, snorting steed. But his mother Teresa was brave, brave as became a Christian spouse, and she listened not to his fears; but bade him be of good heart, and put his trust in Christ.

And at last the day came when she bade him go forth and do battle to the Moors. Young Hernando's heart beat high, for his spirit indeed was willing; and he burned to add his name to the long traditions of prowess which his mother told him of his house. But his arm was all untried, and he shrank from the thought of pain, for the young tender flesh was weak. But he would not belie his mother, so he crossed the bold black charger; and the noble charger snorted, when he felt that once more he bore a Christian to the battle. By night they travelled on; and by day they slept in the shade. In the morning, when the sun began to dawn, they rose, and set out on their way; and as they crossed a plain, young Hernando saw a tall Moor coming towards them. And his heart smote him for fear; and he would gladly have turned [294] out of the way. But he bethought him it became not a Christian to shrink away before a Moor; so he nerved him with what courage he might, and rode on steadily along his way.

Now, when the bold black charger scented the Pagan hound, he snorted, and shook his mane, and darted to the encounter. So young Hernando was borne along, and found himself face to face with his foe. Then his father's shield rose to protect him; and the lance lifted up his arm; and the black charger rode at the Moor; and the lance cast him down from his seat. Then the sword leaped from its scabbard, and planting itself in young Hernando's grasp, struck off the pagan's head.

So Hernando tied the head to his saddle and bound the body upon its mule. Thus he rode on to the town—to the town of Royal Burgos. And when the people saw him bestriding the bold black charger, the grisly head hanging from his saddle, and the headless body following behind, bound fast to the African mule, they cried,

“All hail to the victor! All hail to young Hernando, who conquered the pagan Moor!”

And so they brought him to the king, and his ghastly burden with him, and the headless rider behind. And the king rose and embraced him, and the queen held her fair white hand and gave it the youth to kiss. And she said, “A youth so comely [295] and valiant should have armour rich and bright, and a steed with a shining coat.” So she called a page to bring a suit of polished steel, and a horse from the royal stables, and present them to young Hernando. Then they took off his ancient armour and laid it on the old black charger, and Hernando donned the new, and sprang into the saddle of the horse from the royal stall.

Now the bold black charger was grieved to be thus set aside, so he snorted and turned his head and rode back to Doña Teresa. When Doña Teresa saw him ride back with the empty armour, she thought that her son was dead, and rejoiced as a Christian mother, that the Moors had sent him to glory. So she laid up the ancient armour, and caressed the bold black charger, and led him to his fresh-littered stall.

Young Hernando meantime feared, as he sat on the fiery steed; for in his far-off hillside home he had but that black charger tried. Nor had he learnt to handle the weapons they gave him to bear.

But the king, who had seen him come in bearing along such goodly spoils, took him for a practised warrior, and gave him a work to do which needed a valiant heart. “Now keep this pass,” he said, “for the rocks are narrow and high, and one at a time, as the enemy comes, with your sword you will strike them down.” [296]

Young Hernando durst not say ‘Nay;’ for his spirit within him was bold, though his young tender flesh was weak. And as he watched there alone, with only the moon for guide, “Oh, had I my old black charger, and my father’s armour!” he cried. And the bold black charger felt, as he stood in his far-off stall, that his master’s son was in danger, and he snorted to get away. And Doña Teresa knew when she heard him snort and snort there was work to do far away. So she bound the armour on him, and away he fled like the wind, nor stopped till he reached Hernando.

“To me! my bold black charger! To me! ’tis yet in time! To me!” And he mounted the charger bold, in his father’s armour clad.

Then stealthily came the Moors, all creeping through the pass, and Hernando’s lance and Hernando’s sword laid them low on the ground that night. And when the king came up, Hernando sat at his post, and his prostrate foes around him.

When the king saw he had done so bravely, he would have given him a new suit of armour, and a new bright-coated steed. But Hernando said, “Good king! pray leave me my father’s armour and my father’s charger bold, for I am but a stripling, and my hand and my arm are weak, but my father’s arms and my father’s steed alone put the foe to flight.”

So the king let him have his will; and as he found him so brave and successful [297] against the Moors, he sent him to carry a message of encouragement to Don Diaz, to whom the Moors had laid siege. Now, as he came back from the errand, he was crossing the lonely plain, when anon it was covered with horsemen—Moorish horsemen, arrayed in their might. He knew that his trust was sacred, and he might not endanger the letter he bore by encountering so overpowering a host. But ‘twas vain that he tried to turn, for the bold black charger refused; but, as if he had been spurred, with his might he dashed right into the Pagan midst. The lance sprang in Hernando’s hand and pierced through the Moorish king. Then the host, dismayed, exclaimed, “This one rider alone in his strength, no mortal man is he: it is one of their Christian saints come down to scatter the Prophet’s band.” So they turned and fled apace, and on the black charger rode behind; and Hernando’s lance and Hernando’s sword laid low the straggling host.

And such fear had fallen on all the Prophet’s children that day, that on bended knee they sent to sue a truce of the Christian king. And to purchase a term of rest, they set all their captives free, and with tribute and with hostages made peace with the Christian king.

So young Hernando rode home—to his home by the steep hillside. And Doña Teresa came out to greet her boy on his gallant steed. And with her, fair Melisenda [298] walked, who a gentler greeting gave; she was his bride betrothed, and she knew that now peace was made, they would lovingly live together, in that far-off hillside home.

And they stroked the bold black charger, and led him to his fresh-littered stall. And ‘tis said that while yet the land was blighted by *one* strange[1] Moor, that bold black charger never died; but whenever the fight raged high, or the Christian host

needed aid, there he bore his rider to turn the day. But where he died or when he fell, no mortal ever knew. [299]

1 Foreign. ↑

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THE INFANTE DON HENRIQUE AND THE LIONS.

The Infante Don Henrique had a dispute with his brother, King Alfonso. And, as he wished not to fight with him, thought it most prudent to go over to Barbary. As the King of Tunis had been in great awe of his father, and was very desirous not to run any risk of a collision with the Christians, he took pains to treat Don Henrique well, and entertained him honourably for more than four years, and instructed all his people to behave to him kindly.

Mean time, Don Henrique's princely bearing won all hearts. In all games, and feats of strength and horsemanship, and trials of arms, he bore away the palm; so that all men admired him and cried, "God save him!" till at last the advisers of the King of Tunis feared that they would want next to make him their king, and they would all be under power of the Christians, and the name of the Prophet be put out. [300]

Don Henrique was so valiant, however, and so were all the Christians, his companions, that they dared not attack him openly. And the king saw the danger full well, but durst not interfere either to attack or defend him, for he was divided between love for the young prince and alarm for his own safety.

At last, an astute old Moor devised a plan which should rid them of the young prince without putting them in any danger of suffering from his resistance or the vengeance of his followers, for it should not appear that they of the Moorish sect had any thing to do with it, but it should seem a natural calamity.

The old Moor poured it into the king's ear, and the king could not but say it was well found; and, for all his love for the young prince, he could not resist taking so easy a way for ridding himself of a great danger.

The young prince, in his ingenuousness, suspected nothing. He was used to go out hunting with the king; and now that he invited him to a hunting party, he was only glad to join the gallant sport.

The Moorish king led him on, away from the rest of the party, into a wild part of the thicket, which, according to the plan of the old Moor, had been turned into a *corral*, or enclosed ground having no outlet, but so overgrown with bushes, that [301] the prince could not perceive the trap. Then the old Moor, who was on the watch, as soon as they entered the fatal precincts, gave a signal to his men, who let loose and turned in two fierce hungry lions. The prince, not at all dismayed, drew his sword, and rode right up to them. The lions cowered before his prowess, and did not attempt to attack him, so he drove them before him across the *corral*, and then he saw it was closed in and had no opening but into the den where the lions had been kept; he shut them in and made it fast, and knew now it was a snare; but the king, not daring to face him, had turned and ridden away.

The prince's heart was grieved, for he had thought the king was his friend, but he said, "I will not remain where my presence is considered a burden." The Spanish companions with him wanted him to wreak signal vengeance on the treacherous pagans, but Don Henrique said, "As I am a Christian, I shed no man's blood in personal vengeance; but neither will I leave this ungrateful land without one stroke for Christ. Now these pagans hold in bondage a multitude of Christian captives; go, tell their king that if he fears our presence, we will go, but we leave not our brethren behind."

When the king found that his plan had failed, he was filled with anger at the old man who had invented it, that he sent and cut off his head, and then he sat [302] trembling with fear at the vengeance Don Henrique might take. So, when they brought him his message, he received it with gladness, and ordered that all who had Christian slaves in their house should give them up to Don Henrique. And, as Don Henrique's galleys were not enough to contain all the multitude of captives he had saved, the king ordered others to be lent him, so that only the danger might be removed from his coast.

Then the Christian fleet set sail, and God sent them a prosperous wind; and so they came to Rome, where Don Henrique joined the banner of Charles of Anjou,

and did deeds of valour in his cause. [303]

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BLANCA THE HAUGHTY.

The Count of Tolosa had a beautiful daughter called Blanca, and he had promised her in marriage to the son of the Count of Barcelona. Both were young, and rich, and noble; and all the people from both provinces gathered together to celebrate the wedding with every testimony of interest in their happiness. But Blanca was very self-willed; she had always had every thing her own way—a noble palace in the midst of an enchanting country, plenty of servitors to do her bidding, many knights to contend for her favour; and she seemed to fancy that the whole earth and all who lived in it were made for her, and that all must conform themselves to her desires. Nothing was ever good enough to please her.

Her father had thought she would grow out of these foolish ways as she became older and wiser, and had never duly corrected her; and she, meanwhile, became more practised in them, and chose the occasion of her marriage-fête for the wildest of all her pranks. [304]

While all were seated in the great hall of the castle at the high banquet, and all lips were overflowing with praises, perhaps also with envy at her happiness, the young count, offering her a basket of rich fruits, proposed to divide with her a fine pomegranate. Blanca condescended to give him permission to do so, but the count with all his dexterity could not avoid letting one of the luscious ruby pips fall upon the table; then, as if afraid of leaving a spot before her eyes as a testimony of his awkwardness, he hastily took up the pip, and put it to his mouth.

Blanca, who had all the morning been on the look out in vain for some captious pretext on which to found a quarrel, and show off her haughty, petulant airs, immediately caught at this one, and exclaimed, she would never be bound to such a parsimonious husband; it was an act unworthy of a noble; a man who was afraid of losing the value of a pomegranate pip must be a sorry mate indeed; he would not do for *her*!

It was vain, the young count tried to pacify her by explaining how utterly false was the view she had taken. Equally vain, that her father reasoned with her on the childishness of her conduct, or that her companions pleaded in favour of the disconcerted bridegroom. Blanca would not listen to reason, and the poor young count found himself at last left alone, an object of derision, or at least of pity, to the whole assembly. [305]

He really loved Blanca, and had before this day put up with many caprices out of his affection for her; but this was not only a tax on his patience and good temper, it was an affront on his name and lineage which must not be borne. And yet he loved Blanca too much to resort to any act of hostility which might put a further barrier between them. Uncertain how to act, he went out and rode away, spurring his horse, not caring whither he went, so that he could go far away from the face of his fellow-men and muse over his grief. But all the time there ran ringing in his head,—

> “No more a noble count, I trow,
> A humble shepherd seem I now!”

though he could not think what the lines meant, yet he went on till he had got far away into a distant forest, where all was savage and wild, and where there was nothing to remind him of the scenes he had passed through. There he alighted from his good steed, and threw himself on the hard ground. The sword which he had been wont to raise so bravely against the enemies of his country clanked listlessly by his side, the sharp rocks cut his cheeks, and his noble blood flowed from the rents, while he felt them not, for his heart bled with other and deeper wounds; but all the time there ran in his head the lines,—

> “No more a noble count, I trow,
> A humble shepherd seem I now!”

After he had lain there some time, and the passion of his sorrow had so far cooled down that he began to take notice of the objects around him, he observed two milk-white doves perched lovingly side by side on the branches over his head, yet fluttering full of fear and trouble. Full of his own recent suffering, he felt singular compassion for the two frightened birds; and searching for the cause of their [306]

distress, he perceived a great hawk hovering in the air above, in ever-nearing circles, and with glaring eyes preparing to pounce on his luckless prey. The count at once understood their danger, and picking up a stone, threw it with such force and dexterous aim, that it brought down the greedy hawk dead upon the ground. The doves no sooner found themselves delivered from their pursuer, than they gave every token of gladness and delight, hopping from branch to branch, fluttering away and pursuing each other, and then again loving each other in the gentlest way.

The count could not bear to see their happiness, it reminded him of his loss; so he got up and wandered on into a dark cave where he could see nothing, and there laid him down; and the lines running in his head lulled him to sleep,—

"No more a noble count, I trow,
A humble shepherd seem I now!"

Then in his dream he saw one of the fair doves appear to him in the form of a [307]
beautiful woman; her face was of the softest pink and white, like the face of the sky at sunrise, and her eyes were so bright and lustrous that they illumined the whole cave.

"*Caballero, caballero!*" said the bright vision; "you do not recognize me, I fear; nevertheless, I am indeed one of those poor doves whose lives you saved from the wicked hawk but now; and if I and my mate live in love of each other, it is to you we owe the boon. I am come to pay the debt I owe you, and I know there is only one way in which I can do it, and that is by telling you how to get for *your* mate Blanca, for whose sake you are now so sad. I promise you that in a very little time you shall have it all your own way with her, and she shall become as humble as she now is haughty. Meanwhile, take this ring, which I have enchanted on purpose for you, and whatever you ask of it, you will find that it will do it for you."

Then the beautiful vision disappeared, and the cave immediately became dark and gloomy as before.

The moment the count woke, the memory of his vision rose up before him, and he lost no time in feeling whether he had the ring safe. There it was all right on his finger; and when he felt it, he put his confidence in the promise of the vision, and hastened to go back out of the cave and set to work. He had no sooner found his [308]
way again into daylight, than he took off his ring, and thus addressed it:—

"*Aniellico, aniellico*[1]*!* now is the time come to show your devotion to me. You know how Blanca has scorned me, and how I fear to go near her again, lest she should put some fresh affront in her wilfulness upon me, and yet I cannot bear to stay away from her. Tell me, ring, what I shall do."

"Attend, attend," answered the ring; "watch now what you see passing before your eyes."

As the ring spoke, the count saw a moor-hen scudding away across the plain, and a cock as fast as he could following after her. The hen seemed determined to have nothing to say to the cock; but the cock was so persevering that he came up to her, and made her stand still and listen to him, and then he first knocked her about a good deal, and then soothed her down, and at last they both went off together quite amicably; and the ring sang,—

"The cock o'ercomes, though somewhat rough,
So man, no less, the coy rebuff
Of woman!"

"I see," said the count, "what you mean; but I do *not* at all see how you mean me to carry out your plan." [309]

"Leave that to me," said the ring; "only do as I advise you, and according to the instructions of my lady the dove, I will give you all you wish. And now, in the first instance, you must take off all this fine armour, and all your noble dress, and put on this disguise of a shepherd; and then take this loom, as if you were going, like the poor shepherd, to weave the wool of your flock; and now come along."

Then, as they went along together, the ring told him all that he was to do, and what to say, and it had hardly completed its instructions when they arrived at the gate of the gardens of the Count of Tolosa, every now and then interrupting its discourse to sing,—

"The cock o'ercomes, though somewhat rough,
So man, no less, the coy rebuff
Of woman!"

A gruff old gardener came out to see who called; and when he saw it was only a country bumpkin of a shepherd, he was gruffer than ever, and bid him begone.

“Gardener, gardener!” said the disguised count in his most insinuating accents, “don’t you think, now, if you were to let me come in and help you, you would get through your work much more easily? You have a hard time of it, and get little rest. I am young and strong, and should soon accomplish what you have to do, and [310] then you need not turn out so early in the morning, nor sit up so late at night watching this gate.”

“*Pastorcillo, pastorcillo*[2]*!*” rejoined the old gardener, quite tamed by this appeal, “I cannot say Nay to such an offer; so come in.”

The count lost no time in obeying; and at once began fulfilling his promise, by taking the sheep out of the fold and leading them out to pasture. In doing this, he took care to direct them straight towards the windows of the palace. Arrived there, he sat down and placed his loom, and began weaving away diligently after the manner of poor shepherds, and singing the while,—

“The cock o’ercomes, though somewhat rough,
So man, no less, the coy rebuff
Of woman!”

He had not been sitting there long, before he observed a postern in the wall which separated the castle-keep from the private gardens, open. How his heart beat! Might it not be Blanca coming out for a walk? No, it was only one of her attendants, who had come to see what the shepherd was weaving.

“Tell me, *Don Villano*[3],” she cried, as she came near him, “what wondrous kind of stuff, is that you are weaving? Is it a heavenly or an earthly texture?” [311]

“It is a stuff much too fine for such as *you*. It is such a stuff as has not its like in all the world, and cannot be bartered for cloth of gold; for whoever wears this stuff, however old they may be, immediately appears young, and if already young, it makes them beautiful too.”

And then he went on weaving, without paying any attention to her, any more than if he had not seen her, nor seeming to hear any of her questions or entreaties, and singing the while,—

“The cock o’ercomes, though somewhat rough,
So man, no less, the coy rebuff
Of woman!”

When the *dueña* found she could make no impression on him she ran off at last to call Blanca, who was not yet out of bed, crying long before she got within hearing, “*Infantina, Infantina*[4]*!* get up and come down quickly, for here in your gardens is a shepherd who is weaving a stuff which cannot be matched in all the world, and cannot be bartered for cloth of gold; for whoever puts on a garment made of it will instantly appear young, how old soever they may have been before; and if they are already young and beautiful, it will make them much more so.” [312]

Now the waiting-maid, it must be observed, was neither young nor pretty, and she was most desirous to get possession of the stuff; and as the shepherd would not give it to her, she was dying to make her young mistress get it from him.

Blanca’s curiosity was sufficiently whetted by the description, to get up in all haste and come down, and see the strange shepherd herself.

The count’s heart beat indeed, as she came near; and she looked so handsome, and so haughty, that the sight brought back the memory of all her cruelty, so that he was divided between the inclination to throw himself at her feet and beg her to come and be reasonable, and the resolve to follow the advice of the ring, and give her a lesson that should make her a good wife. But the ring adjured him to keep quite quiet, and not even look up at her.

“God be with you, this morning, *villano*!” she exclaimed, rather loud, with a little sharp cough, to attract his attention.

“May He have you in His good keeping, *niña*[5]!” rejoined the disguised shepherd, without looking up from his loom.

Blanca was not accustomed to be treated in this way; and she felt very much inclined to call some of the servants to chastise the supposed shepherd for his rudeness. Nevertheless, there was something about his manner that both awed as well as interested her to an unaccountable degree, and far too much to let her give [313] up diving farther into the mystery that surrounded him without another attempt.

“*Villano, villano!*” she said, at last, “tell me, I pray, the tissue you are weaving, who taught you to weave it?”

“Seven fairies, lady,” replied the feigned shepherd, “who live in seven towers, and who never sleep or dine; but are constantly weaving and singing this refrain, which I sing continually too, lest I should forget it:—

“The cock o’ercomes, though somewhat rough,
So man, no less, the coy rebuff
Of woman!”

And with that he went on working away as before.

“I suppose you want to sell it, don’t you, *villano*,” continued Blanca, trying not to look vexed. “Now if you like, I’ll buy it of you, and you may ask what you like; money, or jewels, or whatever you will, and I will pay the price.” And when she had said that, she thought such a bait would be sufficient to make him obsequious.

But far from this, he drew himself up proudly, and told her that all her money and jewels were useless to him; that whoever makes up his mind to contemn riches is richer than all the world; and he who is content with the food and raiment earned by his daily toil cannot be bribed by gold. “But,” he continued, speaking a little [314]
lower and more softly, “there is one condition on which I part with my fine weft, and only one. The woman I give it to must be *my wife*!” and then he resumed his indifferent manner again, and went on weaving, and singing the while,—

“The cock o’ercomes, though somewhat rough,
So man, no less, the coy rebuff
Of woman!”

Blanca seemed riveted to the spot. She had long mourned—quite in secret and in silence, the loss of her fond admirer, the Count of Barcelona, and often her heart was—quite in secret and in silence—cut to the quick with the thought, “Suppose he should never come back to me!” Though she appeared outwardly gay and haughty as before, this care was continually preying on her mind; she treasured up, quite in secret and in silence, every little thing that could remind her of him; and whenever a stranger came to her father’s castle, though she pretended scarcely to look at him, she scrutinized him through and through, to see if he could be bearer of any tidings from the absent count. Now there was something about the shepherd that re-awakened all her sorrows, and all her hopes. She did not know what it was. She was too agitated to suspect that it was he himself, and yet [315]
she felt so drawn towards him, she could not tear herself away. The audacity of such words was great, however, coming from one in his humble garb; and she felt she must administer some strong reproof; so, assuming a show of all the indignation she could call to her aid, she half turned away, exclaiming, “Begone, *villano*! nor dare to approach me. If you come but one step nearer, I will call my father’s men to kill you!”

“*Soperbica, soperbica*[6]*!*” replied the shepherd, with most provoking coolness. “You are very proud now; but I swear to you that you will not always take that tone. You will talk to me very differently some day. For so the seven fairies promised me when they taught me the song,—

“The cock o’ercomes, though somewhat rough,
So man, no less, the coy rebuff
Of woman!”

The *dueña*, who had been standing by, watching this scene with the greatest anxiety, intent only on getting a chance of possessing some of the weft which was to make her young and beautiful, was driven beyond endurance by the turn matters were now taking. So she called her young mistress aside and descanted so earnestly on the incomparable powers of the cloth and the little probability of ever [316]
meeting with such a chance again if she neglected this one, and threw in, too, such clever hints about easy ways of getting over the difficulty,—that the simple shepherd could easily be deceived, that she could pretend she was going to listen to his attentions, though it need only be pretence, and in the meantime she would get his priceless treasure out of him,—that poor little Blanca was quite bewildered. She was, indeed, so anxious to see more of the mysterious shepherd, and so possessed with the vague fancy that there was some connexion between him and the Count of Barcelona, that it was no very difficult matter to overcome her scruples, particularly as the *dueña* promised to smooth the way a little for her.

The count, who had also been a little frightened, lest he had spoken too abruptly, was also willing to receive the *dueña’s* mediation, and in a very little time Blanca had obtained possession of the texture; but the count had also played his game so successfully, that Blanca was quite under his influence, and could think and dream

of nothing else, nor rest till she had an opportunity of meeting him again. Of course this was not difficult, and the *dueña* was ready enough to assist her, as she thought the shepherd might have some other precious gift to impart.

Nor was she mistaken. The count consulted his ring as to what he should do next, and the ring gave him a fowl which laid pearls for eggs, and the chickens that [317] came out of them had feathers like gold.

When Blanca saw this, she could not forbear coming down into the garden to ask for the beautiful fowl. The shepherd was feeding her with gold corn, and he went on throwing down the grains without taking any notice of her approach, but singing,—

"My fair begins to yield;
I'm safe to win the field!"

"*Pastorcillo, pastorcillo!* give me the beautiful fowl!" said Blanca imploringly. "I should *so* like to have her. I shall cry if you won't give her *pastorcillo*;" she continued, as the count turned on his heels, and continued singing,—

"My fair begins to yield;
I'm safe to win the field!"

"*Pastorcillo!* listen," repeated the poor child sadly, for though she did not recognize the count, he had so enthralled her, that she felt towards the supposed shepherd as she had never felt towards any but him.

"Oh, cease that horrid song, and speak to me," she said at last, and so humbly, that the count thought it was time to put in a word.

"Will you come away with me? because otherwise it is no use talking," he said, [318] somewhat abruptly.

"Never!" retorted Blanca, indignantly; "and you had better take care, and not talk so loud, for if my father overheard you, he would send and have you strung up."

But the shepherd did not care a bit, he had in the meantime spoken to her father, and told him what his plan was; and received from him the hearty approval of his scheme for bringing his incorrigible daughter to reason; so he sang out louder than before,—

"My fair begins to yield;
I'm safe to win the field!"

Blanca had never been treated in this way, and did not know what to make of it. She turned to go away, but then the dread stole over her, suppose the shepherd should go away as mysteriously as he had come, and then there would be no one left to remind her of the count. She could not bear to think of it: she turned, and said faintly,—

"*Pastorcillo!* give me the beautiful fowl; you must give it me."

"I am going away, Blanca," he replied, but less sternly than before. It was the first time he had called her by her name, and it seemed as if she heard the count speaking. [319]

"Going away!" she exclaimed, in blank despair; "oh, you must take me with you!"

"Take you with me!" repeated the shepherd. "No, you said you wouldn't come."

"Oh, but I did not know what I was saying!"

"It's too late now," replied the count.

"Oh, but I shall come, whether you will or no," she said pertly; for every time he spoke his words seemed to rivet more firmly the chain which bound her to her affianced husband, it seemed as if he was his spectre come to avenge him.

"I cannot help it, if you choose to do *that*," was all his answer, and he turned to go.

"Take me, *Pastorcillo*!" she said once more.

"You would not like to come where I have to go," answered the supposed shepherd. "My dwelling is a dark cave, where no light ever enters. My bed is the sharp rock, which cuts through to the bones. My drink is water, muddy and cold; and my meat is grief and mourning. No companions are there where I live, for all men and women hold my way of living in dread."

When Blanca heard this, she turned pale; nevertheless, she could not see him go without her, and still asked to go.

The shepherd walked on without saying a word. Blanca followed him as if drawn by magic.

Away they went, sad and silent: far, far away; over rocks and declivities, through streams and torrents, past briars and brakes. For months they went on thus; the [320] count going on before,—Blanca, sad and silent, after him. They never entered any town; and their only food was the berries they found in the wood, and the water of the brooks they crossed. Blanca's fair soft skin was burnt brown by the sun and parched up by the wind; her hands were torn by the thorns, and her feet bleeding from the unevennesses of the way. At last a day came when she could go no farther. She sank down fainting on the earth, but she was so humble now, she did not so much as proffer a word of complaint.

"What is the matter, Blanca?" inquired the count. "Do you give up following me any farther?"

"*Pastorcillo!* mock me not. You see I would follow you gladly, but you see too my strength is at an end; I can go no farther;" and with that her senses failed.

When the count saw her in this condition, he took pity on her, and, lifting her up in his arms, carried her to a shepherd's hut at no great distance along the moor, and there the good wife attended to her, putting her in her poor bed, and gently trying to bring her to again. But it was all of no use, she continued in the swoon, and the poor peasant's restoratives were of no avail.

When the count saw this, he was in despair, and sitting down under shadow of a [321] rock, he took out his ring to ask it what was to be done, now being almost ready to reproach it for having led him to be so cruel.

But the ring told him to be of good heart, and all the promises of the milk-white dove would be fulfilled. "Blanca has now learnt a lesson, and acquired a habit of submission which she will not forget all through her life. And besides, after she has given such strong proofs of love and devotion towards you, she will have no inclination to resume the provoking ways with which she tormented you before, so you may safely discover yourself to her now."

Then the good ring suddenly pronounced some words near the peasant's hut, and it became a fine palace, and the bed on which Blanca was lying became covered with beautiful embroidered coverlets, and all around were clothes fit for a countess to wear. The Count, too, was provided with a shining suit of armour and a prancing charger, and by its side a palfrey for his bride, and a train of noble knights and dames to attend them. Over Blanca, too, the ring said some words, and her consciousness came back to her, and when she saw the Count standing by her side, looking just as he did the day he dropped the pomegranate pip, it seemed as if she had never seen him in any other garb, only that he kept singing a verse the ring had taught him— [322]

> "She spurned me, bridegroom, in her pride!
> Then with a shepherd would abide;
> Yet loved me still, for I have tried
> Her love, as gold is purified!"

till she begged him not to sing it, but so gently and submissively, that he could not resist. So he lifted her on to her palfrey, and the whole noble train moved on towards his father's palace, where she lived by his side all her life, a model of a devoted wife. [323]

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1 Dear little ring. ↑

2 Good little shepherd. ↑

3 Sir Country-bumpkin. ↑

4 Little princess. ↑

5 Child. ↑

6 Proud little thing. ↑

[Contents]

MOORISH REMNANTS.

I.

ISSY-BEN-ARAN.

Though the Moors were always hated in Spain, first as a conquering and afterwards as a conquered race, yet many poetical traces of their traditions and maxims remain in the popular literature of the country; and in some of these they appear in a very advantageous light, though, of course, the national hatred loved rather to record those of a contrary import.

Issy-ben-Aran was a venerable muleteer, well-known in all the towns of Granada for his worth and integrity—an elder and a father among his tribe.

One day, as he was journeying over a wild and sequestered track of the Sierra Nevada, he heard a cry of pain proceeding from the road-side. The good old man [324] immediately turned back to render help to the unfortunate. He found a young man lying among the sharp points of an aloe hedge, groaning as if at the last gasp.

“What ails thee? Son, speak,” said Issy-ben-Aran.

“I was journeying along the road, father, an hour agone, as full of health as you may be, when I was set upon by six robbers, who knocked me off my mule, and not satisfied with carrying off all I possessed in the world, beat me till they thought I was dead, and then flung my body into this aloe hedge.”

Issy-ben-Aran gave him a draught of water from his own *bota*[1] and bound his head with linen cloths steeped in fresh water, then he set him on his own beast to carry him at a gentle pace to the nearest town and further care for him, with great strain of his feeble arms lifting him tenderly into the saddle.

No sooner was the stranger well mounted, with his feet firmly set in the stirrups, than, drawing himself up with no further appearance of weakness, he dug his heels into the horse’s side, and setting up a loud laugh, started off at a rapid gallop.

Issy-ben-Aran, to whom every stone of the road was known as the lines upon his right hand, immediately scrambled down the mountain-side, so as to confront the [325] stranger at the turning of the road.

“Hold!” he cried. And the nag, who loved his master well, stood still and refused to move for all the stranger’s urging.

“Son! think not I am come to reproach you,” said the old man. “If you desire the horse, even take it at a gift; you shall not burden your conscience with a theft on my account.”

“Thank you!” scoffed the heartless stranger. “It is fine to make a merit of necessity; but I have nothing to do but ride to the nearest town, and sell the brute.”

“Beware! and do it not,” said the old man. “The nag of Issy-ben-Aran is known at every market in the kingdom, and any man of all our tribes who frequents them, finding you with him, will reckon you have killed me, and slay you in turn. Even for this have I come to you: take this scroll to show that you have it of me as a free gift, and so no harm shall come to you.

“Only one condition I exact. Bind yourself to me, that you tell no man of what has passed between us; lest peradventure, should it become known, a man hearing his brother cry out in distress might say, ‘This man is feigning, that he may take my horse like the horse of Issy-ben-Aran,’ and the man who is really in danger be thus left to perish miserably.” [326]

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1 Small leathern bottle, hung from the saddle in travelling. ↑

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MOORISH REMNANTS.

II.

MÓSTAFA ALVILÁ.

Móstafa Alvilá was califf of a conquered province in Spain, where he reigned with oriental state. The tributary people were ground down with hard work to minister to his treasury, and the vast sums he amassed were spent in beautifying his Alcázar, and filling it with costly productions from all parts. Merchants from every climate under heaven were encouraged to come and offer him their choicest wares.

One day, a merchant of Persia brought a large pack of shawls and carpets, all woven in gold and pearls, and wools and silks of brilliant colours, but among them all the most beautiful was one carpet of great price, on which Móstafa Alvilá's choice was immediately set; but in all his treasury there was not found the price of it. Nothing would do, he *must* possess it: then Ali Babá his vizier came forward and [327] said, "Let ten thousand dogs of Christians be sold, and with the price of them you shall purchase the carpet."

Móstafa Alvilá answered and said, "The advice is good!" So they sent and sold ten thousand Christians, and with the price of them the carpet was bought.

Móstafa Alvilá sat contemplating the curious devices, and tracing the wonderful arabesque patterns with which the carpet was covered; and there was one pattern, all shining with gold and pearls, quite prominent in the centre, which had a likeness to the characters of an inscription; and when Móstafa Alvilá saw it, he was very curious to know if it was an inscription, and what it meant, so he sent to recall the merchant; but he was gone from the Alcázar. Then he sent his servants after him, and though they travelled three days' journey by every road, they could neither find him nor obtain any tidings of whither he had passed. Then Móstafa Alvilá was more curious, and sent and gathered all the learned men in his califate, and inquired of them what the inscription might mean. They all looked troubled, and said they could not tell, they had never seen such letters. But one there was who concealed the difficulty he was in so ill, that Móstafa Alvilá saw he knew what the writing meant, so he looked very severely upon him and threatened him with [328] instant death if he did not tell him exactly what the writing was.

Then the interpreter, when he found there was no other way to save his life, with great fear and trembling said, this is the meaning thereof:—

> "Shiroes, son of Chosroes, killed his father; and he died six months after."

Móstafa Alvilá was greatly troubled when he heard the sentence; for *he* had ascended the califate by killing his father, and he had reigned six months all but one day. So he sent and commanded that the interpreter and all who had heard the sentence should be put to death, that no one might know the omen.

But that night, in the middle of the dark hours, when Móstafa Alvilá was alone in his chamber, a horrible vision came to him. He thought he saw the body of his father whom he had murdered rise up to convict him. He sunk down in his bed, and covered his face in fear and horror.

In the morning, when they came to call him, they found only his lifeless corpse. [329]

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MOORISH REMNANTS.

III.

THE EMIR IN SEARCH OF AN EYE.

The Emir Abu-Bekir lost an eye in battle against the Christians. "The Christians shall pay me what they have taken from me," he said; and he sent for a number of Christian captives, and had one of their eyes taken out, in the idea of replacing his own; but it was found that none of them agreed with his in size, and form, and colour. The Emir Abu-Bekir was of very comely person, and his eyes had been so mild and soft, that it was at last thought only the eye of a woman could replace the missing one; the choice fell upon a beautiful maiden named Sancha. Sancha was brought into the Emir's presence, and his physician was ordered to take out her eye, and place it in the vacant socket.

Now Sancha stood trembling and wailing, and by her very crying damaging the [330] perfection of the coveted feature. Then there stood up a travelling doctor who was in great fame among the people, and begged a hearing of the Emir; for albeit he

was a Turk, yet he possessed pity and gratitude. He knew that the operation, while a torment to the Christian maiden, would be of no service to the Emir; and he pitied the waste of pain. It happened further, that once, when on a journey he had sunk fainting by the way-side, this very Sancha had comforted and relieved him; and now he determined to rescue her.

Accordingly, he stepped up to the Emir, and told him that he had eyes made of crystal, and coloured by cunning art, which no one could tell from living eyes, and which would be of much greater service and ornament than those of the Christian dogs, whose eyes he might have observed lost all their lustre and consistency the moment they were taken from their natural place. The Emir admitted the truth of the last statement, and being marvellously pleased with the glass eyes the travelling doctor displayed, asked him the price.

“The maiden for a slave,” replied the doctor.

The Emir gladly consented to so advantageous a bargain, and suffered the glass eye to be fixed in his head. All the Court applauded the appearance.

“But I cannot see with it!” cried the Emir.

“Oh! you must give it a little time to get used to your ways,” answered the doctor, [331]
readily; “you can’t expect it all of a sudden to do as well as the other, that you have had in use so long.”

So the Emir was content to wait; meantime, the doctor made off with his fair prize, whom he conducted safely back to Spain, and restored her faithfully to her friends and her liberty. [332]

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MOORISH REMNANTS.

IV.

YUSSUF’S FRIEND.

The merchant Yussuf took great pains to train up his only son in prudence, that he might be able, when he was no more, to carry on his business, as he had done before him, with credit and success. But in spite of all his lessons, he would be continually putting his confidence in worthless persons; and in particular he fostered an intimacy with a young Jew of dangerous character, who had several times, by fraud and cunning, cheated him out of large sums, all the while leading young Yussuf to believe that what he had done was fair and just; nor would he listen to his father’s suspicion of him.

The merchant Yussuf had to take a journey to Africa with his son; and while preparing for it, he lamented loudly over the difficulty he was in as to placing his [333]
money in safety during his absence.

“Now, if you had not been so suspicious of my friend the Jew,” said young Yussuf, “*there’s* a man who would have taken care of it for you!”

“You know my opinion of him,” replied his father.

“Ah! you’re so suspicious,” replied young Yussuf, “*I* know him better.”

“Well, if you think so well of him, I will on your advice ask him to take care of a strong-box for me.”

“Well done, father!” replied the young man; “you’ll see you’ll never repent it.”

The same evening, the merchant Yussuf sent a large chest, heavy enough to contain a vast amount of treasure, to the Jew, by the hand of his son; and the next day they set out for Africa.

Having brought their affairs to a prosperous termination, the two Yussufs returned home to Granada.

On the morrow of their arrival, the merchant sent his son to the Jew, to reclaim the strong-box. Young Yussuf returned presently, full of indignation.

“Father, you have insulted my friend beyond all possibility of reconciliation. He tells me it was not money you entrusted to his keeping, but a parcel of broken stones!”

“And pray,” replied his father, “how did your honourable friend discover what was in my strong-box? To find this out, he must have broken my locks; which will, I think, show you it was very well I gave no greater value into *his* keeping.” [334]

Young Yussuf hung his head, and suffered himself to be guided after that by his father’s experience in his judgment of mankind. [335]

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MOORISH REMNANTS.

V.

THE SULTANA’S PERFUMER-IN-CHIEF.

Of all the luxurious appointments of the Moorish houses, none were more prominent than the baths. And you must not think that means a bath just big enough to get into, like those in our houses. At Seville and Granada, and wherever the Moors lived and built, you may see remains of the vast constructions which served them for baths, all of white marble, and situated in the midst of scented shrubs and sweet and brilliant flowers.

In their own hotter country, their baths received a still greater development. There was once a sultana, Moorka-Hama, who had a fancy to have *her* baths always filled with rose-water. One day, when she came to bathe, she found the air perfumed to a most unusual degree; and on her causing an inquiry into it, they found that the heat of the sun had expressed the essential oil, which was floating on the surface. The process thus suggested by accident, was immediately imitated by art; and by it is produced the delicious scent which is now an article of commerce, and which we call attar of roses. [336] [337]

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EL MORO SANTON[1].

Just as it was permitted to the heathen soothsayer Balaam to foretell true things to the Lord’s people, so it is narrated that, a little before the taking of Granada by the Christians, great consternation was produced among the infidel population by the predictions of a Moorish dervish who was held in great veneration.

He was an ancient man, more than a hundred years old; his long white beard seemed to be falling snow, it was more than a yard long, and he could gird it round his waist. He lived out on the mountains of Granada a life of great austerity; though it was long since he had never a hair left, he wore no covering on his head, and the action of the sun and rain had worn it into the appearance of a skull; his eyebrows grew long and bushy, and served as a protection to his eyes; and no clothing wore he but a tunic of camel’s hide; his feet, too, were bare, and his skin was yellow and shrivelled by long exposure. He slept in a cave upon the cold ground, with a stone for his pillow. And for all the hundred years of his life, he had never taken but one meal a day, nor tasted aught but honey and milk, which other Moors brought him by orders of the king. [338]

All looked up to him as to a saint, in all Andalusia; and whatever words he uttered, they respected it as Al Korán, and next to the words of Mahomet himself.

One day, when the king and many people were gathered together to hear him, he spoke to them these words: “When you shall see joined together Aragon and Castille, then know for certain that Granada shall be taken.

“And the king who shall take it, know that his name shall begin with F., for in his time faith[2] shall reign throughout his kingdom.

“And the queen his wife, her name will begin with Y., which may be taken to stand

for *ygual*; for his equal she shall be, in courage and prudence.

“These two shall likewise turn Judaism out of Spain, and set up the Inquisition, by which the wicked shall be sentenced to death. [339]

“They shall acquire three kingdoms, and conquer the Indies.

“And they shall have a grandson, who shall be called Emperor of Germany, also King of Hungary, who shall lay siege to the city of the Pope, and lay low the three lilies of France in the field of Pavia.

“Of the three laws now prevailing in Spain, one only shall remain, and that shall be that one which commences with the font and blessed water, and ends with blessed oils[3].

“And thus they will make an end of the sect of Mahomet; for it had but a thousand years given it, and as more than eight hundred are past, it will soon now come to its end.”

This is said to have been pronounced about fifty years before its fulfilment, in the persons of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castille. [340]

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1 *Santon* is a term used in Spanish for a person professing a life of austerity among the Moors. ↑

2 The letter F in Spanish is pronounced *fé*, and *fé* is the Spanish for faith. ↑

3 Baptism and Extreme Unction, taken to typify the Christian law. ↑

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TRADITIONS DE ULTRAMAR.

HERNAN CORTES IN SANCTUARY.

Hernan Cortes was a Spanish gentleman whose achievements in the new world earned him a fame almost as great and almost as fantastic as that of any of the mediæval heroes. He was first taken out to the West Indies as secretary to Diego Velasquez, Governor of Cuba, whose arbitrary acts excited so much discontent, that a commission of inquiry was sent out from Spain, which established its head-quarters at Hispaniola[1]. It was a perilous enterprise to carry the complaint of Cuba over to the commission; and as no one could be found to undertake the service, Hernan Cortes resolved to go himself, though he had to cross the straits in an open boat. The governor had been on the watch, and one of the swiftest boats under his orders succeeded in overtaking Cortes’s boat, and putting him in irons to bring him back to shore. [341]

Hernan Cortes was one of the handsomest of men; and his beauty and misfortunes exciting the sympathy of his keepers, he was not very vigilantly watched. Possessing great natural pluck and dexterity, he managed in the night, as they neared the land, to slip his chains and gain the shore. Here he hid himself in the jungle till daybreak, when he found sanctuary in a little church. For several days he remained here in safety, but among the frequenters of the shrine was Melinda Xuares, whose piety, and modest demeanour in spite of her exceeding beauty, attracted his attention and won his heart. Her brother, Juan Xuares, with whom she lived, for she was an orphan, was delighted to cultivate the acquaintance of a man he admired so much, and therefore received him cordially.

In his remote retreat he thought himself so safe that he ventured daily to spend some hours at Juan Xuares’ house; but the governor’s spies were down upon him. They caught him one day outside the limits of the sanctuary, and clapped him in prison.

When he had been seized before, it was by an arbitrary stretch of power: now there was a formal charge against him, for having broken prison; and he was liable to be hanged.

Melinda’s grief was indescribable: but she was brave as beautiful; she no sooner heard of Hernan’s imprisonment than she hastened to the governor, and so successfully pleaded her lover’s cause, that he ordered him to be set free and restored to her. [342]

Thus a noble life was spared; and Hernan Cortes afterwards became the conqueror of Mexico. [343]

1 Now Hayti. ↑

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ARAUCANIA THE INDOMITABLE.

I.

Among the many traditions of Spanish adventures in the West Indies and Americas, none are more interesting than those concerning Araucania. Araucania is a province of Chili, which was inhabited by the bravest and noblest tribe of aborigines. Their courage and patriotism preserved them from ever succumbing to the invaders. When the rule of Spain was at length effected, it was through the conversion of the natives and their voluntary acceptance of a Christian government—never by their subjugation; so much so, that for years it was commonly known by the name of “El Estado indomito” (the unconquered province).

Various stories are told of heroism on both sides which deserve a place beside the noblest and most celebrated deeds of any history. Don Alonso de Ercilla y Zuñiga was a page in attendance on Philip II. at the Court of our Queen Mary, when news [344] came of a fresh outbreak of the indomitable Araucanians. Though a mere lad, he pleaded for permission to join the expedition which was immediately formed to quell the insurrection. He presents a marked instance of the best type of Spanish character—brave and patriotic, and at the same time chivalrous and generous. The intervals of leisure he could snatch from the business of the campaign were spent in recording in a heroic poem (which he wrote on any scraps of paper he could procure, and when these failed on dried skins of animals) the incidents of the war which struck his poetic fancy. Far from attributing all the merit to those of his own side with the spirit of a partisan, he has left a series of most touching pictures of the nobleness and bravery of his antagonists. His poem begins, after the manner of the Iliad, with a list of all the valiant chiefs, detailing their qualities and the numbers they commanded. Then it goes on to give a stirring description of their meeting to excite each other to rise in the defence of their country. There was no hanging back or cowardly fear, every one was anxious to be foremost to the fray. When they had well eaten, and warmed their courage with deep potations from their *tinajas*[1] of wine, up rose Tucápel the audacious, and declared he was ready to head the expedition. The universe knew he was the bravest of them all; and if [345] any one disputed the boast, he was ready there and then to make it good. Not suffering him to conclude his speech, Elicura broke in full of boldness, “To *me* it is given to lead the affair; and if any one dispute the claim, he must taste the point of my lance.”

“To *my* arm! to *my* arm,” cried Ongolmo, “it behoves to brandish the iron club.”

“Folly!” shouted Lincoya, mad with rage. “It is mine to be lord of the world, as certainly as my hand holds the oaken staff.”

“None surely,” interposed Argol, “is so vain as to put his prowess on a par with *mine*.”

But Cayocupil, shaking his heavy spear, cleared a free space around him, and roared, “Who will dispute *my* right to be first? Let him come on, come on! I can match you, one or all.”

“I accept the challenge!” responded Lemolemo, darting towards him, “it is no effort to me to prove what is already mine of right.”

But Puren[2], who was drinking at a distance, here dashed furiously through the crowd, and proudly asked who dared harbour so insane a thought; declaring that where Puren stood no one else could bear command. When the storm was at its highest, all shouting and shaking their spears, the venerable Colócolo, the most [346] ancient of all the caciques, came forward, and silence was made before him.

“Caciques, defenders of the State!” he said, “no desire of command animates me; already by my great age I half belong to the other world; my love of you all alone impels me to give you the counsel of the white-haired. But spend not against one another the courage which is needed against our common foe; fight not as to which of you is most valiant, for you are all equal in prowess as in birth and possessions, and any one of you is worthy to govern the world. But as to which shall lead in this present expedition, be advised by me: there must be one, and let the choice be decided by a trial of endurance. Whichever of you shall longest

support a baulk of timber of exceeding weight without wearying, *he* shall take the lead."

He spoke, and not one voice was raised against the voice of the ancient. So the baulk of timber was brought—a vast trunk of ebony which a man could scarcely clasp round with his arms. Paycabi came forward to make the essay, and planted it on his broad shoulders; six hours he bore it with a steady strain, but he could not complete the seventh. Cayocupil with an agile step walked up to the beam, and bore it five hours; Gualemo, a well-grown youth, tried it after him, but could not endure it so long; Argol took it next, but gave way at the sixth hour, and Ongolmo [347] only kept it half an hour more. Puren after him bore it half a day; Lebopia, four hours and a half. Elicura stood up under it manfully longer than any, but at the ninth hour he gave in. Tucápel supported it fourteen hours, and went round to all the caciques boasting of the feat; which, when Lincoya perceived, he tore the cloak from his terrible shoulders, and raising the ponderous bulk without the least apparent strain, planted it on his back curved ready to receive it. Then he ran hither and thither to show how slight was the effort to him. He took it up at the rising sun, and he bore it till the sun had returned to his rest, and through the dread night Diana kept watch with him; and the sun rose again upon his labours, yet he laid it not down till mid-day. And all the people were astonished to find there was one so powerful among them, and they began already to attribute to him the honours of the generalship.

Then Caupólican came up to take his turn quietly and alone—from his birth one of his eyes had been deprived of light; but what was wanting in his power of vision was made up to him in his surpassing strength.

He was a noble fellow, comely and strong, dignified in his bearing and made for command, upright and unflinching, and a strict maintainer of that which is right. [348] His form was muscular, lithe and agile, deep-chested and erect. With the ready confidence of assured superiority, he lifted the wood as if it had been a straw, and poised it gracefully on his shoulders. And all the people praised the movement with a shout of admiration; then Lincoya quailed, for he began to fear the victory would be taken from him. But how much more, when the hours passed by and the hero gave no sign of weariness: he paced up and down, conquering fatigue by resistance, and increasing his power by the habit of endurance. Thus through two days and two nights he never flinched, and then, as if because he had done enough —not because he was exhausted, he lifted down the weight and flung it from him to a mighty distance, showing his strength still unimpaired.

Then all the people shouted and said Caupólican was their leader, and the fear of him was so great, that even those at a distance obeyed his word as if he had been present. Caupólican first exerted his command in setting order among his ranks, and assigning a place to each cacique and his followers. Then he made out a sagacious plan of attack on the Spaniards, and stirred up the brave Araucanians to the contest by assuring them of a speedy victory. Some advised this, and some that, but Caupólican, with his serene word of command, reduced all to willing obedience. [349]

The Spaniards had set up three forts to strengthen their hold on the territory, and against the most formidable of these the first attack was directed. The rising being quite unsuspected, the natives approached the fort easily; but when the Spaniards saw the horde approaching, they quickly raised the cry to arms, and sallied out to meet them with supercilious impetuosity. They soon found, however, they had no mean foes to deal with; though weary and footsore with their hasty march, the Araucanians no sooner came in presence of the foe, than they fought with all the pride and confidence of assured victory. Resistance met resistance, for hours neither side wavered, till at last the Spaniards were glad to secure their retreat in good order into the fort.

Now there was in the Spanish army a brave youth, who, seeing his countrymen give way before the barbarians, was moved to indignation; and when the gate of the fort had closed on the last of them, he stood alone[3] on the drawbridge, and cried to the insurgents, "Come on! come on, the most valiant of you! One at a time, I will match thirty of you—nay I refuse not to a thousand."

More than a hundred Araucanians ran hotly to the encounter; but undismayed, that Spanish youth stood boldly on the bridge, and yet he called to them to come [350] on. Firm and erect he met them, and with a well-placed stroke of his trusty sword laid one and again another and another on the ground. His comrades, watching the unequal contest, sallied through a postern of the fort, and made a diversion for his relief. Many such devoted deeds were done on both sides that day; but it was vain the Spaniards fought like lions, for on and on the Araucanians poured, and for every Spaniard they were twenty. Then, when it was useless to resist longer against their overpowering numbers, they agreed during the night-time to abandon the fort; and trusting to the swiftness of their steeds, they rode away to a

place of greater safety. So Caupólican and his caciques with great rejoicing took possession of the place, and laid the fort even with the ground. [351]

1 Large jars. ↑

2 Puren distinguished himself so much by his courage in these wars, that Alvárez de Toledo, a captain in the Spanish army in Araucania, composed a poem on him, entitled, “Puren indomito.” ↑

3 It is possible Don Ercilla here celebrates some feat of his own. ↑

[Contents]

ARAUCANIA.

II.

TEGUALDA.

It happened once, after there had been a desperate encounter between the Spaniards and Araucanians, that Don Alonso de Ercilla went out late at night to meditate on the lessons of the battle-field strewn with the bodies of those who had been well and brave but a few hours before. The night was dark and gloomy, and yet he thought he discerned indistinctly a form moving from place to place, quietly and noiselessly as a spirit might move; and anon there came from it sighs and groans dismal to hear. Bending down, and hiding himself in the long grass, he tracked the figure, not without some fear at heart; but clasping his trusty sword, he came swiftly upon it. Then it rose erect, and addressed him in humble, timorous accents: “Señor, Señor, have pity on me; I am but a woman, and never have I [352] offended you! If my misery does not move you to spare me, at least consider that there is no glory to be gained by killing a woman—or rather, slay me, but first let me fulfil my work.” Then Don Ercilla asked her what it was had brought her there. And she in dolorous tones answered, “Never was grief like mine; I loved him with true love and purest constancy, and to-day he was taken from me, and slain. Let me but seek the body of him who was my soul, and let me lay it in a decent grave, and *then* take my life, lay my body beside his, for so great is my grief that I dread living without him more than lying beside him in death.”

Don Ercilla was greatly moved by her sorrow, but still he had his duty as a soldier to consider; she might have come to spy the situation of the Spanish camp, under the idea that, as a woman, she would be less easily suspected; and her grief might be assumed in order to induce him to release her. Yet his compassion swayed him at last, so he let her live, and moreover assisted her in her search, leading her to relieve her oppressed heart by pouring out all her story.

“Woe is me!” she said, “for no relief is possible for me, no rest till death. He is gone, and if I open now the old wounds by thinking of him, it is but in the hope that in the violent effort I may sink and die. [353]

“Know then, that I am Tegualda, daughter of the Cacique Brancol. Vain of the attentions that were paid me through many young years, I refused to listen to the suits of any of the young Caciques whom my father presented to me; nor when they danced or wrestled before me would I regard them with favour.

“One day my father took me to the shady thicket where gentle Gualebo pours its limpid stream into the floods of broad Itata with a soothing murmur, and where the sunlight playing through the thick foliage of the breeze-shaken trees, diapered the perfumed air.

“Scarcely had we sat down, when there entered on the plain that spread away before us a band of youths, earnest and silent. At a sign from Brancol various games began, in which each exerted himself to the utmost only to win a glance from me. To me, however, it was a greater pleasure to stand detached from them all, and while they ran, and fought, and showed strange feats of endurance, rather than gratify them by a look, to rest my eyes on the murmuring stream, watching the polished stones, now bathed in snow-like foam, now piercing, black and stark through the mimic waves; or on the waving trees, flinging their lithesome limbs in every graceful attitude, now wide apart, now interlaced in one another’s thrall; or on the far-off sky, sparkling and peering through the leafy shade; on any thing [354] rather than on the contending youths; and thus I sat there, disdaining all interest in the games, and, as I deemed, fancy-free, when all at once a loud cry rose from the contending throng: this was no unusual occurrence, but it was so exulting and prolonged that I could not choose but ask the cause. The youth who stood nearest

me made answer, ‘Did you not observe, Señora, how the brave Mareguano has won the victory over every other combatant? and now when, with joyous haste, we were leading him to receive the conqueror’s wreath from your hand, to gird his temples in token that he is the first and bravest of our company—all at once that handsome lad yonder, wearing green and scarlet for his device, suddenly confronted him, and at their first contest laid him low on the green sward. Mareguano no sooner regained his feet than he required to be allowed another trial; but as this is against all our rules, it was refused him. So the stranger youth comes to be crowned by you, unless you, whose power is absolute over us, suffer them to renew the contest.’

“As he spoke the shouting crowd led him up to me; but before I could take the wreath to crown him, he placed himself modestly before me on his knees, and thus spoke:—

“‘Lady, I seek one favour, though I be a stranger, and have no claim to your regard, yet I have the boldness to prefer my request, having no greater desire than [355]
to live and die in your service. Let me then have your permission to try another fall with Mareguano; ay, and *another* and *another*, even to a hundred, till he is satisfied of my superiority; for here striving in your presence, I know I am certain to come off with greater and greater glory in every trial.’

“And I, who cared little about the matter, carelessly granted what he asked.

“On the instant the two darted off to meet each other: then came a prolonged struggle, fought out with desperate resolve; now lithely bending, now strained to their utmost height, they wrestled for a long space, grasping each other in such iron fashion that it would seem they scarce could breathe; at last the stranger youth ended the contest by seizing Mareguano round the body, then lifting him high in the air, and flinging him headlong on the ground.

“No sooner had he accomplished the feat than the assembled people, delighted at this exhibition of manly strength, bore him along in triumph to receive his reward at my hand.

“When I looked at him, kneeling before me again, flushed with success, praised and applauded by all around, yet waiting for my word, as if he prized it more than all the rest, I felt a new emotion take possession of me, I perceived an interest in him which I had never experienced for any of the others, and it was with difficulty I could command myself sufficiently to conceal what I felt. However, I rose with all [356]
the dignity I could summon, placed the crown on his brow, and announced that the prize I held for the next contest was a ring ornamented with a fine emerald, and that it was for the winner in the race immediately to follow. I could not help saying it in such a way as to betray I expected it would be on *him* I should have to confer it. Nor was I mistaken.

“The competitors, forty in number, were ranged in a long row, panting with anxiety to start. The signal scarcely given, the whole forty set off as one man, and so swiftly that their feet scarcely seemed to touch the sand; but Crepino (such was the name of the young stranger) pursued the sport with so much ardour that he distanced the very wind, and touched the red *Palio*[1] before the others were near it. But I, when he was brought back to me, was more troubled than before; so that when I handed him the ring, I gave him as it were my liberty enclosed in it. And he no sooner had received the ring than, holding it still before me, said,—

“‘*Señora*, I pray you accept it of me; for though it be but little to offer to you, yet it is offered with entire devotion, and the favour you will confer on me in accepting it [357]
will be so great, that it will make me rich, and shall so strengthen and animate me, that there will thenceforth be no undertaking so arduous that I shall not be able to accomplish it; and so you will have added the bravest heart and the stoutest arm to the Araucanian band.’

“I could not but accept what was so gracefully proffered; and now, the games being concluded, the meeting was broken up, and I had to return home with my father.

“For three weeks I concealed what I felt, that I might not appear to change too suddenly from what had been a life-long resolve. But I could not overcome the desire to see him again. When next my father, therefore, urged me to make my choice among the young Caciques, I told him that I had resolved to attend to his bidding, and that my choice had fallen on Crepino, who was of honourable name, brave, well-mannered, and well-grown.

“My father was all rejoiced at this announcement, and, kissing me on the forehead, he confirmed my choice; he told me how on Crepino of all the others his own heart yearned, and how Crepino himself had sued for me, and yet had urged him in no

way to overrule my will.

“With joyful haste the nuptial ceremonies were performed over us, and all was mirth and gladness. That was but one short month ago, and to-day your people [358] have slain him who was all my joy; and all our hopes of happiness are poured out like water on the ground. What comfort is there for so great misery! There is nothing left to hope for now, since earth contains no good which could be measured against such a grief!

“Now, therefore, let me seek my lord, and bury him; for it is not meet that his dear body should fall a prey to voracious beasts and birds.”

Don Ercilla was so much moved by her recital that he no longer doubted her, but helped her to search for Crepino’s body. When the morning dawned they found it, stark and cold, and disfigured by a cannon-ball. Tegualda’s agony revived when she came in sight of his shattered form. She threw herself on him, placed her heart on his heart, and her lips on his, that so she might perchance yet call back the life; and then she struck her face, and tore her long dark hair, and pressed her fingers tightly round her throat, and threw herself again upon the ground, not knowing what she did for very grief. Don Ercilla looked on compassionating, knowing it was but distressing her to interfere till the first violence of her agony was past. Then, at peril of treachery towards him, alone in their midst, he bade her make a signal to call her people, and ordered them to bear away Crepino’s body in decent order. [359]

Then he composed her mantle round her, and, supporting her, gently led her along behind it till they reached the *sierra* where her own people dwelt, and then he delivered her over to her father’s keeping. [360]

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1 *Palio*, a banner of bright-coloured silk or cloth, hung across the end of the race-course among Spaniards, and given to the winner. Don Ercilla, all through the story, seems to fill up his incidents from Spanish manners and ideas. ↑

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ARAUCANIA.

III.

FITON’S CAVE.

During the course of the war an exploring party of Spaniards had been sent to bring a report of the chances of success to an expedition for recovering the coast-line of the Araucanian province. Time passed on, and the party failing to return, great anxiety was felt as to their fate by the Christians; at last some of the bravest volunteered to go and look after them in various directions, and as great caution was necessary, it was agreed the volunteers should go out separately, travelling by night, and keeping themselves concealed by day. It was a perilous enterprize, and Don Alonzo de Ercilla, who was always foremost at any brave deed, was the first to offer himself; and he gives us the following account of an adventure that befell him. [361]

He was making his way through a wild brake, helped by the scanty light of the moon, when he found himself on the edge of a steep descent leading to a vast plain; a narrow path cut the steep, down which a tall, lank native of great age was threading his way. His back was bowed, he was so feeble that he trembled as he walked, and his legs were so fleshless that they looked like dry roots of trees. Don Ercilla advanced to offer his assistance down the rugged descent, and thought at the same time to gather some information of his missing friends, or as to the best means of tracing them. No sooner, however, was the old man conscious of his approach, than, darting into another path at a sharp angle with the first, he turned and fled up the steep side faster than a hunted deer. Don Ercilla spurred his horse, and thought to overtake him easily, but in a moment he was out of sight, neither was it possible for a stranger to find his way so as to proceed with any rapidity over the overgrown crag. Giving up the pursuit, he came at last to the bottom of the declivity, where the stream Rauco flowed turbulently, its course being closed in by sharp rocks on both sides; but a little way down it, on the near bank, was a grove of shady trees, and under them an antelope grazing. The sight reminded him he had once dreamt that this meeting an antelope should be a sign of something important to befall him, so, rejoicing at the incident, he made his way up to the [362] gentle beast.

The antelope had been feeding undisturbed by the sound of the rushing torrent, but no sooner became conscious of a man's presence than, leaving the verdant pasture, she struck wildly into a steep and narrow path, dashing through briar and jungle and close-grown trees; wherever she led, however, Don Ercilla followed, though he had need to spur his horse hard to keep up with her. At last she brought him in sight of a poor little hut, piled up at the foot of an ancient oak. At the sound of their hasty steps an old man came out, to whom, panting, the antelope approached as for protection. The old man tenderly stroked her reeking sides, and then, addressing Don Ercilla, asked him what fate or misadventure had brought him to his remote retreat, which strangers' steps had never yet found out. "If," he said, "you have had the misfortune to get separated from your company, you will find welcome here, and all that my humble roof can offer to restore strength; and fear nothing from your enemies while you are under my protection."

Finding him so affable and pleasant, Don Ercilla gave him his confidence, and not only told him his errand, but also opened to him a wish he had long harboured of visiting the cave of Fiton, the great Araucanian Wizard. The kind old man, without waiting so much as to answer him, took his hand, and at once leaving his seat set [363] out to lead him. It was the season of early summer, and, as the sun was by this time well risen, they picked their way through the shadiest paths. As they went along, the old man spoke thus:—

"My lands were in Araucania. I am called Guaticolo the Unhappy, who, in my robust years, was a valiant fighting man, and in office predecessor to Colócolo. Seven several times have I led our people on to victory on the battle-field, and a thousand times have my now hairless temples been girt with the tokens of success. But as in this life no state is permanent, so fortune was inconstant to me also. After success came defeat; after honour, shame. At Aynavillo I had the misfortune to be loser in a wagered contest, on which my position had been set. Finding myself burdened with a dishonoured life, I could devise no better end to it than to bury myself in this retreat, where, for twenty years, no mortal foot has tracked me; and by strange help it is, I ween, that you have been brought so far; who am I, therefore, to resist the direction you have received from above? How intractable soever Fiton may be, I will urge the claims of relationship, as he is my uncle, and thus induce him to admit you.

"He dwells in the heart of a bleak mountain where the glad sun never penetrates, and whence the foot of man is shut out. But his wisdom and power are so great [364] that he can by his one word perform any of nature's operations. In the blazing heat and dazzling light of noonday he can cover the heavens with the darkness of night. When the sky is one even blue, without assistance of wind or clouds, he can draw rain from a barren heaven. He can arrest the course of the bounding rivers, and of the birds in the midst of their flight. The burnt-up grasses of August at his word raise their withered blades, and resume their verdant hues; the tides of the sea obey his voice, and forget the commands of the moon. And, much more than all this, he can tell the destinies of men, and foresee the fate of nations. It would be impossible for words of mine to overstate his mighty and irresistible power."

While he had been speaking they had passed through a long tract of forest, where the trees grew so thickly, and were so encumbered with brushwood, that Don Ercilla was obliged to tie his horse up and proceed on foot. At last they reached a low opening in a rock, through which was a long dark passage, where they could hardly walk upright, and at the end of it a door garnished all round with heads of wild beasts. Guaticolo opened the door, and led Don Ercilla by the hand into a spacious vault, in the centre of which burnt a strange and perpetual light; in the walls of the cave were cut many stone shelves, on which were ranged jars of [365] ointments, essences, and herbs. There were preserved the far-piercing eyes of the lynx and that of the venomous basilisk; red gore of angry men, and foam from the mouth of rabid dogs; parts of the wing of the harpy, the venom of the amphisbena, and the tail of the treacherous asp, which gives death wrapt up in a pleasant dream; mould off a truncated head unworthy of burial, and the tongue of the horrid hemorreo, whose puncture can never be staunched, but whosoever it wounds must bleed to death. In a huge transparent vase was a griffin's heart, pierced through with an arrow, and the ashes of an eastern phoenix. Stings of serpents, and tails of scorpions, and whatsoever is deadly and venomous in nature.

While Don Ercilla was engaged in examining this strange repertory, a hidden door gave entrance to a lean old man, whom he at once recognized for him who had run away from him with such exceeding rapidity, who said,—

"It is no little boldness in you, so young, to have dared to come thus unbidden to my presence, and to pursue me in my occult habitation, where it is not permitted to foot of man to tread; nevertheless, as I know all things, I know that in your heart you mean no harm, therefore I allow you to live, and will now listen to your intent."

Then Guaticolo took upon himself to explain his errand for him in a long speech, in

which he commenced by lauding the wizard's influence, then detailed Don Ercilla's fame, and finally told him of his dream, in which he had learnt that he might gain from Fiton supernatural information of the fate of the contest in which his Spanish brethren in arms were at the time engaged with the Turks in Europe. [366]

Fiton, in great good humour with Guaticolo's dexterously-administered flattery, took Don Ercilla by the hand, and led him through the secret door by which he had himself entered. It opened into a very different apartment from the other. No mortal tongue could describe its beauty and costliness; the floor was paved with crystal tiles all lustrous with cunning radiance, while the roof was studded with brilliant stones, so that the whole place sparkled with dazzling splendour. Supported on pillars of shining gold a hundred statues of heroes were ranged round the room, so life-like in design that a deaf man might have thought they spoke. On the broad medallions behind were pictured forth the valiant deeds of each, displaying the designer's acquaintance with the history of all nations.

In the midst of the spacious hall, which measured half a mile every way, swung a globe of light, balanced in the air by supernatural power.

When Don Ercilla had spent some time examining all these wonders, Fiton came to him, and, with his wand pointing to the globe of light, explained to him that it contained an epitome of the world, and had cost him forty years of labour; but contained the representation of all that was happening, or ever would happen, in any part or time of the world. "And," he added, "as it seems you are a poet, whose business it is to chronicle the great deeds of the fighting men of your country, and you have already celebrated their achievements by land, I will now show you what they are doing at sea." [367]

Then he touched the bright globe with his wand, and Don Ercilla saw it represented the world with all its parts delineated, and all the people on it seen as clearly as he might have seen his own face in a mirror.

Then Fiton pointed to the Mediterranean sea, and conducted his eyes to that part of it which washes[1] the Ausonian shore, and he saw it was all covered with galleys bearing the devices of the Pope, and Philip II., and the Venetian Republic; and from the port of Lepanto there came out to meet them the galleys of the Crescent. Then with a hoarse and terrible voice, Fiton invoked the infernal powers, crying, "O terrible Can-Cerberus, Charon, weary boatman, yellow Orcus, and irresistible Pluto! O chilly Styx, O lake Avernus, O seething waters of Acheron, Lethe, Cocytus, and ruddy Phlegethon! O Furies who with relentless cruelty torment the souls of the lost, and Gorgons, whose hair of wriggling snakes the shades tremble as they behold! compelled by my all-powerful word, afford to this earth-born youth a clear vision of the work now accomplishing in the waters of Lepanto." As he spoke he frantically waved his wand. [368]

Then behold, the waters of the sea boiled over, and the sterile north-east wind rounding the white sails, the rival fleets were tossed in sudden motion, the gallant Spanish vessels bearing down proudly on the Pagan galleys. Mighty warriors were there, whose names and deeds of fame were borne in characters of flame around their brows; many, whom he had known as companions of his own in childhood, now bronzed with the hardships of many a bold campaign. Suddenly the signal of the fight resounded, and then the Christian hosts, following the sign of their redemption, poured down with resistless ardour on their Pagan foes. With breathless interest Don Ercilla watched the fortunes of his friends, shouted to them—so present was the scene—to bear them bravely, nor waver in their courage. For hours the fight raged, and many a brave servant of Christ fell deadly wounded into the deep waves, and tinged the blue waters with his generous blood. Don Ercilla wept and exulted by turns, as, one after another, he saw dear friends lost to him for ever in this life, and yet the Christian arms prevailing inch by inch, till at last, successful and triumphant, they swept the encroaching Turk from the face of the sea, inflicting an irreparable wound on his power, and setting a bound to his aggressions which he might not pass. [369] [370]

1 The Adriatic. ↑

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MATANZAS.

Matanzas is at the present day one of the most populous and important towns of the island of Cuba: second to Havannah, it goes on ever increasing in commercial activity; it has a railroad and a well-sheltered harbour, and is surrounded by an

extent of sugar and coffee cultivation which promises, with a never-failing supply of exports, to maintain and constantly increase its prosperity.

Nevertheless Matanzas has an ugly name; for, though euphonious enough to our ears, its meaning is neither more nor less than “Slaughterings,” and the ugly name is connected with an ugly history, and, it would seem, an inseparable association of ugliness in every detail. Its situation is flat and unpicturesque; the buildings—unlike, and indeed in strong contrast with the beautiful outlines which, imitating those prevalent in Spain at the time of her greatest colonial eminence, were spread by her all over the new world—are mean and bare, and, while too solidly [371] built of stone to offer any hope that the venerable-making hand of time will ever clothe them with any even adventitious interest, they are yet altogether deficient in a grand or imposing character.

The following story of the circumstances of its origin may be taken to account for the absence of those softening influences of family life and home traditions, which in the other colonies reproduced many of the most beautiful features of the old country.

There once lived, in a village of Castille, a man who thought only of enjoying himself, and who spent all his money without taking any account of how much he had got left for the future; so that at last a day came when he had nothing at all left, and not a bite of any thing but his nails. When he came home without a *maravedi*, his wife and children dinned him so for food that they drove him distracted; and he borrowed a rope of a neighbour, and went to an olive-tree to hang himself.

He had hardly fastened the rope to the tree, when a little sprite appeared, sitting astride on one of its branches, who called out to him, “What are you going to do? You, a Christian, going to hang yourself like Judas! Give up such an idea; here, take this purse, which is never empty, and go home.”

So Perrico (that was the name of our man) caught at the purse to see if such good [372] fortune could be true, and drew out one *duro*[1] after another without stopping, like words out of a woman’s mouth. When he saw that the store was so bountiful, he untied the rope and coiled it up, and made the best of his way home. But passing by the way a tavern where he had been accustomed to take refreshment, he could not resist the temptation of turning in; nor, when he was in, the temptation of ordering the best drinks and viands, till at last he took more than was good for him, and passed the night under the table, drunk, and as insensible as the dead in the churchyard.

The host, who had observed that he payed for every thing he ordered, *duro* after *duro* out of his little purse, and that there was always a *duro* left, determined to possess himself of the treasure, and so told his wife to make another exactly like it, and then changed it against the magic purse in Perrico’s pocket.

In the morning Perrico woke, and suspecting nothing, ran home to his wife as joyous as a holiday.

“No more hunger! no more misery!” he cried; “here’s money enough to last our lives—here’s enough for every one; come, come all and be merry!”

Then he pulled out his purse, and flung the one *duro* in it on the table, but when he expected to find another, it continued empty; then he turned it inside out, and [373] threw it up in the air, and flung it on the floor. But no more *duros* appeared. And his wife, thinking it all a trick, grew more provoked than before, and rated him with an angrier voice than ever.

Perrico, now quite desperate, took up his rope again, and returned to his olive-tree. No sooner had he tied the rope to the branch than the goblin appeared, and reproached him as before.

“But what am I to do?” pleaded Perrico; “I’ve nothing to eat.”

“You ought to find work,” answered the goblin; “nevertheless I’ll give you another chance. Take this table-cloth, and with it you’ll never want for a meal; for whenever you spread it, you’ll find a meal ready cooked, upon it.” So saying, he disappeared.

Perrico took the cloth, and spread it out in the shade of the olive-tree, and immediately it was covered with dishes of choice food, and wine, and fruits, and flowers; so he made the best meal he had ever eaten in his life, folded his table-cloth, and started for home.

Meantime it had got late, and as he passed the tavern, the idea of a comfortable bed seemed more inviting than a long walk, so he turned in and went to bed.

The host, who had made such a fortunate prize out of him the day before, suspected sagaciously that he might have brought some other wonderful gift along with him this time; so while he was sound asleep he turned over his things, and finding the new table-cloth, easily guessed this was what he was searching for, and so replaced it with another like it, and carried Perrico's off. [374]

In the morning Perrico woke, and, suspecting nothing, ran home to his wife as joyous as a holiday.

"Come wife, come children!" he exclaimed, "no more hunger! no more misery! here's food to last our lives."

And with that he spread the table-cloth out on the table; to his chagrin, however, instead of eatables, it was only covered with ugly patches.

Then followed an outcry such as never had been heard before; mother and children set upon him without mercy, and glad enough he was to escape from them, his rope safely tucked under his arm.

Once more he secured the rope, and once more the goblin appeared. "Christian!" he exclaimed, "where is your patience?"

"All beaten out of me by my wife's blows," replied Perrico.

"That's no excuse," said the sprite; "nevertheless I'll help you once more. Here's a stick for you—take this, and when you're armed with it no one will venture to interfere with you."

Perrico caught at the stick, and walked home with as much importance as a beadle bearing his mace; and when the children came clamouring round him, as they had seen their mother do, he only said, "At them! good stick!" and the stick flew out of his hand, and sent them all running helter-skelter. Then his wife came to the defence of her children, and Perrico had only to say, "At her! good stick!" and the stick soon disposed of her also. [375]

But the neighbours, hearing her cries, sent for the Alcalde and his Aguaciles, who prepared to take him; but Perrico cried once more, "At them! good stick!" and straightway the stick sent them all flying in every direction.

Then they sent an express messenger to the king, to tell him how his officers were being treated, and he sent a regiment of grenadiers. But Perrico had one remedy against all: "At them! good stick!" he cried, and in a trice the stick belaboured away, leaving one with a broken arm, another with his eye knocked out, the colonel sprawling in the dust, and every musket or side-arm rendered totally unfit for use, till the soldiers, thinking Lucifer had been let loose among them, were glad to get away as fast as their legs would carry them.

So Perrico was left alone, and was glad to rest after all the excitement, but took care when he went to sleep to hide his stick in his breast, that it might not be taken from him. [376]

When he woke in the morning he found his hands and feet manacled, and an officer of justice standing over him, reading aloud the sentence of death which had been passed upon him. Perrico said nothing, but as soon as they loosened his bonds on the scaffold he took out his stick, and crying, "At them! good stick!" soon delivered himself of executioners, guards, gaolers, and all who stood in his way.

"Leave the fellow alone!" cried the king, "or all my subjects will be killed—only let's get rid of him." So to bribe him to go he promised him a large tract of land in America, and shipped him off to the island of Cuba. Here he founded a town; but his stick did so much execution on the inhabitants, that people gave it the name of Matanzas.

THE END.

1 A dollar. ↑

[Contents]

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21	‘	“
75	[*Not in source*]	”
126, 260, 300	[*Not in source*]	,
136	blunderbluss	blunderbuss
173	A	I
175	[*Not in source*]	.”
198	[*Not in source*]	‘
206	abandom	abandon
210	plentitude	plenitude
226	[*Not in source*]	who
247	,	[*Deleted*]
258	alway	always
282	Alva	Alvar
317	imporingly	imploringly
368	the the	the

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